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Japan's Civil Society: An Historical Overview

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The tradition of respect for authority and disdain for the masses (*kanson minpi*) is deep-rooted in Japan. Officialdom monopolizes the public realm while the people, the masses, are permitted the pursuit of private gain, personal welfare, and individual happiness insofar as these things lie within the legal and political frameworks dictated by the government. This tradition has largely demarcated the realms of public and private in Japanese society.

Considering such a tradition, any attempt to examine Japan's history in terms of the notion of "civil society" might seem a futile exercise. After all, the applications of this term, which have recently been the focus of considerable attention, are quite broad. A civil society can denote a private organization on the one hand and a civic community on the other, but the concept goes beyond those meanings as well. It refers to organizations that act for the public and the public benefit even though they are part of the private rather than the government sector. Although not formally invested with any official prerogatives, such organizations support the welfare of people in general and carry out activities for the community as a whole with a strong sense of commitment.

Any independent organization or private individual so impertinent as to attempt such activities in the Tokugawa period (also called the Edo period; 1603–1867) would have been instantly suspected of posing a threat to the ruling authorities. In those times, it was believed that all aspects of government had to be monopolized by *kogi* (government authority), which was, at that time, the *bakufu,* or shogunal government headed by the Tokugawa clan. From the viewpoint of the feudal system of domains under shogunal control (*bakuhan taisei*) and the then-

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prevailing Confucianist view of social order, for private individuals to trespass the boundaries of their status in society and intervene in the realm of activity deemed to belong to the government was considered a form of revolt. After the founding of the modern state of Meiji in 1868, anyone who wanted to establish an organization to contribute to the good of others was subject to laws and ordinances established by one government agency or another, as well as to often-numerous constraints clamped onto them through bureaucratic guidance. Under these conditions there was very little that might have encouraged the development of civil society in Japan, either in terms of the social environment or human and intellectual resources.

Even today, few public-interest corporations (*koeki hojin*) are completely independent of the government. On the contrary, in many cases they are either auxiliary organs of the government or virtually under its control, accepting official regulations to obtain the privileged status of public-interest corporation. There are numerous occasions, of course, when the government calls upon the support and cooperation of people or groups in the private sector in order to fulfill public goals or needs. In these endeavors, while the private individuals or organizations are given a chance to contribute to the public welfare, the scope and purpose of their activities can unfold only within areas prescribed and determined by the powers that be. It goes without saying that there are self-motivated and self-respecting people in Japan who have contributed to society in the spirit of service for the public good. Particularly in recent years, the dramatic increase in the number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), nonprofit organizations (NPOs), independent foundations, and research or educational institutions can be considered nothing less than revolutionary.

In this chapter, I will examine the conditions that held development of civil society in Japan in abeyance and look at what it is that is now in the process of changing.

PRECONDITIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The following three conditions can be considered requisite for civil society to develop: the presence of a pluralistic society, recognition of the intrinsic value of the "private," and popular awareness of the public interest.

A Pluralistic Society

Under a dictatorship or authoritarian regime—whether it be the Nazi dictatorship or pre–1945 Japanese militarism or developmental authoritarianism—civil society is soon suffocated. The presence of a pluralistic society is the preeminent condition for the free activity of private groups and associations.

Generally speaking, social pluralism is the product of economic development and is considered fundamental for the functioning of democracy. During the post–World War II period, rapid economic growth produced a new middle class in Japan and provided the conditions under which the vast majority of citizens acquired a middle-class consciousness. The same development has occurred in Taiwan and in the Republic of Korea, providing the social foundations for the transition to a democratic system. It is likely that the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will undergo a similar process of change, or so it is expected. Should that be the case, the development-oriented authoritarian regimes, which carry out "development" coercively, by undemocratic means, are sure to bring about their own demise, through development's success, which makes the democratization of their societies inevitable.

In this sense, the optimistic view that social diversification is currently in progress in East Asia and that it will provide the foundations for democratization and nurture civil society in the region is probably not wrong in the long run. History, however, rejects simplistic determinism. It was immediately after the heydays of Weimar democracy in Germany and Taisho democracy in Japan (1912–1926) were brought to an end by the Great Depression that the forces of Nazism and militarism took control. There is no promise that economic development in East Asia will lead to peace and democracy in some predestined fashion. Should responses to economic crisis

err, either domestically or internationally, terrible consequences could result. Nonetheless, in the long-range view, I believe it is correct to assume that mature advanced societies enjoy pluralism, democracy, and the growth of a civil society.

Decentralization in Tokugawa Society

Social pluralism of a sort did exist in premodern times as well. Modern centralized states were born by destroying the decentralized feudal regimes of medieval and premodern times. In the case of Japan's Tokugawa society, the shogunate controlled the center of government authority. The domains, which were granted the right to control local areas by swearing fealty to the *bakufu*, could participate in this government authority and its dominions. They formed small-scale shogunate-like regimes throughout the country.

During the Tokugawa period, the emperor, who was the source of ruling legitimacy, was reduced to the position of a figurehead, while the shogunate became the custodian of government authority. The latter controlled the semi-independent domains and retained the power to reduce or take away the holdings of domanial lords who did not follow its rules. The farmers governed under this system frequently revolted against heavy taxation and corrupt government (approximately 2,800 incidents occurred during the Tokugawa period). Invariably, these uprisings were suppressed by the local lord and their leaders executed, but if the shogunate found that the unrest had been caused by bad government, it could also lead to penalties for the domain. The leaders of these rebellions literally put their lives on the line to appeal to the higher authority of the shogunate for redress of their grievances (Inoguchi 1988).

In any society, the ruler and ruled are aware, at least latently, of the public interest and the issue of governance. If the ruler ignores the public good, it may not be able to avoid the outbreak of protests that violate the law. In 1837, a rebellion broke out in Osaka led by Oshio Heihachiro, a middle-ranking local official and Wang Yang-ming Confucian scholar inspired by a strong sense of justice and devotion to the people. This rebellion was a case where a man literally staked his life to make a statement about the responsibilities of government. The Wang Yang-

ming school of Confucianism, established in the 16th century in Ming China to advocate the translation of truth into reality through subjective acts, inspired the action-oriented revolutionary spirit of Oshio Heihachiro, and later Yoshida Shoin (1830–1859).

