

# JAPAN: STATE AND PEOPLE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Papers presented at the

## STICERD 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium

Sheldon Garon  
Barbara Molony  
Werner Pascha  
Ben-Ami Shillony

Edited by Janet Hunter

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The Suntory Centre  
Suntory and Toyota International Centres for  
Economics and Related Disciplines  
London School of Economics and Political Science  
Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE, UK.  
Tel. 020-7955 6698

## Abstract

The four papers and comments in this volume deal with different aspects of the relationship between state and people in twentieth century Japan. Ben-Ami Shillony's paper is concerned with religious aspects of this relationship, in particular concerning the role of the emperor, while Barbara Molony is concerned with the position of women. Sheldon Garon's paper deal with the state's propaganda to promote saving, while Werner Pascha addresses the broader issue of the position of central government and the possibility of Japan's moving towards more of a federal structure.

**Keywords:** Japan, religion, emperor, women, saving, federalism.

## Preface

To celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines, a special Japanese Studies symposium was held at STICERD on Wednesday, 8 July 1998. The symposium provided an opportunity to hear presentations by scholars from outside Britain on the common theme of State and People in Twentieth Century Japan. The sessions were attended by around fifty guests from all over the UK, and in each case a British-based scholar was invited to comment on the presented paper. The two speakers in the morning session were Professor Ben-Ami Shillony from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Professor Sheldon Garon of the History Department at Princeton University. Professor Shillony has written extensively on 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, including acclaimed studies of army uprisings in the 1930s and wartime culture. Professor Garon is the author of major works on the state and labour in modern Japan and, more recently, on the interaction of the state and civil society. The afternoon session also consisted of two papers. Professor Barbara Molony of the History Department, Santa Clara University, California, has written on the development of Japan's chemical industry, but her more recent work has dealt with aspects of women's history and modern feminism in Japan. Professor Werner Pascha is Director of the Institute for East Asian Studies at Mercator University of Duisburg and an expert on the Japanese economy, who has written widely in both German and English.

We would like to express our gratitude to the four speakers for agreeing to participate on this occasion, and also to the four 'home' commentators for their stimulating contributions. We would also like to thank the audience for helping to make the whole symposium lively and successful, and hope perhaps to welcome people again in another twenty years!

We are grateful to the four presenters and the four commentators for allowing us to reproduce their papers here.

Janet Hunter  
Chair, Japanese Studies Programme  
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# Emperor and Religion in Twentieth Century Japan

by

Ben-Ami Shillony

It is an honour for me to be the first speaker in this symposium on State and People in Twentieth Century Japan, which commemorates the twentieth anniversary of STICERD. State and people interrelate on many levels. The aspect that I would like to talk about today are the relations between the highest organ of the Japanese state, the emperor, and religion. When Emperor Akihito visited Britain in May 1998, the media reported that before the Second World War the emperors of Japan were believed to be gods, whereas after that they have come to be regarded as human beings. This dichotomy raises several questions: Were the emperors indeed believed to be gods? What happened to their religious role when they changed their status? And has their religiosity been limited to Shinto, or has it also stretched back to Buddhism, or reached out to Christianity? These are the questions that I would like to address in my paper.

## Were the Emperors Gods?

We are so accustomed to think that before 1945 the emperors of Japan were considered to be gods, that we do not bother to ask for evidence. We assume that it is written somewhere in the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon shoki*, or that it appears in some imperial rescript or official pronouncement. These assumptions are wrong. The *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* describe the divine origin of the imperial dynasty, but they do not portray the emperors as gods. Descent from a deity did not confer divinity and was not unique to the imperial family. Most aristocratic clans claimed to have divine ancestors, without implying that their heads were divine. Some poems in the *Manyōshū* refer to the emperors as *ara-hito gami* or *akitsu mikami* (both meaning god manifest), and this has produced the theory that the emperors were 'living gods'. But according to the literary critic Origuchi Shinobu, these were phrases of poetic praise rather than assertions of divinity.<sup>1</sup> Unlike in ancient Egypt or Rome, in Japan there was no worship of living emperors. The supremacy of the imperial family did not rest on a belief in its divinity, but on a belief in its descent from a

leading deity, Amaterasu Ōmikami, often referred to as the sun goddess. On the basis of this belief, the emperors mediated between the people and 'the gods of heaven and earth'. Therefore the emperor was a shaman rather than god.

Deceased emperors were gods, but so were also the souls of other dead people. Indeed until the twentieth century emperors were less deified than some of their subjects. The shrine in Nikkō, where the soul of Tokugawa Ieyasu was worshipped, was more magnificent than any shrine for a departed emperor. It was only in 1889 that the Meiji government built a shrine in Kashiwara to worship the founder of the empire Emperor Jimmu. The magnificent Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, where Emperor Meiji and his wife are enshrined, was built only in 1920.

The Meiji oligarchs stressed the sacred position of the emperor, in order to strengthen their own legitimacy, but, contrary to what one might expect, none of their official documents claimed that the emperor was a 'living god'. The Meiji constitution stated that the imperial dynasty was 'unbroken for ages eternal' (*bansei ikkei*), and that the emperor was sacred (*shinsei*) and inviolable (*okasubekarazu*). But sacred is not divine, and this article was copied from the many European constitutions which had similar clauses.<sup>2</sup> The titles by which the Meiji government and press referred to the emperor - *Tennō heika* (His Majesty the Emperor), *Tenshi-sama* (The Honorable Descendant of Heaven), and *Seijō heika* (His Sacred Majesty) - conveyed awe and sacredness, but did not attribute a status of *kami*.

Some conservative scholars regarded the emperor as divine. In 1897 Hozumi Yatsuka wrote: 'The ancestor of my ancestors is the Sun Goddess. The Sun Goddess is the founder of our race... The emperor is the Sun Goddess living in the present.'<sup>3</sup> But not all nationalists subscribed to that view, and it did not become an article of faith of Japanese nationalism. Kita Ikki, the ideological father of many nationalists in the twentieth century, praised the eternal nature of the dynasty, but did not refer to its divinity. He ridiculed Hozumi's idea that the emperor was the nation, saying that if that was true then every soldier was an emperor of a line unbroken for ages eternal.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1930s and early 1940s a religious reverence for the emperor was propagated

in the schools and the barracks. Pupils had to bow before the emperor's portrait (*go-shin'ei*) and recite the Imperial Rescript on Education. The teachers' manual *Kokutai no hongii* of 1937 stated that the emperor was *akitsu mikami*, but added that this did not mean that he was omniscient or omnipotent in the Western sense of the word God.<sup>5</sup> The 1940 textbook *Shūshinsho* said: 'The emperor, whom we the people worship as god, is the descendant of the Great August Sun Goddess'.<sup>6</sup>

Soldiers were taught to regard their superiors as representatives of the emperor and to sacrifice themselves for the glory of the imperial house. The 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors emphasized the interdependence between the emperor and the military: 'Whether we are able to guard the Empire, and so prove Ourselves worthy of Heaven's blessings and repay the benevolence of Our Ancestors depends upon the faithful discharge of your duties as soldiers and sailors'. There was no reference in it to divinity. But in the 1930s, as nationalism became shriller, many military officers were describing the emperor as divine. In March 1935, the emperor's chief aide-de-camp General Honjō Shigeru told Hirohito that 'the military worships His Majesty as divinity incarnate (*arahito gami*)'.<sup>7</sup> Not all officers shared his view. The 'Young Officers' of the 1930s did not treat the emperor as god and were angry when he refused to support their attempted uprisings.<sup>8</sup> The meaning of the battle cry *Tennō heika banzai!* and of the national anthem *Kimi ga yo* was merely that the emperor's reign should last for ever.

When the Shōwa emperor, in his New Year 1946 rescript, announced that he was not god, he renounced something that had never been officially claimed. But he refused to deny the long-established doctrine that he was a descendant of Amaterasu Ōmikami and that his ancestors were gods. This doctrine could not be renounced, as it provided the legitimacy for the imperial dynasty and for the Shinto rites which the emperor has continued to perform. Thus the religious role of the emperor did not change after that announcement. It was highly symbolic that on the same day that Hirohito proclaimed that he was not god, he performed the New Year obeisances to the gods of heaven and earth at the three palace shrines.

What did change was the political context of that role. Unlike Britain and the

Scandinavian countries, where the monarch is the head of the church, the postwar constitution of Japan does not allow the state to engage in any religious activity. Therefore the Shinto ceremonies at the palace are defined as a private affair of the imperial family. As a result, the emperor now sends 'private' donations to various shrines, including the Gokoku Jinja, which until 1945 had been the local branches of the Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>9</sup> The links with Ise Shrine are maintained by 'private' imperial visits and by the appointment of imperial princesses as the chief priestesses (*saishū*) there. The most prominent figure after the war to advocate the emperor's divinity was the novelist and playwright Mishima Yukio. In his 1966 play *Eirei no koe* (Voices of the Heroic Dead), the ghosts of the 1936 rebels and of the 1945 *kamikaze* pilots come on stage to denounce the emperor for his denial of divinity, claiming that if he was no god then their deaths were meaningless.<sup>10</sup>

### **Have The Emperors Reached Back To Buddhism?**

For almost 1,300 years the emperors of Japan were, in addition to their position as sacred descendants of the sun goddess, also devout Buddhists. They promoted Buddhism, patronised Buddhist temples, appointed the senior Buddhist clergy, and bestowed high Buddhist titles like *daishi* or *kokushi*, but they were not regarded as Buddhist deities or bodhisattvas. When they abdicated they often became Buddhist priests or, in the case of empresses, nuns. The Meiji Restoration separated Shinto from Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*) and drove out all Buddhist vestiges from the imperial palace and the Shinto shrines, but the attempt to suppress Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku*) failed, when it encountered popular opposition.

The separation of Shinto from Buddhism meant that the imperial family had henceforth to practice only Shinto. In this respect the modern emperors are more restricted than their predecessors who also practiced Buddhism, and more restricted than ordinary Japanese who usually practice both religions. Making Shinto the exclusive religion of the imperial house required the invention of new Shinto ceremonies. The first Shinto state funeral was that of Empress Dowager Eishō, Emperor Komei's widow, in 1897. The first Shinto wedding was that of Crown Prince Yoshihito (later Emperor Taishō) in 1900. Since then Shinto weddings have become popular, while Shinto funerals have never caught on.

Despite this separation, some links between the imperial court and Buddhist temples remained. When Emperor Meiji toured the country in the 1870s, he paid visits to and sometimes even stayed at Buddhist temples. In 1884 he ordered the renovation of the Senyuji temple in Kyoto, which until the Restoration had been the sanctuary of the imperial family. This temple still conducts monthly memorial services for the last three deceased emperors, who now are Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa, despite the fact that none of them was a Buddhist. In the Edo period members of the imperial family served as abbots at Buddhist temples designated as *monzeki*. Although that system was abolished after the Restoration, Hirohito's brother-in-law (Empress Nagako's brother), Count Higashi-Fushimi, served as abbot of the Shōren-in temple in Kyoto, and Hirohito's sister-in-law (Empress Nagako's sister) served as abbot of the Higashi Honganji temple there.

Most religious organizations supported the wartime policies of the government, but those which espoused pacifism or questioned the emperor's sacred position were suppressed. In 1935 Deguchi Onisaburō, leader of the new religious sect Ōmotokyō, was arrested, his sect was disbanded, and its headquarters were razed, because he had hinted to his followers that he was the future emperor and saviour of the world.<sup>11</sup>

No emperor has tried to reintroduce Buddhism into the palace, but individual members of the family sometimes sympathized with Buddhist sects. Empress Dowager Teimei, widow of Emperor Taishō and mother of Hirohito, was said to be a Nichiren believer.<sup>12</sup> The idea of a modern monarch abdicating and becoming a Buddhist priest surfaced at the end of the Second World War, when Prince Konoe Fumimaro suggested to Hirohito that he should resign and enter the Ninnaji temple in Kyoto, where emperors in the past used to retire.<sup>13</sup> Although the suggestion was declined, it shows that this idea was still alive in the middle of the twentieth century.

### **Have They Reached Out To Christianity?**

Unlike Buddhism, Christianity has never been a major religion in Japan and has taken no part in the religious life of the palace. During most of the Edo period it was banned as an 'evil creed' (*jakyō*), and when the ban was lifted in 1873 it continued

to be suspected. Yet, Christianity was the religion of the enlightened West and enjoyed the West's prestige. In 1872, when the ban on Christianity was still in effect, Emperor Meiji received the King James Bible from James Hepburn, a leading American missionary. The Japanese Bible was presented to him on its completion in 1898.<sup>14</sup> Some Meiji leaders considered the idea that Japan should adopt Christianity to improve its international standing. In September 1885 Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru told the French envoy to Tokyo, Joseph-Adam Sienkiewicz: 'Japan has borrowed everything from the West... One step more remains to be taken - to borrow in the same way from the West the Christian religion'. According to Sienkiewicz, Itō Hirobumi expressed a similar opinion.<sup>15</sup> But the nationalistic mood of that time, the foreign character of Christianity, and its dogmatic principles, prevented it from becoming a popular religion.

Japanese Christians were eager to refute their unpatriotic image by expressing loyalty to the emperor. They were willing to overlook the Shinto character of the imperial institution and to regard the emperor as a civil, even Christian-like, figure. When Emperor Meiji died in 1912, the leading Christian pastor Uemura Masahisa compared him to the biblical King Uziah. He urged Christians to celebrate the accession ceremonies of Emperor Taishō, claiming that these ceremonies, including the Daijōsai, were civic rites that every citizen had to respect. Uchimura Kanzō, founder of the *mukyōkai* Christian movement, who had been dismissed from his teaching post in 1890 for refusing to bow to the Imperial Rescript on Education, joined the mourners and declared that the demise of Emperor Meiji was a tragedy of cosmic proportions.<sup>16</sup>

The loyalty that the Japanese Christians demonstrated toward the emperor convinced the authorities that they should be allowed to pursue public careers. Although the number of Christians in the twentieth century never exceeded one percent of the population, one could find them before the war in many walks of life. Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, who later masterminded the attack on Pearl Harbour, did not convert but in his youth he attended church and kept a Bible on his desk at the Naval Academy.<sup>17</sup> In 1919 another naval officer by that name, Yamamoto Shinjirō, president of the Catholic youth movement *Kōkyō Seinen-kai*, was



appointed tutor on naval affairs to Crown Prince Hirohito. He accompanied Hirohito on his European tour of 1921, in the course of which both were received in audience by Pope Benedict XV.<sup>18</sup>

In May 1936 the Vatican issued a proclamation which allowed Japanese Catholics to participate in Shinto ceremonies, on the grounds that these were merely civil rites of 'filial reverence toward the Imperial Family and to the heroes of the country'<sup>19</sup>. The Christian Council of Protestant Churches in Japan concurred with that interpretation. Now if Christians could attend Shinto rites, should not they also be allowed to pray to the Shinto gods and worship the emperor? In August 1937, a group of prominent Christians indeed reached that conclusion. They travelled to the Ise Shrine and offered a prayer to Amaterasu Ōmikami in which they implored her: 'Prosper and favour the reign of the Emperor who rules over the Great Eight Islands as Manifest Kami... Bring it to pass that all things may be done according to the Way of the Gods'<sup>20</sup>. A year later, the Christian pastor Ōjima Saneharu went one step further, by claiming that Shinto was just a distorted form of trinitarianism and that both Christianity and Shinto worshipped the same 'Celestial Deity' (*akatsu kami*).<sup>21</sup> In June 1941 most Protestant denominations joined to form the government-sponsored United Church of Christ in Japan (*Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan*), which exists until today. During the war this organization as well as the Catholic church supported the government in the war, but some Christian groups were suppressed because of their pacifism or links to the Anglo-Saxon countries.

In 1945 Japan came, for the first time, under the control of a Christian power. This presented an extraordinary opportunity to convert the imperial family and through it also great numbers of the people. The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur was a devout Episcopalian and on several occasions expressed his view that only Christianity could save Japan from communism. In October 1945 he invited a group of Protestant leaders from the United States to meet with the emperor and told them: 'Japan is a spiritual vacuum. If you do not fill it with Christianity, it will be filled with communism. Send me 1,000 missionaries.'<sup>22</sup> Violating his own constitutional principle of separating religion from state, he encouraged thousands of missionaries to come and proselytize in Japan.

William Woodard, who was head of the Religious Research Unit of SCAP, writes: 'That the General pondered the possibility of His Majesty's conversion, there can be little doubt. He referred to it on too many occasions for this to have been a mere figment of romantic imagination. There is good reason to believe that Christianity was mentioned on the occasion of at least one of the Emperor's visits with MacArthur.' But, probably not to embarrass the Supreme Commander by this revelation, Woodard adds, in apparent contradiction to what he has just said: 'regarding the suspicion that MacArthur may have wanted the Emperor to embrace that faith during the Occupation or that he thought it would be a good thing if this happened, the evidence would appear to be to the contrary'.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting that Hirohito was receptive to these overtures. According to a report in the magazine *Church and State*, quoted by Woodard, MacArthur told the preacher Billy Graham that the emperor had confided to him 'his willingness to make Christianity the national religion of Japan', but MacArthur rejected the offer 'because he felt it wrong to impose any religion on a people'.<sup>24</sup> Woodard also mentions that Empress Dowager Teimei, the mother of Hirohito, was heard saying: 'What this country needs now is Christianity'.<sup>25</sup>

In May 1946 Hirohito invited a Christian scholar, Professor Saitō Takeshi of Tokyo University, to the palace to lecture on the topic of 'Sin, suffering and pardon, the Cross and then the hope'. The message of the lecture was that Japan's suffering could be redeemed by embracing the Cross. The lecture was attended by all the members of the imperial family, and when it was over the emperor asked Saitō to recite a Christian prayer.<sup>26</sup> In April 1947 Hirohito invited the woman pastor Uemura Tamaki, daughter of the formerly mentioned Meiji pastor Uemura Masahisa, to teach the Bible to his unmarried three daughters and the empress. These lessons continued until the end of the occupation in 1952.<sup>27</sup> In August 1947 the emperor visited a Catholic church in Akita city, where the nuns sang for him a hymn asking God to protect Japan and its emperor. In 1948 Hirohito exchanged photographs with Pope Pious XII, through the French missionary Joseph Flaujac, whom he and the empress had befriended.<sup>28</sup> Since the nineteenth century the French Foreign Mission Society had been entrusted with Catholic missionary work in Japan.

On the basis of these and other signs, many observers at that time believed that the emperor's conversion was imminent. In December 1946, the Christian president of Tokyo University, Nambara Shigeru, predicted publicly that the emperor would embrace Christianity. In May 1947, the *Miyako shinbun* reported that Hirohito was 'on the way to conversion'.<sup>29</sup> In the spring of 1948 Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York met with the emperor and declared that 'It was desirable that both the emperor, as an ethical leader, and the people, become Catholic'. In December 1948, Vatican sources were predicting that the emperor of Japan would be converted to Catholicism.<sup>30</sup>

Could a Christian emperor perform the Shinto ceremonies at the palace shrines as the descendant of the sun goddess? Fantastic as this may sound, there was the long precedent of Buddhist emperors performing Shinto ceremonies, and there was the prewar precedent of Japanese Christians regarding Shinto rites as a secular ritual. In 1947, Hirohito's brother Prince Takamatsu told the shrine magazine *Jinja shinpo* that Shinto should 'tie up' with Christianity in the same way that it had once tied up with Buddhism.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Christian Network Around Akihito**

The great hope of the missionaries was Crown Prince Akihito, who was only twelve when the war ended. To provide him with Christian values, the former diplomat, Mitani Takanobu, a Christian disciple of Uchimura Kanzō and younger brother of the Christian theologian Mitani Takamasa, was appointed vice president of Gakushūin, the former peers' school which Akihito attended. Then, in October 1946, Elizabeth Vining, a devout Quaker from Philadelphia, was invited, on MacArthur's recommendation, to tutor the crown prince in English and other subjects. The Quakers of Philadelphia have been engaged in missionary and educational work in Japan since 1887, when they established the Friends School in Tokyo, and Vining's position at the palace could be regarded as a continuation of that activity. Indeed, following her appointment, Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, MacArthur's military secretary and himself a Quaker, predicted that 'Japan's next emperor would undoubtedly be a Christian'.<sup>32</sup> In her memoirs *Windows for the Crown Prince*, Vining reveals that when she started teaching Akihito, 'many Christians felt and... others

put to me in far more blunt terms, that I should convert the Crown Prince to Christianity'. She could not do it bluntly, but hoped to guide the prince so that he himself would discover the truth. She used to pray: 'Heavenly Father, bless this child to whom some day will come great responsibility... May he learn to know and trust Thy light within his own heart...'.<sup>33</sup> To provide him with peer support, she invited a Christian boy, Robert Togasaki, to be Akihito's companion. Among the topics that she discussed with them were: 'what is God?' and 'why do Christians pray?'.<sup>34</sup>

With the tacit support of the occupation, Christian educators were appointed to key palace positions, forming a network around the crown prince. In 1948, Mitani Takanobu, the Christian vice president of Gakushūin, was appointed grand chamberlain. In 1949, the economist Koizumi Shinzō, a former president of Keiō University who had converted to Christianity after the war, was put in charge of Akihito's education. For the next seventeen years, until his death in 1966, Koizumi was the closest and most important adviser to Akihito. When Elizabeth Vining returned home in 1950, after four years as Akihito's teacher, another Quaker woman from Philadelphia, Esther Rhoads, who was director of the Friends School, became his English teacher for seven more years. In 1951, Hamao Minoru, a Catholic teacher and elder brother of the future bishop of Yokohama Hamao (Stephen) Fumio, was appointed as tutor to Akihito. Another Catholic, chief justice of the supreme court Tanaka Kōtarō, a relative of Koizumi, became Akihito's teacher on constitutional law. A Christian instructor at Gakushūin, Shimizu Jirō, was appointed chamberlain to the crown prince.

This Christian network did not produce a conversion, maybe because the occupation came to an end in 1952 and the motivation to carry favour with the American authorities disappeared. But the Christian influence in the palace, which had been nurtured during the occupation, remained high. According to Watanabe Midori, who produced several documentaries on the palace, Akihito's younger brother Prince Hitachi was so attracted to Christianity when he attended the senior high school of Gakushūin from 1951 to 1954, that he used to pray every night before going to bed. When Hirohito heard about it, he rebuked the prince, but Hitachi replied that he could not discard his faith.<sup>35</sup> Kawahara Toshiaki, a palace journalist,

writes: 'Although as a member of the imperial family, Prince Hitachi participates regularly in Shinto ceremonies, deep in his heart he is a Christian'.<sup>36</sup>

The tacit Christian presence in the palace achieved an important boost in 1959, when Crown Prince Akihito married Shoda Michiko, whose parents were Catholic and whose whole education had been in Catholic schools. She graduated from the Futaba kindergarten and elementary school, the junior and senior high schools of the Sacred Heart, and the Sacred Heart University (*seishin joshi daigaku*). The sisters of the Sacred Heart, which ran these institutions, were close to the Jesuits. Although allegedly Michiko was not baptized, she maintained close relations with her former teachers. In 1958, after graduating from the university, she represented her alma mater at an international conference of Catholic schools in Brussels, and was elected president of the Sacred Heart Graduates' Association.<sup>37</sup>

The crown prince's engagement to a commoner, whom he had met on the tennis court in Karuizawa, excited the people. In fact, that tennis game of 19 August 1957 had been arranged in advance. Matsushita Keiichi, professor at Tokyo University, revealed in an article in *Chūō kōron* two years later, that Koizumi had told him: 'We respected the wishes of the crown prince, but fortunately his wishes coincided with ours. As for the timing, our wish came first... It was not just a romantic affair'.<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Vining quotes a letter from Koizumi to her, in which he wrote: 'It [was] not only His Highness's but our choice too (we rather chose first)' [brackets in the original].<sup>39</sup> Kawahara writes: 'Most people now agree that one of the crown prince's teachers, the economist Shinzō Koizumi, who knew the Shōda family, set the whole thing up'.<sup>40</sup> An indication as to who were the other people involved in the matchmaking is provided by the palace correspondent Yoshida Shinya, who writes that among those who had arrived to watch the game in Karuizawa were Koizumi Shinzō, Hamao Minoru, Chief Justice Tanaka Kōtarō, and Michiko's mother Shōda Fumiko.<sup>41</sup>

In November 1958, an Imperial House Council (*kōshitsu kaigi*), chaired by Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke and attended by Director of the Imperial Household Agency Usami Takeshi, Chief Justice Tanaka Kōtarō, the speakers of both houses and

others, convened to approve the candidate. At that conference, the prime minister asked: 'What is the religion of Michiko? I hear that the Shōda family is Catholic and that she herself graduated from the Sacred Heart University. As the religion of the imperial family is Shinto, wouldn't that create a problem?'. The director of the Imperial Household Agency replied: 'It is true that her family is Catholic, and that she graduated from the university that you have mentioned, but Michiko was not baptized, so there is no problem.' This answer satisfied the conferees, and the marriage was approved.<sup>42</sup>

The main goal of that matchmaking was to democratize and popularize the imperial family, and that goal was achieved. Yet, Koizumi, Hamao and Tanaka seem to have entertained an additional goal: to enhance the Christian influence in the palace. It is interesting that Mishima Yukio, who advocated the emperor's divinity, expressed hostility toward Koizumi. In an interview to the literary newspaper *Tosho shinbun* a week before his suicide in 1970, he said: 'Koizumi Shinzō is bad, very bad. Such bad persons are traitors'.<sup>43</sup> According to an article of Miyabara Yasuharu in *Bungei Shunju*, Hirohito scolded Michiko for encouraging Prince Hitachi to read the Bible, but she denied it and put the blame on a Christian chamberlain. This exacerbated the relations between Michiko and the imperial couple.<sup>44</sup>

At the Akasaka palace of the crown prince and princess some of the chamberlains and ladies in waiting were Catholic. In 1961, Akihito's Catholic tutor Hamao Minoru was made chamberlain and put in charge of the education of Akihito's son Naruhito. He remained in that position for ten years, and later taught at the Sacred Heart University and wrote books on Christian education. His younger brother, Hamao (Stephen) Fumio, was a frequent visitor to the palace.<sup>45</sup> Hirohito's youngest brother, Prince Mikasa Takahito, who majored in ancient Hebrew at Tokyo University, was strongly critical of the Shinto myths.<sup>46</sup> In 1955 he became a professor of the ancient Middle East at the Tokyo Women's Christian University. In 1980 his eldest son, Prince Mikasa Tomohito, who had studied in Oxford, married a Catholic woman, Aso Nobuko, the granddaughter of former prime minister Yoshida Shigeru.

The Shinto framework of the imperial family was maintained. The wedding of Akihito

and Michiko, as well as the weddings of their sons Naruhito and Akishino, were conducted in a Shinto ceremony. When Michiko's Catholic mother, Shōda Fumiko, died in May 1988, she was given a Shinto funeral. When Hirohito died in January 1989, his funeral was divided into two parts: first came the 'private' Shinto ceremony, attended by the family; then, when the wooden *torii* and the sacred *sakaki* trees had been removed, the secular state ceremony started. Left-wing and Christian leaders denounced the Shinto part of the funeral, as well as Akihito's *Daijōsai* enthronement ceremony in the following year, as unconstitutional.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when nationalism and empire were on the rise, the issues of emperor and religion were of great importance in Japan. The religious aura surrounding the emperor until 1945 provided the people with an impetus to work hard, save, and sacrifice. In the middle of the century, when Japan lay in ruins, the significance of emperor and religion was how to distance them from the state, so that they would not endanger the people. In the following decades, as the war memories receded and living standards rose, emperor and religion lost much of their significance. Now, as the long Shōwa boom has turned into the great Heisei recession, nobody knows how that would affect the status of the emperor and the place of religion in Japan.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Origuchi Shinobu, *Origuchi Shinobu zenshū* (Tokyo: Chūō-kōronsha, 1955-67), vol. 20, pp.63-69.
  - <sup>2</sup> Such a clause appeared in the constitutions of Sweden (1809), Norway (1814), Bavaria (1818), Portugal (1826), Italy (1848), Hungary (1848), Denmark (1849), Austria (1867), and Spain (1878).
  - <sup>3</sup> Quoted in Richard Minear, *Japanese Tradition and Western Law* (Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 73.
  - <sup>4</sup> Kita Ikki, *Kita Ikki chosakushū* (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1959), vol. 1, p. 223.
  - <sup>5</sup> Robert Hall and John Gauntlett, eds., *Kokutai no Hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University

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Press, 1949), p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Hall, ed., *Shushin: The Ethics of a Defeated Nation* (New York: Columbia University, 1949), 76.

<sup>7</sup> Honjo Shigeru, *Emperor Hirohito and His Chief Aide-de-Camp: The Honjo Diary, 1933-36* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1982), p. 131.

<sup>8</sup> Ben-Ami Shillony, *Revolt in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 178-179, 186-187.

<sup>9</sup> Takahashi Hiroshi, *Gendai tennō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1978), p.238).

<sup>10</sup> Mishima Yukio, *Eirei no koe* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1970).

<sup>11</sup> Kokugakuin Daigaku Nihon Bunka Kenkyūjo, ed., *Kindai tennō-sei to shūkyōteki ken'i* (Tokyo: Dōhōsha, 1992), pp. 209-210; H.N. McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 63-64; Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 61, 72-80.

<sup>12</sup> Tamai Reiichirō, *Taiseikiji no 'tsumi to bachi'* (Tokyo: Tamairaba Shuppan, 1997), pp. 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> Tokugawa Yoshihiro, *Jijūchō no igon* (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppansha, 1997), p. 158.

<sup>14</sup> Elliot Griffis, *The Mikado* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915), p. 228; F.G. Notehelfer, *American Samurai* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 172-173.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Sims, *French Policy towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan* (Richmond: The Japan Library, 1998), p. 196. Sims quotes from the report of Sienkiewicz found in the archives of the French foreign ministry.

<sup>16</sup> Dohi Akio & Tomura Masahiro, eds., *Tennō no daigawari to watashitachi* (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan Shuppankyoku, 1988), pp. 138-143.

<sup>17</sup> Hiroyuki Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral* (Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1979), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> *Nihon kirisutokyō rekishi daijiten* (Tokyo: Kyōbunkan, 1988), p. 1446.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in D.C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1943), p. 99.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, pp. 100-101.



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- <sup>21</sup> Quoted in Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, p. 114.
- <sup>22</sup> William Woodard, *The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945-1952 and Japanese Religions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), p. 243.
- <sup>23</sup> Woodard, *Occupation*, p. 272.
- <sup>24</sup> Woodard, *Occupation*, p.245.
- <sup>25</sup> Woodard, *Occupation*, p. 273.
- <sup>26</sup> Takahashi Hiroshi & Suzuki Kunihiko, *Tennō-ke no misshitachi* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1981), pp. 120-122.
- <sup>27</sup> Takahashi & Suzuki, *Tennō-ke*, pp. 106-115.
- <sup>28</sup> Takahashi & Suzuki, *Tennō-ke*, pp. 134-136;
- <sup>29</sup> Woodard, *Occupation*, p.273.
- <sup>30</sup> Woodard, *Occupation*, pp. 273-274.
- <sup>31</sup> Quoted in Takahashi & Suzuki, *Tennō-ke*, pp. 122-123.
- <sup>32</sup> Woodard, *Occupation*, p. 273.
- <sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Vining, *Windows for the Crown Prince* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1952), pp. 73-75.
- <sup>34</sup> Vining, *Windows*, p. 186; Elizabeth Vining, *Return to Japan* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960), pp. 226-227.
- <sup>35</sup> Watanabe Midori, 'Michiko-sama no inori', *Bungei shunju*, December 1993, pp. 173-175.
- <sup>36</sup> Kawahara Toshiaki, *Michiko-sama to kōzoku-tachi* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), p. 259.
- <sup>37</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, 'Japan's Imperial Family has Catholic Ties', *National Catholic Reporter*, May 12, 1989, p.9.
- <sup>38</sup> Matsushita Keiichi, 'Taishū tenno-sei ron', *Chūō kōron*, April 1959. Reprinted in March 1989, p. 124.
- <sup>39</sup> Vining, *Return*, pp. 214-215.
- <sup>40</sup> Kawahara, *Hirohito*, p. 184.

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Yoshida Shinya, *Tennō e no michi* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1991), pp. 324-326.

<sup>42</sup> Hattori Minoru, 'Kōshitsu to kirisutokyō', *Bungei Shunju*, November 1989, pp.238-239. See also Toshiaki Kawahara, *Hirohito and his Times* (Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1990), pp. 185-186.

<sup>43</sup> *Tosho shinbun*, 12 December 1970, p. 1 (interview by Kobayashi Hisashi).