The Tokugawa shogunate, by contrast, had adopted and promoted so-called Neo-Confucian orthodoxy soon after it seized control of the whole country in the early 17th century, putting an end to a prolonged period of civil war. Neo-Confucianism, based on the teachings of 12th-century scholar Chu Hsi (1130–1200), stressed the static order of the universe, hence the shogunate considered it helpful in securing a lasting and stable domestic order. The models of human relations taught in Neo-Confucianism are predominantly vertical, such as those between parent and child, elder and younger brothers, teacher and disciple, and lord and vassal. (The only exception is the horizontal relationship of "friends.") Special emphasis was placed on obedience and fidelity shown by those in inferior positions (child, younger brother, disciple, vassal) vis-à-vis their superiors (parent, elder brother, teacher, lord). The Confucian ideology prized by the Tokugawa shogunate and the succeeding Meiji government attached more importance to the individual moral training of the ruled than the high moral leadership of the ruler.

From one point of view, the feudal system created a society of many divisions. It was divided vertically into the samurai, farmer, artisan, and merchant classes and horizontally into more than 270 semi-independent domains. Each domain had its own ethos and culture and competed in the realms of scholarship, martial arts, and local products. The ethos of the Satsuma domain in Kyushu, for example, stressed martial spirit and action and looked down on assiduous study and logical argument. By contrast, the Saga domain, located not far away, inculcated its youth with a thoroughgoing devotion to learning.

Another domain, the size of a pea in comparison with the nearby mammoth Satsuma, was Obi (now just one part of the city of Nichinan in Miyazaki Prefecture). This tiny domain toughly resisted the hegemony of its giant neighbor over the centuries. By skillful use of an alliance with Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), who was in the process of unifying Japan's warring

provincialities, and other diplomatic means, Obi managed to maintain its independence. One young man who studied in the domain school for the sons of local samurai was Komura Jutaro (1855–1911), who later played a leading role in Japan's diplomacy at the time of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. No doubt putting to use the survival tactics developed by a small domain in dealing with a powerful one, Komura's diplomacy was responsible for Japan's survival in the life-or-death struggle with the great continental military power, Russia, by skillful reliance on diplomatic relations with faraway powers like Britain and the United States.

In any case, the 270-odd domains were the source of tremendous cultural and industrial diversity. Premodern Japan's social hierarchy was another source of diversity. Over time, the merchant and artisan classes attained a degree of autonomy—based on economic strength—from the political authority monopolized by the samurai class. A freewheeling urban culture flourished in the cities and castletowns sustained by the merchant and artisan classes. In addition to the domain-run schools (*hanko*) for the sons of samurai, approximately 10,000 popular schools (*terakoya*) attended by members of the other classes operated throughout the country, and in the cities there were also a variety of private academies, or *shijuku*. The *shijuku* of the late Tokugawa period included the Tekijuku of Osaka, led by Rangaku (Dutch learning) scholar Ogata Koan (1810–1863), and the Shoka Sonjuku school where Yoshida Shoin taught his ideas of revolution. These schools generated the shock waves that helped to open the way for the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Any search for civil society in Tokugawa Japan would be in vain, but it did provide the space in which people could enjoy cultural diversity; such pluralism proved to be a precious resource from the beginning of the Meiji era (1868–1912) onward.

All the same, in the face of the social crisis that resulted following the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's "black ships" in the early 1850s, it was almost exclusively members of the samurai class who were able to suggest strategies and policy proposals and actively participated in political campaigns for or against the government. Only they, after all, had had any training in dealing with issues of governance and the public interest. And in the face of an age of drastic

change, it was not so much the senior officials as the young men and not so much the high-ranking samurai as those of lower ranks who provided the new ideas and the energy to engineer the transition.

Dignity of the People

Under the authoritarian state, the government represents the *whole*, the authority embodying the public, and the people are considered simply parts that are individually pursuing their private interests under that authority. Until this definition of public and private is overcome and replaced by an awareness that the people themselves are worthy of respect and have value on their own terms, civil society will not emerge.

Novelist Shiba Ryotaro (1923–1996) once noted that until 1871, when popular-rights advocate Nakae Chomin (1847–1901) brought back from France the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau (*The Social Contract*), Japan had virtually no concept of "the people." In that sense, Shiba said, the intellectual soil in Japan at the end of the Tokugawa period and in the early Meiji period was quite barren (Shiba 1989). Why did the idea of "the people" exist in the West yet remain so underdeveloped in Japan? Furthermore, does that mean that respect for the people and the emergence of civil society in Japan and other non-Western societies is unlikely? Discussion of this issue is continuing even today.

Honma Masaaki, a professor of economics at Osaka University who has been studying NPO activities since 1978, says that his findings are often rebutted with the argument that the volunteer spirit is a Western tradition based on Christian teachings and could not possibly take root in Japan. Honma's view, however, is that volunteerism is part of a humanistic global trend characterized by an economic and social rationalism that by no means excludes Japan. Today, with the outburst of volunteer activity since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 1995, when 1.3 million volunteers turned out to help deal with its aftermath, and the enactment

of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities, or the NPO Law, that facilitates incorporation of NPOs, Honma's assertion has been supported by reality.

Here I believe we should make a clear distinction between two things. It is one thing that the idea of "the people" has been fostered most aggressively in the West, but it is quite another than an attractive idea spreads beyond its place of origin and, propelled by its universality, takes root in other places in specific guises influenced by the local context.

The Idea of "the People" in the Christian World

In the West, the concept of "the people" is premised on the concept of the "person" or individual, and the impact of Christianity in the shaping of this concept in Western civilization is undeniable. Christian thinkers defined the human being as being in the image of God and taught that each person must be respected to the utmost because he or she was endowed with the divine nature.

In *Summa Theologica,* St. Thomas Aquinas cites Boethius's definition of the *persona*: "an individual substance of a rational nature." Here "rational" meant possessing a nature resembling that of God and "individual substance" meant a unique and irreplaceable entity not dependent upon or accessory to others. The impact on real politics and society of this theological concept proved considerable through the ideas and actions of the Protestant denominations following the Reformation. The well-known ultrarepublican movements of the Levellers and the Diggers at the time of the Puritan Revolution based their claims to political legitimacy on new interpretations of Christian theology.