<sup>44</sup> Miyabara Yasuharu, 'Michiko kogo fuin sareta kanashimi', *Bungei Shunju*, Nov. 1997, p. 267.

<sup>45</sup> Hattori Minoru, 'Kōshitsu to kirisutokyō', *Bungei Shunju*, Nov. 1989, p. 239.

<sup>46</sup> Mikasa no Miya Takahito, *Kodai oriento-shi to watakushi* (Tokyo: Gakuseisha, 1984), p. 251.

## Ben-Ami Shillony, 'Emperor & Religion in Twentieth Century Japan'

### COMMENT

Stephen S Large, University of Cambridge

It is an honour and genuine pleasure for me to comment briefly on Professor Shillony's interesting and thought-provoking paper. First, I would like to qualify his discussion of how far the emperors were believed to be gods. This is a devilishly difficult problem and I admire Ben-Ami's bravery in tackling it head on. But I think it is rather more complicated than he suggests.

Yes, in terms of official ideology, lineal descent from the Sun Goddess, rather than notions of imperial divinity, comprised the basis of imperial legitimacy. I also agree that most Japanese probably did not believe that living emperors were gods – certainly not in any Western sense of 'god' or divine kingship. Yet, there is some evidence, drawn from ritual interpretation and popular folklore, that well into this century there were probably more Japanese than Ben-Ami implies who indeed believed that living emperors were gods in the Japanese sense of *kami*.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning ritual interpretation, I am glad Ben-Ami mentions Origuchi Shinobu, whose views on the *daijōsai* were especially influential. In brief, Origuchi held that whereas the souls of ordinary people depart the body for another world immediately upon death, this was not the case with the soul of a deceased emperor. Accordingly, for Origuchi, during the *daijōsai* consecration ceremony a new emperor, whose body was in effect a *tamashii no iremono*, received the soul of his predecessor, and by extension the immutable spirit of the Sun Goddess. Just when this transference occurred in the ceremony is a contested issue<sup>2</sup>, but transference itself, and not blood lineage, supposedly conferred legitimacy on a new emperor. Commenting on Origuchi, Fujitani observes: 'The *daijōsai* was thus part of an elaborate theology' in which 'all the successors of the Sun Goddess, while different in flesh, were in fact the same in spirit and every emperor was in essence the same emperor.'<sup>3</sup>

Now, although the arcane rituals of the *daijōsai* would not have been widely known to the people, this sort of ritual interpretation reinforced Shintō arguments that in key mysterious ways the emperor uniquely partook of divinity and to this extent, ritual interpretation became an important element in the unfolding emperor cult, which we are only beginning to research in any depth.

Images of the living emperor as a ‘super-*kami*’ were strikingly persistent in popular folklore, which likewise contributed much to the modern emperor cult. These images are very old. As Ben-Ami says, they may not have featured in the *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki*. However, in a book published earlier this year, *Tennō shinwa no keisei no manyōshū*, Professor Tōyama Ichirō shows that they figured prominently in the ancient poems of the *Manyōshū*, a rich source for myths of imperial divinity down through the centuries. Mori Kōichi similarly traces the historical persistence of such images on medieval war chronicles, the songs of itinerant blind monks (*biwa hōshi*), certain Noh songs, and so forth.<sup>4</sup>

In the modern period, Mori and Fujitani give various examples from popular folklore of Japanese who worshipped emperor Meiji as a living god. To illustrate, Fujitani quotes Kinoshita Naoe, who observed that when Meiji toured Matsumoto in 1880, older folk there ‘clung firmly to the old belief that “the emperor is a living deity with magical powers.” They believed that if one looked up at the emperor, one’s eyes would be crushed.’ Elsewhere, people rushed to collect sand where Meiji had trod, believing that it would bring them worldly benefits, and in 1895 a certain Nosaki Sokejūrō reverently threw money in Meiji’s direction as Meiji passed by, later explaining that this was his way of thanking the emperor, whom he sincerely believed to be a deity (*kamisama*).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Gluck notes there were shrines where Meiji was worshipped ‘as a living god (*ikigami*) – that is, a god-like man, or a man worshipped as a god – in the folk tradition.’<sup>6</sup>

Judging from this kind of folklore evidence, it seems to me the country girls who volunteered to be buried alive beneath Meiji Shrine (as A Morgan Young reports it)<sup>7</sup> may well have seen Meiji as a manifest deity while he was alive and that the fanaticism of Japanese soldiers in World War II flowed from something more than

reverence for the emperor as lineal descendant from the Sun Goddess. I quite agree that after the War the Occupation authorities misunderstood the myth of imperial divinity. But my general concern here is with Ben-Ami's statement that 'there was no worship of living emperors in Japan.'

Second, I am intrigued by his remarks about Christian influence at the postwar Shōwa court. However, if the intention was to convert Akihito to Christianity, it would have made more sense to appoint a Southern Baptist as tutor to the Crown Prince! Elizabeth Gray Vining – whom my mother got to know well in Philadelphia, after Vining returned from Japan – did not see this as her mission and only spoke to her students about God and Christian prayer because they asked her to do so.<sup>8</sup> At the most, Elizabeth only wished to communicate the spirit of reconciliation, as reflected in her Quaker beliefs.

In any event, Ben-Ami's informative story of how the court 'reached out to Christianity' leaves me wondering, what was at stake in this process, politically? For instance, his mention of the Catholic Chief Justice Tanaka Kōtarō reminds me that Tanaka was very keen on Frank Buchman's assertive Moral Rearmament movement, which I first stumbled upon as a teenager when I visited the international headquarters of MRA, as it is known, on Mackinac Island, near where we spent our summer holidays in northern Michigan.<sup>9</sup>

Blending Christianity and a strident anti-communism, the MRA tried, with some success, to influence Japanese elites after the war, and in this endeavour it had the support of General MacArthur and (perhaps less enthusiastically) his successor, General Ridgway. Operating MRA House in Tokyo, it actively lobbied prime ministers, opposition leaders, businessmen and trade union officials. Later, in 1956, Buchman himself visited Japan and although he was prevented by the American ambassador John Allison from seeing the emperor, by the time he left Japan after being decorated with the Order of the Rising Sun (Second Degree), Buchman had managed to see Princess Chichibu and the MRA had made promising inroads into sections of the Japanese aristocracy; just how far can be seen from *Nihonshi no hiroku*<sup>10</sup>, written by Kan'in Sumihito, the son of Prince Kan'in Kotohito.

So, in the broader context suggested by the case of the MRA, it is not just a question of the court 'reaching out to Christianity', but also of Christian influences, both American and Japanese, reaching into the court, specifically to pursue a Cold War political agenda. I think this topic deserves further study, if Ben-Ami is willing to broaden his inquiry beyond the emperor, to include Christianity and elements of the aristocracy.

### Endnotes

1. See Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, 'The Emperor of Japan as Deity (*Kami*)', *Ethnology* vol.XXX, No.3 (1991), pp.199-215.
2. See Carmen Blacker, 'The *Shinza* or God-Seat in the *Daijōsai*: Throne, Bed or Incubation Couch?', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol.17, Nos.1-3 (1990), pp.179-197.
3. T Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1996), pp.157-8.
4. Mori Kōichi, 'The Emperor of Japan: A Historical Study in Religious Symbolism,' *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol.6, No.4 (December 1979), pp.540-5.
5. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, p.51 and pp.226-7.
6. Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.143.
7. A Morgan Young, *Japan Under Taishō Tennō*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), p.328.
8. Elizabeth Gray Vining, *Windows for the Crown Prince*, (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E Tuttle Company, 1959/1989), p.186.
9. For an introduction to the MRA and its initiatives in postwar Japan, see Basil Entwistle, *Japan's Decisive Decade: How a Determined Minority Changed the Nation's Course in the 1950s*, (London and Melbourne: Grosvenor Books, 1985).
10. Published in 1967.

## **State and Women in Modern Japan: Feminist Discourses in the Meiji and Taishō Eras**

Barbara Molony

The relationship of women to the Japanese state has been the object of much discussion in Japanese studies in recent years. To be sure, there are as many ways to approach this topic as there are conceptions of 'the state' and of 'women.' Both of these terms are embedded in complicated and historically contingent discourse fields, making it impossible to posit just one or two types of relationships linking the two categories, as they are not fixed. Some scholars look at women as the target of government policies;<sup>1</sup> some examine women as agents of some part of the state;<sup>2</sup> some are interested in women in organized or institutionalized politics or movements;<sup>3</sup> some study women in groups that articulate with state power;<sup>4</sup> and others look at the discourses about women and the state.<sup>5</sup>

This study considers one aspect of this last approach, examining the relationship of women and the state through discourses on 'women's rights' from the mid-Meiji era through the Taishō era. Many scholars have grounded their work on the assumption that the 'state' was an entity distinct from women or women's groups, with which women sought alliance to achieve shared goals, against which they struggled for justice, or in which they sought membership.<sup>6</sup> While a stress on resistance or on accommodation appears to be making vastly different points of view about women's relationship to the state, they do, in fact, share an assumption that the state had an *a priori* existence with which women could articulate, but not really change.

Bringing the question of **rights** into the picture, however, muddies the waters considerably, because possession of rights assumes a degree of ownership of the state and thus the ability to influence it. Women's rights discussions are particularly germane to an understanding of the ideology of the state in any society, and Japan is no exception. The struggle for women's rights, while overlooked by many historians in the past, has in more recent years captured the imagination of other historians as an

inspirational instance of resistance against the state. At the same time, however, the notion of resistance must be understood in relation to its converse--that is, resistance is always articulated in relationship to power.<sup>7</sup> Rights both embrace and resist power.

'Rights' remained a central issue in a wide variety of Japanese intellectual and political discourses, including feminist discourses, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup> But the notion of rights underwent change by the interwar period, as Japanese people's understanding of the 'state' changed. By then, the state had come to appear as a reified entity, essentially a bureaucracy with legislative and other appurtenances shaping it, under an abstraction (the emperor) theorized as defined by and defining the collective spirit of the *kokumin*. Ironically, the era of greater democracy and liberalism was also one in which the contours of the state were already more established, so women's struggles for the right of inclusion in the state would potentially produce more gradual change even if women gained an institutionalized political voice. In addition to struggling for the right to participate in the state, either in such formal ways as access to suffrage and political office or in less formal ways such as state recognition of the 'voice' of the 'kitchen', feminists also defined women's rights in the interwar period to include the notion of 'protection' by a state whose prior existence they acknowledged. That is, in addition to working to be included in the state in order to alter its constitution in ways beneficial to women and families, feminists sought the state's protection from certain aspects of public and private society which they viewed as oppressive. In the interwar period, these included, but were not restricted to, demands for protection from institutionalized patriarchy--both state supported patriarchy and the everyday version of domineering husbands; protection from the excesses of capitalism; and protection from miserable economic conditions that led to suffering and deaths of women and their children. Both forms of rights discussions in the interwar era--resistance against participatory exclusion and acceptance of the state's power to protect--assumed an existing state structure. Meiji-era discussions of rights assumed both a more fluid political situation and a less precise definition of rights.

### **Meiji-era rights discourse**

In Japan as in many other societies, 'rights' had multiple meanings.<sup>9</sup> Rights discourse



was lively and diverse, particularly because it originally surfaced in a variety of contexts, and blended notions of Tokugawa anti-authoritarianism<sup>10</sup> with frequently conflated 'Western' rights discourses. In addition, the terms for 'rights' (*kenri*), 'women's rights' (*joken*), 'male-female equality' (*danjo byōdō*), 'male-female equal rights' (*danjo dōken*), and other concepts in the lexicon of rights were themselves neologisms. (These terms were, at times, used interchangeably, though their meanings were actually distinct.)<sup>11</sup> Moreover, state, nation, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and so on were all in the process of mutual construction around the same time, and in some cases, rights discourse was used selectively to resist the emerging structure of one or another of these categories. Conversely, rights discourse could also be employed to help reify any of these categories or institutions.

People's Rights advocate Ueki Emori notwithstanding, however--Ueki claimed that men and women were entitled to equal rights and that resistance to unresponsive government was a people's right and duty--most Meiji-era advocates for women did not call for resistance to the state or society leading to its overthrow and replacement by a rights-paradise for women.<sup>12</sup> 'Resistance' occurred within the regimes of power it called into question.<sup>13</sup> To put it a bit more simply, until the rise of socialist feminism in the last decade of the Meiji period, women's rights called for *inclusion*, not *revolution*--and even most socialists sought inclusion in the absence of a revolution.<sup>14</sup> I suggest two reasons for feminists' desire for inclusion: first, the fundamental nature of rights themselves; and second, the identification, for some Meiji-era women's advocates, of rights with recognition and rewarding of female self-cultivation as a marker of a woman's personhood.

Rights discussions in the late Meiji era, whether by advocates for men or women, developed in a context of iconoclastic rejection of past (Tokugawa) relations of power and of engagement with foreign ideas. That power (a state, social norms, laws, customs, and so on) would exist was not questioned; it was a given. One's relationship to power was under discussion. Feminisms have often been about--as feminist theorist Wendy Brown notes--'a longing to share in power rather than be protected from its excesses.'<sup>15</sup>

Any quest for rights, then, might seem rather ironic. One of the purposes of rights is protection from something--from encroachment by another public person, from encroachment by the state, from being limited in one's expression, and so on. (The various notions of rights are frequently in conflict--one's freedom of expression, for example, might conflict with another's right to protection.) These notions of rights as protection from encroachment were clearly shared by some Meiji rights advocates; but to what extent were they applied to women? I would argue that the idea of rights as protection *from* the state was a minor thread in women's rights talk--that the main focus was on inclusion *in* the state and equality in both the private domain of the family and the public domain of civil society.<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, a 'public/private' dichotomy does not quite work here, where women sought to empower themselves in the family ('private') through means of the law ('public') and through public recognition of their intellectual accomplishments. The notion of protection was not absent from Meiji discourse but it arose more in connection with the idea of 'liberation' (*kaihō*) than with rights. Liberation was not used in discussing women's political rights until Socialists began using the term in 1907. *Kaihō* was first used to discuss the liberation of prostituted women and girls from contractual bondage and came to include, by the end of the century, liberation of wives, through divorce, from oppressive marriages.<sup>17</sup> Protection, which came to occupy a central place in women's rights discussions in the twentieth century, was simply the fortunate outcome of women's struggle for respect, the dominant Meiji-era feminist focus.

As theorist Carole Pateman and others have shown, the notion of 'civil' has had shifting meanings in Western discourse. Before the creation of the social contract, 'civil' was seen as the opposite of 'natural'; thereafter, it was seen as the opposite of 'private.'<sup>18</sup> Thus, by the nineteenth century in the West, civil society came to be viewed as standing in opposition to the family (the private).<sup>19</sup> But such an opposition was not assumed by women's rights advocates in turn-of-the-century Japan.<sup>20</sup> While many did assume the family was a warm (private) haven from a cold public world, many others in the early Meiji period believed women were dealt a raw deal in the stereotypical early modern Japanese family. Later Meiji images of the family may not have been so gloomy for

women, but again, the family was not seen as something separate from the public sphere. Indeed, many believed women deserved a public role not *despite* their family status but *because* of it. Thus, for instance, the mother who kept her family healthy was seen, during the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), as serving her nation publicly.<sup>21</sup> The ideological opponents of the women's rights advocates--gender conservatives who opposed any concept of inherent (natural) rights or even earned rights based on service in the public sphere--also argued that the family was the basis of the state.<sup>22</sup> But their idea of 'family' was a patriarchy with no thought of rights or even equality among its members. So where did rights advocates start their quest for women's rights?

Although the earliest discussions of rights in the 1870s and 1880s often did not explicitly correlate rights with male gender, the Japanese discussants frequently employed the ideas of Rousseau, whose vision of a social contract was founded on the rights of men in fraternity.<sup>23</sup> Those men and (the smaller group of) women who clamored for rights in the 1870s demanded the rights of political participation or inclusion. By 1890, a tiny minority of men had been awarded the right of inclusion in the state and civil society, but women were pointedly excluded from political participation.<sup>24</sup> The dominant conservatives had gendered the state 'male' by 1890--maleness was required of all government officials, including the emperor. By the turn of the century, the requirement of male gender for political participation was taken for granted by many; the state itself was being constructed as a fraternity under a patriarchal emperor.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, when political rights were extended in 1890 to some of the men who had earlier demanded rights of fraternal inclusion, many of those activists followed up on their demands by joining parties and entering the government in some capacity.<sup>26</sup>

Nineteenth-century Japanese advocates for women were, of course, of varying minds about the definition of 'women's rights', but all agreed that women did not have rights at that time. Some argued for a communitarian inclusiveness reminiscent of the Rousseauian ideas espoused in the 1870s, when neither men nor women had political rights. Others, inspired by Mill, stressed improved education as a way for women to gain the subjectivity that would make them eligible for rights. Others believed inclusion must follow the elimination of patriarchal sexual privileges, such as those implied by

polygamy, prostitution, and patrilineality.<sup>27</sup>

In its formulation and its legal applications, the concept of rights is one which separates the individual from his or her community rather than embracing the notion of community.

People struggle for rights on behalf of an oppressed identity group (a class, a gender, an ethnicity), but when rights are granted they are applied to individuals.<sup>28</sup> Japanese commentators on Meiji civil law, both before and after the implementation of the Civil Code of 1898, rightly argued that this concept of rights was at odds with the notion, codified in the Constitution of 1889, that women, and especially wives, were under the jurisdiction of the patriarchal family head, and thus had no individual rights within the community of the family nor the independent right of contract that would permit rights in the larger society.<sup>29</sup> The Civil Code, therefore, explicitly excluded the idea of rights held equally by separate individuals (irrespective of household membership).<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, Japanese supporters of improving the lot of women brought rights in as a means to elevate women's status. Many saw rights in terms of inclusion in state and civil society rather than as a basis for continuing resistance and separation from power. In this regard, they had many parallels with Western notions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mill and Rousseau were particularly important sources in the development of Japanese thinking about rights. Under the social contract, which had come to be understood in the West as occurring after the defeat of the metaphorical father (the patriarchal king), individuals voluntarily gave up some rights in return for the protection of civil law and inclusion in the fraternity of citizens. Liberty, equality, and fraternity were the ideal of the civil, or public, sphere following the French Revolution.<sup>31</sup>

The problem with this construct was that its theorists supposed that only 'individuals' could enter into this contract; because of their putative weakness in strength and intellect, women were not entitled to ownership of property in the person, and were therefore not individuals. For Mill, women were thus not in the public, or civil, sphere, and where they were--the home--was to be 'private' or off limits to the state and dominated by the home's own patriarch, who was part of the civil, egalitarian 'fraternity.' Not surprisingly, advocates of women's rights (including Mill) reckoned that education

was one key to making women deserving of being 'individuals' and therefore improving their status, but even Mill did not know what to do with a husband's right to dominance in marriage. Rousseau, male-centered though his writings often appear, did, in fact, have a publicly important role for women. Men could not be 'brothers' if they were not ethical fathers and sons, and the mother was the key to preserving the moral and ethical family. This idea resonated with women's rights thinking in turn-of-the-century Japan, one of whose key components was moral and intellectual cultivation and its connection with social respect.

Historians of Japan have traditionally raised concerns about 'state intrusion in the family', but that formulation ignores the fact that patriarchal dominance may have felt just as confining to many women as state authoritarianism. Indeed, one component of state authoritarianism was the reification of male dominance in family law. Inclusion in the state, which must be preceded or accompanied by inclusion in the public sphere, has thus been a goal (though one fraught with problems as well) of many feminist political activists, whether Japanese or Western. Patriarchal problems in the 'private' sphere seemed so debilitating in Meiji Japan that issues surrounding marriage and sexuality became a major early concern of advocates of women's rights. Here we can see the precursors to later feminists' emphases on 'protection'; it should be kept in mind, however, that Meiji-era feminists principally argued for respect for women and their personhood rather than for protection of them as weak.

Though concepts of rights and participation in civil society as they developed in eighteenth and nineteenth century Western thought were central to the mid- to late-Meiji discourse on rights, the context was quite different. Most significantly, the metaphorical patriarch (the emperor) was not defeated in Japan but rather was theorized as the abstract centerpiece of a male-gendered (and upper-class centered) polity. Indeed, male sex was made a requirement for emperorship in 1890, which surprised and disheartened many women's rights advocates.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, male though the emperor had to be, he co-existed with a slowly expanding participatory society, a scenario that led many advocates of rights, both civil and women's rights, to continue to look, in varying degrees, to Western discussions of rights as desirable and perhaps

even normative. Rights discourse was a big tent that accommodated a variety of opinions, and Japanese thinkers, male and female, radical or liberal, drew on different bits of this diverse discourse.

The issues raised by Meiji-era women's rights advocates developed in the context of men's political rights. The concept of male fraternity, so central to Rousseauian rights discourse, was deeply embedded in Japanese social culture, even in contexts in which rights were not at issue.<sup>33</sup> Some women who used notions of rights to advocate elevating the status of women would have agreed with the gender essentialism implied in the fraternity concept while rejecting the notion that it might imply male superiority; others leaned toward the notion of rights inherent in individuals irrespective of gender. But because women's rights implied women's inclusion in the state and civil society--which would erode a sense of fraternity of male citizens--and because most advocates for women recognized that equality first required the destruction of patriarchal family practices such as polygamy, prostitution, and patrilineality, women's rights talk eventually moved in divergent directions from (male) rights discourse after the 1890s, when some men became enfranchised citizens.

It is tempting to analyse women's rights primarily in terms of politics, but we would overlook a significant part of the discussion about women in Meiji-era Japan if we did so. At that time, discussions of women's rights were closely related to discussions of women's education, particularly education beyond the elementary level. Cultivating a good, moral, ethical, responsible character capable of manifesting agency--through being an exemplar or even a leader--was a goal of Confucian education as well as the recently introduced Western-style learning. Intellectual and moral cultivation produced a person worthy of respect, worthy of having a recognizable subjectivity. The centrality of education, with its deep connections to notions of respect and ethical leadership (which itself implies both agency and a relationship to regimes of power), in turn-of-the-century rights discourse suggests that rights at that time were closely connected to the yearning for respect for women's subjectivity. And that subjectivity was conceived within the frame of power of contemporary Japanese society. Talk of rights takes persons' subjectivity for granted; talk of education as self-cultivation advances the

cause of women's subjectivity. In Meiji Japan, even the type of education which claimed to train women who did not need *political* rights (narrowly defined as the vote) was to mould ethical wives and mothers who led by example in the family and in civil society. These women would be active not in electoral politics but, as individuals or as members of organizations, in public activities such as poor relief or more controversial reforms like those calling for regulation of sexuality.<sup>34</sup>

Some scholars suggest that 1890s discourses on women, which focused more on educated women managing a warm, loving family and home (*katei*) or playing a leadership role in legal reification of moral reform (especially reform of the patriarchal family), was a shift away from 1880s discourses focusing on political rights.<sup>35</sup> But I would argue that there was no real gulf between the 1880s and the 1890s when viewed from the perspective of subjectivity. If, before 1890, 'male-female equality' (*danjo byōdō*) was much discussed, it was used both as the ground for *joken* and *dōken* (women's rights and equal rights) and as the justification for the attack on polygamy. Unlike *joken* advocates, advocates of monogamy did not necessarily wish women to be active in politics, but they did view women as fully realized individuals deserving equality and respect. Both types sought women's inclusion in society, one through political, civil, or civic participation on a par with men, the other through the use of law to improve familial relations, which would further the dissolving of barriers between public and private spheres. This approach to improving the status and conditions of women continued in the 1890s, supplemented by discussions of equal rights and, most noticeably, discourse on education. Ethical and well-trained women were worthy of respect and were, therefore, integrated with society, a necessary step toward inclusion in the state and possession of rights.

From the beginning of the Meiji period, what later came to be called *fujinron* (discourse on womanhood) occupied the attention of quite a few commentators, many of whom discussed education, especially in the context of morality in the family and, by extension, in the whole nation. *Mei roku zasshi* (founded 1873, circulation 3,000) was an early venue for these discussions.<sup>36</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, perhaps the most famous early participant in the "*fujin ronsō*," and author of the influential *Nihon fujinron* in 1885,

stressed monogamy as the basis of equality (*byōdō*).<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere, Fukuzawa linked 'equality' closely to education.

Like Fukuzawa, female advocates for women also linked education, monogamy, and respect. Going beyond the printed word alone, women advocates took the feminist message to the public through political speeches, like those of (Nakajima) Kishida Toshiko and Fukuda Kageyama Hideko. They also organized civic groups, thereby moving into and helping to develop civil society in Meiji Japan. Kishida Toshiko gave scores of speeches between 1882 and 1884. Her talks were pointedly political, calling for equal rights for men and women, decrying the stultifying effects of repression of freedom of thought, denouncing the equating of personhood with male gender alone<sup>38</sup> and, above all, calling on women to develop the mental strength (*seishin ryoku*) to be confident public persons.<sup>39</sup> Kishida rhetorically connected the development of women's subjectivity--their existence as persons in society--both to national strength and to People's Rights politics. Because '[e]quality, independence, respect, and a monogamous relationship are the hallmarks of relationships between men and women in a civilized society,' she stated, women's rights would elevate Japan in international esteem and thereby aid in its defense against a possible Western threat.<sup>40</sup> Kishida also gave sexual inequality a political twist her colleagues in the People's Rights movement would not fail to grasp when she equated male supremacy with the government's dominion over the people--as in her speech entitled 'The government is the people's god; man is woman's god' (*Seifū wa jinmin no ten; otoko wa onna no ten*).<sup>41</sup>

Kishida inspired women all over Japan.<sup>42</sup> Women's groups sprang up in cities and towns, large and small--many of them to welcome speakers like Kishida. There were Women's Friendly Societies (*joshi konshinkai*), Women's Freedom Parties (*fujin jiyūtō*) Women's Rights Associations (*jokenkai*), Women's Societies (*fujin kyōkai*), and at least one Women's Freedom Hall (*joshi jiyūkan*).<sup>43</sup> Whether these groups continued to exist long after they sponsored Kishida and others is unclear. Yet they did have specific goals, and they did participate in feminist discourses that continued in later decades. Their role in disseminating ideas of rights and reforms is as significant as their role in involving women in non-governmental advocacy groups outside the home. Moreover,



they helped set the stage for the growth of larger and more influential feminist groups, such as the Japan Christian Women's Reform Society (*Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai*) or the Women's Morality Associations (*Fujin Tokugikai*) in the next half decade, and they created a context for the expansion of women's rights discourses in magazines and journals in the 1890s.<sup>44</sup> These groups advocated monogamy and women's sexual dignity and fostered political discussion and collaborative feminist efforts to set up schools for girls and women.<sup>45</sup> 'Joseiron' in these groups meant discourses on ways to improve women's lot through politicizing the private by means of education, marital respect, and the relationship of these to public voice and self-cultivation.

Educator Fukuda Hideko followed in Kishida's footsteps.<sup>46</sup> Inspired by Kishida, the young Hideko founded a community women's group that brought in speakers on natural rights, equality, and freedom.<sup>47</sup> In 1890, Fukuda petitioned the Diet to permit women's political participation--a clear use of what she viewed as her right to address the government.<sup>48</sup> In 1891, Fukuda caught the attention of the mainstream media with her proposal to establish a newspaper for women run entirely by women.<sup>49</sup> Like Kishida, Fukuda tied women's rights and political involvement to strengthening the nation.<sup>50</sup> Though more famous than most of their contemporaries, Fukuda and Kishida were not alone among women and men who translated into notable political action their desire for women's right of inclusion, for education, and for the respect that came with personhood.

The rhetoric of rights was further developed in new journals and magazines that appeared in the late 19th century. The most important of these new journals for women was *Jogaku zasshi* (Women's education journal), co-founded by Iwamoto Yoshiharu (Zenji) in 1885, and edited by him for most of its eighteen years. *Jogaku zasshi* employed the talents of numerous writers, including at least eight women known in their day as advocates of rights, both women's rights and people's rights; the most famous of these were probably Shimizu Toyoko, Nakajima Kishida Toshiko, and Wakamatsu Shizu (who married Iwamoto in 1889).<sup>51</sup> All were influenced by the readily accessible thought of the freedom and people's rights polemicists as well as lively intellectual

discourse in other publications like the *Meiroku zasshi* of the previous decade and *Kokumin no tomo*, a journal which shared a readership with *Jogaku zasshi*.<sup>52</sup> From these sources, the writers were influenced by a diverse body of thought on rights.

Raising women's status had particular and shifting meanings to Iwamoto Yoshiharu. In 1885, Iwamoto stressed that women's human character must be recognized; like men, women were human.<sup>53</sup> He argued for the fundamental equality of men and women--*danjo byōdō*--although he rejected male/female equal rights--*danjo dōken*.<sup>54</sup> *Danson jōhi* (respect the male, despise the female) was particularly odious to Iwamoto.<sup>55</sup> Christianity, which permeated Iwamoto's thinking, emphasized the equal humanity of men and women in the eyes of God.<sup>56</sup> Women must not be seen as less than human, he wrote in 1885, but that did not imply that men and women must be granted equal rights; servants are human, too, but they do not have the same rights as their employers.<sup>57</sup> Though Iwamoto believed in gender equality before God, he took social stratification by gender as perfectly natural, as did many contemporary social contract theorists in the West, whose grounding was also in Christianity. From the mid-1880s to the early 1890s, when Iwamoto fervently espoused education for women, he also believed that the purpose of women's education should differ from men's. Women must be trained to be good wives and mothers--but he called for a 'modern' type of wife and mother.<sup>58</sup> Christian, modern (*kirisutokyōteki, kindaiteki*) thinking would respect men and women for the particular roles each fulfilled. It would elevate women's status. It would create mothers who were intelligent and wives who were good persons, and not merely mothers who were wise educators of their children and wives who served their husbands well. But it would not necessarily require political rights identical to those of men.<sup>59</sup> Such a concept of rights, which would set a woman apart from the community constituted by her family, was alien to Iwamoto's communitarian construction of rights at that time. To counter opponents' criticism that educated women made bad wives, *Jogaku zasshi* extolled the virtues of an educated wife.<sup>60</sup>

Iwamoto was bitterly disappointed in the 1889 Constitution. His sense of betrayal when he read that gender determined imperial succession<sup>61</sup> comes across as surprising naiveté to a late twentieth-century observer. But interestingly, it was after this shock

that Iwamoto adopted a new approach to women's education and to women's rights. In a June 1889 article entitled '100-Year Chronic Disease' (*Hyaku-nen no koshitsu*), Iwamoto presented a stinging criticism of sexism in education.<sup>62</sup> If Japanese opposed women's high schools, objected to women voting, objected to monogamy, insulted the morality of female students, and failed to regard men and women as equally human, then Japan would never cure its century-long chronic disease. The ruler would be separated from the people, the people from the officials, the slave from the master, the rich from the poor. It is remarkable how advocacy of the education of women, of Christian moralism, of religious egalitarianism, and of women's civil rights are all brought under one discursive umbrella. Moreover, the article's rhetorical device of equating the disease with standard symbols of Tokugawa authoritarianism like the separation of the ruler and the ruled or the people and the officials is a powerful one.

*Jogaku zasshi* published a number of criticisms of the denial of women's right of political inclusion in 1890. In an unsigned article, *Jogaku zasshi* called for women to take part in political discussions in order to promote 'political harmony among men and women' (*seijijō danjo kyōwa*).<sup>63</sup> Shimizu Toyoko wrote in August 1890, condemning the recent passage of legislation barring women from political meetings, that 'if individual rights are to be protected, and the peace and order of society secured, laws should not be discriminatory, granting advantage to men only, and misfortune only to women.'<sup>64</sup> In another article two months later, Shimizu considered it irrational that 'one part of humanity arbitrarily control...the other part.'<sup>65</sup> These articles indicate Shimizu's individual rights-based concept of women's rights as well as her displeasure with the denial of women's agency.

Many advocates of women's rights focused on sexuality issues in their struggle for developing women's personhood and dignity. The heterosexual relationship was problematized early on in the discussions on womanhood (*fujinron*), as seen in the early discussions by *Mei roku zasshi* writers. These articles stressed the damage done by polygamy to Japanese ethical values and Japan's resulting weakness in the face of the West. Feminists expanded these ideas and discussed control of sexuality--that of men and of some women--as a way of improving women's conditions and helping their development as full, equal human beings, a necessary condition not only for

respectability but also for inclusion in the state and civil society.