George Fox, leader of a new religious sect that arose during the mid-17th century in England, taught that "there is that of God in every man" and that since all people equally possess the Inner Light of the divine spirit the dignity and equality of all human beings should be respected. In line with that view, his sect did not distinguish between clergy and layman and in congregations or meetings, leadership of which was taken by turns among the participants, each person recounted his or her experiences of encounter with the Inner Light. The group stressed the sharing of these

experiences among its members. They called for social reforms that would guarantee the dignity and equality of people.

The idea of the dignity of each individual person under God paved the way for the belief in the dignity of all people, and in the course of time, the source of legitimacy ceased to be traced to the Christian principle of the individual "under God." Respect for humanity, popular thought, and fundamental human rights came to be expounded in the realms of natural law, humanism, and political theory. Be that as it may, it is clear that the concepts of "the person" and "the people" were sustained by Christianity, which the people of Western civilization believe to be the common source of their values.

In the mechanistic view of social relations, the relation of government to individuals is that of whole to parts, and in this scheme it was logical that the whole should have precedence over the parts. However, the introduction of the idea of human dignity in this context brings into being a realm of basic human rights of the individual that even the government representing the whole may not violate. Moreover, if that which is most valued in a society is humanity (who is in God's image), then it follows that it is the people who make up the whole and whose primacy must be respected. Here the government does not take the leading role, exercising the powers of life and death, or of giving or taking away; it becomes a functional body intended to serve "the people." Historically, there were attempts to legitimize absolute rule according to the concept of the divine right of kings, but the mainstream development, from Christianity to humanism, and thence to democratic government, ultimately made the society where officialdom is exalted and the people despised untenable, and laid the foundation for the dignity of the people.

Other religions besides Christianity included doctrines of respect for humanity. It is believed in Buddhism that Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, sang at his birth, "I alone am honored / In heaven and on earth." This verse does not advocate selfishness but calls for respect for each individual as a precious and irreplaceable existence. The Lotus Sutra tells of the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (in Sanskrit, Sadaparibhuta), who bows low before each and every person he

meets, saying, “Please accept my deepest respects, because within you is the Buddha.” People found his behavior so odd and suspicious that they stoned him to death and the bodhisattva became a martyr to the doctrine of the “Buddha within all persons.”

The inner Buddha and the inner Christ are similar, although, unlike in the West, this former idea did not crystallize into a doctrine of “the people” in society and politics in Asia and did not evolve into a theory of democratic principles. Indeed, it was an idea that has been transmitted through the generations, settling in the deepest layers of the Japanese spirit. Buddhist thought, which teaches love and compassion for all living things, had a tremendous impact on the ethos of Japan’s traditional animism, the indigenous belief in a broad pantheon of deities, including those of the mountains, the sea, the forest, the well, and the fields. The spiritual tradition in Japan that prizes gentleness toward others (people) must have been even further strengthened by the Buddhist teaching of universal compassion. This was the spiritual layer that later absorbed the Confucian teaching of “every person has a sympathetic heart,” that in modern and contemporary times responded to Christian ideas and democracy, and that more recently fueled the impulses that turn Japanese to engage in voluntary activity with unprecedented energy.

The ideas of treasuring the splendor of life and of compassion for all individuals without discrimination were therefore deeply imbedded in the Japanese spirit, and people who were capable of treating others in that spirit were highly respected. But the principle of universal compassion did not come into play in the realities of politics and government. There were religious leaders like Priest Nichiren (1222–1282) who fiercely demanded that secular rule be subject to Buddhist laws, and there were religious cults such as the Ikko (Jodo Shin) sect of Buddhism that engaged in fanatic armed campaigns. Rulers saw the danger of political turmoil in such extremist ideas. Especially in the Tokugawa period, the shogunate was successful in containing them within the framework of the Confucian view of social order.

The Tokugawa government, which brought to a close a century and a half of war and civil strife by placing top priority on peace and order, banned Christianity and allowed the Buddhist

sects to survive insofar as they submitted to incorporation within the structure of its rule. Thus, under the feudal regime, through which the shogunate controlled the semi-independent domains throughout the country, the spirit of compassion to all living things universalized by the transmission of Buddhist teachings was respected only in that private realm insofar as it did not conflict with the official structures of the Confucian view of social order. The ideas of the dignity of the individual and respect for the people, therefore, could not be legitimized either socially or politically; even if they were, they could only be subordinate concepts..

Popular Awareness of the Public Interest

The public interest is served by that which is to the common good of the communal group as a whole. The legitimacy of authority is heightened by the degree to which it conforms to that public interest and diminished by the degree to which it is arbitrary. No dictatorial regime will prevail for long after it ceases to conform to the public interest. And no matter how well established the custom of reverence for officialdom and contempt for the masses in a society, when the regime ceases to promote the safety and well-being of the people or when it engages in government tainted by the pursuit of personal gain, it will not be long before the regime is brought to an end, either by the chorus of popular censure or by a national catastrophe of some sort.

Here we may identify a number of phases with regard to the government versus the public interest relationship. The first is the phase in which officialdom (the government) monopolizes all matters in the public interest. On this level, even should officialdom violate the public interest, any criticism or opposition is considered a crime against the state. This is the government-decides-all type of society that does not recognize the people (and the nongovernmental sector) as capable of independent undertakings in the public interest. In the second phase, while officialdom is the exclusive actor in the realm of the public interest, individual rights are guaranteed in a constitution so that it is possible to refuse intervention of the

government in the private realm. At the third phase, the people hold the power to challenge the government if it is not conducting government in conformity with the public interest; in other words, at this level the power of the people to change those in authority, when they believe government is not being conducted properly, is institutionalized. At the fourth phase, the people not only hold the power of approval regarding the government's actions in the public interest, they themselves are conscious of their responsibility to act in the public interest as private citizens, and this awareness is recognized by the government.

As shown above, pluralism is an important element of the social infrastructure for civil society to be able to emerge, and respect for humanity and the individual is also absolutely necessary as the spiritual and philosophical condition for it to flourish. In addition, it is only if there is willingness on the part of the people, no less than the government, to contribute to the public interest and the common good that civil society gains both vitality and validity.