Sexuality issues were increasingly politicized after the founding of the Tokyo (later Japan) Christian Women's Reform Society by Yajima Kajiko in 1886.<sup>66</sup> Articles discussing the Reform Society's views on monogamy as moral, as good for Japan, as respecting nature's gender balance, and as a move away from evil customs of the Confucian past emerged in articles by and about the Reform Society's political activities in *Tōun shinbun* and *Tōkyō Fujin Kyōfukai zasshi* in the late 1880s.<sup>67</sup> *Jogaku zasshi*, another source of information about the Reform Society, also stressed control of male sexuality through the banning of polygamy in an 1887 article by Iwamoto entitled 'The atmosphere of adultery' (*Kan'in no kūki*), for which the entire issue in which it was to appear was banned by the government.<sup>68</sup>

Women's advocates' main view of polygamy was that it was a denigration of women's rights. For that reason, Yajima and others were passionate in their struggle against it--this was no abstraction to them. In 1889, Yajima delivered to government officials a petition with 800 signatures, demanding an end to concubinage. She took a dagger on this mission, prepared to commit suicide if she were unable to hand over her petition.<sup>69</sup> *Tokyo nichi nichi shinbun* reported that in November 1891, the Reform Society planned to submit a petition to the Diet for legislation banning polygamy. Thus, the Reform Society recognized the use of the power of the state in influencing equality in the marriage relationship.<sup>70</sup> Male morality was often at stake in these discussions; Shimizu Toyoko, for instance, wrote an article entitled 'Discussing Japanese Males' Moral Character' (*Nihon danshi no hinkō o ronzu*).<sup>71</sup>

Discussions about controlling male sexuality were accompanied by those concerning the control of some women's sexuality. Reform Society goals included the elimination of prostitution as well as concubinage as two sides of the same coin.<sup>72</sup> The sex trade denigrated wives by supporting husbands' adultery, and thus was seen as a women's rights issue that focused on legitimate wives. As for women in the sex trades themselves, Reform Society attitudes were often unsympathetic. *Tōkyō Fujin Kyōfu zasshi* called for shaming women into leaving sex work: 'Succumbing to the easier life

of prostitution...they brazenly walk the streets in broad daylight....There is no way to stop them other than to shame them into reforming!' Overseas prostitution, moreover, shamed Japan as a whole, the journal noted, and may have contributed to anti-Japanese discrimination in the United States.<sup>73</sup> The Reform Society's concern about prostitution was, in these types of comments, less connected to saving fallen women--which was, in fact, another goal of the organization--than to supporting the human dignity and equal personhood of wives and improving Japan's foreign relations.

Gaining subjectivity was an important requirement for eligibility for rights; and rights discourse was a well-used way of discussing subjectivity. The two were often elided. The issue of 'morality' was essential to women's subjectivity. This can be seen, for instance, in the journal *Joken* (Women's rights). Established in September 1891, *Joken* included articles by leading feminists such as Fukuda Hideko and reported extensively on the activities of Women's Morality Associations (*fujin tokugikai*) throughout Japan.<sup>74</sup> The goals of various branches of this association called for freedom (*jiyū*), equality (*byōdō*), women's rights (*joken*), and morality (*tokugi*).<sup>75</sup> The Women's Morality Association's stated goal was 'the expansion of women's rights and the elimination of the evil of "respect the male and despise the female."<sup>76</sup> Like *Jogaku zasshi*, *Joken*, in an 1891 article entitled 'People's Rights or Men's Rights?' (*Minken ka danken ka?*), strongly criticized the exclusion of women from the political world, arguing that 'rights' should not be gendered.<sup>77</sup>

The Women's Reform Society and the Women's Morality Association attempted to push their agendas in the political arena. That venue was quite restricted, however. Even before the revisions of the Police Security Regulations of 1890, with its infamous 'Article 5' which banned women from all political participation, including political speaking and assembly, women had been pointedly excluded from participation in the City-Town-Village Regulations of 1889.<sup>78</sup> Feminists submitted petitions to the Diet to eliminate these restrictions, but failed.<sup>79</sup> In response, feminist Shimizu Toyoko contributed her important article in *Jogaku zasshi*, 'Why are women not permitted to take part in political meetings?' (*Naniyue ni joshi wa seiden shūkai ni sanchō suru no o yurusarezaru ka?*).<sup>80</sup> One response by the government, in turn, was a Diet member's assertion that women

should not have political rights because they should focus on their work in the home--the first such assertion in the Diet.<sup>81</sup> Failing to gain a political voice, women's rights advocates did not abandon their cause, but turned even more attention to the issues of sexuality, which were now redefined as 'social' rather than the banned 'political'. Economic independence became yet another part of feminists' quest for sexuality-based marital respect as an element in social reforms.

Shimizu (and others) connected the rights of citizens (*kokumin*) with social and moral issues.<sup>82</sup> Women needed to be citizens--to have the right of participation--because they should educate their children as citizens and support their husbands in the exercise of their citizenship. Thus, Shimizu posited that women's political rights arose from their relationship with those who had (some) rights. This resonated with Kishida Toshiko's 1884 article, 'Appeal to my sisters,' (*Dōhō shimai ni tsugu*).<sup>83</sup> Women's advocacy groups, then, restructured the political to be more like the social or moral. Advocacy of improving women's conditions did not end with Article 5; concerns about morality, the home, economic conditions, and other issues took center stage as women moved increasingly into public realms of advocacy (civil society). And women's education was essential to this ability to penetrate civil society by creating women's personhood or subjectivity. For late Meiji-era feminists, the state was still an entity in formation. Many believed that women's involvement with the state through their quest for rights was bound to alter it.

The political use of liberal notions of rights was not limited to 'bourgeois' women in the late Meiji era. As Vera Mackie notes in her recent study, socialist women led the earliest campaigns, from 1904 to 1909, to revise Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law, which prohibited women from attendance at political meetings as well as membership in political parties.<sup>84</sup> Putting women in the same category as minors, an editorial in Fukuda Hideko's newspaper *Sekai fujin* stated, was insulting.<sup>85</sup> These campaigns by socialist women to revise Article 5 were unsuccessful, the socialist newspaper *Heimin shinbun* reported-- blending class analysis and feminism--, because the House of Peers, 'an organization made up of members of the male class (*danshi kaikyū no ichi dantai*). . .do not see women as human individuals (*ikko no jinrui*) or as

citizens of the nation (*ikko no kokumin*).<sup>86</sup>

## Taishō Feminisms

Discussions of women's rights were common in the Taishō era. Many women and men across the political spectrum engaged these issues through words and through political actions. This section addresses a narrow but important segment of that rights discourse--that engaged in by leading suffragists. In the Taishō era, the conception of the state held by most feminists (including some socialist feminists) was as a relatively fixed entity with which they sought alignment in some form or from which they sought protection from social or economic oppression. This notion of the state framed the 'motherhood protection debate' (*bosei hogo ronsō*) early in the Taishō era. This debate, carried out by a handful of activists and writers in the pages of national circulation magazines, has been treated in detail by numerous scholars,<sup>87</sup> so my discussion of it will be very brief here. What is salient in terms of women's relationship to the state is the recognition by all but one of the participants that the state owed mothers 'protection.' Hiratsuka Raichō argued that women performed a service to the state by giving birth and, thus, deserved financial payment. Socialist Yamakawa Kikue seemed to reject the arguments of the other three as bourgeois, stating that all members of society would be protected if the capitalist order were replaced by socialism; yet she, too, called for state support of maternity, albeit in a completely reformed state. Yamada Waka took an essentialist point of view of women's biological duties, but in the end she called for both husbands and the state to support maternity. Only Yosano claimed that focussing on protection from the state was 'slave morality' (*dorei dōtoku*); even she conceded the desirability, however, of a system of insurance that would compensate women for wages lost while recovering from childbirth. For all of these 1910s feminists, then, the state had taken on a role as protector of (gendered) rights of maternity. I view this as a changing attitude based on feminists' thinking that the state had become a reified institution capable both of protecting rights against societal or civil oppression and of denying rights to groups or individuals who then must either resist the state or struggle for inclusion in it.<sup>88</sup>

The notion that the state was an entity that should protect classes of individuals against

societal exploitation, and which consisted of individuals with the right of membership, is clearly evident in the founding of the New Woman Association (Shin Fujin Kyōkai) in 1919. To achieve the rights of protection and inclusion, women had to identify as a class, noted Hiratsuka Raichō, one of the group's three founding mothers (the other two were Ichikawa Fusae and Oku Mumeo). Invited to speak to the All-Kansai Federation of Women's Organizations in late November 1919, Hiratsuka delivered a talk entitled 'Toward the Unification of Women.'<sup>89</sup> Identifying women as a class, Hiratsuka called for women to unite to articulate common concerns and demand power. As possessors of rights, women would be part of the state that would determine 'the future.' Women were no longer in need of proving their wisdom and talent, as they had been in the late nineteenth century. Rights should be theirs--if only women would communicate to achieve those rights. Her vision of rights included different but complementary roles and identities for men and women. In addition, Hiratsuka articulated two types of feminist rights in her comments--women's rights (*joken*) and mothers' rights (*boken*). Women can be individuals, but motherhood requires at least one relationship, that of mother and child; mothers' rights are by definition relational.

Shortly after this speech, sometime in November or December, Ichikawa joined Hiratsuka to draft the New Woman Association's two central demands. The first of the two proposals demanded revision of the Public Peace Police Law (*Chian keisatsuhō*) of 1900. As we have seen, protest against Article 5 of that law was not new. The feminist fight against the Police Law of 1900 was also inspired by the increasing successes of women's rights movements outside Japan. In contrast to many women in the West, Ichikawa noted, '[Japanese women] could not even listen to political speeches. We greatly resented this.'<sup>90</sup>

The second major program of the NWA also had foreign parallels. Inspired by recent developments in domestic legislation in Europe and the United States, Hiratsuka proposed that the NWA seek passage of legislation to protect women from marrying men with sexually transmitted disease and to assist wives who had been infected by their carrier husbands.<sup>91</sup> Legal inequalities, she noted, created hardships for women victimized by the dreaded disease. The Revised Civil Code of 1898 stipulated that a



Japanese wife was subject to divorce and two years imprisonment for committing adultery but was unable to file for divorce should she discover--and venereal disease was a strong indication--that her husband engaged in extra-marital sexual relations.<sup>92</sup> The NWA's proposed reform of the divorce laws to permit women to reject syphilitic husbands or fiancés directly challenged the patriarchal family system, which gave few rights to members other than the patriarch. Although Ichikawa was not as committed at that time to the struggle for domestic rights as was her colleague, she agreed to work for the second program as she realized its importance in the fight for equality.<sup>93</sup> Hiratsuka, Ichikawa, and Oku met with other activists at Hiratsuka's home on 6 January 1920 and decided to present two petitions before the forty-second session of the Diet. These petitions were printed in the opening pages of almost every issue of *Josei dōmei* (Women's League)--the NWA organ that began publication later that year--as a constant reminder to supporters of the centrality of these issues. The petitions read:

1. We, the undersigned, seek repeal of the word 'women' from Clause One and the words 'women and' from Clause Two [of Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law].
2. We, the undersigned, support enactment of a law protecting women who marry men with venereal disease, according to the following provisions: a. Men who have contracted the disease are to be prevented from marrying; b. A man wishing to marry must present the results of a doctor's physical exam to his intended spouse, ascertaining his freedom from disease; c. This proof of health should accompany the marriage certificate and be incorporated into the family register; d. A marriage may be annulled if it is discovered that the husband concealed the presence of venereal disease; e. Wives whose husbands have become infected after marriage or who are infected by their husband may file for divorce; f. Wives infected by their husbands may collect monetary compensation for medical expenses and other damages even after divorce.<sup>94</sup>

Petition 1 unambiguously demanded the identical rights of citizenship and inclusion in the state enjoyed by men. Petition 2 called for women's protection by the state against potentially deadly excesses inherent in the family system.

The supporters of these petitions adopted several strategies in response to opposition. To those who maintained that political rights for women would destroy the Japanese

family by changing the wife's role, Ichikawa argued that revision of the Police Law would not harm womanly virtues but would, in fact, help women become better wives and wiser mothers; a politically aware mother was better informed and, therefore, able to rear better children. Ichikawa's conflation of wifeness and motherhood sounded natural to her listeners because the discourses on wifeness and motherhood were becoming increasingly blended in the popular mind by the clichéd phrase, 'good wife, wise mother.' Supporters of 'motherhood' ranged from conservatives to feminists, the latter stressing that by valuing motherhood society would value women. But 'wifeness' in its official (state) interpretation was not liberatory. Wives were, at worst, under patriarchal control and, at best, responsible for family-supporting productivity.<sup>95</sup> For wise mothers, who carried out an important role in moulding the future, political rights could be arguably necessary; for wives, who had no property to protect and who had productive responsibilities to the state and family, political rights may have been harder to justify. In eviscerating the wife role by focussing on the mother role, Ichikawa, who was neither a wife nor a mother, appears to have abandoned the Meiji-era feminists' tack of linking women's rights--in an era when the state was still viewed as being under construction--with respect for wives and encouragement of their education as a basis for developing the subjectivity necessary for equality.

To those who contended that enactment of a law protecting married women's health would undermine the husband's dominant position within the family, the NWA answered that a husband's venereal disease, which would affect the well-being of the children, was even more debilitating to the family.<sup>96</sup> This approach also shifted the discourse from wifeness to motherhood, using the malleability of 'good wife, wise mother,' a phrase Ichikawa scorned but manipulated when necessary. By focussing on the groom's health and not the bride's, the petition ran into strong opposition. Meiji-era feminists had identified women's rights with respect for women's full personhood. Women gained subjectivity as respected and educated wives in a society free of patriarchy, polygamy and prostitution. Meiji women's rights discourses boldly attacked extramarital male sexuality. By the Taishō era, male sexuality was identified with patriarchy, which was supported by law and by the state. To change male sexual privilege, then, Taishō feminists had to cast their arguments in terms of other state-

sponsored discourses, particularly 'good wife, wise motherism.'<sup>97</sup> The petition justified exempting brides from VD screening by noting that men's sexual habits were dissolute and self indulgent. Among women, only prostitutes were so morally lax.<sup>98</sup>

Because even sexuality had been politicized by the legal reification of patriarchy, the NWA found that they had to give priority to efforts to revise the Police Law. No political activity could be carried out without first revising the Police Law. Yet advocacy of change in the law could in itself be a violation of that law. For their first foray into politics, therefore, the NWA felt a petition, stamped with the family seals (*hanko*) of Japanese subjects and presented to the Diet, would be the most effective first step toward changing the law. In the event, the petition never made it out of Diet committee and to the full floor of the Diet, as Prime Minister Hara Takashi dissolved the forty-second Diet session on 26 February.

The dissolution of the Diet relieved Ichikawa, Hiratsuka, and Oku of their lobbying activities and gave them a chance to work on strengthening the organization of the NWA and to go to lectures. One lecture Ichikawa and Hiratsuka attended on 4 March 1920 had the interesting title, 'Current Events as Seen by Intellectuals.' But their enjoyment of the lecture was cut short when the two, highly visible in a sea of men, were arrested for attending a 'political' meeting.<sup>99</sup> Their arrests animated the activists all the more. Why, Ichikawa wrote in *Josei dōmei's* first issue in October, was it all right for women to read and write but not to speak and listen?<sup>100</sup>

Although Ichikawa believed that it was illogical and irrational to distinguish the written and spoken word, the two are, in fact, quite different as forms of discourse. It is possible that the authorities figured that written words could inspire criticism but not a mob, as written words were more likely the possession of middle-class writers, not the working-class whom they feared. Spoken language has immediacy and irrepressibility. Spoken words must be heard, while written words can be more easily controlled through censorship or simply ignored. Moreover, women's voices, distinct from men's, have an effect on their listeners that is different from men's; written words can be attributed to a pseudonymous author and gender can be masked. An established state that fears unpredictable, spontaneous politics seeks means to contain the speech of those not

part of the state. Feminists recognized this, and in their attempt to join with and benefit from the existing state, they first sought to claim a political voice. Women would not be fully members of society until their participation in discourse was as unfettered as men's.

Hoping to claim that voice, Ichikawa announced the official principles of the NWA at its formal 'opening ceremony' on 25 March 1920:<sup>101</sup>

1. To demand equal opportunities for both men and women so that women might achieve their full potential;
2. To encourage cooperation between men and women who, although different, have equally important societal functions to perform;
3. To make clear to all the important role of the household in society;
4. To safeguard the rights of women as mothers and daughters by aiming to promote their best interests and by eliminating impediments to the exercise of their rights.<sup>102</sup>

These principles stressed the desirability of women's rights based on gender differences and on the particular importance of the household and family relationships (motherhood, daughterhood).

The NWA's petitions eventually made it to the Diet on 19 July 1920. The agenda for that day's Diet session contained the long-awaited proposed amendment to the Public Peace Police Law. Independent Representative Tabuchi Toyokichi made an impassioned appeal for support of women's political rights.<sup>103</sup>

There has recently been much talk concerning freedom of speech, but because this freedom is not respected in this country, there is, even in the Diet, little respect for freedom of speech. . . In this sense, Japan is a police state. . . It is deplorable that we legislators have not become fully aware of this state of affairs. . . I have, therefore, decided. . . to bring this problem to your attention. . . and to obtain your approval for changes in Japan's Police Law. . . Specifically, [I support] elimination of the word "women" from Article Five of the Public Peace Police Law. Gentlemen, one of the currents of our postwar world is socialism; a second current is feminism, reaching Japan. . . I wonder if these momentous global changes will penetrate the Japanese Diet? . . I firmly believe we must look for what

is valuable in feminism and socialism, adopting what is good and discarding what is bad. . .Gentlemen, manhood suffrage is widely discussed in Japan today. . .Political rights for women have spread to numerous countries, including England and France (*sic*) [yet] Japan still does not even recognize suffrage for men! This situation is unacceptable! . . .I believe some of you are unaware of conditions in the world today.

For Japan to be included among the postwar world's civilized democracies, Tabuchi emphasized, its leaders would have to expand the rights and freedoms of all its subjects, including women.

Although I do not advocate giving women complete suffrage at this time, I do believe we must give all adult men (those over twenty) the right to vote. We must extend universal suffrage. . . However, at the same time, I realize women are also human beings who have a right to free speech. . . .I believe we must exercise the basic premise of "democracy" which fosters concepts of equality and support for the weak. . .I urge you not to derive pleasure from oppressing the weak, but to work for the thirty million [women] subjects of Japan.<sup>104</sup>

Tabuchi explicitly differentiated men's and women's political rights. He also advocated revision of Article Five not only because he called for a new relationship between men and women (as involved subjects) and the state, but also because he wished the state to protect the 'weak.' Shortly thereafter, the Diet was dissolved, so there was no opportunity for a vote.

At a later Diet session, on 26 February 1921, a nearly unanimous House of Representatives recommended revising Article 5 to permit women to attend political meetings and rallies (the prohibition of their joining political parties was not yet lifted, however). Opposition to the bill, even in this compromised form, was greater in the House of Peers. The most vocal opponent was Baron Fujimura Yoshirō, president of *Taishō nichichi shinbun* and a powerful leader in the Upper House. 'The participation of women in political movements is extremely boring,' he remarked condescendingly. Furthermore, he continued,

it goes against natural laws in a physiological as well as psychological sense. It is not women's function to be active in political movements

alongside men. The woman's place is in the home. Her role is a social and educational one. . . Furthermore, women's going out into society and becoming active in political movements will result in a number of extremely bad consequences... Take the example of Queen Elizabeth's reign... What I am saying is supported by our particular traditions, customs, and history. Finally, giving women the right to participate in political movements subverts the family system that is the basis of our social system. I think that the behavior of these new women--these groups of peculiar women trying to become politically active--is extremely shameful. [The issue before us] concerns Japan's national polity. . . .I believe we should oppose [revision of the Police Law].<sup>105</sup>

Fujimura's colleagues heeded his warnings and defeated the amendment in the closing minutes of the forty-fourth session.

While the bills were being debated in the Diet, the women of the NWA redefined their activities to permit them to participate in their own governance while steering clear of the government's restrictions on political activities. They turned to projects that were less likely to be identified with the demand for political rights. The NWA could, then, rightfully claim not to be purely a political association, something women were prohibited from joining. Ichikawa worked to dispel the idea that the NWA was only interested in 'obtaining political rights for women.'<sup>106</sup> Hiratsuka Raichō had stated earlier, in her Ōsaka speech, that women's status and lives could not be improved without removing impediments to women's rights--that is, women had to gain equality in the eyes of the law through political rights. But most advocates of women's rights presented civil and political rights as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves. The end they called for was the improvement of women's lives through better health, elimination of poverty, better work conditions, protection of motherhood, and other feminist goals. Even Ichikawa, the feminist most noteworthy for her espousal of women's political rights, stated that civil rights, while beneficial in themselves, also were crucial for the improvement of women's lives. Hiratsuka wrote in the first issue of the NWA's journal *Josei dōmei* that suffrage was not an end in itself but a means to inject new feminine values into a male political system.<sup>107</sup> Non-socialist feminists viewed the political system and state as already institutionalized by the Taishō period. Their campaign for civil rights, an attempt to become part of that state, was no more an attack

on the state than was the feminists' working with the state to gain protections for women.

Improving women's lives may appear fundamentally political, but politics were more narrowly construed in 1920s Japan. Motherhood protection, or health issues, or labour protection were seen as social reformers' issues, and though they intersected with politics by being debated and funded by cabinet and parliament, women's involvement with them was often viewed as non-political. Ichikawa and other 'political' women politicized the 'kitchen' much later, in the 1930s. In 1920, the struggle for political rights as an end rather than as a means was viewed by non-feminists as selfish, though feminist social reform was not. Political rights implied the activist wanted something for herself--the right to assemble or the right to vote.

In the process of working on health issues or labour reform, women may have been acting as if they were members of the state, but without specific and articulated rights, their citizenship was always less than men's. In 1921, therefore, the leadership of the NWA decided to risk societal opprobrium and expand their demand for complete inclusion in the state. They were determined not only to seek revision of the Police Law but to raise the issue of women's suffrage. The December 1920 and January 1921 issues of *Josei dōmei* carried, along with the organization's earlier petitions for revision of the Police Law and regulation of men's access to marriage, a new demand calling for revision of the House of Representatives Election Law, which restricted the right to vote to males 25 or older who paid a minimum direct tax of three yen per year and who had been listed in the election directory for one full year.<sup>108</sup>

Few women understood what revision of the Election Law would mean (and Ichikawa claimed that most progressive women were not yet attuned to suffrage at that time), but those who read about the NWA's new position on suffrage in *Josei dōmei* were increasingly comfortable with the idea of participation in national politics. Equal suffrage rights began to enter discourse as a significant component of women's rights.

During the 1920s, Ichikawa's ideas developed in directions different from Hiratsuka's.

According to Ichikawa, Hiratsuka's ideology was based on the "principle of mothers' rights" (*bokenshugi*), a concept which contrasted significantly with her own "principle of women's rights" (*jokenshugi*). Ichikawa later wrote:

Although Hiratsuka emphasized raising the position of women, obtaining their rights, and male-female equality, she attached a great deal of importance to the household and hoped very much to protect mothers and children.<sup>109</sup>

Hiratsuka believed in improving women's status through protection of motherhood. For Ichikawa, the relational role was secondary; she wished to improve the status of all women, irrespective of their relationship to children. While motherhood protection in its own right was important to Ichikawa, she felt, in the 1920s, that women's political empowerment was not to be achieved through using the power of the state to protect mothers, but through recognition of male-female equality.<sup>110</sup>

In a 1920 article, Ichikawa articulated her beliefs in terms of the 'principle of women's rights' ideology.

Aren't we [women] treated completely as feeble-minded children? Why is it all right to know about science and literature and not all right to be familiar with politics and current events? Why is it acceptable to read and write but not to speak and listen? A man, no matter what his occupation or educational background, has political rights, but a woman, no matter how qualified, does not have the same rights. . . . If we do not understand the politics of the country we live in, we will not be able to understand conditions in our present society.<sup>111</sup>

For Ichikawa, cultivating oneself through education and thereby earning social respect was insufficient, particularly in light of the fact that it failed to gain women the rights their Meiji-era sisters had assumed would be incorporated in the developing Meiji system.

In December 1920, Ichikawa published an article entitled 'Absolute Equality between Men and Women?' in *Fujin kōron*, in which she discussed the differences in the United States between feminists demanding complete legal equality with men and those advocating special and distinctive treatment for women, especially workplace



protections.<sup>112</sup> She suggested that a similar debate was emerging among Japanese women. For Ichikawa, the central feminist debate was between special protections for women and identical treatment of both sexes. Both sides of this debate took an established state for granted.

Absolute equality between men and women? Which is right or wrong? I have outlined the problem here and have decided to wait for the comments of other intellectuals.<sup>113</sup>

One intellectual from whom Ichikawa may have wished to hear was socialist feminist Yamakawa Kikue. In April 1921, Yamakawa and others organized Japan's first socialist women's association, the Red Wave Society (Sekirankai). The Red Wave Society's manifesto, written by Yamakawa in 1921, condemned capitalism for turning women into 'slaves at home and oppress[ing] us as wage slaves outside the home. It turns many of our sisters into prostitutes.'<sup>114</sup> She decried capitalism for engendering (in both senses of the word) imperialism, which deprived women of their male loved ones, thereby defining the problems of capitalism in terms of women's losses rather than men's.<sup>115</sup> But like socialist women elsewhere, Yamakawa would find her feminism marginalized by socialist men and in contention with the positions of non-socialist feminists.

Yamakawa, as her bourgeois sisters, foregrounded protection of women as a function of the state. But unlike the NWA, she did not take the existing Japanese state for granted but rather envisioned a state that eschewed capitalism. Yamakawa Kikue's article, 'The New Woman's Association and the Red Wave Society,' appeared in the July 1921 issue of *Taiyō*.<sup>116</sup> Criticizing the NWA, she wrote:

there is absolutely no way in a capitalist society to alleviate the misery of female workers. We believe it is a sin to waste the strength of women workers in a . . . time-consuming Diet movement--that is, in any movement which digresses from the only road to salvation for women, the destruction of capitalism. However, bourgeois gentlewomen, because they cannot trust or imagine a society beyond capitalism, concentrate their energies on alleviating the misery of women workers in a superficial and ineffective way.<sup>117</sup>

The months after Yamakawa's article saw a period of considerable activity by women

in Japan. Much of this activity was stimulated by the amendment of Article 5, Clause Two of the Public Peace Police Law.<sup>118</sup> Taking advantage of their newly-won right to attend political rallies (they still could not join political parties), women began to organize new groups through which they could make additional demands. Some worked for women's political rights, others pushed for an end to licensed prostitution and other goals. Some groups of women, like those involved in housewives' campaigns to rationalize home life, might not have described themselves as women's rights activists, though their leaders often did embrace the demand for women's political rights. Their greater public involvement coincided with and was encouraged by other women's increased public visibility. In short, it was becoming unexceptional for women of a variety of political persuasions to take part in some types of political discourse. Women's groups of all sorts blossomed in the early 1920s: consumer groups of varied political persuasions, socialist feminist groups, bourgeois descendents of the NWA, the venerable Women's Reform Society and its suffragist arm, and so on. Feminist reformism permeated Taishō liberal culture, but in mid-1923 it was not coordinated to focus on political rights for women as a class. A jolt was needed to persuade activist women of the importance of joint activity.

That jolt was provided by the great earthquake that hit the Kantō Plain on 1 September 1923. In the aftermath of the quake, the Women's Reform Society's Kubushiro Ochimi and other women turned to relief work to supply thousands of Tokyo residents with food, clothing, and shelter. Women from Christian churches and other groups in the Tokyo area started distributing milk to children and developed a sense of solidarity through shared compassion and concern. Some were housewives with little or no experience in organized cooperative activities. Others were members of alumnae groups and women's auxiliary organizations. There were socialists like Yamakawa Kikue who disregarded ideological differences to participate in relief measures with middle-class Christians and housewives.<sup>119</sup> On 28 September 1923, approximately 100 leaders from forty-three different organizations agreed to formalize their spontaneous cooperative efforts and joined forces in an organization named the Tokyo Federation of Women's Organizations (Tokyo Rengō Fujinkai).<sup>120</sup>

The earthquake's destruction had created a situation that demanded effective cooperation. After the Tokyo Federation finished emergency distribution of food and clothing to the poor and finding shelter for the homeless, many members continued to meet.<sup>121</sup> Sometime in late 1923 or early 1924, the organization was divided into five sections: society, employment, labour, education, and government.<sup>122</sup> Within these sections, women discussed a variety of issues, including motherhood protection, licensed prostitution, the problems of working women, and political rights for women. Not only did women have the opportunity to resume discussion of problems attracting their attention before the earthquake, they also cooperated with women from organizations with different basic objectives.

The Tokyo Federation's government section focussed on issues of political rights, discussing means of using the state to earn inclusion. It also examined the character and direction of the Japanese women's movement. That fall, government section director Kubushiro Ochimi decided to call a meeting of women interested in working for women's political rights. Sixty to seventy women attended a 'women's suffrage movement workshop' on 13 and 14 November 1924 at the Reform Society's Women's Home in the Ōkubo section of Tokyo.<sup>123</sup> This meeting spawned the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage (Fujin Sanseiken Kakutoku Kisei Dōmei) on 13 December 1924, the principal suffrage organization in the interwar years. As its name indicated, the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage would concentrate on obtaining political rights for women. Political rights, declared the manifesto proclaiming the founding of the organization, were essential to improving the status of Japanese women:

1. It is our responsibility to destroy customs that have existed in this country for the past twenty-six hundred years and to construct a new Japan that promotes the natural rights of men and women;
2. As women have been attending public schools with men for half a century since the beginning of the Meiji period and our opportunities in higher education have continued to expand, it is unjust to exclude women from universal suffrage;
3. Political rights are necessary for the protection of nearly four million

working women in this country ;

4. Women who work in the household must be recognized before the law to realize their full human potential;
5. Without political rights we cannot achieve public recognition at either the national or local level of government;
6. It is both necessary and possible to bring together women of different religions and occupations in a movement for women's suffrage.<sup>124</sup>

This list is a remarkably clear and succinct statement of the meaning of rights among middle-class feminists in the Taishō era. Article I unequivocally contrasted 'natural rights of men and women' with venerable 'customs' that must be destroyed. Japanese society, that is, buried the rights of individual men and women under unnatural customs. In contrast to the Meiji-era optimism about the ability of education to elevate the status of women, Article II of the 1924 manifesto rued the continuing denial of even educated women's rights, though it implied--as did Meiji-era feminism--that there should be a connection between education and rights. Article III tied together rights and protection for women, an important Taishō-era concern. Article IV called for recognition of all women's full humanity, and Article V connected rights and recognition in the public sphere, both issues raised in the Meiji era. Article VI, which focussed on implementation rather than on fundamental principles, recognized the need for a movement. Thus, this manifesto reiterated some of the Meiji-era discourse of rights in terms of respectability, but also explicitly called on the state to include women. Article I suggested, moreover, that including women as men were included might be insufficient, since both men and women had natural rights that had been inadequately promoted.

To achieve the goals of the manifesto, the proclamation announced three resolutions. First, the organization resolved to demand that the Fiftieth Diet session grant women civic rights on the municipal (city, town, village) level. The City Code and the Town and Village Code, promulgated in 1888 by Meiji leaders who 'saw the importance of cultivating in the people the modern ideas of public participation in processes of self-

government,' gave local governments 'the [autonomous] right to enact laws and ordinances effective within their own administrative boundaries.'<sup>125</sup> But the laws also defined very specifically the qualifications for achieving status as a *kōmin* (citizen) on the local level. Only men over twenty-five residing in their district for two years and either owning land or paying a minimum annual tax of two yen were eligible to vote in local elections and to serve on local governing bodies.<sup>126</sup> Kubushiro, in presenting the manifesto to the women assembled to mark the founding of the League for the Realization of Women's Suffrage, charged that the law, by preventing women from participating in government as responsible citizens, violated the civil rights of Japanese women. 'In order to obtain our local rights in cities, towns, and villages, the word 'male' must be eliminated from the pertinent articles of this law.'<sup>127</sup>

Second, the manifesto resolved that:

We demand that revisions in the House of Representatives Election Law to be presented before the upcoming Fiftieth Diet include the equality of women and men, so that we, as half the population of the nation, may fully carry out our responsibilities.

Here, Kubushiro analogized rights of participation in civil society with responsibilities. Even if women and men had different responsibilities, both were equally entitled to citizenship.

And third, the manifesto resolved that Article 5 of the Public Peace Police Law be completely revised, and the three characters "*go: joshi*" (five: women) be removed from clause two in order to permit women freedom of political association.

Based on these goals, the new group petitioned the Diet for civil rights. The suffragists' expectations were high right before the scheduled debate on amending political rights laws in the Fiftieth Diet session. Three weeks earlier, in late February 1925, the Kenseikai-dominated House of Representatives had passed the promised universal manhood suffrage bill. Under the provisions of this law, only male subjects over twenty-five were eligible to elect members of the House of Representatives, and only those over thirty were permitted to become candidates for elective office. Although many

liberals welcomed the expansion of the electorate, Ichikawa and her colleagues criticized the new legislation because 'giving the vote only to men and excluding women is not universal suffrage.'<sup>128</sup> Despite the Diet's recent limitation of suffrage rights by gender and its passage of a Peace Preservation Law designed to curb leftist political expression, feminists had not thrown in the towel.<sup>129</sup> They looked forward to Diet discussions of women's suffrage and welcomed the opportunity to resume lobbying in the Diet. The women succeeded in convincing a small group of representatives, most of them in their thirties, to introduce several items for discussion:

1. An amendment to the Public Peace Police Law of 1900 giving women the right to join political parties and associations;
2. A petition to encourage women's higher education;
3. A petition for women's suffrage in national elections;
4. A petition to make changes in the City Code (1888) and the Town and Village Code (1888), allowing women to vote and become candidates for office on the local level.<sup>130</sup>

When these four items came up for discussion on 10 March, a date designated by suffragists as 'women's Diet day' (*gikai fujin dee*) because four of the 25 items scheduled for discussion concerned women's rights,<sup>131</sup> some 200 women filled the visitors' section in the balcony overlooking the Diet chambers. Their optimism contrasted with the mocking tone of press reportage that day. Describing those they called 'veterans of women's suffrage,' the *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* reported on 10 March 1925 that 'They talk big in their shrill voices.'<sup>132</sup> The following day, the *Asahi* printed a caricature of four Diet members with ribbons in their hair signifying sympathy toward women. Diet speeches in opposition to the proposed petitions and amendment were also full of vitriol, but in the end, the proposals were all approved by the Lower House. Three of the items voted on were only petitions and thus did not become law, and the Police Law amendment was killed in the Upper House, but it is noteworthy that these proposals for expanding women's rights fared as well as they did.<sup>133</sup> The partial success of 10 March gave suffragist women hope that they might achieve civil rights. Suffragists shortened the name of their group to Women's Suffrage League (*Fusen Kakutoku Dōmei*) and made a public appeal for *fusen*. This appeal was symbolically important.

The women were fortunate in that *fusen*, when written with different characters, meant either 'universal suffrage' or 'women's suffrage'. *Fusen* had been on the lips of activists for years but had been virtually synonymous with 'male suffrage'; the WSL made a tactical decision to buy into the acceptable discourse on male rights by taking advantage of the homonym.<sup>134</sup> They emphatically stated that *fusen*, or universal suffrage, was incomplete without *fusen*, or women's suffrage.

As with the decision to change their group's name, suffragists issued the following declaration defining the scope of their future activities:

The foundation for the construction of a new Japan has been laid and, as expected, the [male] suffrage bill was passed by the Fiftieth Diet session. However, along with men who are under 25 or who "receive public or private assistance," we women who comprise half this country's population have been left without political rights. . . . Therefore, women should put aside their emotional, religious, and ideological differences and cooperate as *women*. . . . We should concentrate our efforts on achieving the singular goal of political rights. We should work closely with the political parties but maintain a position of absolute neutrality [in partisan matters].<sup>135</sup>

Women's rights discourses and activism did not die with the Taishō era but rather expanded and grew in diverse directions. Suffragism continued to be a central feature, fueling the rhetoric and actions of groups dedicated to suffrage as a *sine qua non* of rights as well as being supported by groups with other primary agendas.<sup>136</sup> These latter groups took for granted the desirability of rights, despite their differences concerning the meanings of rights other than the vote, which virtually all supported to some degree. Rights within the existing state system might be just a stop-gap till a revolutionary state could be created--as socialist women advocated in their feminist demands in the leftist labour movement in the late Taishō era,<sup>137</sup> or they might be framed in terms of inclusion in the existing civil society.<sup>138</sup> In both cases, they were articulated within existing regimes of power. Feminists increasingly expressed rights as protections in the 1930s, when concepts of rights based on the 'individual' were potentially subversive. Inclusion in the state and/or civil society, many feminists believed, could be achieved in multiple ways, including consumer movements, 'election purification' movements, protection of

labourers, welfare assistance to single mothers and their children, and other public-sphere activities producing gendered social-welfare reforms. Rights remained a central feature of these various activities. The permutations of rights discourses against shifting social and political backgrounds, especially as the state became increasingly reified in the early twentieth century, both accompanied and drove changes in the relationship of women to the state.

## Endnotes

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1. For representative works in English, see e.g., Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, 'The Meiji State's Policy toward Women, 1890-1910,' in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Janet Hunter, 'Factory Legislation and Employer Resistance: The Abolition of Night Work in the Cotton-Spinning Industry,' in *Japanese Management in Historical Perspective*, ed. T. Yui and K. Nakagawa (University of Tokyo Press, 1989); Yoshiko Miyake, 'Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women's Factory Work under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s,' in *Recreating Japanese Women*; Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983).
  2. In English, see, e.g., Sumiko Otsubo, 'Engendering Eugenics: Feminists and Marriage Restriction Legislation in the 1920s,' in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, eds. Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (Cambridge, MA: Harvard CEAS Publications, forthcoming); Barbara Molony and Kathleen Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae: A Political Biography* (Stanford University Press, in progress); Kathleen Uno, *Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, forthcoming).
  3. See, e.g., Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour, and Activism, 1900-1937* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Helen M. Hopper, *A New Woman of Japan: A Political Biography of Katō Shidzue* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Yukiko Matsukawa and Kaoru Tachi, "Women's Suffrage and Gender Politics in Japan," in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan (New York: New York University Press, 1994).
  4. See, e.g., Sheldon Garon, 'The World's Oldest Profession? Prostitution and the State in Imperial Japan, 1900-1945,' *American Historical Review* 93, no.3 (1993); 'Women's Groups and the Japanese State: Contending Approaches to Political Integration, 1890-1945,' *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19 vol. 1(1993).
  5. For some works in English, see, e.g., Barbara Molony, 'The 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law and the Changing Discourse on Gender,' *SIGNS* 20. no 2 (1995); Kathleen Uno, 'The Death of Good Wife, Wise Mother?,' in



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*Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Laurel Rasplica Rodd, 'Yosano Akiko and the Taishō Debate over the "New Woman"' in *Recreating Japanese Women*.

6. Representative works in each of these categories include, respectively, Garon (alliance); Mackie (struggle for justice); Molony and Molony (struggle for membership).
7. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. I, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 95.
8. Although the term 'feminism' (*feminizumu*) was introduced in Japan in a 1910 article in *Hōgaku Kyōkai Zasshi*, I shall use the term to refer to a broad range of discourses, beginning in the early Meiji period, that supported women's rights or the improvement of women's condition or status. See Sōgō Joseishi Kenkyūkai, ed., *Nihon josei no rekishi* (Kadokawa Shoten, 1993), 192-193, for more on the introduction of the term 'feminism.'
9. Susan Mann has written persuasively that "contemporary Western feminism may remain parochial in its insistence that its own *telos* of freedom and agency be at work in every record of women's lives." See Mann, "The History of Chinese Women before the Age of Orientalism," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no.4 (Winter 1997):174. In the case of discussions about rights, advocates were explicit about the quest for women's rights; the historian need not project her own feminist hopes of finding calls for agency.
10. George M. Wilson, *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) offers an insightful treatment of Tokugawa anti-authoritarianism. See also Matsumoto Sannosuke, 'The Idea of Heaven: A Tokugawa Foundation for Natural Rights Theory,' in Tetsuo Najita and Irvin Scheiner, *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
11. Mill's *On Liberty* was translated very early--in 1868. This translation was followed in the 1870s and early 1880s by translations of works by other Western political theorists. Rousseau's *Social Contract*, though translated later (1882) than Mill's work, was highly esteemed by People's Rights advocates. See Masaaki Kosaka, ed., *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, vol. VIII, *Thought* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1958), 115, 146.
12. Ueki Emori, cited in Roger W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 205. Suzuki Yūko, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei*, vol 1, *Shisō, seiji: Josei kaihō shisō no tenkai to fujin sanseiken undō* (Fuji Shuppan, 1996), 23, notes that other than Ueki, whose writings about women's rights were inspired by the demand for voting rights by Kusunose Kita, few of the leading male people's rights advocates discussed women's rights in their

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- writings. Women like Fukuda and Kishida were, therefore, particularly important. See also Sharon Sievers, 28-29.
13. Foucault, 95.
  14. See Vera Mackie, *Creating Socialist Women*.
  15. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4.
  16. See also Noriyo Hayakawa, "Feminism and Nationalism in Japan, 1868-1945," *Journal of Women's History* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1995):111.
  17. Sotozaki Mitsuhiro, *Nihon fujinronshi*, vol. 2, *Fujin kaihō ronsō* (Domesu, 1989)22-24.,
  18. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 11.
  19. Brown, 151.
  20. 'Civil society' was not named in the late nineteenth century, but by the 1920s rights of civic and civil participation were understood to be related to *kōminken*. See, e.g., Barbara Molony and Kathleen Molony, *Ichikawa Fusae: A Political Biography* (forthcoming). Kevin M. Doak notes that 'civil society' (*shimin shakai*) came to used in Japan in the 1920s, but the Japanese translation's urban implication (*shimin*) made it unpopular with rural folk. Doak, "What is a Nation and Who Belongs? National Narratives and the Ethnic Imagination in Twentieth-Century Japan," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (1997):290.
  21. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, in *Taiyō*, 'Katei' column, cited in Muta Kazue, 'Images of the Family in Meiji Periodicals: The Paradox Underlying the Emergence of the "Home,"' *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* English Supplement 7 (1994): 64.
  22. See, e.g., Hozumi Yatsuka, quoted in Masaaki Kosaka, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, 381; 383. 'Family' was not seen in the same light by conservatives and by feminists. For feminists, the family was made up of loving members whose sexually-differentiated but complementary roles were to be equally valued. Conservatives found that formulation of the family threatening, believing that it could undermine the foundation of the Japanese authoritarian state. That is, as the influential conservative legal scholar Hozumi Yatsuka wrote in 1896, 'The obedience to....the headship of the family is, inferentially, what we confer on the Imperial House as the extant progenitor of the nation'; or, in 1898, 'The family expanded becomes the country....we cannot be indifferent to whether the family institution is maintained or abolished!'
  23. For more on Rousseau's ideas, see e.g. Carole Patemen, *Sexual Contract*.
  24. See, e.g. Sievers, 52; Yasukawa Junosuke and Yasukawa Etsuko, *Josei*

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*sabetsu no shakai shisōshi* (Akaishi Shobo, 1993), Chapter 1.

25. On 'fraternity' see e.g., Donald Roden, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: A Study in the Culture of a Student Elite* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).
26. Suzuki Yūko, *Nihon josei undō shiryō shūsei* vol. 1, *Shisō, seiji* (Fuji shuppan, 1996), 18.
27. Patrilineality is effectively problematized by Kathleen Uno in 'Questioning Patrilineality: On Western Studies of the Japanese *ie*.' *positions* 4, no.3 (Winter 1996):569-594. She argues convincingly that scholars have often distorted the historical roles of patrilineality. Meiji women's rights advocates also strongly contested what they saw as continuing patterns of women's subordination through patrilineality and its ties with the other 'p's' of patriarchy, prostitution, and polygamy.
28. Brown, 98.
29. For an extended discussion of Meiji Civil Code, see Ryosuke Ishii, ed., *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era*, vol. 9, *Japanese Legislation in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1958), 601-692.
30. Ironically, critics of the individual rights basis of the first draft of the Civil Code complained that the code smacked of 'European' civil rights ideas.
31. Pateman, *passim*; Yasukawa and Yasukawa, Ch. 1.
32. Noheji Kyōe, *Josei kaihō shisō no genryū* (Azekura Shobō, 1984), 14.
33. Donald Roden's study of elite male education in imperial Japan, for instance, describes a fraternal communalism which violently resisted even the suggestion of a womanly presence in its hallowed manly halls. Roden, 146; 139.
34. See, e.g., Sievers's discussion of the Women's Reform Society. Sievers, 87-114.
35. See, e.g., Muta, 'Images of the Family,' 62-63, who offers important evidence that articles on 'women's rights' peaked in 1886, to be replaced by those focussing on *katei*.
36. Yamaguchi Miyoko, *Meiji keimōki no fujin mondai ronsō no shūhen* (Domesu, 1989), 186.
37. Yamaguchi, 199. For an extensive treatment of the philosophical basis for Fukuzawa's thought on equality and on education, see Yasukawa and Yasukawa, 36-104.
38. Suzuki, 56-85, offers a wealth of information about Kishida and her public activities. Newspaper articles, reprinted here, show that Kishida had an

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extraordinarily busy schedule, rushing from city to city to speak out--with occasional censorship by the police--on women's rights.

39. Kishida Toshiko, 'Dōhō shimai ni tsugu,' reprinted in Suzuki, 74-85 .
40. Kishida, 'Dōhō,' quoted and translated by Sievers, 38.
41. Suzuki, 57.
42. Suzuki, 56.
43. Suzuki, 71-73, has articles describing the founding of several of these groups.
44. Hirota Masaki, 'Kindai eriito josei no aidentiti to kokka,' in *Jiendaa no Nihonshi* vol. 1, ed. Wakita Haruko and S.B. Hanley (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1994), 203, is not impressed with the Okayama Women's Friendly Society, noting that its members were merely wives and daughters of men in the People's Rights movement. He contrasts this group with those formed by women not related to male activists.
45. Suzuki, 98.
46. Sievers, 36.
47. Mikiso Hane, *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 36.
48. Suzuki, 127.
49. Suzuki, 98.
50. Hirota, 202.
51. Fujita Yoshimi, *Meiji Jogakkō no sekai* (Shōeisha, 1984), 35, 79; Noheji, 24. The others were Tanabe Hanaho, Ogino Ginko, Yoshida Nobuko, Andō Tane, and Kojima Kiyo.
52. Noheji, 68.
53. Noheji, 129.
54. Noheji, 128.
55. Noheji, p. 133.
56. Aoyama Nao, *Meiji Jogakkō no kenkyū* (Keiō Tsūshin, 1983), 7.
57. Noheji, 129.

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58. Noheji, 155, notes that the four characters--*ryō*, *sai*, *ken*, and *bo*--were used throughout Iwamoto's famous collection of essays entitled, *Gotō no joshi kyōiku*. This short collection, which first appeared as articles in *Jogaku zasshi* from 1890 to 1892, is cited in Noheji, 82-83; 131-32; 139-158. Iwamoto's use of 'good wife, wise mother' (*ryōsai kenbo*), Noheji notes, differed from that of his contemporaries in his stress on Christianity as the basis for that type of education.
  59. Noheji, 131.
  60. Noheji, 112.
  61. Noheji, 14.
  62. Iwamoto Yoshiharu, 'Hyaku-nen no koshitsu,' *Jogaku zasshi* no. 167(22 June 1889), cited in Noheji, 137.
  63. Suzuki, 125-126.
  64. Shimizu, quoted in Sievers, 52-53; Suzuki, 127.
  65. Shimizu, quoted in Sievers, 101.
  66. 'Fujin Kyōfukai,' in *Asano shinbun* 12 December 1886, reprinted in Suzuki, 85. See also Sumiko Otsubo.
  67. See Suzuki, 86-94, who cites several articles from these journals.
  68. Aoyama, 4.
  69. Matsukawa and Tachi, 174.
  70. 'Ippu ippu no seigan,' *Tokyo nichichi shinbun*, 26 November 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, 92.
  71. Shimizu Toyoko, article in *Tōun shinbun* 8-10 May, 1889. Reprinted in Suzuki, 111-114.
  72. Muta Kazue, 'Senryaku to shite no onna,' *Shisō* (February 1992):220-227; Sievers, 95.
  73. *Tōkyō Fujin Kyōfu zasshi*, 20 September 1890, cited in Sievers, 214n.
  74. Suzuki, 132-142, cites several articles about Women's Morality Associations in various locations.
  75. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, in its compendium of regulations, stated that the goal of women's education was 'womanly morality' (*jotoku*). Womanly morality required that the focus of girls' education be the fostering of

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- 'docility' (*wajun*) toward one's husband and 'chastity' (*teisō*). This morality theme, which contrasted with the goals of the Women's Morality Association, was reiterated in another journal established in 1891, *Jokan* (Women's mirror). Cited in *Nihon josei no rekishi*, 197.
76. Women's Morality Association goals, stated in 'Fujin tokugikai kaisoku,' *Joken* 29 September 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, 141-142. The organization limited membership to women.
  77. *Joken* 29 September 1891, reprinted in Suzuki, 141.
  78. Suzuki, 26.
  79. Petitions and reactions, cited in Suzuki, 126-131.
  80. Entire article reprinted in Suzuki, 127-129; excerpted translations in Sievers, 52-53.
  81. Suzuki, 26-27; Hayakawa, 111.
  82. 'Citizenship' is a complicated term in this period. See Atsuko Hirai's insightful commentary on terms translated as 'citizen' in 'State and Ideology in Meiji Japan-A Review Article,' *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 1(1987):89-103.
  83. Hirota Masaki, 202.
  84. Mackie, 62-63.
  85. Mackie, 63.
  86. 'Fujin to kizoku,' *Nikkan heimin shinbun*, no. 62 30 March 1907, quoted in Mackie, 65.
  87. For treatment of this subject in English, see, e.g., Rodd, 189-198; Mackie, 86-91; Barbara Molony, 'Equality versus Difference: the Japanese Debate over "Motherhood Protection,"' in *Japanese Women Working*, ed. Janet Hunter (London: Routledge, 1993). For original documents see Kouchi Nobuko, *Shiryō: Bosei hogo ronsō* (Domesu, 1984).
  88. Mackie, 92, finds this stance highly problematic, noting that these feminists 'unwittingly reinforced the notion that the normal relationship between the State and individual women is one of "protector" and "protected."'
  89. Hiratsuka Raichō, *Hiratsuka Raichō jiden: Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta* 3 (Otsuki Shoten, 1973), 41; Hiratsuka, *Watakushi no aruita michi* (1955), 195.
  90. Ichikawa Fusae, *Ichikawa Fusae jiden: Senzen hen* (Shinjuku shobō, 1974), 53.
  91. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 86. For a detailed analysis of Hiratsuka's focus on

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- eugenics, see Sumiko Otsubo.
92. Rōdōshō Fujinshōnenkyoku, *Fujin no ayumi sanjūnen* (Rōdō Hōrei Kyōkai, 1975), 28-29. Under the terms of the Civil Code, women enjoyed virtually no equal rights or privileges. Subject to strict supervision by the head of the 'house' (*ie*), women became legally incompetent after marriage.
93. *Jiden*, 53. As Otsubo notes, Hiratsuka's advocacy of marriage restriction, influenced by the thinking of Ellen Key, was inspired as much by eugenics (albeit a gender-based variety of eugenics) as by women's rights thought. Because Ichikawa focussed more on rights, however, this study will emphasize the rights aspect of the NWA's work in the area of sexually transmitted disease.
94. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 71-73.
95. Nolte and Hastings, 156.
96. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 82. This argument was not unique to Japan. In the United States, e.g., venereal disease was viewed as destructive to the family, but a man's secret infection should not be revealed to his relatives by his physician, it was believed in the first decades of the twentieth century, lest he lose his dominance in the family. See Allan Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1850* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 18-19. As in Japan, U.S. feminists were infuriated with 'men for infecting women and destroying the lives of children.' See Lois Rudnick, 'The Male Identified Woman and Other Anxieties: The Life of Mabel Dodge Luhan,' in *The Challenge of Feminist Biography*, ed. Sara Alpern, et al. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992). Otsubo, in 'Engendering Eugenics,' notes that Hiratsuka, in justifying the legislative petition's focus on restricting only men's access to marriage, emphasized the importance of eugenics to the Japanese race and nation as well as to wives and children (the latter being the feminist emphasis).
97. 'Good wife, wise motherism' is treated by a number of scholars, most notably Kathleen Uno, whose numerous works on this topic cover the Meiji era through the present.
98. Hiratsuka Raichō, "Karyūbyō danshi kekkon seigenhō ni kansuru seigan undō," *Josei dōmei* 1 (October 1920): 35.
99. Ichikawa Fusae, 'Chian keisatsuhō daigojō shūsei no undō (1),' *Josei dōmei* 1 (October 1920): 23-24.
100. *Ibid.*, 24.
101. *Jiden*, 63-64.
102. These four objectives appear in virtually every account of the NWA. Also, they

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- appear in the opening pages of several issues of *Josei dōmei*. See *Jiden*, 66-67.
103. Hiratsuka, *Genshi josei*, 117; Ichikawa, *Jiden*, 75.
  104. Tabuchi Toyokichi, 'Fujin no seijiteki jiyū o shuchō Tabuchi-shi no enzetsu,' *Josei dōmei* 3 (December 1920): 8-9, 16. *Josei dōmei* published Tabuchi's speech in its entirety.
  105. 'Fujimura Yoshirō-shi no chikei kaikin hantairon hihan,' *Josei dōmei* 8 (May 1921): 5. Fujimura's stress on the greater importance of women's role in the household is similar to that espoused by the Home Ministry fifteen years earlier; as Nolte and Hastings, 156, put it, 'the state's claim on the home preempted women's claims on the state.'
  106. Ichikawa Fusae, 'Sōritsu yori josei dōmei hakkan made (2),' *Josei dōmei* 2 (November 1920): 46. It appears that Ichikawa's initial fears about the NWA's image, at least as far as the government was concerned, were unfounded. Although the NWA and other women's groups formed in later years gave high priority to acquiring political rights for women, their existence was not considered a violation of Article 5, Clause One prohibiting women's participation in political associations; a political association was usually considered as one composed of individuals capable of exercising political power, which women were unable to do without the vote. Women were more likely to have been closely supervised for violation of Clause Two, which prohibited attendance at political rallies and meetings.
  107. Hiratsuka Raichō, 'Shakai kaizō ni taisuru fujin no shimei,' *Josei dōmei* 1 (October 1920):10.
  108. This demand appears, along with the other two petitions, in the opening pages of several issues of the organization's bulletin. See *Josei dōmei* 3 (December 1920): 2.
  109. *Jiden*, 68.
  110. This changed in the following decade, when Ichikawa became a principal supporter of the Mother-Child Protection Law of 1937. Molony, 'Equality versus Difference,' 131.
  111. Ichikawa, 'Chian keisatsuhō (1),' 24.
  112. Ichikawa Fusae, 'Zettaiteki danjo byōdō?' *Fujin kōron* 5 (December 1920): 28-36. Numerous treatments of US feminist movements exist. See, e.g., Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
  113. Ichikawa, 'Zettaiteki danjo byōdō?,' p. 36.
  114. Yamakawa Kikue's May Day manifesto, cited in Hane, 126-127.



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115. This seems a rather weak critique of imperialism, given all we know today about the gender oppression that characterized Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s. But the comfort women would appear after Yamakawa wrote these criticisms of imperialism. And the socialist feminist theorizing about imperialism widely available today would have seemed heretical in a 1920s context in which only class mattered.
  116. Yamakawa Kikue, 'Shin Fujin Kyōkai to Sekirankai,' *Taiyō* 27 (July 1927).
  117. Yamakawa, 'Shin Fujin Kyōkai,' 135-137.
  118. Yoshimi Kaneko, *Fujin sanseiken* (Kajima Shuppankai, 1971), 153.
  119. Yamakawa defended her actions in the March 1928 issue of *Rōnō*. Quoted in *Jiden*, 147, and in Kaneko Shigeri, *Fujin mondai no chishiki* (orig. publ. by Hibonkaku, 1934, republished by Nihon Zusho Sentā, 1982), 218.
  120. Ide Fumiko and Eisashi Akiko, *Taisho demokurashii to josei* (Gōdō Shuppan, 1977), 257-260; see also Shidzue Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), (reissue of 1935 edition, with new introduction and afterword), 254.
  121. Kaneko Shigeri, *Fujin mondai no chishiki*, 218.
  122. Yamataka (Kaneko) Shigeri, 'Watakushi no rirekisho,' *Nihon keizai* 20 November 1975; Chino Yōichi, *Kindai Nihon fujin kyōikushi* (Dōmesu, 1979), 242.
  123. Kubushiro Ochimi, *Haisho hitosuji* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1973), 169; Izuma Tsuko, 'Fusen jishshi no kekka o yososhite,' in *Fujin mondai to fujin no yōkyū* ( Bunmei Kyōkai, 1929), 121.
  124. Cited in Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai, ed., *Nihon Kirisutokyō Fujin Kyōfukai hyakunenshi* (Domesu, 1986), 526-527; see also *Jiden*, 144; and Kubushiro, *Haisho*, 170-71.
  125. Takeo Yazaki, *Social Change and the City in Japan from the Earliest Times through the Industrial Revolution*, transl. David Swain (Tokyo: Japan Publications, 1968), 334; Kurt Steiner, 'Popular Political Participation and Political Development in Japan: The Rural Level,' in *Political Development in Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 236.
  126. Yamanaka Einosuke, *Nihon kindai kokka no keisei to kanryōsei* (Kobundō, 1974), 215.
  127. Kubushiro, cited in *Jiden*, 145.
  128. *Jiden*, 150.
  129. The Peace Preservation Law passed in 1925 was directed against groups and

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individuals who advocated a change in the 'national polity' (*kokutai*) or who advocated the abolition of private property. Ambiguities in the law would later make it possible to increase the number of offenders and to increase government pressure on the women's movement. See Richard Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976),63.

130. *Jiden*, 150; Yoshimi, 155.
131. Kyōfukai, 528.
132. *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* citations of 10 March 1925 quoted in *Jiden*, 152.
133. For more on the activities of Diet supporters, see Murata Shizuko, 'Daigishi Yamaguchi Masaji to fujin sanseiken undō,' *Rekishi hyōron* 517 (May 1993):83-99.
134. *Jiden*, 155. It is believed that legal expert Hozumi Shigeto was the first to use the word *fusen* to apply to women in 1924. See 'Fusen mondai,' *Fusen* 1 (March 1927):10.
135. Ide Fumiko, 'Nihon ni okeru fujin sanseiken undō,' *Rekishigaku kenkyū* (November 1956):18-19.
136. Works on feminists' actions and discourse in the remainder of the interwar period abound. See, e.g., Garon, Mackie, Molony and Molony, and Popper.
137. Molony, 'Equality versus Difference,' 129-130.
138. See, e.g., Fujime Yuki, 'Zen Kansai Fujin Rengōkai no kōzō to tokushitsu,' *Shiron* 71, no.6 (1988); Sheldon Garon, 'Women's Groups and the Japanese State'.

**Barbara Molony, 'The State and Women in Modern Japan: Feminist Discourses in the Meiji and Taishō Eras'**

**COMMENT**

by

Ann Waswo

There are two facets of this paper on which I'd like to comment, but first I'd like to make some observations about the emergence of women as a topic of inquiry in modern Japanese studies. Today we are helping to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines, and back when the Centres were established in the late 1970s [and before Dr Hunter got to work] I think it is fair to say not only that Japanese women hardly featured at all in the existing scholarly literature, but also that hardly anyone thought their absence at all strange. I certainly didn't, even though I was mildly interested in the then relatively new field of women's studies and in at least some of the issues then being debated by American feminists.

This was brought home to me recently when, for another purpose altogether, I made a crude content analysis of the first [1978] and second [1996] editions of Kenneth Pyle's generally excellent textbook, *The Making of Modern Japan*. In the process I discovered two references to Japanese women in the first edition [out of a very meagre number of references, I might add] that hadn't bothered me at all when I had encountered them back in the 1970s, but which I now reacted to with some distaste. The first was the statement that the 'women, primarily young peasant girls' who made up almost 60 percent of the industrial workforce in the Taishō era 'were hardly the stuff of which radical labor movements are made' [p. 125]. The second was a long anecdote taken from Douglas MacArthur's *Reminiscences*, which concerned the presence of an alleged prostitute among the 38 women elected to the Diet in 1946 and the General's opinion that, as the woman in question had received over 250,000 votes, she must have got support from many more people than her customers alone [p. 162]. Both of these

references have been deleted from the second edition of the book, and a large proportion of the one hundred or so newly written pages of text interspersed here and there among the original pages concern women – in the home, in the community, in the workplace, from *bakumatsu* to the present day. While there had been no mention of ‘women’ in the index of the first edition, now there is an extensive entry. In the sense that a textbook on any subject reflects a prevailing episteme and synthesizes the research findings of other scholars, it would appear that Japanese women have finally won their place in history.

But to what effect? Political correctness and/or beguiling glimpses into the minutiae of daily life aside, what real insights do we gain from their presence in the narrative of history? Here I return to Professor Molony's paper and to my comments proper.

The first of these relates to the methodology with which the paper is infused. So long as historians and scholars in other disciplines remained content within the ‘prison house of language’ they inhabited, they were constrained to schematize reality into syntactically manageable compartments - either into such binary opposites as ‘for’ or ‘against’, or ‘the elite’ and ‘the masses’, or into that mystical trinity of characterizations that somehow gave western readers the sense they were getting an appropriately nuanced explication.

The invention of the notion of ‘discourse’ about and around all facets of an issue has opened new frontiers of conceptualization and understanding on this front, and we see an example of it here, in Professor Molony's focus on ‘discourses on women's rights’ from mid-Meiji to the mid-1920s. From the very outset she takes us beyond simple dichotomies and mystically compelling trinities into the complex and shifting ground of argument and activity over decades. In so doing she creates space for men as well as women, for small victories as well as defeats and - most importantly - for contextual change in how the key issues were perceived by diverse participants over time. In case you didn't notice, that was a trinity of characterizations, and I expect most of you resonated mystically with its cadence. At any rate, I think this discourse-based approach

takes us a lot further into understanding the historical experiences of Japanese women than, say, the now rather familiar narrative descriptions of the hardships of life for young girls from Hida or the passionate arguments about motherhood protection among the most famous Japanese Bluestockings that crop up all the time in 'traditional' histories of women in the Meiji and Taishō eras. Instead of surrogates for a complex historical reality, we are getting closer to the reality itself. Professor Molony is also to be thanked for getting us there with only a modicum of the theory and jargon that often makes the going rough for ordinary mortals such as myself.

Turning now to the second issue, I think Professor Molony's paper contributes in a useful, albeit indirect, way to the on-going academic rehabilitation of the imperial Japanese state. Much demonized by postwar scholars of diverse nationalities and diverse ideological persuasions, that state is beginning to emerge as a rather less omnipotent and occasionally less oppressive entity than generally portrayed in the past fifty years. While it would be mindless to go to the other extreme and treat it [or any state] as totally benign, just getting beyond the monolithic 'it' and starting to delve into the entire range of state behavior and the gamut of actors performing state functions over time makes great sense.

In Professor Molony's paper, we encounter not only 'heroic' resistance to the state, but also demands for inclusion in it and for the securing of state aid in eliminating oppression from other sources such as the workplace and, perhaps most crucially, the patriarchal family. The patriotism of some of the women she mentions, who associated women's rights with the strengthening of Japan vis-à-vis the West, is striking. We could, of course, dismiss this as a rhetorical flourish or as false consciousness, but I think that would be unwarranted. However masculinist the Japanese state may have been and however futile the efforts of some women to gain full rights of participation within it, there were clearly areas in which interests coincided and in which useful alliances between women and the state were forged. Improvements in sanitation and healthcare come immediately to mind. To an extent, no doubt a much greater extent than the demonic image would allow, the imperial Japanese state responded to popular

concerns, including the concerns of women. We still have a lot to learn about this dynamic, and more studies such as this one will contribute to the learning process.

## **'Saving the Nation', Saving for the Nation: The Japanese State's Promotion of Thrift after World War II**

Sheldon Garon

This paper is part of a larger project that examines the little known story of Japanese efforts to encourage saving and frugality from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Why do this? First and foremost, because we know very little about how, and to what extent, governments and cultures influence economic behavior. In a recent book, I examined several areas in which the modern Japanese state has intervened to shape the thought and behavior of its people, using the tools of 'moral suasion.'<sup>1</sup> I wish to carry this research into the realm of economics. Can a regime persuade its people to save more money and forego greater consumption?