Relationship of Public and Private in Modern Japan

In the mid-19th century, the Tokugawa government that had ruled Japan since 1603 felt the full impact of the arrival of Western civilization on its doorstep, as symbolized by the appearance of the "black ships" in 1853. Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794–1858) and his fleet arrived in Tokyo Bay and forced Japan to end more than two centuries of national seclusion. In what direction did that encounter turn Tokugawa society, which had been shaped by a decentralized, feudal system? Was the advent of Western civilization fortuitous for the people? The answers to these questions are two-faceted. The modern, centralized state that the Meiji-era leaders sought to build had to be two different things: It had to be both a "strong state" and a "more democratic state" based on the rule of law.

On the one hand, therefore, the Meiji state faced the task of abolishing the decentralized feudal system and of building a strong centralized state. As the modern navies of the Western

colonial powers began to appear in the waters around the Japanese archipelago, self-defense and survival became Japan's most urgent business. Insofar as India had been placed under colonial rule and that even parts of China were controlled by the Western powers in semicolonial fashion, it was clear that maintaining independence would not be easy. When samurai struck out in xenophobic pride and blind patriotism, killing an Englishman at Namamugi in 1862, the city of Kagoshima was bombarded by British naval forces, and the forces of the Choshu domain started an attack on all Western ships in 1863, only to be defeated by a fleet of four Western nations that occupied the Shimonoseki Strait region in 1864. Driving out the foreigners was obviously impossible. To challenge the Western powers without sufficient strength could, on the contrary, hand them the opportunity to take over Japan completely.

Ultimately, Japan had but one logical recourse: It could only adopt what Arnold J. Toynbee later dubbed "Herodism." It had to open its doors and, by conducting trade and studying the secrets of the strength of foreign civilizations and acquiring those strengths for itself, hope eventually to overcome the challenge of those outside powers. Thus, the task of Meiji Japan was to master enough of Western civilization to build up its strength to the level of its challengers.

Not only as far as military might was concerned but in other areas, Japan would have to be a centralized state that could control and mobilize the people as a united force if it was to maintain independence from the colonialist powers. To fend off exploitation by advanced states that had already undergone "bourgeois" revolution and the industrial revolution, Japan had to rapidly forge a society to the same effect, and that had to be implemented efficiently from above. Meiji Japan tackled this effort under the slogan of "enrich the country and strengthen its arms," or *fukoku kyohei*. The slogan reflected leaders' appreciation of the fact that without vigorous industrial strength Japan could not sustain strong military forces. Becoming a strong nation was paramount; national survival was at stake.

On the other hand, the modern states of the West were not simply strong, centralized states; they were founded on different social principles. During the mid-19th century, the nation-states

of the West had reached the point where the creed of universal human rights, parliamentary institutions based on the rational contractual principle of no taxation without representation, and assertion of the right of self-rule had become well-established. It had become widely accepted that state authority had to be limited in this fashion. In the advanced societies of the time, constitutional governments were being established based on the premise that state power should not be unlimited and that it should go hand in hand with the basic rights of the individual and the people. Under constitutional government, both the individual and the state were subject to law.

There was also recognition that all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. State power, therefore, should not be unitary, but separated and balanced out through the checking of power between different branches of government. The exercise of power by the executive branch would be checked by the high authority of the legislative branch reflecting the will of the people, and the judiciary established to administer justice under the law would be separate from both the executive and legislative branches. The process of building strong centralized states, but created on the basis of democratic principles (namely, respect for the individual and respect for the will of the majority of the people), of constitutionalism and representation, and the institutionalization of the separation and limitation of power, had taken place first in Great Britain, France, and the United States.

Then, by the mid-19th century, Germany and Italy had finally managed to unite the diverse principalities within their borders and had begun to emerge as modern nation-states. It was at this time that Japan's interlude of peaceful isolation was broken and it determined to leave its Asian neighbors behind and somehow catch up with the advanced powers of the West. Officially, the new Meiji government declared noble aims: that it would seek knowledge widely throughout the world, that the "four classes"—samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants—were equal, and that all things would be decided through public debate. But, given the international circumstances, would it be able to stick to the high ideal of building an egalitarian society with a constitutional government and a parliamentary system?

Overwhelming Superiority of Officialdom

While the advanced Western states that were the models for the building of the Meiji state had built themselves into strong sovereign states and nurtured institutions limiting state power through law and popular participation in government, did Japan adopt both those aspects of nation building? If it did learn both aspects, which one received the greatest attention?

The Meiji period is often portrayed as a time when reverence for government and contempt for the masses prevailed, and indeed the greatest energy was invested in the building of a strong centralized state dominated by the overwhelming power of the bureaucracy. Why was this the case? Part of the reason was more or less the result of the general conditions in the world at the time. But part of the reason had to do with Japan's own specific circumstances.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the functions of states in the West were expanding and growing stronger. At one time, the theory was advanced that government should be limited to keeping the domestic peace—the so-called nightwatch state. That represented the extreme, of course, but it was widely considered that the minimum responsibilities of government included national security, foreign relations, domestic peace, and management of the currency.

In 18th-century Europe, the plight of the masses was extreme. The poverty of English workers during the industrial revolution convinced Karl Marx that exploitation of labor was a universal and immutable feature of capitalism. Starting in the early 18th century, unseasonable weather and famine assailed all of Europe and starvation repeatedly swept the continent thereafter, leaving death and misery in its wake. No one except the members of the nobility and the wealthy enjoyed the luxury of eating meat or dairy products; others subsisted on meager diets mainly of grain. The French Revolution erupted against the backdrop of this dire suffering of the 18th-century masses.

After the devastating famine in the mid-19th century that struck not only Ireland but also areas of northern Europe with a high rate of dependency on potatoes, however, the problem of

famine was overcome in Europe, and people came to enjoy the nutritious and abundant food supply that Asians tend to think of as typical of the West. Famine was conquered partly because industrialization resulted in improved diets, but it was also because, prompted by popular protests and riots that continued until the February Revolution of 1848, governments began to realize that society would not stabilize until the state guaranteed not only human freedom under the law but also a minimum standard of living for the people. Thereafter, from the 19th and into the 20th century, social security and welfare gradually became the responsibility of the state, and citizens were considered entitled to the right to life and social rights.