The question is also relevant to one of the most puzzling aspects of the Japanese economy. How do we explain postwar Japan's relatively high rates of household saving? Economists and a few political scientists have variously emphasized rising real income, preferential tax treatment of savings, payment of semiannual bonuses, the accessible postal savings system, inadequate welfare programs, the preponderance of the populace in their earning (rather than retired) years, and the need to save for education, weddings, and home-buying.<sup>2</sup>

Every one of these factors enters into Japanese saving behavior. Yet - whether by themselves or taken together - they do not adequately explain why household saving rates have remained at fairly high levels since the early 1930s under a variety of economic conditions, interest rate regimes, and financial institutions. Since 1989, for instance, saving rates have not dramatically declined, contrary to the predictions of many economists. Rather they have hovered around 13 percent, and amid Japan's current financial crisis appeared to have risen by several percent despite abysmally low interest rates, stagnant incomes, a rapidly aging society, and the end of tax-exempt treatment for most accounts in 1987. Most inexplicable to neoclassical economists is Japanese saving behavior following the Oil Shock of 1973-74. Americans at the time appear to have behaved 'rationally': in a period of high inflation, they were dissuaded from saving and they borrowed heavily. In contrast, the Japanese people, faced with even higher levels of inflation, not only continued to

save substantial portions of their income, but attained their loftiest rate of household saving (23.2 percent) in 1976.

The one variable consistently left out in most analyses of Japanese saving is the formation of habits. In the course of the twentieth century, the Japanese people became accustomed to placing significant portions of their income in financial institutions and increasingly regarded thrift as desirable for a variety of reasons. This process of habit-formation was not entirely spontaneous, for it occurred amidst determined efforts by the Japanese government and private organisations to mold a 'culture' of saving and economizing since the turn of the century. Although the impact of these campaigns on economic behavior is difficult to measure, an appreciation of their scope and appeal will surely deepen our understanding of Japanese saving.

In addition, the prevalence of savings campaigns challenges us to re-examine central questions in the political, social, and cultural history of postwar Japan. The degree of 'transwar' continuity is one such question. Most accounts still treat imperial Japan and postwar Japan as if they were two entirely different societies. In reality, the postwar savings drives inherited much of the thinking, organization, and patterns of state-society relationships that underlay the 'diligence and thrift' campaigns of the prewar years and the 'spiritual mobilization' drives of World War II.

We also need to rethink conventional categories of 'Right' and 'Left'. The historiography of postwar Japan posits a fundamental cleavage between Right and Left (e.g., 'the 1955 system'), which is thought to have persisted until recently. To be sure, major disagreements between progressive and conservative camps arose over the status of the Japanese military or the role of the emperor. What would happen, however, if we were to examine the more mundane relationships between the state and everyday life?<sup>3</sup> The story of postwar savings campaigns is one of unexpected alliances among officials, women's groups, and social democrats. These patterns of cooperation demand explanation if we are to comprehend the thought and behavior of the leading postwar actors in all their complexity.



Finally, the focus on savings promotion furnishes new ways of looking at gender and politics. One of the most remarkable changes in Japanese gender roles during this century has been the transformation of the married woman from generally a producer to primarily a consumer and saver within the household economy.<sup>4</sup> These developing roles enabled officials to mobilize more and more women as local agents in the drives to encourage saving. At the same time, the mainstream of the postwar women's movement self-consciously defined itself around the cause of 'rationalizing daily life', which included the mission of teaching rank-and-file women how to save and economize.

### **The Prewar and Wartime Inheritance**

This paper showcases savings campaigns from 1945 to the early 1960s, for they were critical to establishing the infrastructure and assumptions underlying later savings promotion. By the same token, the early postwar campaigns must be understood in the context of long-term developments dating back to the prewar decades.

The 'encouragement of diligence, thrift, and saving' (*kinken chochiku shōrei*) is as old as modern Japan itself. Indeed, its origins may be traced further back to the Tokugawa era (1600-1868), when the shogunate and domain authorities regularly exhorted peasants to avoid extravagance, and agrarian reformers - notably Ninomiya Sontoku - preached the importance of 'diligence and thrift'. In 1875, just a few short years after the Meiji Restoration, the new regime instituted the postal savings system, and various savings banks and other banks followed. The task of persuading the populace to entrust their savings to modern financial institutions had begun.

The first truly nationwide savings drive occurred under the Home Ministry's pervasive Local Improvement Campaign (1906-18). The authorities sought to discourage popular consumption and to promote saving in an effort to finance Japan's military build-up and other projects following the Russo-Japanese War. In light of later developments, the most innovative aspect of the Local Improvement Campaign was its encouragement of 'regulated saving' (*kiyaku chochiku*) and 'group

saving' (*kyōdō chochiku*). Officials directed villages and towns to create 'savings associations' (*chochiku kumiai*). Each association was governed by regulations, which typically required members to make regular deposits (say, 10 *sen* each month). Members who failed to do so would be forced to leave the association. Moreover, members would commonly tender their monthly deposits to the association representative, who would then deposit the funds in the local post office or savings bank in the individual account of the member.

The spread of savings associations had a significant effect on savings behavior.<sup>5</sup> For one thing, it improved access to financial institutions for villagers and townspeople, most of whom did not have a post office or bank in their hamlet or neighborhood. The practice of regulated saving also served to 'accustom him [the farmer] to regular (weekly or monthly) saving,' according to the German advisor Paul Mayet, an early proponent of savings associations.<sup>6</sup> Above all, group saving involved the use of local hierarchy and peer pressure to induce households to save more than they would have on their own. Those in charge of the savings associations were usually village headmen, local notables, or one's landlord.

The 1920s and early 1930s witnessed several savings campaigns aimed at inculcating habits of thrift not only in the rural populace, but among urban consumers as well. In the Campaign to Encourage Diligence and Thrift (1924-26), the government made unprecedented use of the modern media—advertisements in newspapers and magazines, motion pictures, essay contests, and even radio (the latter inaugurated in 1925). Most eye-catching were the 2.3 million colorful posters that blanketed trains, temples, and public buildings.

The interwar campaigns were a good deal more democratic than the top-down drives of the past. Assisting the government were many women's organizations, including prominent suffragist and moral reform groups. Rather than simply exhort the people to save, campaign leaders sought to persuade households that saving and 'rational' consumption would bring 'improvements in daily life'. Proclaimed one poster in 1925, 'Diligence and Thrift: It's for Your Own Good, and the Good of the Nation'.<sup>7</sup>

After Japan embarked on full-scale war against China in 1937, officials launched a series of savings and austerity campaigns that continued until the nation's defeat in 1945. In 1938, the Ministry of Finance established a National Savings Encouragement Bureau, which coordinated the drives in tandem with the National Savings Encouragement Council and local savings encouragement committees. As Jerome Cohen noted, 'in contrast to Great Britain and the United States, Japan made no serious attempt to finance the war by any appreciable degree of taxation', nor to 'induce widespread bond ownership'.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the state relied, as in the past, on stimulating corporate and household savings, which were applied toward the purchase of government bonds. Although officials insisted on the 'voluntary' nature of national saving, compulsion in its various forms was at the core of wartime savings promotion.

The so-called front-lines in these campaigns were the 'national savings associations' (*kokumin chochiku kumiai*). Officials encouraged the creation of these associations, much as they had organized the turn-of-the-century savings associations - that is, to harness group pressures to increase local saving. By the end of 1944, there were 65,500 such associations with 59 million members.<sup>9</sup> National savings associations were organized in government offices, companies, schools, and among trade associations, youth groups, women's associations, and particularly neighborhood associations (*chōnaikai* and *burakukai*). Under the National Savings Association Law of 1941, the authorities could order the establishment of a savings association. And that, they did. Membership in effect became compulsory. Nor were members normally permitted to withdraw from their accounts without the approval of the association head, and only then, in the case of unforeseen calamities or accidents.<sup>10</sup>

What made the wartime national savings associations particularly coercive was the government's requirement that associations extract deposits from each member, based on the individual or household's ability to save. The Ministry of Finance devised detailed guidelines that stipulated the percentage of income to be saved, according to such factors as marital status, number of dependents, and whether one had experienced recent increases in earnings. Each year the ministry set a national

savings target. This target was then subdivided and allocated to prefectures, post offices, banks, and, at the lowest level, individual savings associations. Like a Tokugawa-era village when it came to paying taxes, neighborhood associations found themselves making critical decisions about whose daily consumption should be curtailed more, and whose less. By the time the war ended in 1945, the Japanese government had raised the annual national savings target more than 8 times what it had been in 1938.<sup>11</sup>

The impact of wartime savings campaigns in human terms was momentous. Official statistics indicate that Japanese were saving (or being forced to save) an astonishing 42 percent of income in 1944. Money that might have purchased scarce food, clothing, and shelter was being channeled toward a losing war.

### **Campaigns for ‘National Salvation’**

In retrospect, there was every reason to believe that the punishing savings campaigns of wartime would disappear with defeat and Occupation by the victorious Allied powers. Conventional portraits of the latter half of the 1940s highlight profound popular disillusionment with the elites who had mobilized and manipulated the nation. This was, after all, a time of intellectual ferment, marked by the resurgence of Marxist thought, an assertive labor movement, and Communist and Socialist parties. Materially the Japanese suffered from massive food shortages in 1945 and 1946. In the ‘People’s Rally for Obtaining Food’ on May 19, 1946, some 250,000 workers and city people demonstrated outside the Imperial Palace grounds.<sup>12</sup>

Equally important, U.S. officials in the Occupation seemed determined to dismantle the mechanisms that underlay Imperial Japan’s elaborate programs of ‘social management’ — the ubiquitous moral suasion drives included.<sup>13</sup> The Americans minced few words in condemning the compulsory aspects of wartime savings campaigns.<sup>14</sup> With an eye toward fostering democracy and autonomous civic groups, they also disapproved of the Japanese state’s penchant for mobilizing religious organizations, women’s groups, and neighborhood associations as intermediaries in the drives to encourage saving.

Nor would we have expected the Japanese people to embrace another austerity campaign after 1945. Most were exhausted by, if not downright angry at, the rapidly rising extraction of savings in the last years of the war. As the chief of the Postal Savings Bureau admitted in 1944, the growing ‘bureaucratic cast’ of savings encouragement activities was actually turning the people against saving, and the often unrestrained extraction of savings from each household created an additional set of problems.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the early postwar years seemed an odd time to ask citizens not only to boost their level of savings, but also to entrust their meager reserves to financial institutions. Wartime spending and mounting scarcities in food and other necessities had sparked rising inflation, which only worsened after defeat. Inflation eviscerated families’ savings. Most Japanese were forced to draw down their savings simply to buy food at exorbitant prices on the black market. Adding insult to injury, the Ministry of Finance forced postal savings depositors to indemnify the ministry’s Deposit Bureau for losses suffered from investing postal savings funds in Japan’s occupied territories. And if that was not enough to erode confidence in post office and banks, in March 1946 the government partially froze deposits (postal savings excepted) as part of an effort to reduce the money supply by converting Bank of Japan notes into ‘new yen’.<sup>16</sup>

Under the circumstances, it seems incredible that the bureaucracy of a defeated and occupied nation would continue wartime ‘spiritual mobilization’ as if little had changed. Yet that was precisely the course taken by the government of the ‘New Japan’. In November 1946, the Bank of Japan and Ministry of Finance launched the first of nine National Salvation Savings Campaigns, which ran successively until the end of 1949. Officials had proposed other names, but eventually settled on the emotive term ‘national salvation’ (*kyūkokoku*)—apparently at the suggestion of Fukuda Takeo, a young Ministry of Finance bureau chief. Fukuda remained a proponent of fiscal austerity and savings promotion throughout his subsequent political career, which culminated in service as deputy prime minister and then prime minister during the 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

The economic bureaucrats conducted the National Salvation Campaigns with a remarkable degree of self-confidence. They regarded national saving as central to economic recovery, indeed to national salvation. And they were convinced that if the people continued to make sacrifices as in the war, Japan would re-emerge as a major economy. As one finance minister inveighed in a 1947 radio address to the nation, 'reduce your daily living standard as much you can, economize, and above all save your unspent money'.<sup>18</sup>

A dramatic illustration of bureaucratic single-mindedness is to be found in Ikeda Hayato's savings-promotion speech to a gathering in Hiroshima in 1947. Ikeda was vice minister of finance at the time, although he is better known as the prime minister whose cabinet initiated the highly successful 'income-doubling plan' in 1960. A native of Hiroshima, Vice Minister Ikeda alluded to the city's devastation by the atomic bomb two years earlier, praising residents for their extraordinary efforts at rebuilding. Yet without wasting any more words on the human toll, he launched into an explanation of how economic recovery would come about only if the Japanese people all engage, in the parlance of the Meiji era, in 'diligence and vigorous efforts' (*kinben rikkō*) and submit to 'lives of austerity'. Ikeda thereupon mapped out the relationship between household saving and export-led development, which Japanese would hear repeatedly over the next several decades:

for the 80 million Japanese people to live and, in the future, live in a splendid cultural nation at a standard of living sufficient to contribute to the progress of the world in scholarship and the arts, . . . the one and only path, I believe, lies in the promotion of trade. . . We will therefore work for the increased export of manufactured goods. . . We will import as many raw materials as possible and then make as much money as we can processing them. Drawing on this income, we will import food and other commodities in short supply at home.

Ikeda acknowledged the difficulties Japanese manufacturers faced in competing on world markets, given the enormous wartime losses suffered from aerial bombardment and the shipping off of existing plant as reparations to Asian and Pacific nations. The one solution to this bind, he explained, was for the people to save all of their unspent income, which the government and banks would then invest in industry. Standing in Hiroshima, a city that had endured more than its share of suffering from the last bout of mobilization, this future prime minister starkly

concluded that only by continued austerity 'will our country exist in the future'.<sup>19</sup>

The government's obsession with savings campaigns may also be understood as a defensive reaction to perceived postwar trends in the rest of the world. Far from portraying the Japanese people as exceptionally prone to thrift and self-sacrifice, bureaucrats feared that Japan would fall behind other nations that carried out more successful savings drives. Within the Ministry of Finance, a new mantra was heard: 'whether victor or vanquished', the former belligerents (with the possible exceptional of the United States) were all engaged in austerity drives to bring about economic recovery. Mentioned prominently were the Soviet Union's New Five-year Plan, and nationwide campaigns in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands to subdue inflation and amass savings.<sup>20</sup> However, Japanese officials appear most impressed with the case of postwar Britain. That nation may have won the war, yet

the British have not chosen the easy path, but rather have austere maintained wartime controls on the principal daily necessities. . . . In the postwar era, they have even rationed bread, which had been freely sold in wartime. The British people . . . have persevered, wearing extremely old and shabby clothes, and eating small meals. Why must the victorious British maintain harsh lives of austerity? The answer, without a doubt, is that the money and material saved by lives of austerity can be applied, in full, to economic recovery. . . . In the near future, free trade will be re-established in the world. These people are in a hurry to establish a favorable position that allows them to strut on the stage of global economic competition.<sup>21</sup>

Just as remarkable as officials' faith in healing powers of austerity was their confidence that the grand campaigns of yesteryear could be mounted again with little popular resistance, and much cooperation. In 1947, none other than the finance minister, Kurusu Takeo, openly praised the wartime savings drives for their 'substantial' contributions to financing the national debt and subduing inflationary pressures. To his mind, the chief problem with the campaigns of the past were the ends, not the means. Whereas savings had been spent unproductively on the military, current savings would be invested in economic recovery. As for the campaigns themselves, 'the importance of accumulating capital has not in the least changed from wartime to the present'. The wartime drives had imposed a healthy discipline on the consumers, opined the finance minister. Unfortunately, 'following

the war, our people experienced a psychological liberation from these pressures [to save], and their sense of thrift hit rock bottom. Worse, their desire to consume, which had been suppressed during the war, burst forth with a vengeance and added fuel to the fire of inflation'.<sup>22</sup> Postwar savings campaigns, it seems, aimed at restoring the discipline of the bunker, albeit for more peaceful ends.

At the same time, Ministry of Finance officials grudged that they could no longer compel people to save, nor would the appeals of wartime still persuade. Their solution, however, was not to alter the campaign mechanism fundamentally, but to adopt new language. In a confidential document one year after surrender, ministry officials noted that wartime slogans of 'wage war until its successful conclusion' and all 'for victory' were passé. It would be more prudent now, they reasoned, to encourage saving on behalf of 'economic recovery' and 'revival of the realm'. They would further explain how saving directly benefited individuals and households.<sup>23</sup> As the president of the business-oriented *Nihon keizai shimbun* aptly observed, to distinguish itself from wartime predecessors, the postwar savings campaign 'must necessarily change its clothes'.<sup>24</sup>

If the National Salvation drive were to be a success, observed Ministry of Finance leaders, it would have to be a 'truly democratic people's campaign'. Had the bureaucracy jettisoned past preferences for mobilizing society in deference to popular initiative? Not exactly. Ministry planners defined a democratic people's campaign as one that persuades the people. That is, 'we plan to make people understand the absolute necessity of saving for the revival of the realm and building the economy of the New Japan. By cultivating a climate of opinion on behalf of saving, we aim to develop a democratic people's campaign'.<sup>25</sup> The 'people' were to figure in the new campaigns, to be sure, but as objects, not active subjects.

Although the early postwar savings campaigns in fact abandoned the most coercive practices of their predecessors, several central features of the wartime drives survived. As before, the government announced an annual savings target and, despite denials, allocated targets to each prefecture. Within each prefecture, targets were assigned by category to the banks, post offices, agricultural cooperatives, and



other institutions.<sup>26</sup> Another carryover was the wartime innovation of ‘model savings districts’. Officials worked with civic groups and financial institutions in designated neighborhoods, towns, and villages, with an eye toward making these districts exemplary cases for ‘those locales that save erratically and those classes that lack an understanding of saving’. Appearances of local autonomy notwithstanding, the model districts were expected to report the total amounts saved to the Ministry of Finance every quarter.<sup>27</sup>

The bureaucrats also devoted considerable energy to resurrecting the imperial order’s hierarchical networks of semiofficial and official groups. In the wake of defeat, they frequently bemoaned the damage done to what they matter-of-factly termed ‘the substructure of savings promotion’. Dissolution of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, the Greater Japan Women’s Association, and the Greater Japan Youth and Children’s Association had been a decided blow.<sup>28</sup> Officials voiced similar concerns after the Occupation dissolved the officially supervised neighborhood associations (*chōnaikai*) and village associations (*burakukai*).

But these setbacks proved to be temporary. The old youth and women’s associations may have been disbanded at the national level, but they continued to operate at the prefectural and local levels. Most were summarily renamed ‘social education groups’, for they assisted the Occupation and Japanese government in educating the populace about the new constitutional order and public health measures, in addition to encouraging thrift.<sup>29</sup> In 1947, the government earmarked 11,173,500 yen of the savings promotion budget for subsidies to these social education groups and other organizations. Some 48 percent went to local women’s associations (*fujinkai*). More surprising, the state continued the prewar and wartime practice of subsidizing Buddhist, Shinto, and Christian organizations for assisting in the savings campaigns.<sup>30</sup> This support was granted in spite of the recently effected postwar constitution, which explicitly prohibited the giving of public money to any religious institution.

### **The Impact of Early Postwar Campaigns**

The National Salvation Savings Campaigns were nothing short of thorough in

propagating their message by means of radio, newspapers and magazines, posters, and a horde of organizations, public and private. Yet did they effectively persuade the populace to save? There were, of course, limits to how successful any campaign could have been amid the dire circumstances confronting the Japanese people following defeat. In one survey taken in September 1948, more than half of the respondents replied that they were unable to save any money.<sup>31</sup> As late as the beginning of 1949, the Ministry of Finance acknowledged that the campaigns had yet to involve actively those below the middle classes and local leaders.<sup>32</sup> If measured strictly by household savings rates, savings behavior would indeed appear to have been unresponsive to official blandishments. Indeed, rates turned negative from 1947 to 1949, as families depleted their savings in order to survive.

By other measures, however, the National Salvation campaigns were highly successful. The rapid growth in total savings on deposit exceeded the wildest expectations of planners. During fiscal 1948 and first half of 1949, increases in total deposits were running at roughly four times what they had been during the first five months of the campaign (1946-47). What's more, the Japanese managed to increase savings during the late 1940s, when most were still struggling to make ends meet - and before the economic boom associated with the Korean War began in 1950.

Campaign sponsors noted two other achievements.<sup>33</sup> People had apparently heeded the advice to reduce consumption and expand savings ('from goods to money' was an oft-repeated phrase at the time). Whatever the price paid in poorer nutrition and greater discomfort, economizing in everyday life played a crucial role in checking inflation, the worst of which had passed by the end of 1949.

Second, the campaign did much to restore confidence in the nation's financial institutions. The government not only used moral suasion to reassure the populace of the safety of banks and postal savings, but also adopted several concrete measures. With great fanfare in 1947, it announced a complete end to the freezing of deposits, so that funds could thenceforth be freely withdrawn. The authorities, moreover, introduced incentives (or in some cases, reintroduced wartime provisions)

to encourage saving. Interest rates steadily rose under the campaigns (e.g., on one-year deposits, from 3.6 to 4.7 percent, May 1947-autumn 1949). Tax-exemption, within limits, was granted both to those who made regular contractual deposits through the national savings associations, and to depositors in the postal savings system. In addition, officials extended de facto tax-exemption to long-term deposits by restoring the presurrender practice of allowing savers to open deposits without registering their true name. Not surprising, these time deposits became extremely popular and accounted for the greatest number of new accounts. Over the course of the National Salvation campaigns, time deposits - as measured against all savings on deposit - rose from 2 to 25 percent. The most notable savings instrument at the time was probably the 'good fortune time deposit' (*fukutoku teikin\_yokin*). In an era when necessities were in short supply, these deposits offered not deferred interest, but immediate bonuses in the form of ten yen or hard-to-secure goods, such as saccharin, cotton thread, towels, and even sewing machines. Good-fortune deposits alone took in 37.5 billion yen from late 1946 to early 1949.<sup>34</sup>

The impact of the National Salvation campaigns may also be measured in less quantifiable terms, for they restored many of the cultural and organizational underpinnings of presurrender savings promotion. Organizationally, the Occupation-era savings campaigns provided the infrastructure for a major expansion of the promotional apparatus after Japan regained its independence in 1952. The transition was not entirely smooth, however. SCAP officials had tolerated and even encouraged the National Salvation drives - if for no other reason than that Washington expected the Japanese to get back on their feet by their own efforts and cease dependence on the U.S. Japanese-style savings promotion faced its first real challenge in September 1949. A U.S. mission head by Professor Carl Shoup advised the Japanese government to check inflation primarily by tax collection, rather than voluntary saving by the people. Concerned about widespread tax-evasion, the Shoup report further recommended abolition of unregistered deposits. Revenue officials would be given new powers to inspect bank records to ascertain the incomes of taxpayers.

Senior Japanese bureaucrats reacted to the Shoup report as they had often done in

the face of external pressures. They curbed the most visible manifestations of the campaigns. In December 1949, the government dissolved the Currency Stabilization Board, which had coordinated the drives. So ended the National Salvation Savings Campaigns. In reality, central agencies continued to direct and support the activities of savings promotion committees at the prefectural and local levels.<sup>35</sup>

The constraints on encouraging saving were rather short-lived. No sooner did Japan sign the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951 than the economic bureaucrats busily readied a new national organization to replace the Currency Stabilization Board. Established on April 15, 1952, just days after the Occupation formally ended, the Central Council for Savings Promotion became the nation's first state-sponsored organization to coordinate savings campaigns on a permanent basis. Though nominally 'nongovernmental', it has in fact been housed within the Bank of Japan and staffed by central bank officials. In 1987, the council changed its name to the Central Council for Savings *Information* - once again to deflect criticism from the U.S., which this time charged Japan with engineering 'oversaving'. Like its predecessors, the Central Council has aggressively promoted saving on several fronts - through the media, and in cooperation with schools, local governments, prefectural savings promotion committees, and national and grass-roots groups.

In political terms, the early postwar campaigns served to 'democratize' the consensus behind saving and savings promotion as a national priority. Surprising as it may seem, the postwar Left and other progressive groups did not, for the most part, challenge the Japanese bureaucracy's penchant for savings and austerity drives. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, during the prewar and war years, Japanese Protestants, middle-class reformers, social democrats, and women's leaders had cooperated closely with the imperial state in inculcating habits of thrift in ordinary Japanese.<sup>36</sup> These progressives might take issue with the government over maintaining licensed prostitution or, in the postwar era, for attempting to revive State Shinto or a formidable military. Yet like state officials, most progressives regarded household saving as morally good, central to 'improving daily life', and essential to economic recovery. So it was in 1947, when the Ministry of Finance employed the noted Christian socialist reformer Kagawa Toyohiko to lecture at a national

conference of savings promotion officers on the topic of 'Bringing Science to Daily Life'.<sup>37</sup> Nor does it seem so puzzling that the 1947 budget for savings promotion would grant the cooperative Japan Christian Federation a subsidy that was five times greater than that offered to either the Buddhist or Shinto federations.<sup>38</sup>

One might have expected Japanese socialists, like the Shoup mission, to have been cool to savings campaigns as a primary source of raising capital, preferring the more socially just alternative of progressive taxation. Instead, the early postwar leadership of the Japan Socialist Party embraced austerity and savings promotion with gusto. Their enthusiasm stemmed in part from the predominance of Christians at the top level, particularly Katayama Tetsu, who was Japan's first socialist prime minister in 1947-48. The Katayama cabinet aggressively continued the National Salvation Savings Campaign, the prime minister himself observing that 'the beautiful customs of diligence, thrift, and saving have long been fostered as a part of our national character'.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, his government mounted postwar Japan's first major 'New Life campaign', which sought to teach households how to save and budget effectively as part of its central mission of 'rationalizing' and 'bringing science' to daily life.

The Socialist Party and much of the labor movement supported savings efforts on other fronts as well. No less than the economic bureaucrats, early postwar socialists were shocked by the nation's hyperinflation, and they accepted the need to soak up purchasing power by persuading the populace to save more. In October 1946, the Socialist Party joined four centrist and conservative parties in the Lower House of the Diet in calling for just such a campaign to stabilize the Japanese yen and fight inflation. Only Communist Party members opposed the resolution. Although Marxist economists denounced attempts by conservative governments to break the labor movement by means of fiscal austerity and 'rationalization' of production during the 1950s, some vocally supported and cooperated with the Central Council for Savings Promotion's efforts to check inflation by fostering saving.<sup>40</sup> In addition, austerity and saving appealed to social democrats because they inhibited the wealthy from engaging in conspicuous consumption and advanced a communal consciousness, even if they did not equalize wealth itself. Surely it is no coincidence that in the

immediate postwar world, left-wing ruling parties -- from British Labour and to East European Communists -- ran sweeping national savings campaigns.

Within the workplace, millions of employees, many of whom were union members, welcomed the convenience and tax-exempt benefits of saving through company-based national savings associations. Moreover, as Andrew Gordon demonstrates, from the 1950s to the 1970s, wives of workers in large companies eagerly took part in employer-sponsored New Life movements and housewives' groups. There, sometimes to the consternation of their more militant husbands, they learned methods of household budget-keeping and cutting 'waste in daily life'. These experiences, Gordon concludes, were important to the efforts of business and the state to perpetuate anti-Fordist values. Rather than confidently endorse the vision of a vibrant economy based on high wages and domestic demand, many workers' families continued to believe that improvements in daily life would primarily come from restraining consumption and boosting savings.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, women became central to forging the consensus behind saving and promotional efforts. Women had not been the obvious targets or subjects of savings campaigns at the turn of the century. Urban and provincial middle-class wives began to assume the role of household managers during the interwar years, and, by necessity, state campaigns depended on ordinary women at the height of the China and Pacific wars, after most able-bodied men had been mobilized. Under the postwar National Salvation Savings Campaigns, officials similarly encouraged residential women's associations, most of which were based on the wartime organizations, to form national savings associations—so much so that savings associations became known as 'mothers' banks'. One of the principal tasks for leaders of these associations was to distribute government-issue household account books and teach other women how to use them.

SCAP discouraged the government from coordinating local promotion through hierarchically organized federations of women's associations as officials had done before 1945. But once the Americans departed in 1952, local women's organizations — with support from the state — coalesced into the National

Federation of Regional Women's Organizations (Zen Chifuren). Claiming some 7.8 million members at its peak in the early 1960s, the federation provided the footsoldiers in the savings campaigns of the next several decades. It was joined by other national women's federations, notably the women's section of the Agricultural Cooperatives (*Nōkyō*). Zen Chifuren's willingness to work with the state on behalf of promoting saving sometimes went to extraordinary lengths. In 1957, the women's federation restructured itself into seven regional blocs after receiving a sizable grant from the Central Council for Savings Promotion. The Central Council, of course, envisioned the blocs as vital to its own mission. To this day, annual bloc meetings of Zen Chifuren regularly are addressed by Bank of Japan officials, who subtly or not so subtly impress upon the women delegates the need for continued savings.<sup>42</sup>

Although there is much evidence of bureaucratic manipulation of these women's groups, women's involvement in the state's campaigns was rarely passive. On the contrary, what gave official savings drives much of their vitality was that they intersected and interacted with the energetic and autonomous efforts of the women themselves. The distribution of standardized household account books is a case in point. Getting women diligently to record income, expenditures, and surpluses has no doubt been the one of the most effective means of instilling habits of thrift in the postwar era. By 1970, half of all households surveyed reported that they kept household account books (41 percent of them regularly).<sup>43</sup> This achievement resulted in part from official encouragement, but customs of household account-keeping were also inculcated by housewives' magazines and organizations.

A pioneer figure in this regard was the progressive educator Hani Motoko. As editor of the magazine *Fujin no tomo* (Woman's friend), Hani had since the 1910s — before the great official savings drives — exhorted housewives to keep account books in their emerging capacity as rational managers of the home. She further spread the gospel of a 'budgeted life' through a nationwide network of readers' groups called 'friends' societies' or *tomonokai*. Hani's organizations shared with the state the quest to mold a culture of thrift, and she often cooperated with official savings drives before, during, and directly after World War II. In the 1947 budget, for example, the *tomonokai* received the sizable subsidy of 300,000 yen to assist the

National Salvation campaigns in furthering the use of account books.<sup>44</sup> By the 1950s and 1960s, growing legions of self-described 'housewives' were regularly keeping household account books published by *Fujin no tomo* or the more commercial housewives' magazines, notably *Shufu no tomo* (Housewife's friend). It did not particularly matter whether one used an account book issued by the government, which focused on the national economy, or by a housewives' magazine that sought to enhance the lives of women and their families. An account book was an account book, and their proliferation powerfully normalized the act of saving.

By the mid-1950s, national women's federations of various ideological stripes were openly working with government to persuade households to save. Curiously, one of the most enthusiastic organizations was the Housewives Association (Shufuren), which is usually portrayed as a fiercely independent consumer group. Under the charismatic leadership of Oku Mumeo, a prewar feminist with socialist leanings, the Housewives Association regularly participated in official savings campaigns to 'bring prosperity to our lives and to the nation's economy'.<sup>45</sup> Represented by Oku, the Housewives Association in 1954 became a member of the Central Council of Savings Promotion - along with the National Federation of Regional Women's Organizations and the women's auxiliary council of the Agricultural Cooperatives. To commemorate the wedding of Crown Prince Akihito in 1959, the three women's organizations and others began co-organizing the 'National Women's Meeting for "New Life and Saving"'. Co-sponsored by the Central Council for Savings Promotion and the state-funded New Life Campaign Association, the annual meetings bring together officials and delegates representing millions of women in an effort to monitor and devise strategies for rationalizing household finances.<sup>46</sup> They meet to this day.

If the early postwar drives were instrumental in democratizing and feminizing the apparatus of savings encouragement, they also kept alive prewar traditions of 'regulated saving' and 'group saving'. During the postwar era's first decade and a half, economic bureaucrats continued to regard the wartime national savings association as the linchpin of their promotional activities. As Ministry of Finance officials explained in 1947, 'augmenting savings is not simply a matter of voluntary



saving by the individual, but fundamentally requires cultivation within democratic savings associations based on mutual, collective encouragement'.<sup>47</sup> That same year the government revised the National Savings Association Law of 1941 so that membership in savings associations could not be compelled. Nor could the authorities any longer order the establishment of associations.