The expansion of the functions of the state from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th, therefore, was explosive. States now undertook not only the redistribution of wealth but created government agencies for every aspect of national life. Advances in science and technology, industrialization, and the emergence of the mass society revolutionized not only civilian life but the scale and intensity of wars. It was also the age of imperialism, and states that could not meet these challenges did not survive. By the time of the two world wars of the 20th century, states had burgeoned to grotesque proportions that evoked the great beasts of myth and folklore, Behemoth and Leviathan.

Such was the international environment into which Japan plunged as it abandoned national isolation and embarked upon its nation-building effort. Japan was more or less obsessed by the idea that it could not survive internationally without building a powerful state and that it could not be accepted among the world powers unless it revised the unequal treaties signed in the 1850s and 1860s.

In the case of Japan, there were other, particular reasons in addition to the international conditions in which states in general were growing large and powerful. Those reasons derived from the fact that Japan had been a late starter in the modernization process. Strong governmental authority was required to overcome the resistance to modernization of a traditional society to which Western civilization was inherently alien. While Tokugawa society was already

quite an advanced society culturally, it would have taken quite a long time if industrialization, modernization of laws, establishment of a public school system, and building of modern military power had been left to the spontaneous action of the private sector. But Meiji Japan could not wait. Ultimately, modern institutions modeled after those of the West had to be transplanted under the leadership of the state. The government orchestrated a national drive through which modern institutions were grafted onto Japanese society from above.

Except for the advanced nations that achieved modernization in a gradual, endogenous process, all others could only do their best to catch up through such state-led modernization implemented by government decree. In contrast to the first group of advanced nations (Britain, France, and the United States), the second group of states to modernize—Germany, Italy, and Japan—achieved their success by authoritarian (Prussian-style) means. The emergence of the communist system in the 20th century, too, was in response to the urgent need for nations to catch up by committing themselves to planned economic development under one-party dictatorship. The developmental authoritarianism of post–World War II East Asia is also a product of the need for countries lagging behind to catch up as rapidly as possible.

The above-described circumstances, compounded by the tradition in Japan in which the samurai class had monopolized government authority since the 12th century, contributed to the creation of an overwhelmingly state-led body politic in modern Japan. The job of rebuilding traditional society in conformity with the models of the modern West presented a real crisis for Japanese identity. There was much talk of *wakon-yosai*, or preserving the "Japanese spirit" while acquiring "Western arts (technology)," but in practice people were irresistibly attracted to the philosophy of Rousseau, John Locke, and others, and not a few were converted to Christianity. Many people became uncertain about the validity of the notion of Japanese spirit. The greater people's misgivings about Japan's distinctiveness, the greater the effectiveness of the emperor system as the traditional symbol of unity. Inasmuch as modern Japan had no choice but to follow the Herodian path of studying the secrets of Western power to preserve itself, it was inevitable

that Westernization should leave its mark in every corner of society. Considering the traumas of that experience, holding aloft the banner of the emperor system proved to be a valuable spiritual counterbalance.

The Imperial Rescript on Education issued in 1890 clearly demonstrated the emperor system's counterbalancing role. It declared the creation of a structure sustained by the Confucian worldview under the banner of the traditional symbol of the emperor system, which had for centuries been remote from the actual exercise of government. It was the embodiment of modern Japan, rooted in tradition, struggling to establish national unity and order so that it could cope with the double-edged challenge of both learning from and defending itself against the West.

Fukuzawa Yukichi and the Idea of "the People"

In the early Meiji era, even before Nakae Chomin brought back from France Rousseau's ideas about popular rights and "the people," Western political thought had begun to flow into Japan. The man who indisputably played the greatest role in introducing individualism and the self-respect of the people independent of the government was Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901).

As recounted in Fukuzawa's famous autobiography *Fukuo jiden* (The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi), he grew up in the Nakatsu domain of Kyushu and received an education centered around the study of Chinese classics, but later entered Tekijuku, Ogata Koan's school of Dutch studies in Osaka, where he advanced to the position of chief instructor. In 1859, a few years after the opening of the treaty ports, however, Fukuzawa happened to visit Yokohama where he was shocked to discover that the Dutch language he had worked so long to master was useless in communicating with the foreigners he encountered there. He immediately began to study English. He boarded the first ship to cross the Pacific under Japanese command, the *Kanrinmaru,* as part of a Japanese mission. He visited the United States and Europe a total of three times and purchased many English books. He described the experience of coming into

close contact with both Western civilization and the traditional society of Japan as having lived "two lives in one."

Fukuzawa wrote bluntly about his disdain for the two types of arrogance devoid of substance he observed among Japanese. The first type of arrogance was that bandied about in the final days of the shogunate under the slogan of "expel the foreigners" (*joi*), although its advocates usually knew nothing of the West. He wrote, "The more widely these uncivilized fellows carried on arrogantly about 'driving out the foreigners,' the more they sapped the strength of Japan. To think of what could happen to this country as a result filled me with despair."

The other type of arrogance was that displayed by government officials. The "way shogunate officials boasted and blustered," although they were without exception "ignorant and incompetent, "Fukuzawa later wrote, "is completely unimaginable today." Ultimately the shogunate fell and the new government adopted a policy of opening Japan's doors to the West. That was all very well, but then the officials of the new government turned out to be just as arrogant as those of the old. "Everywhere throughout the land," Fukuzawa complained, "officials build unnecessary distinctions between the high and the low, the illustrious and the lowly, contriving in every possible way to make it seem as if officials and the people are of completely different races. Since the government is considered worthy of the highest esteem, those who enter its service are automatically considered to be highly esteemed and begin to take on airs of superiority. . . . Once you join the company of such officials you will find yourself committing the same arrogant behavior before you know it."

Fukuzawa thus clearly saw how the "respect for authority/contempt for the masses" tradition was passed on from the old feudal regime to the new Meiji government. This was the reason he refused to take any government appointment. He argued that the common belief among Japanese that "the only road to success lies in the government" was a "misguided holdover" from the old society. Convinced that people ought to realize the error of this behavior, Fukuzawa was eager to "show them from his own example that they should learn the truth about advanced civilization

and culture," and inspired by what he had learned, he chose to remain a private, individual citizen throughout his life. "I do not want to rely on the government nor do I want to be indebted to its officials." Japan would only have a future, he categorically declared, through the fulfillment of society brought into being by an independent-minded citizenry determined not to depend on the government and not to rely on government officials.