Yet key features of the wartime national savings associations remained in place. Under the National Salvation campaigns, as before, the central government directed prefectural officials to help organize or revive savings associations as rapidly as possible. Harking back to wartime rhetoric, one confidential memorandum by the Ministry of Finance bluntly declared that the agency desired 'total participation by the entire nation'.<sup>48</sup> Another memorandum detailed the ministry's plans to reinstate wartime guidelines that stipulated that those in workplace savings associations regularly deposit at least 10 percent of salary and 20 percent of bonuses.<sup>49</sup> The authorities were also instructed to seek out as heads of neighborhood-based savings associations local activists who could influence humbler folk. Lest there be any doubt that the national savings associations functioned as extensions of higher authority, the central government granted subsidies to the associations and their heads to defray expenses. The campaigns' unrelenting efforts paid off. By 1949, there were 80,000 national savings associations enrolling 10 million members. In addition to workplace and school-based associations, a single residential savings association was typically established in each village, town, and urban ward.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, most residential savings associations became based on the local women's association. Although the Central Council for Savings Promotion tended to report on the more active groups, we nonetheless have a record of the lengths to which these savings associations imposed a regimen of thrift on the community as a whole. Take the case of the award-winning 'egg saving association' in one rural community. Here we see the survival of the turn-of-century practice of converting 'diligence' to thrift — that is, encouraging residents to take up by-employments whose profits would be devoted in full to savings. Every Saturday directors of the association visited members' homes, gathered their eggs, and brought the eggs to the woman who headed the association. On Sunday a

wholesaler bought the eggs, and on Monday the head deposited a portion of the proceeds in each member's savings account.<sup>50</sup>

Contrary to economists' view of saving as individual or household act, such cases illustrate the often collective nature of Japanese saving in the first two postwar decades. Setting aside money could be quite public, subject to group pressure and a measure of one's status as a skillful homemaker within the community. To be sure, many savings associations were more impersonal and functioned merely as vehicles for securing tax-exemption for deposits. Yet these, too, were governed by regulations that required one to make regular deposits, thus strengthening habits of thrift among a sizable portion of the population. In 1963, the National Savings Association Law was repealed, in response to concerns over rampant tax-evasion and the recognition that communal solidarity was breaking down in some areas. To receive the benefits of tax-exemption for small accounts, one no longer needed to save through a group.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, saving money remained a social act for many full-time housewives. Local women's groups, 'daily life schools', and rural 'daily life improvement circles' continued to teach methods of keeping household accounts and saving for old age. They often do so supported by official subsidies within the Central Council for Savings Promotion's model 'life planning and savings districts' (a total of 526 in the early 1990s).

### **The Legacy**

It is commonly held that the austerity of the early postwar years ended with the high growth era that began in the mid-1950s. In the catch phrase of the time, consumption — not thrift — had become the leading 'virtue'. Unquestionably real income rose rapidly during these years, and most Japanese increased their levels of consumption substantially. Nonetheless, household saving rates remained high and even increased between 1955 and 1972 (from 12.2 to 18.2 percent). This behavior may be explained by a number of factors, but previous and continuing efforts to instill the habits of saving and economizing surely constitute a significant element. Few Japanese fully embraced consumerism as a virtue. Government and leading women's groups welcomed improvements in consumption, while warning, in words still heard today, that households must strike a 'balance' (*baransu*) between saving

and consumption.

The people's carefully cultivated anxieties about their own financial constraints and those of their resource-poor nation burst forth again at the time of the first Oil Shock in 1973-74. As women's magazines actively recalled the austerity of the war and early postwar years, the public seemed highly receptive to the campaign of government and private groups to reinvigorate the virtues of 'economizing' and saving, if the Japanese economy were to recover. It is no coincidence, I believe, that Japanese saving rates reached their highest level during the mid-1970s. Rates of household saving declined during the 1980s. However, with the collapse of the 'bubble economy' and the onset of Japan's prolonged recession that began in 1991, Japanese once again seem receptive to messages of 'economizing' and saving. As before, housewives' magazines like *Shufu no tomo* and *Fujin no tomo* reinforce the government's promotional efforts with story after story about clever homemakers who eliminate wasteful consumption and keep accounts (now, often with the aid of computers). Contrary to most predictions, household saving rates have stabilized around 13 percent since 1989. And if the spike in savings rates since late 1997 is any indication, they may go higher.

What conclusions should we draw from the history of postwar savings campaigns? First, savings promotion is a key element in the politics of everyday life that has generally united state and society in postwar Japan. Although most Americans would bristle at being encouraged to save and to moderate consumption, Japanese (especially housewives) generally continue to view 'thrift' as a good thing and a moral duty, if not a definition of what it means to be Japanese. For women's groups, participation in official campaigns has long been regarded as source of empowerment. On the other hand, the cooperative relationships between women's groups and the government that developed around savings promotion have probably inhibited the emergence of a more autonomous women's movement. Socialists are no longer as impassioned about savings promotion, as they were in the days of the Katayama cabinet. Yet one rarely hears left-wing criticism of the government's long-standing programs to inculcate thrift and forestall American-style consumption.

Second, there is the thorny question of the extent to which savings campaigns affected actual behavior. Certainly, at its most extreme - during World War II - moral suasion succeeded in raising saving rates to sky-high levels. And in times of pessimism, during the early postwar years and the 1970s, campaigns and accompanying incentives have no doubt encouraged greater savings. During the high-growth era, from the mid-1950s to 1973, Japanese probably would have saved at impressive levels, with or without government programs. Nevertheless, rates would no doubt have been lower in the absence of household account books, children's banks, national savings associations, and tax-exemption for small accounts.

Finally, whatever the actual relationship between savings promotion and saving, postwar Japanese governments have devoted substantial resources to encouraging saving in the belief that a culture of thrift can be effectively molded. Although some officials today (particularly in the Ministry of Finance) are skeptical of the efficacy of these efforts, many other bureaucrats and women's leaders are convinced that Japanese young people will turn spendthrift without school savings programs and ongoing moral suasion.

Nor are these views confined to officials and activists. Witness a recent survey of public opinion by postal savings authorities. Respondents were asked to comment on a number of aphorisms about saving and consumption, including the phrase 'Luxury is the enemy' (*zeitaku wa teki da*). The saying was a relic of the desperate days of World War II. Yet as late as 1993, some 33 percent of the sample still agreed that 'luxury is the enemy'.<sup>52</sup> To Americans, such preferences make little sense — that is, until we appreciate how this culture was formed and re-formed.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> See Charles Yuji Horioka, 'Why is Japan's Private Saving Rate So High?' in Ryuzo Sato and Takashi Negishi, eds., *Developments in*

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- Japanese Economics* (Tokyo: Academic Press/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Japan, 1989), 145-78; Kent Calder, 'Linking Welfare and the Developmental State: Postal Savings in Japan,' *Journal of Japanese Studies* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1990):31-59; Fumio Hayashi, *Understanding Saving: Evidence from the United States and Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).
- <sup>3</sup> See Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, chap. 5.
- <sup>4</sup> Kathleen S. Uno, 'Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labor,' in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 17-41.
- <sup>5</sup> Okada Kazunobu, *Chochiku shōrei undō no shiteki tenkai* (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 1996), 43-44, 52-53.
- <sup>6</sup> P[aul]Mayet, *Agricultural Insurance, in Organic Connection with Savings-Banks, Land-Credit, and the Commutation of Debts*, trans. Arthur Lloyd (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893), 72-73.
- <sup>7</sup> [Naimushō] shakaikyoku, *Kinken shōrei undō gaikyō* (Tokyo: Shakaikyoku shakaibu, 1927).
- <sup>8</sup> Jerome B. Cohen, *Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 85-86.
- <sup>9</sup> Ōkurashō zaiseishi hensanshitsu, *Shōwa zaiseishi*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Tōyō keizai shinpōsha, 1957), 235.
- <sup>10</sup> Okada, *Chochiku shōrei undō*, 101.
- <sup>11</sup> Ōkurashō zaiseishi hensanshitsu, *Shōwa zaiseishi* 11:230-36.
- <sup>12</sup> Joe Moore, *Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power, 1945-1947* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 89-91, 181-83.
- <sup>13</sup> Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 150-51.
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. State Department, Interim Research and Intelligence Section, [and] Research and Analysis Branch, 'Control of Inflation,' Report--R & A no. 2451, 1 October 1945, reprinted in Ōkurashō zaiseishishitsu, *Shōwa zaiseishi: Shūsen kara kōwa made*, vol. 20 (Tokyo: Tōyō keizai shinpōsha, 1982), 491-92; Cohen, *Japan's Economy*, 86.
- <sup>15</sup> Nakamura Jun'ichi, 'Chochiku zakkan,' *Teishin kyōkai zasshi*, no. 429 (June 1944):3.

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- <sup>16</sup> Yamaguchi Osamu, *Yūbin chokin no hyakunen* (Tokyo: Yūbin chokin shinkōkai, 1977), 118-20.
- <sup>17</sup> Chochiku zōkyō chūō iinkai, *Chochiku undōshi: Chozōi 30 nen no ayumi* (Tokyo: Chochiku zōkyō chūō iinkai, 1983), 15.
- <sup>18</sup> Yano Shōtarō, “Ōkura daijin rajio hōsō: Chochiku kyōchō jūkan ni saishite kokumin ni uttau,” 12 June 1947, p. 5, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 21, *Sengo zaiseishi shiryō* (hereafter cited as SZS), Ministry of Finance.
- <sup>19</sup> ‘Jikan chochiku kōen shiryō,’ 5 April 1947, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 1, SZS.
- <sup>20</sup> ‘Ōkura daijin rajio hōsō,’ p. 1, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 21, SZS.
- <sup>21</sup> ‘Jikan chochiku kōen shiryō,’ Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 1, SZS. For an account of British austerity policies, see Susan Cooper, ‘Snoek Piquante,’ in Michael Sissons and Philip French, eds., *Age of Austerity* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), pp. 33-54.
- <sup>22</sup> [Kurusu Takeo], ‘Ōkura daijin kōen genkō,’ 16 September 1947, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 36, SZS.
- <sup>23</sup> ‘Chochiku zōkyō hōsakuan,’ secret, ca. August-September 1946, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 1, doc. 4, SZS.
- <sup>24</sup> Obama Ritoku, in ‘Shitsumonkai: Nihon keizai saiken no shujuso – infureeshon to chochiku,’ *Fujin no tomo* 40 (Dec. 1946):3.
- <sup>25</sup> Ōkurashō, [Ginkōkyoku], ‘Chochiku zōkyō ni kansuru ken,’ ca. June 1946, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 1, doc. 3, SZS.
- <sup>26</sup> E.g., Tōkyō-to tsūka antei suishin iinkai, ‘Tōkyō-to [cho]chiku zōkyō hōsaku,’ ca. Oct. 1946, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 1, doc. 26, SZS; Nihon ginkō Kyōto shiten, “Kyōto-fu kyūkokū chochiku undō kin’yū kikanbetsu mokuhyō narabi tasseigaku,” ca. Jan. 1947, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 1, doc. 52, SZS.
- <sup>27</sup> Ōkurashō, ‘Chochiku jissen mohan chiku setchi yōryō,’ ca. April 1947, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 7, SZS.
- <sup>28</sup> Ōkurashō, ‘Sensō shūketsugo ni okeru kokumin chochiku no zōkyō ni kansuru hōsaku (sankōan),’ 6 Sept. 1945, Noda bunsho, Chochiku

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- zōkyō taisaku, 1945-52, SZS.
- <sup>29</sup> See Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 157-60, 187-89.
- <sup>30</sup> Ōkurashō, 'Shōwa 22 nendo yobikin shishutsusho,' ca. Oct. 1947, pp. 28-30, also p. 9, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 3, doc. 8, SZS.
- <sup>31</sup> Tsūka antei taisaku honbu, 'Yokin ni kansuru seron chōsa,' Nov. 1949, p.2, Noda bunsho, Chochiku dōkō, 1947-51, doc. 7, SZS.
- <sup>32</sup> Ōkurashō, 'Chochiku suishin kabu kikō no kongo no un'ei ni tsuite,' ca. Jan. 1949, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 4, doc. 44, SZS.
- <sup>33</sup> Tsūka antei taisaku honbu, 'Chochiku undō sankanen o kaiko shite,' Nov. 1949, pp. 5, 8-10, Noda bunsho, Chochiku dōkō, 1947-51, doc. 6, SZS; Tsūka antei taisaku hombu, 'Yokin ni kansuru seron chōsa,' Nov. 1949, p. 1, Noda bunsho, Chochiku dōkō, 1947-51, doc. 7, SZS.
- <sup>34</sup> Chochiku zōkyō chūō iinkai, *Chochiku undōshi*, 16-17.
- <sup>35</sup> Chochiku zōkyō chūō iinkai, *Chochiku undōshi*, 22-27.
- <sup>36</sup> Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*.
- <sup>37</sup> 'Dai 3-kai zenkoku chochiku jimu shokuin kōshūkai,' 17 September 1947, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 3, doc. 1, SZS.
- <sup>38</sup> Ōkurashō, 'Shōwa 22 nendo yobikin shishutsusho,' p. 30, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 3, doc. 8, SZS.
- <sup>39</sup> 'Kyūkokū chochiku tokubetsu undō ni kansuru Katayama naikaku sōri daijin dan,' 1 September 1947, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 2, doc. 46, SZS; see also Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 163-66.
- <sup>40</sup> Especially Suzuki Tsuru. Interview with Tachi Ryūichi (former professor of economics, Tokyo University), 27 November 1996.
- <sup>41</sup> Andrew Gordon, 'Managing the Japanese Household: The New Life Movement in Postwar Japan,' *Social Politics* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1997):245-83.
- <sup>42</sup> E.g., *Zen chifuren*, no. 231 (15 November 1995):3, and no. 232 (15 December 1995):3; Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 189-92.

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- <sup>43</sup> Chochiku kōhō chūō iinkai, *Chochiku to shōhi ni kansuru seron chōsa*, 1996 (Tokyo: Chochiku kōhō chūō iinkai, 1996), 146.
- <sup>44</sup> Ōkurashō, 'Shōwa 22 nendo yobikin shishutsusho,' p. 29, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 3, doc. 8, SZS.
- <sup>45</sup> *Shufuren dayori*, no. 88 (15 September 1956):4; also Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 186-87.
- <sup>46</sup> Zenkoku chiiki fujin dantai renraku kyōgikai, *Zen chifuren 30 nen no ayumi* (Tokyo: Zenkoku chiiki fujin dantai renraku kyōgikai, 1986), 52.
- <sup>47</sup> Ōkurashō, 'Shōwa 22 nendo yobikin shishutsusho,' p. 10, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 3, doc. 8, SZS.
- <sup>48</sup> [Ōkurashō], Ginkōkyoku, Kokumin chochiku-ka, 'Shōwa 24 nendo kyūkoku chochiku undō hōsaku yōkōan,' 5 April 1949, p. 3, Aichi bunsho, Chochiku: Chochiku zōkyōsaku, 5, doc. 4, SZS.
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- <sup>50</sup> *Chochiku jihō*, no. 20 (April 1954):120.
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- <sup>52</sup> Yūbin chokin ni kansuru chōsa kenkyūkai, *Dai 5-kai chochiku kōdō to chochiku ishiki ni kansuru chōsa hōkokusho*, 1994 (Tokyo: Yūbin chokin ni kansuru chōsa kenkyūkai, 1994).



**Sheldon Garon, 'Saving the Nation', Saving for the Nation:  
The Japanese State's Promotion of Thrift after World War II**

**COMMENT**

by

Gordon Daniels

Professor Garon's refreshingly original paper suggests that Japanese savings policies and behaviour have often been distinctive. It also indicates that state activity - at times resembling policies in Europe - has been a significant element in the history of Japanese savings.

In establishing a postal savings bank in 1875 (only fourteen years after Gladstone founded Britain's Post Office Savings Bank) the Meiji Government was clearly aligning itself with modernising tendencies.<sup>1</sup> Government-supported postal banks not only provided accessible financial institutions for citizens who lacked them, but created a material link between an individual's financial security and the state. This gave citizens an additional vested interest in the new political regime. In the parlance of the 1990s, lowly Japanese subjects could become stakeholders in the Meiji state. Undoubtedly the modern Japanese state - like governments in Europe and North America - wished to encourage thrift, but how far were states successful agencies of actual saving, as opposed to agencies of savings propaganda?

Even in Britain, which pioneered state-backed post office savings banks, much nineteenth and early twentieth century saving was linked to voluntarism and non-state collectivism. By 1910 British friendly societies had opened more than 30,000 local branches, and helped the Government to administer its first sickness benefit system.<sup>2</sup> Some Western studies of Japanese communities also emphasise voluntarism rather than state organisations in pre-war and early post-war savings activity. Writing in the late 1930s, when Japanese state power was allegedly at its height, John F Embree observed 'more money is tied up in *Kō* than in bank, village credit association, and postal savings put together'.<sup>3</sup> How widespread such patterns were, is a promising theme for further research.

As Professor Garon indicates, the Second World War was a time when elements of compulsion and quasi-compulsion propelled much national savings activity in Japan.

Indeed, at the Imperial Conference (1 December 1941) which decided on war with Britain and the United States the Minister of Finance Kaya Okinori clearly emphasised the importance of savings in maintaining wartime financial stability.<sup>4</sup> Three months later the Japanese capture of Singapore was followed by intensified national savings campaigns, rather than any lapse into consumerism. No doubt the depth and intensity of Japanese savings extraction policies appear distinctive, but even these tactics may have been inspired and paralleled by policies in Europe. British war savings schemes had been pioneered during the First World War when Savings Certificates and National Savings Stamps had been introduced.<sup>5</sup> In the Second World War the National Savings movement was even more active, and pervasive. In his classic study of wartime Britain Angus Calder wrote:

‘Savings was by 1943 an even more obvious national obsession than salvage. The National Savings campaign spent greater sums on advertising than the Ministry of Food itself . . . .After the six o’clock news every Sunday the BBC broadcast ‘Weekly Savings News’. Special ‘drives’ had already produced a series of local occasions in every big city, with parades, ‘speechifying and exhibitions on the same scale as those in honour of the Red Army - War Weapons Weeks in 1941, Warship Weeks in 1941-42.’ In the spring and summer of 1943 Wings for Victory Weeks were in progress all over Britain’.<sup>6</sup>

Yet one might note that large financial institutions were often called in to meet ‘British savings targets which could not be achieved by citizens’ savings’.<sup>7</sup>

It is in the post-war years that an increasing divide developed between British consumerism and the Japanese predisposition to save. Yet even in these years there were interesting complexities within Japanese attitudes. In the early 1950s, when Richard Beardsley, John Hall and Robert Ward investigated a rural community in Okayama, experiences of war and defeat seemed to have weakened the prestige of overtly government-linked savings institutions. The Michigan researchers wrote :

‘Nearly all the houses in the buraku keep their savings in the form of credit in the Agricultural Co-operative Association. The exceptions are negligible. Past experience may partly account for this. Prewar savings other than those in the local co-operative were either frozen or made difficult to withdraw until the post-war inflation had pushed prices so high that Hiramatsu Hisa, when she finally drew out her postal savings, had just about enough to buy some sweets’.<sup>8</sup>

In the post-war years the Japanese Government lent considerable sympathy to Agricultural Co-operatives - but in this rural community there appears to have been significant friction between different forms of state encouraged savings activity.

In the decades following the Second World War a wide variety of states sought to mobilise savings activity to stem inflation and support social stability, but in Britain wartime collectivism soon weakened, and post-war austerity produced widespread exasperation.<sup>9</sup> Consequently savings and austerity not only appeared the enemies of consumerism, but of individualism and democratic choice - increasingly powerful themes in post-war British society.<sup>10</sup> What appears distinctive and striking in the post-war Japanese experience is not only the maintenance of high savings rates but the central position of post office savings in Japanese life. Clearly the tax privileges accorded to these accounts is in large part responsible for their success.<sup>11</sup> But the continuing linkage which Professor Garon notes between saving, national welfare, rationalism and modernity in savings propaganda, and in the minds of millions of Japanese, seems remarkable. In contrast one might note the winding up of the United States postal savings bank in 1966, and British Chancellor Nigel Lawson's statement that he had found the National Savings administration 'moribund' in the early 1980s.<sup>12</sup> The lowly position of National Savings in post-war British society is also evident from its omission from virtually all serious histories of the period.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Garon perceptively suggests that high rates of saving in Japan are the product both of government encouragement and of the particular demands of post-war life, in particular for higher education and health care. But is this an improvised conjunction of circumstances? Or does it represent a deliberately created socio-political economy? In the pre-Thatcher period Britain's economic policies seemed designed to minimise personal competition by developing progressive taxation and welfare services. In contrast, was Japanese savings strategy part of a planned structure of meritocratic competition in which success and status were gained by individual effort, underpinned by saving? Should this be the case saving is not simply a long standing Japanese tradition but the core of a distinctive democratic strategy, which appears to have echoes in the policies of the current British Government.

## Endnotes

- 1 For the background to Gladstone's initiative see *Committee to Review National Savings, Report* (Chairman Sir Harry Page) June 1973 (London H M S O, Cmnd, 5273) pp. 101-103. For a brief account of the development of National Savings in Britain see *125 Years of National Savings 1861 to 1986* published by the National Savings organisation (1986). The French Government did not establish a post office savings bank until 1881.
- 2 J Doward, 'Full circle for societies friendly to the Poor,' *The Observer* 5 July 1998.
- 3 J F Embree, *Suye Mura, A Japanese Village* (Chicago, 1939) p. 147.
- 4 N. Ike (ed), *Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences* (Stanford, 1967), p. 274-275.
- 5 *125 Years of National Savings, 1861-1986*, (1986), pp. 6-7.
- 6 A Calder, *The People's War : Britain 1939-45* (London, 1969), p 355-356. By 1943 there were almost 300,000 individual Savings groups in Britain.
- 7 ibid., p 356
- 8 R K Beardsley, J W Hall and R E Ward, *Village Japan* (Chicago, 1959) pp.205-206. R P Dore in *City Life in Japan, A study of a Tokyo Ward* (London, 1958), p. 32, emphasises the widespread ownership of shares in private companies by small investors after the war.
- 9 For the cultural climate of the years of post war austerity see M Sissons and P French (eds), *Age of Austerity, 1945-1951* (London, 1963).
- 10 British National Savings responded to consumerism in 1956 by instituting Premium Bonds — the interest on which was invested in an electronic lottery. (*125 Years of National Savings (1986)*), p.15. Britain's poor savings performance in recent years was highlighted in A Browne, 'Why Britain is the nation without a saving grace' *The Observer* 5 July 1998.
- 11 *Japan, An Illustrated Encyclopaedia*. Vol 2 (Kodansha, Tokyo 1993), p. 1222.
- 12 N. Lawson, *The View from No 11, Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London, 1992), p. 117.
- 13 Eg. P Clarke, *Hope and Glory, Britain 1900-1990* (London 1996); K O Morgan, *The People's Peace, British History, 1945-1990*; (Oxford, 1990) A Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (Harmondsworth, 1982).

# **Federalism in Japan - Only a Fancy?**

by

Werner Pascha

## **1. Why is federalism an interesting subject with respect to Japan?**

Usually, Japan is associated with a heavily centralised structure. This holds both for the organisation of government and for economic performance. In this context it is agreed that the concentration of economic performance in the Kanto area around Tokyo is not the result of an autonomous process, but is heavily influenced by the geography of the centralised political power structure. Centralisation and concentration on Tokyo seem to be accepted as a 'quasi-law' in Japanese studies and beyond, similar to the presumed 'group-orientation' of Japan, the 'vertical society', the dominance of long-term relationships, the character of the 'developmental state', etc.

Many of these latter concepts are increasingly being questioned - and have probably always raised eyebrows among those knowledgeable about the limitations of these (over-) simplified concepts. Is it reasonable to argue that the centralism of Japan is not to be seen as 'given' either? This is the first question to be discussed. Next, we will present the economic case for and against a stronger role of the regions in the Japanese administrative set-up. Finally, we will discuss the possibilities of implementation and the dynamics of any process heading into this direction.

For clarification, two things should be mentioned before entering the discussion. First, this paper deals with the division of power between the 'nation state' of Japan and the next lower level of jurisdictional units, currently prefectures. It does not cover municipalities (cities, towns, villages). Second, it does so from an economist's point of view and the goal is to discuss normatively the optimum size and distribution of labour of jurisdictional units from the point of view of the welfare of the individual. Doing so, political-economic considerations about the dynamics of institutional choice in the Japanese context are also raised.

## 2. Unipolarisation and centralisation in Japan: not a 'given' fact

Three major arguments can be put forward to deny the concept of the heavy concentration of power in Tokyo (Japan = Tokyo = Kasumigaseki) the status of a socio-economic 'quasi-law':

1. Looking back in history, it can be shown that the role of the centre in Japan has always been somewhat ambiguous - at least far more ambiguous than is usually perceived.
2. Looking at the history of ideas and the political decision-making process, discussing alternative jurisdictional set-ups has a rather long tradition.
3. Recent changes in the global economy have strengthened the case for reconsidering the distribution of functions, whatever may have happened before.

These three will be discussed in turn.

### 1. Evidence from history

The *bakuhau* system of the Tokugawa period was, according to John Whitney Hall (1968, p. 375), characterised by 'relatively independent local territories'. The sense of regional identity was strong. With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, as is well known, the domains (*han*) led by regional hereditary lords (*daimyō*), were soon, in several steps, replaced by prefectures (*ken*), and prefectural governors were appointed by the national government in the early '70s. The number of today's set-up of 47 sub-national units (43 of them termed *ken*, three - at that stage - called *fu*, and one, the 'frontier province' of Hokkaido, referred to as *dō*), had already been reached in 1888. Since then, there has almost been no change in the geographical division of jurisdictional units - apart from Tokyo changing into a *to*, having led to the whole set-up's being referred to as the *todōfuken* system. This stability may have contributed to the impression of an unchangeable, almost 'natural' structure.

When Hall talks of the 'relative independence' of territories, it is obvious that such 'independence' was far from perfect during the Tokugawa period. Hall himself states that the regional lords (*daimyō*) were only autonomous to the extent that they fulfilled

the expectation 'to administer their territories' properly; certainly, Hall adds, 'all daimyō were well-accustomed to receive and act upon instructions' (1968, p. 375). There was no constitutional safeguard for the autonomy rights of the regions; on the contrary, as the ultimate goal was to stabilise the Tokugawa leadership, the system was intentionally structured to give the *bakufu* the ultimate means to order whatever was deemed instrumental to this goal.

It may also be pointed out that particularly during the period of the Warring States (1467-1568), neighbouring jurisdictions felt little trust towards each other. It therefore needed a strong central power to keep the regions at bay in what might be termed a 'centralized federalism'.<sup>1</sup> Even with this reservation, though, it seems clear that the relationship between centre and regions was a very delicate one and the *han* were far more important than is usually perceived.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the post-Tokugawa period, at first sight it appears to be characterised by a rather stable set of 'nation state-cum-prefectures'. However, there was considerable change as to the relationship between nation and prefectures as determined by laws and ordinances. Up to the 1920s it is possible even to discern a trend towards somewhat more local autonomy (*chihō jichi*), a keyword already much in use during the Meiji period. The 1890 Prefectural Code defined the role of the prefectures in handling their business more clearly by introducing Prefectural Councils for this purpose. Universal male suffrage, introduced in 1925, led to more citizen participation, and in 1929, the Home Ministry lost the power to make peremptory cuts in the prefectural budgets (Kodansha 1995, p. 78). The tide reversed, however, with the mobilisation drive of the 1930s, ideologically prepared by the nationalistic state reform movement which left little scope for local or regional, let alone individual autonomy. Another important and somewhat related factor was the growing fiscal strains on the prefectures and municipalities; it appeared that they were unable to fulfill what was expected of them during the nationalist drive.

In the post-war period, due to the drive for national economic reconstruction, the 1930-1940 system was more or less kept intact, despite attempts in the post-war reforms to strengthen local autonomy.

There are different views as to how much leeway the regions actually possess. In what is usually considered the 'conventional view', the dominant role of the central government is stressed, exemplified through the seemingly strong position of the Ministry of Home Affairs (*Jichishō*; literally Ministry of Local Autonomy). Particularly in the 1970s, though, so-called revisionist authors began to stress the existing possibilities for regions (and localities) to pursue their own policies (e. g., Samuels 1983). This change of attitude was certainly influenced by the temporary success of leftist parties in the regions which successfully objected to Tokyo policies. In this context earlier experience was reappraised, for instance, the history of the 'dissident' administration of Kyoto since the 1950s under the late governor Ninagawa (Krauss 1980, Gotoda 1985). Although the impetus of this movement later declined, it shows that there is more to the possibilities of regional autonomy in Japan than first meets the eye.

Summing up, there were two periods in which there was a strong push towards centralisation, i.e. the early Meiji reforms, which tried to safeguard national primacy, and the 1930-1940 mobilisation, the legacy of which is still unbroken, with some movement towards decentralization at other times. This is not untypical of other countries, which also show a rather ambivalent attitude, wavering between the extremes of total centralisation and strict decentralisation,<sup>3</sup> with some institutional pressure towards a more pervasive role of the centre.<sup>4</sup> Thus, with Japan not being a special case, historical evidence for repeated attempts at local autonomy should not be ignored, despite two strong movements towards centralisation, both with a lasting impact.

## 2. Ideas

Neither should it be ignored that moves to increase regional autonomy and to build a federalised structure have always accompanied Japan's modernisation. At least since



the 1920s, the idea of *dōshū* ('states') has come up<sup>5</sup> now and again. Important supporting groups have been the Kansai Federation of Industries (*Kankeiren*) and the Japan Chamber of Industry and Commerce (*Nihon Shōkō Kaigisho*). It is noteworthy that voices from the Kansai area around Osaka, which was the No. 1 national business centre before it lost its position to Tokyo, have been particularly outspoken. Table 1 gives an overview of major recent initiatives by Kankeiren in this respect. Although these initiatives towards a federalized system have been continuously frustrated, they have been put forward with amazing regularity under the 'cover' of different supporting arguments in line with topical concerns. This can easily be shown for the late 1960s, for instance, when concerns for the environment and Kakuei Tanaka's plan for restructuring the Japanese archipelago served as a 'carrier' for the message to give more weight to the regions.

Apart from the idea of decentralization (*bunken*), which implies a limited reclassification of government functions, and the regional state system (*dōshū-sei*), which implies strong regional jurisdictions on the basis of economic externalities and scale economies, there exists the concept of a federal system (*renpō-sei*) in a purer sense, with a connotation of democratic empowerment and subsidiarity (e. g., Imidas 1997, pp. 352-353).

Most recently, the idea has come up again in various think tanks and organisations. For instance, the so-called *Heisei Ishin* (Heisei [period] Restoration) movement, inspired by management guru Kenichi Ohmae, took it up in the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Also, the Kyoto-based PHP Institute, associated with the late entrepreneur Kōnosuke Matsushita (National/Panasonic brands), made it one of its themes in the mid 1990s (Eguchi 1996).

The background for this recent interest is the discussion on administrative reform, which intensified in the 1990s. In June 1993, the Diet passed a resolution on promoting regional decentralization (the respective catchphrase is *chihō bunken*). On this basis, various committees discussed proposals, which in 1995 led to a Law to Promote

Decentralization (*Chihō Bunken Suishinhō*) being passed. According to this new piece of landmark legislation, a Committee to Promote Decentralization (*Chihō Bunken Suishin linkai*) has been put in charge of developing specific proposals. There is a time frame of five years for the Committee to do its work, and as of mid 1998, four reports containing recommendations had meanwhile been published. In May 1998, the government prepared a comprehensive plan for promoting decentralization based on the recommendations delivered by the committee.<sup>7</sup>

Federalization was not an option seriously taken up by the government bodies based on the 1995 law, though. Actually, it had already been turned down in the first wave of reports following the 1993 resolution (Muto 1998, p. 1). Although the proposed changes may be far-ranging when the status-quo of centre-periphery relations in Japan is accepted as the point of reference from our point of view here, only somewhat limited changes to the system are discussed, *not* changes regarding the character of the system in terms of a 'transformation'. Aspects covered include a redistribution of taxes between national and local levels, a reform of the system of vertical fiscal transfers, a re-classification of government functions, including an abolishment of so-called agency delegated functions, which allow for extremely little leeway for regional entities, etc.

Nevertheless, the fact should not be ignored that the 'official' debate is very much influenced by actors who have a stake in the current system and who would probably lose out in a more radical shift. For instance, after the 1993 Diet resolution, six local government associations set up a committee to discuss decentralization. It represented the prefectural governors, speakers of prefectural assemblies, city mayors, speakers of city assemblies, town and village mayors and the speakers of the town and village assemblies. It comes as little surprise that they recommended 'maintaining the present prefectural system as a regional local government and city/town/village as a basic local government' (Muto 1998, p. 1).<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, it is more important to realise that the new political process in favour of limited decentralization opened a 'valve' for also airing more radical proposals that

gained some public attention. Looking at this phenomenon from another point of view, however, it cannot be totally excluded either that some of the proponents of a radical *dōshū* or federalised system only wanted to give themselves the appearance of being particularly brisk by proposing rather outrageous and seemingly utopian demands and suggestions, in order to gain popularity or to raise the chance of settling down with at least a few tangible improvements.