Even in the Meiji state, where authority and officialdom were unquestionably ascendant, there were independent thinkers like Fukuzawa. Now let us look at how the balance between these two sides fluctuated during the history of modern Japan.

Official and Private in the Meiji Era

The Meiji system continued until the end of World War II in 1945. Here let us evaluate the relationship between official and private during that period in terms of two indicators.

The first indicator is school textbooks, which clearly exhibit how the government sought to inculcate certain values among the people.[1] The second indicator of the official-private relationship is the number of private organizations formed during the modern period.[2]

Looking back over the history of school textbooks, we soon discover that during the period before World War II, textbooks were most liberal, enlightened, and dynamic in the early Meiji period. The Ministry of Education was established in 1871, and the following year the Education Order of 1872 (Gakusei) was promulgated, which set up a system of eight years of elementary education divided into upper and lower levels of four years each. The ministry drew up guidelines for primary-level schooling, stipulated the content of instruction, and in time began to write and publish textbooks of its own.

This early period was remarkable for the free and wide-ranging publishing by individual scholars of many textbooks, and for the fact that the Education Ministry encouraged this activity as well as competitive publishing of good textbooks. Most of these publications introduced the society, thought, ethics, and famous personalities of Europe and the United States. There were

also many cases when well-received books originally published for a general readership by respected authors of the day were reissued as school textbooks. Examples include the famous translation by Nakamura Masanao of Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* and Fukuzawa Yukichi's translation of Robert Chambers's *Moral Class Book.* Fresh and informative books like these, which introduced Western ideas on humanity and society and portrayed the exemplary lives of important figures, were taken up as textbooks.

Smiles's treatise showed that England's strength lay in the spirit of self-help that characterized its people and explained how English society was sustained by the strong aspiration to nobility and heroism not only among its noble and heroic but equally among the nameless and unknown.

The Fukuzawa translation contained the story of Benjamin Franklin, the son of a Boston candlemaker who became a central figure in the American revolution. Franklin's success in the printing industry and his achievements in community and public service led him eventually, as in the case of Fukuzawa himself, to open an academy for advanced study. Fukuzawa's enthusiasm for this book, which portrayed Franklin's meritorious achievements in France as ambassador while the colonies went to war with Great Britain, is clearly evident. It was stimulating stories of world achievement and adventure such as this that became textbooks in the early Meiji period.

The Meiji government, realizing the urgency of launching a new approach to education and training a new brand of teacher, sought the advice of New York–born educator David Murray (1830–1905). It is said that the classroom scene so familiar to Japanese even today, with its blackboard at the front, modest teacher's podium, and small individual desks for pupils, was introduced directly from the Boston area by Murray (Kosaka 1996). In 1872, a teacher's college was established in Tokyo, and the training of teachers in Japan was begun. At the recommendation of Murray, Marion Scott, who had been a school principal in San Francisco, became its head. In the early Meiji era, education reflected the enlightened, liberal models of the

West under the strong influence of U.S., British, and French education. Teaching resources included many translations of civics texts used in the modern West.

According to a study by Muramatsu, Ito, and Tsujinaka (1986) of the formation of private organizations before and after World War II, the first type to be established were so-called sector organizations rooted in key industries in various fields. Next came the "policy-beneficiary" organizations related to the distribution of government subsidies and other resources. The "value-promotion" organizations devoted to furthering particular ideas or movements were the last to emerge.

Of course, sector organizations were not the only such groups created in the early Meiji period. In addition to federations in key industries, such as the Dai-Nihon Nokai (Greater Japan Agricultural Association) and the Boseki Rengokai (Federation of Spinning Manufacturers), all manner of academic and cultural societies were founded, including the Teikoku Gakushiin (Imperial Academy; today the Japan Academy), Kojunsha (an association of intellectuals established by Fukuzawa Yukichi), and the Meirokusha (an intellectual society started by statesman Mori Arinori [1847–1889] that published the liberal journal *Meiroku zasshi*). In the early Meiji era, many societies to promote particular ideas or values were founded that drew on knowledge from around the world and played an important role in the dissemination of enlightened thinking in Japan.

The liberal and open era of "civilization and enlightenment," however, proved to be unexpectedly short-lived. In 1877, the Satsuma Rebellion in southwestern Japan led by Saigo Takamori (1827–1877), was crushed by the Meiji government under the leadership of Okubo Toshimichi (1830–1878). This turned out to be the last attempt at armed insurrection by the old guard against Okubo's modernization reforms. In its place, the popular rights movement (*jiyu minken undo*) gained momentum and demonstrations calling for adoption of a constitutional government and formation of a national legislature spread throughout the country. There was

another pattern of antigovernment movement. As evidenced by the assassination of Okubo in 1878, isolated acts of terrorism occurred intermittently throughout the pre–World War II period.

The Meiji government struck back hard at both challenges to its authority, particularly against the popular rights movement. Measures to maintain peace and order were tightened, and in 1880 the Public Assembly Ordinance was issued in an attempt to control antigovernment activities by restricting freedom of speech and assembly. In addition to these measures of physical restraint, the authorities undertook to guide popular attitudes relating to ideas and education in what they considered favorable directions. The policy of active encouragement of free publishing of textbooks of the early Meiji era was abandoned and steps taken to strengthen state supervision. In regard to content as well, the government moved to bring an end to the introduction of quality books of Western ethics and philosophy and inculcate the people instead with a sense of order and obedience to the state by revival of Confucian thought.

The Imperial Will on Education of 1879 (Kyoiku-seishi) marked a clear turning point in education policy. Convinced that liberal education on Western models was a factor contributing to antigovernment movements, the Meiji government switched to a policy of suppression of Western books on morals and ethics as textbooks, declaring that they "threatened public security and corrupted popular morals." For example, citing the passage in Abe Taizo's highly reputed translation of American clergyman and educator Francis Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* that goes, "When officials in the government are corrupt, and cruel and brutal in their actions, there is no way to stop their imperiousness except revolt and civil protest," it prohibited further use of the work as a textbook. Discussion of ideas that recognized the initiative of the people or approved of the right of the people to resist bad government or revolt against authority was prohibited; instead the government vigorously stressed Confucian ethics and traditional Japanese customs. Education policy was clearly designed to inculcate a uniform morality centering around "the loyal subject, righteous man, filial child, and faithful woman" from an early age.

With issuance of the Revised Education Order of 1880, the local autonomy that had been permitted in regional education was withdrawn. The state strengthened fundamental educational standards and the Ministry of Education established the Henshukyoku (Editorial Bureau) and began to compile and publish ethics textbooks based on its own new policies. The following year, all schools were required to report to the ministry what textbooks they were using. In 1883, the ministry issued an order stating that no textbooks could be used without obtaining its prior permission. In 1886, the year after the inauguration of the cabinet system, this official approval system was further revised with the institution of the textbook authorization system. At that time, the national public education system was completed on the basis of the Elementary School Law, the Middle School Law, the Teachers' College Law, and the Imperial University Law, and the new system for overseeing textbooks meant that the entire system was now totally under the control of the government.

With the political crisis of 1881, the government came under new leadership. Fulfilling public pledges, the government of Ito Hirobumi (1841–1909) adopted the Meiji Constitution in 1889 and the following year convened the Diet for the first time. These developments were in part responses to the liberalism of the early Meiji period and the pressures brought by the popular rights movement. At the same time, however, they represented the success of the Meiji government in containing such popular and liberal forces within the framework of government-led institutions. The new emperor-granted Constitution stated that "Japanese subjects shall, within the limits of law, enjoy the liberty of speech, writing, publication, public meetings, and associations" (Article 29), but "within the limits of law" was prescribed by the Newspapers Ordinance, the above-mentioned Public Assembly Ordinance, and the Public Peace and Order Ordinance. The Imperial Rescript on Education issued the same year as the Diet was first convened was an edict based on the spiritual principles of the Confucian social order that made the duty of children to obey their parents the starting point for loyalty of citizens to the state.

Two years later, elementary school morals textbooks written in accordance with these principles began to be used in the schools throughout the country.

In the field of education, any remaining freedom for private or individual spontaneity was being rapidly eclipsed as government controls were clamped down one by one. The textbook authorization system led to widespread cases of bribery and corruption, however, and in 1902 a scandal erupted over textbook publishing that forced the government to "rethink" its practices. The upshot was the decision to allow only state-designated textbook publishing. Only three publishers were permitted to produce textbooks: Nihon Shoseki, Tokyo Shoseki, and Osaka Shoseki. Adoption of this system made it possible for the educational policy and ideology of the state to be directly reflected in the content of school textbooks.

The government-led modernization drive of the Meiji period was supported by the strong loyalty and diligent endeavors of the people. Under the Tokugawa regime, government had been monopolized by the samurai class. While forced to pay heavy annual taxes, participation in politics by the farming class was out of the question, and the people had had no way of expressing their political will save by staking their lives through revolt or insurrection. By comparison, the vast majority of the people were better off even under the bureaucrat-led Meiji regime. Under the system for elections, there was room for expression of political will and it was possible for the people to join the power elite, either by seeking candidacy for election to the Diet or by gaining a position in the bureaucracy through academic achievement.

As long as it was moving toward the apparently attractive goals of modernization, economic development, and raising the image of the country on the international stage, the government was able to count on the cooperation and contribution of the people in its endeavors. The Japanese were an easy people to govern and they did not make excessive demands on the government. One aspect of traditional values was the spirit of self-sacrifice for a larger public objective (*hoshigarimasen katsu made wa*, "we will relinquish everything until victory"), and the Confucian-inspired educational policies instituted from the second decade of the Meiji era (the

1870s) were carefully worked out to mobilize even further the unconditional loyalty of the people to the emperor-system state.

Throughout the period of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese people worked themselves to the bone, as has been depicted in the stories of Oshin and of the young women who toiled in the textile factories. Not only members of the former samurai class but the people in general practiced high moral standards and their sense of civic duty was of a standard equal to that of any other society in the world. The people as a whole supported and were united in the consciousness of their duty to prevent their new nation from falling prey to the imperialist powers and their determination to modernize and build up their country to rival the world powers of the time. Sustained by this endogenous nationalism, the Meiji government was successful in its aims. The success of the centralized Meiji state would not have been possible without the diverse and abundant human resources nurtured in the heterogeneous society of the Tokugawa period and by the extraordinarily high sense of public mission and responsibility of the people.

Taisho Democracy and the "Associational Revolution"

With its victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was finally able to put behind it the sense of crisis in being a newly developing state whose very survival was at stake. It attained recognized status as Asia's sole imperial power. It no longer had to unilaterally demand the limitless loyalty of its citizens, but had reached a stage at which several national objectives could be posited and Japanese society could enjoy a certain diversification of values. The ensuing period of peace provided an environment for the growth of private activity.

With the political crisis of 1913 in which the upsurge of popular sentiment under the first movement to protect constitutional government brought down an unpopular cabinet, Japanese society put behind it for the time being the era of excessive concern with the external threat to

Japan's security and of national mobilization to achieve state goals. The times were ripe for the fulfillment of the potential of civil society.

In a sense, this development in Japanese society presaged the international trends of the post–World War I period. The experience of the first war in history that involved not only armies but the entire populace of nations in an international conflict dealt a profound blow to the societies of Europe and North America, and they began to seek a new kind of society and a new kind of world. Pacificism, democracy, and socialism were the order of the day. In Japan as well, the era of party politics began with the skillful leadership of politician Hara Takashi (1856–1921), and for eight years from 1924 through 1932 the government alternated between two major political parties, the Seiyukai (Political Friends Association) and the Kenseikai (Constitutional Politics Association). Shidehara Kijuro (1872-1951), ambassador to the United States from 1919 to 1922 and Japan's representative at the Washington Conference, pursued a cooperative and conciliatory foreign policy under the post–World War I Washington system that offered the country some relief from the tensions of earlier years. It was the era of scholar Yoshino Sakuzo's (1878–1933) prolific writing on democracy and government by the people. In the field of literature, the Shirakaba coterie of writers presided over a new optimism and internationalism.