### 3. The impact of globalisation

The interest in *dōshū* and *renpō* has not only arisen from factors characteristic of Japan, though, but has to be seen in relation to world-wide trends. Economic 'globalisation' in terms of the growing mobility of capital and other factors of production, the increased and complex interrelatedness of economic activities and the enhanced competition for economic locations (*Standorte*) calls into question traditional divisions of labour between levels of jurisdiction. This was, for instance, the explicit background of Ohmae's proposals to reconsider the role of the (Japanese) nation state and 'The Rise of Regional Economies' (subtitle of Ohmae 1995).

In this debate, the question is asked as to what extent the interest of the nation - understood as the sum of the interests of its individuals - can still be looked after by policies at the national level. To the extent that - say - the economic situation of Hokkaido is very different from Kansai - due to different clusters of industries, with more or less international penetration - it makes little sense to concentrate government activities at the national level. This holds in particular, if - as is often claimed - the interests of the citizens become ever more heterogeneous.

Another aspect, to which we will return later, is that hope for additional competition between jurisdictions may help to break the impasse of true reform at the national level. Such reform is necessary because of the turbulent global economic environment, which is continuously slowed down because of the ubiquity of vested interests in well-established advanced societies. Seen from this perspective, it is noteworthy from a

Japanese point of view that its main competitors and partners in the world economy, especially North America and Europe, are also considering or even implementing systemic change with respect to the levels of appropriate jurisdiction. As for the US, there has been a rather lively debate on federalism in recent years (e.g. Kenyon/Kincaid (eds.) 1991; Rivlin 1992 with the pointed title *Reviving the American Dream*). How to set free (and not to throttle) forces of economic dynamism in Europe is one of the most pervasive topics on the European unification process (e. g. Apolte 1997 and the vast literature listed there). In Germany, a reorganisation of the federal system is also seen by many observers as both a fiscal necessity (because of a skewed system of horizontal fiscal transfers between the *Länder*) and a chance to set free dynamism through rearranging economic incentives in the public sector (Ottvad/Linnartz 1997). As for the UK, constitutional change to give more autonomy to the regions is one of the main themes of the new Labour government.

### **3. The case for and against an enhanced federal structure for Japan**

Based on the ongoing debate, a couple of factors can be identified which call for a far-reaching reform of Japan's jurisdictional system. There are also some factors which speak against such change, although they are not entirely convincing, as will be argued below. The strongest case against such reform can be made on the ground that it may be unrealistic to achieve, as will be discussed in more detail in part 4. However, even in this respect some reservations are due - apart from the argument that some two thirds of social science reasoning would have to be scrapped if the criterion of the probability of implementation would be upheld.

The major arguments in favour of reform (1, 2) and the major counter-arguments (3 - 5) are:

1. the inefficient current set-up
2. the induced competition among jurisdictions
3. the lack of regional awareness or identity
4. the significant differences in economic circumstances among regions
5. the danger of a competitive 'race to the bottom' with respect to the deliverance of public goods.

Each will be discussed in turn.

## 1. Deficiencies of the current set-up

Nobody can seriously doubt the need to reform the relationship between the (nation) state and the prefectures in Japan. As for local finance, an important basis of any power relationship between centre and regions, the current structure of duties, obligations, fiscal transfers, local taxes, etc. is extremely complicated<sup>9</sup>, and even experts admit to the fact that they cannot fully comprehend the level and distribution of financial flows. These flows are by no means marginal. Prefectures and municipalities account for around two thirds of all public (net) expenditure in Japan, but they receive only some 40 per cent of their financial revenues from local sources. Consequently, there is an extremely large vertical and non-transparent transfer controlled by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Some other striking evidence is presented in Figure 1. It shows the vast differences between income and expenditure in the various prefectures. Some of the richest prefectures collect about twice as much in taxes than they are able to spend because of the transfer system, while some of the poorer, more peripheral prefectures spend twice as much as, or more than they collect in taxes. While it certainly is one of the reasons for the state acting as intermediary between public income and expenditure to counterbalance different capabilities and needs to follow superior goals, it is hard to avoid the impression that Japan's system is well beyond a reasonable level of transfers.

For an international comparison, refer to Figure 2. As can be seen, Japan has the largest share of (net) local expenditure (encompassing both prefectures, *Länder* etc. and lower levels) among leading advanced economies. However, the gap between tax income and expenditure (which is visualised as the horizontal distance between the division marks in the upper (tax) and lower (expenditure) column for each country) is also clearly the highest among this group - apart from the UK, where there is a rather heated debate on the far-reaching redefinition of the role of the regions. Based on the

1994 data utilised for Figure 2, the gap is 27.9 percentage points for Japan, yet only 7.1 for Germany, 6.6 for the US, 11.8 for France, and 25.3 for the UK.

The case for change rests on the argument that a) the distribution of functions, b) the legal set-up, and c) actual implementation reflect a historical path in which the logic of federalism, i.e. allocating the functions of state to the level most adequate to handle it (taking into account externalities, economies and diseconomies of scale, etc.), plays but little role.

For instance (a), most observers agree that the standardization of education and policing go well beyond the point of optimality. Possibly the most famous example - also utilised by former Prime Minister Hosokawa when he was prefectural governor - is the setting up of bus stops, which has to be authorised by the national Ministry of Transport. Of course, all advanced economies experience an increasing interrelatedness of national and local tasks, as a result of which there occurs a hollowing out of the possibility to strictly distinguish between national and local/regional spheres of action. However, it is quite clear that Japan has gone overboard in giving central authorities a say in local matters which have few interregional externalities and for which there are few convincing (meritocratic) arguments in favour of uniformity or national standards.

As for the lines of command and responsibility (b), basic common-sense rules have so far not been followed. For instance, the prefectural governor is to some extent answerable to the prefectural assembly and thus to the population of his jurisdiction which elects him, but much of his work is done as an agent for the national government. To that extent, he is answerable only to the national government. This confuses the extent to which he is responsible for his actions, and the information cost for the principals, the voters, is considerably raised.

Finally, as for implementation (c), the influence of the Ministry of Home Affairs is obscure and difficult to ascertain. Apart from fiscal non-transparency, it rules not only

through formalised statutory channels (finance, approval and permission, delegation, see Samuels 1993, p. 39), but also through the intangible networks of human relationships (administrative guidance, personnel policy). Ministry officials will typically have moved back and forth between ministry positions and posts in selected regional jurisdictions. In the end, they often become knowledgeable and influential enough to be successful in gubernatorial elections. This leads to further confusion of authority and responsibility, familiar from other parts of the government, and which is correctly blamed for the situation. (Like in the cases of MoF, MoT or MITI, this does not imply that the mechanism may not be effective under certain circumstances to achieve goals like economic growth, but it is not effective as the means of controlling the actual performance of the authorities with respect to an efficient production of public goods).

It is instructive to look at the background of prefectural governors (Table 2). It can be seen that governors fit well into the network system of Japanese bureaucracy. In 1993 almost half of them had a Faculty of Law degree from Tokyo University. Their professional background in most cases is either the Ministry of Home Affairs or the local bureaucracy; outsiders are rare. Few governors are party members, but most are supported by a large ad-hoc coalition of parties. Hence, there is little open competition or programmatic struggle. All too often gubernatorial elections are set cases based on predetermined bargaining.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Induced competition

What has been said so far lends support to a reform of the relationship between the centre and the regions, but not necessarily to a federalised structure. Indeed, as has been mentioned before, the current move towards regional decentralization has already taken up many of the aforementioned problems and is heading towards solving at least some. For instance, the incentive- and control-incompatible agency delegated functions of local governments (*kikan i'nin jimu*) are to be abolished - although the central government wants to retain some powers (consultation, agreement, etc.) even for 'strictly' local functions (*jichi jimu*) (Muto 1998, especially p. 11).

Stressing the role of competition, though, implies that there should be a more encompassing devolution of authority towards the regions, which may as a consequence be characterised as a *dōshū*-type (regional states) or *renpō*-type (federal) structure. Only actors who possess significant leeway in their decision-making power - and who will be held responsible for their actions - can behave appropriately in a competitive environment. To prepare this argument, it is helpful to first to have a brief look at the literature on federalism.

Apart from the somewhat static aspect of an adequate distribution of labour between different levels of jurisdiction, which in the general literature is sometimes summarised under the concept of 'fiscal federalism', in recent years the idea of 'competitive federalism' with its stress on dynamic factors has gained a lot of ground (e.g., see Kenyon / Kincaid 1991, pp. 8-10). Regional governments have to compete for capital and people, forcing them to avoid slack, to streamline their activities and in general to make it attractive for its citizens and for those keeping capital there. Reactions are to be expected both at the level of income (tax breaks for companies, etc.) and of expenses (less costly services, etc.).

Noting the immobility of reform at the national level in Japan, one may hope for some more dynamism at the regional level. This may not hold for all regions, but even if only some of them achieve significant reform, this will be a success and may even put more pressure on the regions lagging behind. It should be stressed that not only may one expect (more) competition between regions, but also between the centre and the regions. Leftist pressure from prefectures is already said to have pushed the national government towards more activist environmental policies around 1970 and towards at least some support measures for small and medium enterprises in the early 1950s (Gotoda 1985). For a very recent example, Kanagawa Prefecture is a case in point, having announced in mid September, 1998, that it may have to cut costs and thus may not be able to participate in a national programme of fiscal stimuli to overcome the



recession (Tott 1998). This message has to be understood against a background of mounting debt of local governments and plans by the national government to cut local corporate taxes in early 1999, i. e. diminishing local income even more. While it is unclear whether this regional 'revolt' is (only) meant to achieve a redesign of the tax reform in favour of regional finances or whether it is motivated by serious doubts about the extent to which another round of a public-spending-dominated stimulus package maybe able to turn the economy around, it shows how strong and self-confident regions can effectively shake up regional *and* national matters.

Kindleberger (1996, pp. 11-13) has taken a rather sceptical stance on which government functions can be appropriately allocated to the national and to the regional level; according to him, that depends on many aspects and it tends to be path-dependent. However, even the transfer of power back and forth may be helpful for development, because such change shakes up institutions and makes societies resist entropy and sclerosis as a result.

As for the boundaries between what may become 'states' within the federation of Japan, there have so far been no convincing administrative units beyond the levels of prefecture. Still, the boundaries of the areas served by the regional electricity companies, what is loosely referred to as 'regions' (*chiho*) in many government publications and working groups, and, more recently, the set-up of larger regional blocks for electoral reform already give an idea of what may be sensible regional units.<sup>11</sup> As the smaller Japanese islands of Hokkaido, Shikoku and Kyushu can be said to form natural regional 'states', the real issue is in fact how to partition the main island of Honshu. A considerable number of suggestions have already been made, with a typical attempt presented in Figure 3. Apart from the smaller islands, eight 'states' are assigned to Honshu, giving a total of eleven. Most of the boundaries are - arguably - quite obvious and to some extent even natural. For instance, Shin'etsu Hokuriku covers the 'backside' of the strong Pacific belt regions towards the Sea of Japan.

There is one region, however, needing further explanation. This is the area around Tokyo, which is separated into three 'states', i.e. North and South Kanto plus Tokyo itself, which, as a 'city state', may or may not have some special status. To combine Tokyo with parts of North and/or South Kanto or with both would lead to a 'super state' towering over its smaller neighbours in terms of economic size. Moreover, the city-type problems and issues of Tokyo would make it difficult to find a fruitful working relationship with its 'provincial' parts.<sup>12</sup> There is dissatisfaction in and around Tokyo already regarding the fact that many commuters live outside Tokyo and pay their (local) taxes, sometimes without a feeling of belonging there, while Tokyo takes care of their daytime needs.

The proposal sketched out above implies that Kansai would be the largest Japanese 'state' in terms of GDP, ranking no. 6 in the world in 1991,<sup>13</sup> between the UK and Canada. The Tokyo Special Region would be no. 10, somewhat below Spain. The weakest region state, Shikoku, would be somewhat smaller than Indonesia (Eguchi 1996, pp. 184-185). It comes as little surprise that this kind of proposal originated in the Kansai area. In another effort, Ohmae selects somewhat wider boundaries for what he calls the Tokyo Capital Sphere (*Tokyo shuto ken*), and this would rank first in Japan and no. 3 in the world, between Germany and France (as of 1993).<sup>14</sup> Kansai would be down in second place, while a diminished Rest-of-Kanto would occupy fifth rank within Japan.

Apart from competitive federalism, it should be noted that there also exists the concept of a 'cooperative federalism', under which the different levels of jurisdiction would work together by 'sharing and mutual accommodation (e.g., comity)' (Kenyon/Kincaid 1991, p. 7). This idea has gained ground through America's New Deal, but its inherent weaknesses, e.g. the propensity towards wasteful collusion, are well known. Japan thus fits the international classification; it does not constitute a special case.

Of course, all concepts of federalism have their inherent weak points and one should now discuss any possible problems, if Japan is to be reorganised on the basis of the ideas of fiscal and competitive federalism.

### 3. Regional identity, spirit and economic circumstances

Frequently, the argument can be heard that in the case of Japan a federal structure does not make sense, because there is a lack of regional identity. Firstly, the factual statement behind it is somewhat difficult to ascertain. There is little doubt that some sense of regional identity does exist and movements like 'one village, one product' may have contributed to a possible trend in this direction. There have recently been efforts to reappraise regional identity and extensive evidence can be found for this (Kreiner (ed.) 1996).

Apart from that, competition among the regions for key industrial projects can easily be traced. For instance, there was a scramble to set up industrial combines in the Kanto, Kansai and Chūbu area in the 1950s and '60s as well as for the establishment of new international airports. After Tokyo (Narita) and Kansai (in Osaka Bay) it is now Nagoya which is pushing forward its plan to build a new site in front of Chita Peninsula. One may even claim that the reason for central élites having made so many efforts to imprint the ideology of centralism into everybody's mind has been because groups, 'clans' or regions can so easily be made to develop a strong sense of belonging together and of competing against each other.

However, these considerations may well be off the mark anyhow. Regional identity may be helpful to the extent that its boundaries are identical with - or at least *not smaller* than - the outer limits of the externalities which regional jurisdiction is supposed to rectify and the range of public goods which it is supposed to serve most efficiently under the given economies of scale. If regional identity exists on this scale, it is helpful to ensure that the variance of (economic) interests within the jurisdiction is smaller than beyond.

Nevertheless, it is usually not problematic, if the sense of belonging also reaches *beyond* the boundary of the jurisdiction. For competition among jurisdictions a high degree of mobility is helpful. If the feeling of belonging is not reduced in too strict a fashion, this helps capital and people to migrate and thus 'vote with their feet'. Taking a side view at the US or Europe, it is obvious that the success of federal structures does not depend very much on a corresponding sense of identity (e. g., the 'new' states along the American frontier, which were often formed for purely administrative convenience, or the cases of some 'synthetic' German *Länder*, like Northrhine-Westphalia, which were founded by an *ordre du mufti* during the period of Allied occupation). As for Japan, it can be shown that interregional mobility of people is quite high; citizens do indeed react to structural changes in this manner, while this behaviour is particularly noteworthy between urban regions (Matsukawa 1991).

What is more important is that problems may arise if the sense of identity is smaller than the jurisdiction (e. g., Belgium with its Flemish and Walloon part); in that case, solidarity within the region may be difficult to achieve.

Applied to Japan, somewhat ironically, the real problem may not even be that - say - the region states of Shikoku and Kyushu would find it too difficult to define their own identity, but rather that there may be too many subregional or local identities left *within* the regions, making it difficult to realise all potential benefits. For instance,<sup>15</sup> although the idea of federalism is often forwarded from within Kansai, the peculiar and rather distinct character of its three major cities - Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe - may constitute a problem, if these subregions find it hard to reach a compromise. Currently, Kankeiren is promoting some 170 projects around the region, claiming the case that regional cooperation is important. To some extent this large number may be due to the fact that to reach a compromise, all parts of the area covered wanted to be represented with some kind of translocal project.

In general though, the lack of too much regional identity so often mentioned serves the purpose of introducing federal structures from the point of view of at least competitive federalism. Actually, and again somewhat ironically, the often contended Japanese nationalism may serve a positive purpose in this context. Nationalism, as used here, implies that mobility across national boundaries may be impeded. Usually, one of the problems of competitive federalism is that enhanced competition may lead to resources being moved abroad and not serving the interests of any of the jurisdictions for which competition was introduced in the first place. If the national boundary is also a barrier for mobility, though, competitive pressure is - to a considerable extent - limited to the nation, and *one* of its regions is bound to profit from mobile resources. If citizens are 'nationalistic' enough to accept such an outcome, which may well change the balance of regions *within* the nation, then this helps to reach acceptance of the whole scheme and a realisation of its benefits.

#### 4. Too much heterogeneity among the regions?

Another aspect which influences the feasibility of a federal concept is the homogeneity/heterogeneity of the different region states - particularly with respect to two indicators: size and level of economic activities. The more equal the partners, the less the necessity for major fiscal transfers, which may easily lead to bad feelings, moral hazard behaviour of the weaker regions and disincentives for the stronger regions.

Let us compare the potential Japanese region states - usually about 9 to 11 - with the US states and the German *Länder*.

In terms of economic size (most conveniently measured as GDP), the biggest regional state in Japan would be Kansai, if 11 states were formed. As compared to the smallest regional economy, Shikoku, the difference would be 6.6:1. If Kanto was united as a 'Greater Kanto' (North and South Kanto plus Tokyo), the ratio would be 14.7:1. Even with respect to the second largest region in that scenario, the difference would still be 2.2:1 (see Figure 3). In the USA (Bureau of Economic Analysis 1998, based on 1993

personal income data), California has the biggest economy, while Wyoming's is the smallest; the ratio is a remarkable 75.9:1, well beyond any configuration in Japan. With respect to Germany, Northrhine-Westphalia possesses the biggest economy, while Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's is the smallest (Statistisches Bundesamt 1994, pp. 34-35; based on 1993 GDP data). The ratio between the two is 22.5:1, so it is even bigger than in the case of a Greater Kanto regional state. This evidence quite contradicts the argument that the differentials among the potential region states in Japan would be too large for any federalized system to be feasible.

Of course, there is not only economic size to be considered, a federal structure is not only an economic, but even more so, a political issue. Population size may absorb most of the forces involved in that respect. With respect to Japan, the order of regions does not change very much if compared with what was noted about economic size: Kansai has the largest, Shikoku the smallest population, the ratio being 4.8:1. If we assume a Greater Kanto (with a population of approximately 39.8 million), the ratio rises to 9.4:1. Differences would thus be smaller than with respect to economic size. Put differently and thus constructing another indicator, the potentially largest state, Greater Kanto, would comprise some 32 per cent of the total population. As for the United States, the ratio between the state with the largest and the smallest population (again California and Wyoming) is 66.5:1, which is well beyond any Japanese value. California itself, with its population of only some 31 m. people (in 1993) contains only 12 per cent of the total population. Due to its size and the vast differences, the USA, as is well known, is organised into 50 states, giving even its biggest member states only relatively little weight. In the case of Germany, Northrhine-Westphalia is largest also in terms of population (17.7 million); incidentally, this is some 22 per cent of the population, distinctly lower than for Japan. The German city state of Bremen has the smallest population; compared to the largest state, the ratio is 25.8:1. While this is generally believed to be too much of a difference, Japan's maximum possible ratio would be much lower, even in case of a Greater Kanto.

Finally, the feasibility of a federal system may also depend on whether the level of productivity and technological expertise is not too diverse among member states. While this may be the hardest criterion to operationalize, a possible solution could be to accept per capita income (or per capita GDP) as a proxy. On this basis, in Japan the Tokyo Special Region is clearly the most 'productive' area, while Shikoku has the lowest GDP per capita (based on Figure 3 data); the ratio is 2.6:1. In case of a Greater Kanto, though, somewhat weaker areas on the periphery of and beyond the Kanto plain are included, lowering the indicator value. The ratio then turns out to be only 1.6:1. Looking at the US, Connecticut registered the largest per capita personal income in 1993, while Utah ranked lowest. The ratio was 1.8:1, which is comparable to the situation in Japan. Turning to Germany, the strongest state is Hamburg, the weakest Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (based on 1993 GDP data), giving a ratio of 4.3:1, much higher than in Japan's case. However, doing such a calculation may not be very meaningful, because Hamburg is a city state, while the new *Länder* of the former GDR can still not really be compared with the productivity level of the Western parts. If we compare Hamburg with the weakest *Land* in the Western part (Rhineland-Palatinate), the ratio changes to 2.0:1. This is somewhat lower than when comparing Tokyo to Shikoku. If only Western area states are compared (highest indicator value: Hesse, lowest: again Rhineland-Palatinate), the ratio is decreased to 1.4:1. This is still somewhat less, but only marginally, than if we compare the area of Greater Kanto with Shikoku.

It may be argued that the more qualitative aspects are not covered in the above analysis. For instance, it has frequently been pointed out how information channels and actual flows of bits of information are very much concentrated on Tokyo and the more sophisticated parts of the value-creation chain are localized there. Many companies even from the peripheral regions, have moved their headquarters to Tokyo, or at least their strategically important departments. All this implies that concentration on Tokyo may be more pronounced than indicated by GDP per capita data. This argument is difficult to verify, but circumstantial evidence suggests that the status of Tokyo in relation to the other regions is indeed higher than is the case of New York in the USA or

Frankfurt (or, possibly, the Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan region) in Germany. Still, this argument should not be overdone: To some extent, Tokyo's role depends on the very fact that there is no federal system. If there were, Tokyo's role would almost certainly decrease, just as in the case of the US or Germany. Of course, this process could not be undertaken without friction.<sup>16</sup>

Summing up, what has been said implies that a federal structure with Greater Kanto or Tokyo as one of its region states would be somewhat off balance; although, based on various indicators, Japan with its unipolar structure is less different from federally organised nations, like the US or Germany, than is often assumed.

Still, requests for fiscal transfer would be significant, and it would be difficult to compete at an even level. There would probably be an important role for the national government to act as a mediator between Kanto and the other regions, and this would seriously dilute the benefits of jurisdictional competition and subsidiarity. Even if the Kanto area were to be divided into two or three region states, the problem remains that externalities across the boundaries of the Kanto-based region states would be significant and some further layer (or, again, the national government) would be needed to coordinate the Kanto-based states.

Whatever the solution, due to the historical path having created so much imbalance, the role of the national government as a regulating authority would remain strong. As we will see below in part 4, this may even serve a positive purpose.

##### 5. Will competition lead to 'a race to the bottom'?

So far, within a federal structure we have assigned to competition a positive value. Doing so, we have assumed that the current system of government is working with too much slack and that, as a *leviathan*, it actually delivers too many unwanted goods, ever more growing through the discretionary powers of the bureaucrats, or is inattentive to the need for what may loosely be called 'encompassing economic reform'. If competitive



pressure reduces the size of government, it is not clear, though, whether this process will stop at the 'optimum level' of deliverance of public and meritocratic goods within an efficient organisational structure. Rather, it might be expected that competition will force the size of government to be reduced further. This tendency is much discussed in the current literature on the pressure on taxation in a globalised economic environment, and similar concerns also hold for competitive federalism (issue A). As for the need for 'reform', it is unclear whether federalization would provide for the very incentives that would lead to such reform (issue B).

### Issue A

In the case of Japan, the problem may be particularly serious, because the Japanese state is usually considered to be less overblown than is the case with some European welfare states, for example. Therefore, the danger of suboptimality of government may turn up rather early. It could be argued that, although the fiscal size of the Japanese government may not be too overblown, there is clearly too much regulation needing to be scrapped. However, it is debatable whether competition would primarily take the form of deregulation. The reason is that regulation and deregulation are somewhat lacking in transparency. Even in the case of formal deregulation, at an informal level the old networks may stay intact. There is considerable information asymmetry, therefore, and regional governments will probably prefer the clearer signals of reducing taxes (and thus reducing expenses) to attract mobile resources. Consequently, suboptimality of the provision of public goods may still be a problem and the prospects for deregulation somewhat overestimated.

It has been argued that within a federal structure competitive pressure would be misunderstood, if it were only thought of in terms of heading towards a reduction of government activities. Indeed, jurisdictions also have to attract financial and human capital by offering a stable social environment, good education facilities, public safety, etc. In the long run, competing jurisdictions may have to move within a rather narrow band of options, avoiding excessive government activities on the one hand and too little care on the other (Fisher 1991).

## Issue B

Apart from the *level* of public activities, we have raised the point of whether the *field* of such activity would be appropriate. Figure 4 presents a typical attempt to differentiate between what type of functions should from a reformist point of view be taken care of by the nation, by the regional states and by the basic self-governing areas (municipalities). As can be seen, the proposal is quite similar to what is usually understood as sensible demarcation lines in Western federalist thought. For instance, defence or foreign relations are clearly understood to be tasks performed by the federal government, while many aspects of public safety (police forces) or public utilities are issues of the states, and most aspects of education (apart from standards) can safely be left to the municipalities. As a critical observer, one may note that this set-up is not free of overlapping competencies, and even in such topical cases as regulating the financial system, which would be assigned to the national level, according to figure 4, the regions make their influence felt through providing (or, indeed, not providing) public utilities, like means of communication, engaging in relevant skill development activities, etc.

The actual behaviour of the region states is, of course, difficult to foresee. However, Japan has a reputation for excessive competition to develop within a number of institutional arrangements. Probably, a strong national regulating authority will be needed as a mediator<sup>17</sup> also from this point of view, in order to make sure that cut-throat competition of regional jurisdictions in the short run does not lead to basic standards of government action being disregarded.

Incidentally, potential 'excessive competition' is a well-rehearsed argument of the national bureaucracy against a decentralization of power, well known from the discussion on competition and industrial policy. This problem is not peculiar to Japan, though, and as suggested in the existing literature on federalism (Kincaid 1991), it can and should be taken care of by a suitable institutionalisation of mediation.

Another argument frequently heard from national bureaucrats is that there is too much incompetence at the prefectural and municipal levels. While this argument may have held in the early Meiji period, when it was already put forward, it carries little persuasive power today. Intellectual capacity is not reduced to the graduates of a few faculties of a handful of universities any more. While changing to a new system may involve friction, because older local bureaucrats are not yet used to the new level of decision-making power and may have problems in adapting, this should only be a rather short-term issue.

#### **4. Is federalism feasible?**

In the final part of this paper, we have to drop one further assumption. So far, we have only discussed the (net) benefits of an established federalised system for Japan. What has not been covered, though, is how easy or difficult it is to realise such a new set-up, even if one may be able to show that net benefits could indeed be realised. Both issues are rather important. In institutional economics, it has recently been stressed that it cannot be taken for granted that the most efficient institutional arrangements will eventually just happen.

Obviously, it is not easy to implement federalism in Japan. Although it has often been put on the political agenda, all attempts have failed. Two of the most recent attempts mentioned above, the initiatives of the *Heisei Ishin* and of the PHP Institute, also came to nothing. The Heisei Movement somehow collapsed after Kenichi Ohmae proved spectacularly unsuccessful in local elections, and the PHP Institute declared how difficult it was to find support among political parties or leaders.

Taking the point of view of political economy, the following factors, which will be discussed below, can be distinguished as influencing the feasibility of change:

1. the formal, legal requirements for change to occur
2. the rhetoric of the debate, and most of all

3. the affected interest groups with their means of action and their organisational coherence.

From the formal point of view, local autonomy is covered in Articles 92 to 95 of the 1947 Constitution. Two features are particularly important, the first being that reference is only made to 'local public entities' (*chihō kōkyō dantai*). Prefectures, municipalities, etc. are not directly mentioned. This means that the actual organisational set-up, e.g. introducing larger-scale administrative regions, is up to the discretion of the Diet. A change of the constitution is quite unnecessary, which significantly raises the chance of eventual implementation. The second feature, however, is that in such a context the federal structure would not have constitutional status. It would be just as easy for the Diet to introduce it as to scrap it. More particularly, Article 94 explicitly stresses that the local entities manage their affairs within (national) law, so the national government clearly 'retains final say' (Akizuki 1995, p. 339).

So, either true autonomy would not be realised, with the inherent risk of the national government intervening in regional affairs, or the aim would have to be an amendment of the constitution. As is well known, there are so many tricky issues with respect to expectations regarding constitutional reform (role of self-defence forces, etc.) that the threshold for tackling such an endeavour is high indeed for any enterprising politician.

Another difficulty for any enterprising politician is that the idea of introducing regional states does not only bear 'positive' connotations from the point of view of the median voter. More specifically, we have so far treated it as implying more democratic participation and the chance of putting the 'supply function' of the government more closely in tune with the 'demand function' of the voters. However, when Kankeiren and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry promoted the idea of *dōshū-sei* in the past, they did not understand it as democratisation, but rather as a chance of making the rule of government (bounded within the iron triangle of bureaucracy, politicians, and business) more effective. In some of the extreme versions of this concept, *dōshū* were only seen as efficient administrative units with no participatory control by the electorate

- at least not at that very level of government (Samuels 1983). Demanding something like *dōshū* today, against the background of new trends in the age of globalisation and heterogeneous consumer and voter interests, may, by some observers, only be seen as a new way of hiding the old 'big business' interests. Something similar already happened in the late 1960s, when populist environmental and welfare concerns were made use of to demand change.

In any political-economic consideration regarding the chances of implementing institutional change, an analysis of the affected interest groups will rank supreme. From simple theoretical considerations, but also by learning from the debate on the *dōshū-sei*, it is clear that any move towards federalisation would run counter to the interests of some well organised and powerful interest groups:

- the national bureaucracy, which would lose discretionary power,
- the community of prefectural governors, who would simply lose their jobs,
- the prefectural assemblymen, including the speakers of the assemblies, whose numbers may also be expected to be considerably reduced,
- the ruling party, who would face an increased risk that, at least in some region states, a different political group may gain power.

Compared to this powerful phalanx of interests, those favouring a federal structure are rather less well-organised. This holds for the heterogeneous individuals in particular, whose interests might be served. Business might gain from competitive federalism, but it has little direct influence on the political process, as it has traditionally made its impact felt through allying itself with the bureaucracy and the politicians, which stand on the other side of the front line in this struggle. (Seen against this background, it is understandable why most of the leading federalised states have either a long tradition of federation (Germany, Switzerland) or been able to build up federal structures from scratch (USA), with little influence of vested interest groups).

Although this juxtaposition of existing interest coalitions looks rather bleak, there are aspects which lend plausibility to the idea of a federalisation of Japan. If politicians are to decide about reform, they will keep the chances for reelection in the new

environment in mind. A look at Table 3 may be helpful. It contains data on the 1996 Lower House election. Due to electoral reform, the election system shifted to 300 single-member constituencies plus 200 representatives elected from 11 regionally based 'blocks'. Collecting and regrouping all results into the regions resembling the proposals for federalisation mentioned before, gives an idea of the potential strength of the various parties in the regions. As can be seen, the LDP fared particularly well in the Kanto area around Tokyo, in Shin'etsu Hokuriku, and in the Southwest, realising a safe absolute majority. The LDP received its lowest share in Kinki (i. e. Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo with Kobe, etc.), a traditional stronghold of opposition to the LDP. In Tokyo, Hokkaido, and Tokai (with Nagoya), coalitions against the LDP would also be feasible, although the LDP held the largest or a close second-largest share of the votes.

Of course, we should not deduce too much from this 'simulation' of elections within a federation. Almost certainly the election system would be different if a federation were introduced. Parties would campaign differently and hence would probably fare differently, and indeed, some new parties would be formed or have actually already appeared since 1996. Still, there is evidence to suggest that neither the LDP nor other major parties, including major opposition forces, would be the total winners or the total losers. The LDP, currently still the strongest force, may prefer the current system *as long as* it can hold on to an overall majority at the national level (or can be optimistic about heading a coalition). In case of it becoming considerably weaker, because of possibly not being able to implement full-scale economic reform, it could still hope to remain in power in at least some of the Japanese regions, even with a relatively large swing against it.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper is about the question of whether there is the possibility of a federal system in Japan. The following points have been raised to support such a notion:

a) Historically, Japan has vacillated between institutional set-ups giving more rights to the regions and the centre. Although the latter forces dominated particularly during the

Second World War and heavily influenced the post-war period despite movements towards change, the usual view of seeing only Kasumigaseki-dominated Japan is too simplistic.

b) Also in terms of ideas, there have been many proposals for change towards federalism. The recent legislation in favour of regional decentralisation has led to a new wave of such proposals, although so far they have not led to any tangible moves towards a federal system.

c) The benefits arising from a competitive federalism could well be realised in Japan. Such forces might put an end to the serious immobility of Japanese politics. While the unipolarity of Tokyo as an economic centre is creating a number of problems, compared to similar situations in the US or Germany, the importance of this factor seems exaggerated. A federal structure would have to be mediated appropriately, but this is a task which should not be impossible to accomplish.

d) Established interest groups will normally be against radical change, but conditions are possible under which this rule-of-thumb judgement may no longer apply:

- If achieving deregulation and liberalisation at the national level remains as difficult as it seems today, and if foreign pressure - either political or through the financial markets - persists, then making the bold move towards new and feasible federal structures may become a serious option for the ruling party.
- The national bureaucracy may to some extent be pacified by the prospect of a strong regulatory authority still being needed. We have deduced this need in several instances above.
- The LDP may prefer a federal system to stay in power in at least some regions, if there is a serious swing against it at the national level.
- Opposition parties - to the extent that we can apply this Western-based concept - may also jump at such a change, because they may have hopes of taking over some of the regional governments.
- The resistance of prefectural governors and assemblymen can probably only be broken if the economic situation deteriorates significantly enough.

This latter argument plainly applies the simple logic contained in Mancur Olson's work, that far-reaching institutional change can usually only be realised in a period of crisis. Even in such a crisis agreement about specific and painful reform measures in which the few winners and the many losers will, to a considerable extent, be known in advance, may be difficult or almost impossible to reach. Then, a change towards a federal system may be felt to be a superior solution, because the institutional decision itself involves little concrete pain, while the ensuing process, which is hard to predict in terms of winners and losers, will bring about the necessarily painful adjustment.

Without such a crisis it is difficult to imagine a Japanese federation's coming into existence. Given such a period of crisis, however, careful and conservative observers can be frequently surprised by the speed and intensity of change, which had been considered pure fancy only months before.

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### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Michio Morishima used this term during the symposium to characterize the Tokugawa period.

<sup>2</sup> There is a vast literature discussing the peculiarities of the *baku-han* system (*bakuhan taisei*), which we cannot hope to adequately summarise here (see, for instance, the contributions in Sumiya/Taira (eds.) 1979, pp. 22-37.

<sup>3</sup> E. g., see the evidence collected in Kindleberger 1996.

<sup>4</sup> A secular increase in the role of the central government due to its 'relative advantage ... to increase its power compared to local governments' (Apolte 1996, p. 279) is well in line with theoretical considerations and the experience in other countries - even in countries with a much stronger constitutionally codified division of power like the USA.

<sup>5</sup> A detailed summary can be found in Samuels 1983, pp. 126-145. For an update, see Asahi Shinbunsha Chiiki Hōdōbu 1997, p. 73; arguments for *dōshū* and for an even 'purer' concept of a federal system (*renpō-sei*) are also presented in Sakata 1996, pp. 224-243.

<sup>6</sup> For an exploration in English, see Ohmae 1995, especially pp. 98-99 and 123-124; for an account in the context of Ohmae's 'movement', see Kawanishi 1995, especially pp. 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> For English language sources, see DeWit 1998 and Muto 1998. Apart from

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these, many books (and articles) in Japanese have been published on the topic, leading Andrew DeWit, who reviewed some of them (1998), to speak of this debate as 'Japan's Heisei growth industry'. The reader may want to consult Asahi Shinbunsha Chiiki Hōdōbu 1997, a compilation of reports on the subject by the leading daily newspaper *Asahi Shinbun*, including an opinion survey, Sakata 1996, which includes an explicit discussion of *dōshū*, or Hiramatsu 1997, authored by a prefectural governor, which consists of interviews with influential personalities.

8 However, the argument that, because of self-interest the relevant actors would turn down any change which might endanger their individual situation, should not be overdone. Consider the following: In early 1997, *Asahi Shinbun* did a survey among governors and mayors of Japan. One of the questions asked was how many cities, towns and villages should be left after a thorough restructuring (the current number is around 3,200). Whereas most of the prefectural governors politely declined to make their opinion known, only some 9 per cent of the mayors considered the current number to be just fine; none voted for raising the number. The relatively largest number of responses (some 22 per cent) was registered in favour of 'approximately 1,000 entities' (Asahi Shinbunsha Chiiki Hōdōbu 1997, p. 290).

9 A rather detailed introduction can, for instance, be found in Satō/Hayashi (eds.) 1996. New developments in local finance are regularly updated in the annual White Paper on Local Finance (*Chihō Zaisei Hakusho*) of the Ministry of Home Affairs. For English language overviews, see Ishihara 1993, Yonehara 1993, Mochida 1996; for a 'semi-official' source, see FAIR 1992, pp. 223-259.

10 There are well known exceptions, of course, due to public unease with the closed networks and their performance. In the mid 1990s, two showbiz personalities were elected governor in Tokyo and in Osaka. There were incidents of leaving the 'consensus framework of the insiders' in this context. For instance, in a highly publicized case Governor Aoshima of Tokyo axed the Tokyo World City Expo planned for early 1996. Still, these cases cannot really be interpreted as evidence of serious reform of the current system; they rather exemplify public longing for true reform which is still to come.

11 There are no simple rules on the optimal size of states within a federation. From a theoretical economic point of view, the economies of scale in administrative services and the level of externalities are decisive variables. Ohmae (1995, p. 89) has stressed the point that, from a business point of view, for region states to be successful in international economic competition, they should offer an attractive market for brand development and economies of servicing them, e. g. in terms of having their own international airport. He

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concludes that 'they tend to be between 5 and 20 million people in size' (ibid.). The 9 to 11 states discussed above (also: Figure 3) fit this condition.

12 German experience suggests that 'city states' are indeed difficult to include in a set-up of 'area states'. Most reform proposals suggest the abolition of the *Länder* of Hamburg and Bremen, which were initially set up because of their Hanse tradition. However, the recently failed attempt to unify Berlin and surrounding Brandenburg show how difficult it is to make sure that both city and country dwellers feel well represented in a state supposedly dominated by one major city.

13 Obviously, such calculations depend on the exchange rate used for making comparisons. In the present case, 1991 market exchange rates were used, not taking into account purchasing power. As the yen was particularly strong during those years (1 USD = 133.18 Yen), the values for Japan are probably somewhat too high in terms of a meaningful comparison.

14 Ohmae 1995, p. 104, Kawanishi 1995, p. 33. I could not find an exact explanation in the sources as to which prefectures or municipalities were counted among the *shuto ken*, and which among the Kanto regional state.

16 As for another incidence, even the seemingly 'easy' case of the island of Shikoku may pose some problems. This is because various parts of Shikoku are quite closely related to different areas of Honshu and Kyushu, and not so much to each other.

16 We disregard the issue of shifting the capital in the context of this paper.

17 For the idea of mediated (vs. unmediated) intergovernmental and interjurisdictional competition, see Kincaid 1991, pp. 91-93.

**Table 1**  
**Activities and positions of Kankeiren**

<b>Suggestions etc.</b>		<b>Sequence of Events</b>
4/1955	Suggestion: dōshū-system	The bringing together of cities and municipalities progresses with the goal of creating a rational and effective administration
3/1963	Conception for the union of Fu and Ken	The organisation of the industrial base takes place by implementing the plan for the development of the whole country
10/1969	Suggestion: to integrate the whole country into the dōshū-system	Prime Minister Tanaka publishes the 'Plan to restructure the Japanese Archipelago'
8/1982	Suggestion: Regional Authority	The oil crisis leads to the restructuring of the economy and an administrative reform
6/1989	Suggestion: Regional Authorities and a system of cooperation between the greater regions	The opposing arguments about the dōshū-system are discussed again

Source: Asahi Shinbunsha Chiiki Hōdōbu 1997, p. 73.

**Table 2****Background of prefectural governors, as of 1 June 1993**

University degree	40
University of Tokyo	(21)
Faculty of Law	[20]
Kyoto University	(5)
Kyushu University	(3)
Others	(11)
No university degree	7
Party member	3
LDP member	(3)
Non- party member	44
Party support from several parties	39
including LDP	(35)
including CPJ	(2)
Conservative' ( <i>hoshukei</i> ) support	4
Support from one party	4
support from LDP	[3]
Professional background:	
MHA	12
Other ministries and BoJ	7
Local civil servant	14
Professional (professor, lawyer, doctor, etc.)	4
Manager, entrepreneur	3
Journalist	2
Not deducible	5

Note: total number of cases for each criterion is 47.

Source: Chihō gyōzaisei chōsakai (ed.) 1993; own calculation

**Table 3**

**Results of the 41<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives elections (20.10.1996) in the regions<sup>12</sup>**  
 Number of seats

Region	LDP	NFP	DPJ	CPJ	SDPJ	Sakigake	MKR	Indep.	Total
Hokkaidô	9	4	8	1	0	0	0	0	<b>22</b>
Tôhoku	21	15	3	1	1	0	0	1	<b>42</b>
Kita-Kantô	28	14	4	2	1	0	0	3	<b>52</b>
Minami-Kantô	28	16	7	3	1	0	0	0	<b>55</b>
Tôkyô	19	11	9	3	1	0	0	1	<b>44</b>
Hokuriku-Shin'etsu	19	9	3	1	1	0	0	0	<b>33</b>
Tôkai	23	24	5	3	1	0	0	1	<b>57</b>
Kinki	23	38	5	7	3	1	1	2	<b>80</b>
Chûgoku	25	4	2	1	1	0	0	1	<b>34</b>
Shikoku	13	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	<b>20</b>
Kyûshû	31	18	4	2	5	1	0	0	<b>61</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>500</b>

Percentage of seats (in%)

Region	LDP	NFP	DPJ	CPJ	SDPJ	Sakigake	MKR	Indep.	Total <sup>3</sup>
Hokkaidô	40.9	18.2	36.4	4.5	0	0	0	0	<b>100</b>
Tôhoku	50.0	35.7	7.1	2.4	2.4	0	0	2.4	<b>100</b>
Kita-Kantô	53.8	26.9	7.7	3.8	1.9	0	0	5.8	<b>100</b>
Minami-Kantô	50.9	29.1	12.7	5.5	1.8	0	0	0	<b>100</b>
Tôkyô	43.2	25.0	20.5	6.8	2.3	0	0	2.3	<b>100</b>
Hokuriku-Shin'etsu	57.6	27.3	9.1	3.0	3.0	0	0	0	<b>100</b>
Tôkai	40.4	42.1	8.8	5.3	1.8	0	0	1.8	<b>100</b>
Kinki	28.8	47.5	6.3	8.8	3.8	1.3	1.3	2.5	<b>100</b>
Chûgoku	73.5	11.8	5.9	2.9	2.9	0	0	2.9	<b>100</b>
Shikoku	65.0	15.0	10.0	10.0	0	0	0	0	<b>100</b>
Kyûshû	50.8	29.5	6.6	3.3	8.2	1.6	0	0	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Imidas 1997, p. 324-327, own calculation and arrangement

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations of party names: LDP = Liberal Democratic Party (Jiyû Minshutô); NFP = New Frontier Party (Shinshintô); DPJ = Democratic Party of Japan (Minshutô); CPJ = Communist Party of Japan (Kyôsantô); SDPJ = Social Democratic Party of Japan (Shakai Minshutô); Sakigake = New Party Sakigake; MKR = Minshu Kaikaku Rengô; Indep. = Independents.

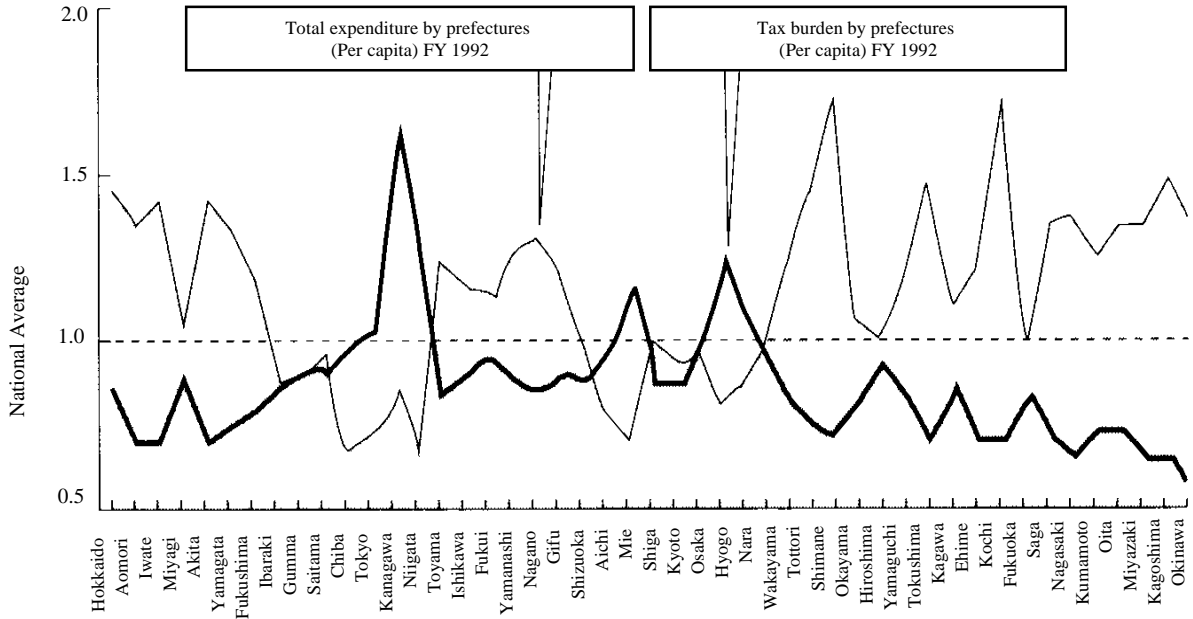
<sup>2</sup> Distribution of the prefectures in the regions: Hokkaidô = Hokkaidô; Tôhoku = Aomori-ken, Iwate-ken, Miyagi-ken, Akita-ken, Yamagata-ken, Fukushima-ken; Kita-Kantô = Ibaraki-ken, Tochigi-ken, Gunma-ken, Saitama-ken; Minami-Kantô = Chiba-ken, Kanagawa-ken, Yamanashi-ken; Tôkyô = Tôkyô-to; Hokuriku-Shin'etsu = Niigata-ken, Tôyama-ken, Ishikawa-ken, Fukui-ken, Nagano-ken; Tôkai = Gifu-ken, Shizuoka-ken, Aichi-ken, Mie-ken; Kinki = Shiga-ken, Kyôto-fu, Ôsaka-fu, Hyôgo-ken, Nara-ken, Wakayama-ken; Chûgoku = Tottori-ken, Shimane-ken, Okayama-ken, Hiroshima-ken, Yamaguchi-ken; Shikoku = Tokushima-ken, Kagawa-ken, Ehime-ken, Kôchi-ken; Kyûshû = Fukuoka-ken, Saga-ken, Nagasaki-ken, Kumamoto-ken, Miyazaki-ken, Kagoshima-ken, Okinawa-ken.

<sup>3</sup> Sums different from 100 are due to rounding.



Figure 1

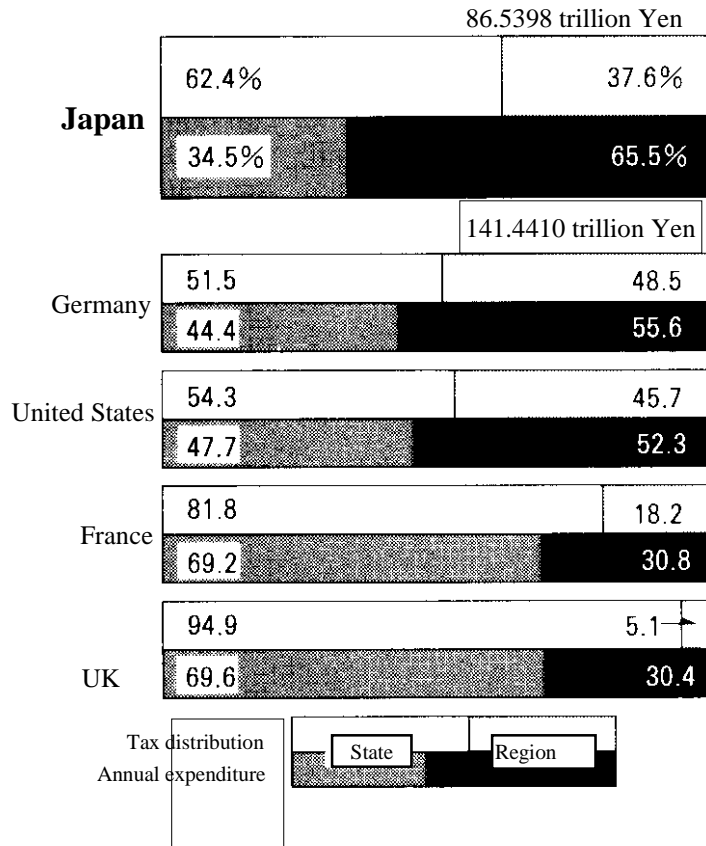
Income and expenditure by prefectures



Source: Asahi Shinbunsha Chiiki Hôdôbu 1997, p. 226.

**Figure 2**

**Tax distribution and annual expenditure by countries and regions  
(Fiscal Year 1994)**

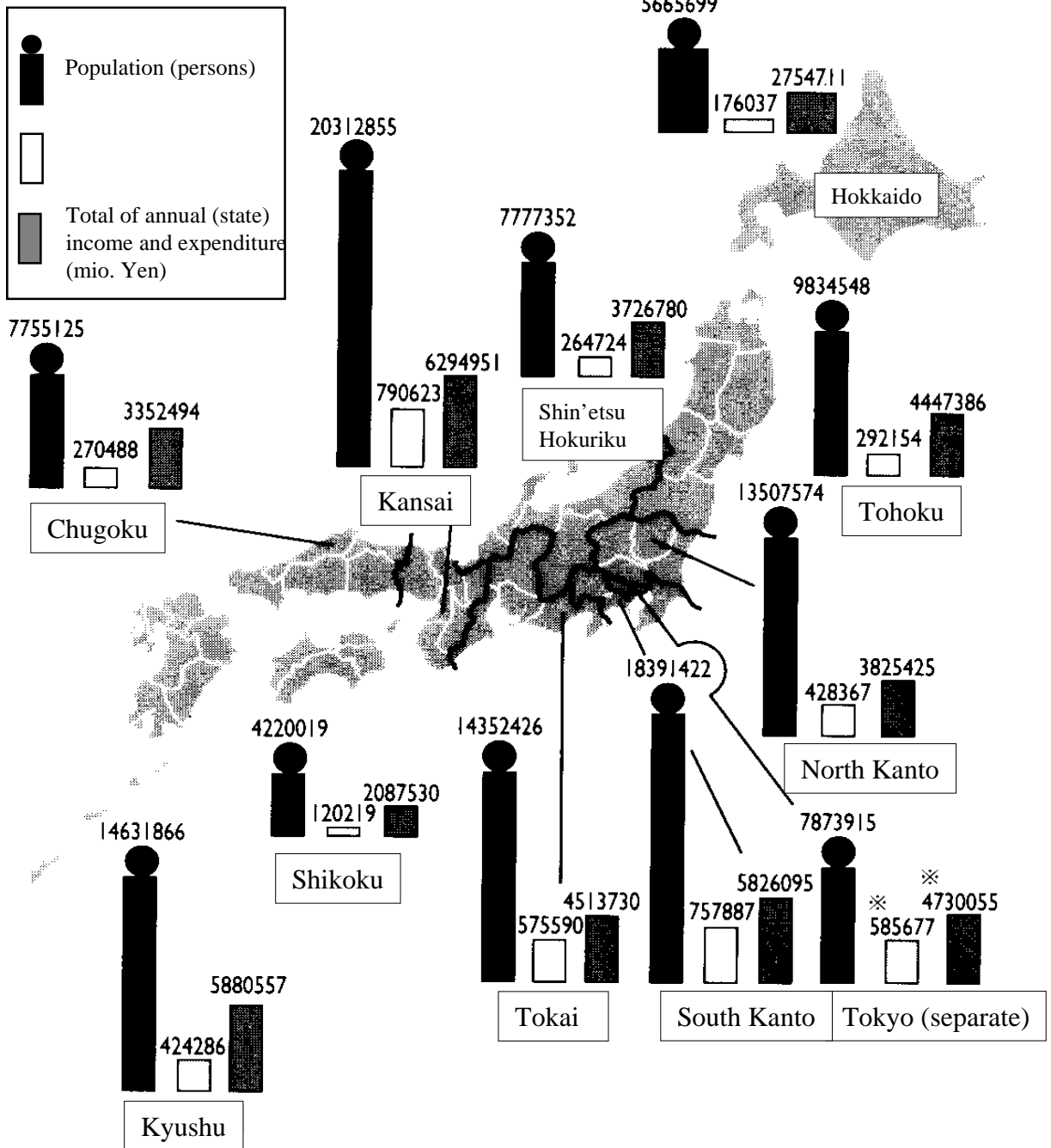


Data taken from: Whitebook on Regional Finances and data of the Ministry of the Home Affairs (Tax Department)

Source: Asahi Shinbunsha Chiiki Hôdôbu 1997, p.231.

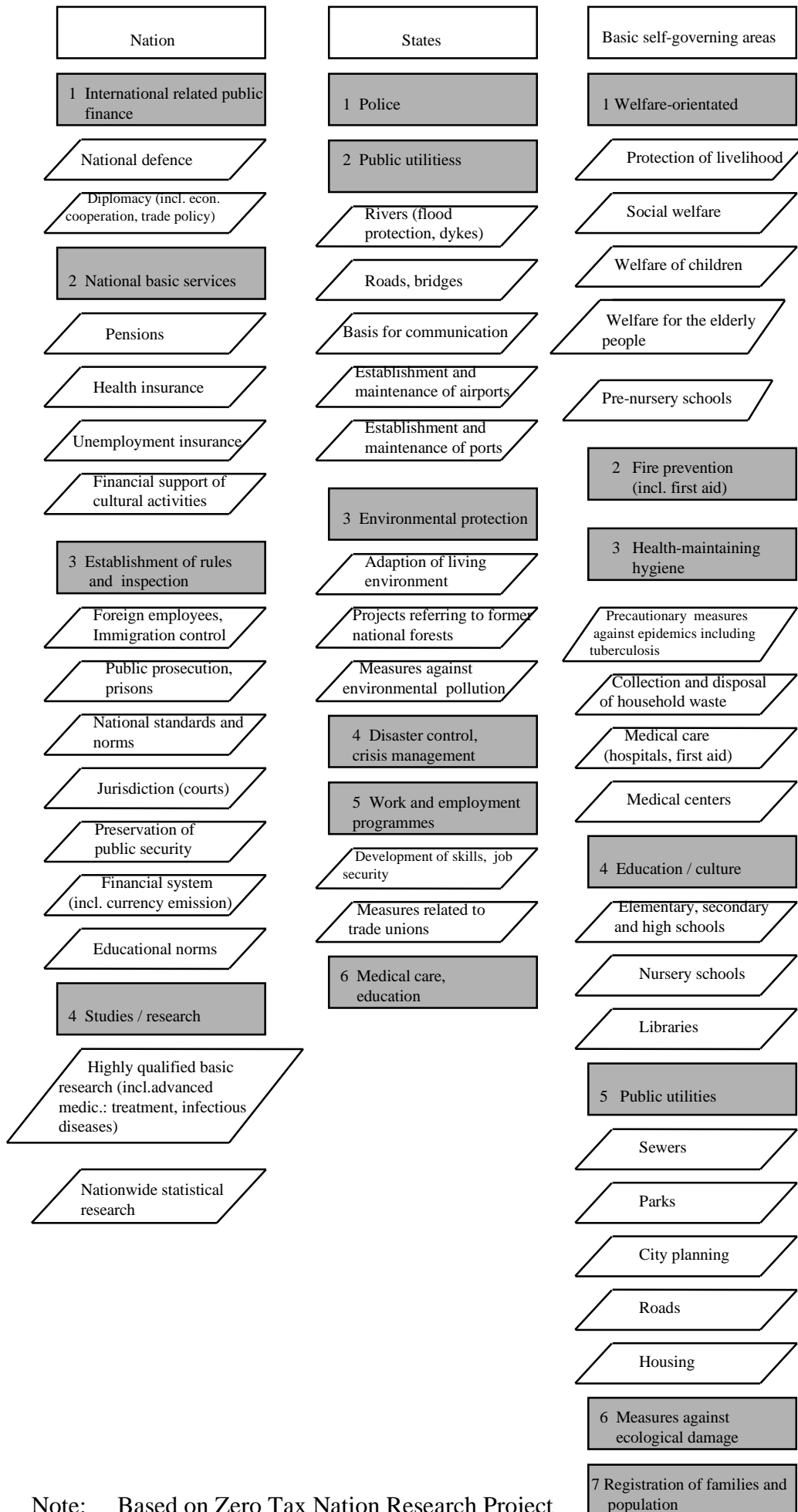
Figure 3

Basic data for a setup of 11 states



Notes: The population of Tokyo so comprised of its 23 municipal districts (ku).  
 Data base: Ministry of Home Affairs, Economic Planning Agency, Regional Finance Cooperation Agency.  
 Source: Eguchi 1996, p. 170.

**Figure 4: Distribution of functions in a federalized Japan**



Note: Based on Zero Tax Nation Research Project  
 Source: Eguchi, 1996, p.150.

## Werner Pascha, Federalism in Japan – Only a Fancy?

### COMMENT

by

Penelope Francks

For me, and I suspect others here, the great value of Professor Pascha's paper has lain in its raising of an issue to which little thought has been given up to now, in the English-language literature on Japan's political economy at least, and which indeed has seemed almost unthinkable. Although I would be horrified to be accused of perpetuating some of the myths about Japan that Professor Pascha lists - 'group orientation', 'vertical society', etc. - I realise that I have to stand convicted of the assumption that for 'modern Japan' the central government is all that matters. This may reflect a British tendency to regard local government as intrinsically boring (unless it becomes corrupt), but we lack at the national level in this country the experience of federal forms of government of those from, for example Germany or the United States. On the other hand, 'federalism' has become a word which British politicians dare not speak, with reference not to the national but rather to the supra-national level, and indeed the theoretical issue of subsidiarity which Professor Pascha discusses - the question of the most appropriate and efficient level of government at which to take decisions and manage resources - has been hotly debated in this country from academia through to the tabloid press. Although it is clear, from discussion with those present who have recently been in Japan, that moves towards a more federal structure of government are being discussed there as part of the wider debate over deregulation and liberalisation,<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Professor Pascha for forcing me to make the lateral shift required to relate the questions which arise for us in the context of the EU to our thinking about the nature of government and the economy in Japan.

Having made this shift in thinking, it does become possible, as an economic historian, to begin to find references in the literature to the role played by local government organisations in Japan's economic development. Indeed, as I realise now, my own work on agricultural development in one particular region stressed the important role of the prefectural government in promoting technological diffusion and infrastructure investment and, in general, pre-war Japanese agricultural policy, at

least as regards technology and agricultural extension, is often held up as an example of the use of local-level institutions to produce techniques appropriate to local conditions.<sup>2</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki's recent book on the development and diffusion of industrial technology also makes a point of discussing the role of prefectural organisations in promoting technological development, pre-war and post-war.<sup>3</sup> The value of studying economic history from the perspective of relations between periphery and centre is demonstrated by Karen Wigen's recent book *The Making of a Japanese Periphery*, which traces the changing forces incorporating one locality into regional, national and international trading networks, over the course of Japan's early industrialisation.<sup>4</sup> As regards the post-war period, although the increasing body of work on small businesses, dating back to David Friedman's *Misunderstood Miracle*, may reflect some 'decentralisation' in approaches to study of the economic miracle, reference to relations between centre and regions does not, as a rule, go much beyond a passing mention of Tanaka Kakuei and the remodelling of the Japanese archipelago. In general, therefore, the shifting balance of power between local and national governments which Professor Pascha outlines is little reflected in standard approaches to post-Tokugawa economic history and a shift in focus away from the policies and actions of the central government alone would surely, as he suggests, be fruitful.

Professor Pascha has thus done us a great service by making us aware of this dimension of Japan's economics and politics and raising issues that we should bear in mind in our research on Japan's economy, past or present. There are, however, some issues which it seems to me do complicate any discussion of regional/central government relations and subsidiarity in the Japanese context, making Japan's case perhaps interestingly different from those of other countries experiencing or debating greater decentralisation, and it is these which I should like to raise here.

1. There is perhaps some justification for our ignorance about regionalism in post-Tokugawa Japan, given that, compared with many other industrial countries, Japan has had a very heavy concentration of population and economic activity in a fairly limited area centring on the Kanto and Kansai metropolises. It has also seen, by comparison with, for example, most of Europe, massive and concentrated migration into these areas and even before industrialisation began it had become a highly

integrated national economy. In this sense, therefore, although it may not be unique, the speed and pattern of its growth into a modern industrial economy make it to some extent a different case, at least from that of Europe and America, if not perhaps of other, more recent, 'late developing' economies experiencing industrialisation. As a result, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that there is less basis for regional identity and autonomy than in many other countries and, with some obvious exceptions (e.g. Hokkaido, Okinawa), it is not clear what would constitute a region in the Japanese case. The proposed 'region states' that Professor Pascha mentions would need some sort of economic or political basis and identity to justify, in terms of both economic efficiency and political rationality, the functions they would be given but it could be argued that, given the nature of Japan's industrialisation experience since the later nineteenth century but also especially during the miracle period, the determination of that basis would raise greater problems than elsewhere.

2. One of the major features differentiating the process of economic development in Japan from that in earlier industrialising countries has been, as is often argued, the role played in it by the state and it is certainly true that the by now large literature on the role of the state in Japanese (and East Asian) development concerns the central government and rarely if ever considers local government structures (as opposed possibly to local interest groups). Indeed it could be suggested that the 'bureaucratic developmental state' of its very nature has to be centralised - it assumes national homogeneity, common, centralised, economic goals, systems for neutralising centripetal forces and interest groups and so on - so that moves towards federalism could be seen as undermining one of the major forces which have brought about Japan's economic rise. The state, in this model, also operates through the regulatory powers, formal or informal, of the bureaucracy and since, as Professor Pascha argues, the goal of and motivation for federalism in Japan would be deregulation (rather than reducing government expenditure or increasing democratic accountability), these powers would also be threatened. So, as with many of the reform proposals being made in Japan now, any watering down of central authority could be seen as liable to throw out the baby with the bathwater. If centralised political and economic power has been crucial to Japan's economic success (i.e. is a prerequisite for the kind of state role in economic development that

Japan has had), then there will be even more, and rather specific, barriers to greater regionalism than elsewhere where the role of the state in the economy has been somewhat different. In this respect, it could be very interesting to compare Japan with other, supposedly similar, bureaucratic developmental states in the region: the antithesis of the Japanese case might be the Chinese one, where, as I understand it, much economic and political activity has to be understood in the context of the relationship between the central government and regional authorities with strong local identities and interests.

3. Our (British) perceptions of the issue of federalism, unlike those of, say, our German and American counterparts, have been created within the context of relations between national and supra-national governments (i.e. the EU in our case). Of course, Japan's is a much larger economy than, for example, the UK's and one in many ways rather less integrated with the regional and world economies, and this may to some extent account for the inconceivability of the idea of transferring functions from Tokyo to some East Asian Brussels. However, there is an active movement to develop regional political and economic co-operation organisations in the Asia Pacific, in which Japan has participated with growing enthusiasm. This is a reaction to the economic and political force of 'globalisation' and indeed Wigen shows that, even before World War II, developments in the region she studied depended on the workings of an international, not just national, trading network. The organisations that have come into being in the Asia Pacific region consciously eschew any kind of federal structure or supra-national governing body, but they have promoted cross-border economic co-operation between sub-regions of nation states, including, for example, the 'Japan Sea economic zone' covering coastal areas of north-east China and the Russian Far East, the northern coastal regions of North and South Korea and the Japan Sea coast of Japan.<sup>5</sup> The government of Okinawa is apparently already considering a role for the prefecture within the wider north-east Asian region, distinct from its role within Japan.<sup>6</sup> Hence it may be that eventually, although it seems hard to imagine at present, Asia Pacific supra-national regionalism may provide the economic and political basis for greater regional diversity and identity in Japan and the context within which the movement for greater local autonomy might flourish.



## Endnotes

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- 1 See also, a recent review of the Japanese literature on the topic:  
DeWit, A., 'Heisei Growth Industry: the New Decentralization Debate', *Social Science Japan Journal* 1:1, April 1988: 141-6
- 2 See Francks, P., *Agriculture and Economic Development in Pre-War Japan*, Yale University Press, London, 1984.
- 3 Morris-Suzuki, T., *The Technological Transformation of Japan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994
- 4 Wigen, K., *The Making of a Japanese Periphery*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995.
- 5 For a short summary, see Thompson, G., *Economic Dynamism in the Asia Pacific*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp.167-70.
- 6 Personal communication with Akena Kayoko of the Okinawa prefectural government.