The impact of changing currents in thought was not lost on school textbooks. Around 1918, textbooks and teaching methods began reflecting the ideas of the so-called New Education Movement stressing the spontaneous activity of children and free approaches to learning. Then in 1925, with passage of the universal (manhood) suffrage act and the quadrupling of the number of voters to 12 million, people became keenly aware of the need to acquire objective knowledge of their own society, and efforts were stepped up to introduce not only morals appropriate to virtuous "subjects (*shinmin*) of the Empire" but to "citizens" (*komin*) holding certain rights under the constitutional system (Matsuno 1996).

The emergence of the new educational trends reflecting the conditions of liberal Taisho democracy, however, aroused considerable alarm among traditionalist educators and bureaucrats who believed that the spiritual supports of the state could only be assured by a doctrine of loyalty and patriotism. As efforts to open up a new "civic" education in response to the needs of democracy confronted conservatives' moves to restrengthen state-centered education pivoting on traditional values, the short heyday of post–World War I democracy of the 1920s came to an end. The year after the Manchurian Incident in 1931, when elements of the Japanese Imperial Army launched the conquest of Manchuria, textbooks reverted to their earlier support for nationalist values. Under the National People's School System (Kokumin Gakko Seido) instituted in 1941, control of education by the state became complete and the inculcation of the imperial subjects with the values of self-sacrifice in the service of the nation for the all-out war with the United States and Great Britain became pervasive.

Looking at the rise and fall of private-sector organizations, we can see that the prewar peak falls roughly in the period centering around the 1920s, between the Taisho Political Crisis (1913) and the Manchurian Incident. In terms of numbers, there was an eruption of private organizations formed before the war, an "associational revolution" in its time; and they were tremendously diverse in purpose and type. Not only were there business-related groups such as the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but numerous labor unions and welfare societies in every field of industry, the Japan Fabian Society and ideologically inspired organizations such as the National Federation of Levellers, and cultural and academic societies and international exchange groups such as the Pacific Society. The proliferation of nonprofit as well as "value-promotion" organizations was phenomenal.

However, like Taisho democracy itself, the privately initiated endeavors of this period were troubled by the inherent vulnerability of greenhouse-cultivated plants. They had not put down the sturdy roots that were needed to endure the cruel assault of ultranationalism and militarism that swept the country following the Manchurian Incident.

A case described by Hayashi Yujiro (1997) vividly portrays the "noble" birth of these private organizations in the best of times before the outbreak of the war as well as the way they were treated by the state. In 1923, in Ibaraki Prefecture, the Saito Foundation was founded. Its founder, Saito Zen'emon, described its purpose as follows:

> Human beings are caused, through the awesome power of the grace of the gods or buddhas, to work for the advancement of world civilization, and the fruits of these labors belong to heaven. They should not be private possessions but be offered for the happiness of all humankind. Based on this idea, I set aside a 3 million yen endowment for a foundation for public programs "for the repayment of divine favors" (*hoon*). The foundation's trustees were to administer the funds fairly in such a way as not to betray the will and spirit of heaven and without the least concern for the benefit of the Saito family. Even if the Saito family should perish, the family will never touch the original endowment, and insofar as family business prospered, the family will endeavor to increase the fund in perpetuity. Some people criticized me for being stingy, but I have always lived simply and frugally and I could not bear to see the fruits of what I have gained simply squandered.

What is evidenced here is the awakening of the public spirit in a private citizen and his very noble aspiration to do good for the world without discrimination in return for the divine favor he has enjoyed.

But when the Saito Foundation was approved as a public-interest corporation under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, its by-laws came out (in part) as follows:

> Article 1. The purpose of the said Foundation is to conduct and/or assist programs that are deemed spiritually and physically necessary to contribute to furthering the fortunes of the state . . .

> Article 3. . . . facilities needed to increase the happiness of society by enlightening and guiding people's thought and propagating the concept of the state.

After undergoing the ritual of approval by the competent authorities, Saito's ideas of the "happiness of all humankind" and the "spirit of heaven" in founding the foundation were so transformed as to seem to have been placed under an evil spell. The foundation's purposes were now defined as "furthering the fortunes of the state" and "propagating the concept of the state," narrowly defined notions that could hardly have been further from the intentions of the founder (Hayashi 1997).

From the point of view of the Meiji state, the public good could be none other than that which conformed with the objectives of the state. Only the state was capable of defining with authority and responsibility the nature of "public" and the "public interest." That which the government did not approve and which went against the will of the government would not be recognized as of value. Anything that sought to be good for the public had to show that it contributed to the interests of the state. This pattern of thought was so deeply entrenched that even the brief flourishing of Taisho democracy could not change it. Indeed, it may be said that after the end of World War II, liberation from the old state-centered ideas has still been quite limited.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

Liberation of the Private Realm and Continuity of Officialdom

The principle of the pendulum seemed to be at work in modern Japan. Periods of enchantment with things Western and obsession with the "catch-up" mentality alternated with eras of "return-to-Japan" introspection characterized by reappraisal of tradition and preoccupation with self-identity, often accompanied by antiforeign belligerence toward the outside world. At the risk of

oversimplification, we might describe these swings as moving between modernization and domestic reform at one extreme and war with other countries at the other.

Prior to World War II, Japan was at war with one country or another once every ten years. Nationalistic sentiment would arise among the people with the outbreak of the conflict and all available resources—material, financial, and human—would be poured into the war effort. Once hostilities were over, however, the pendulum swung back, while the country "recharged" itself, so to speak, through a resurgence of civilian economic vigor. Popular energy thus released sought its outlet in individualism, democracy, liberalism, and internationalism. In short, mobilization for waging of war and improvement of the economic life of the nation stood in a kind of trade-off relationship vis-à-vis the country's limited resources.

The same pattern of shift occurred in the transition from wartime to the postwar period after 1945. Given that inherent tendency in modern Japanese history, it was practically inevitable that the pendulum would swing back to emphasis on civilian economic strength. Not only did the state's all-out mobilization for the war culminate in disastrous defeat and devastation but the international environment itself had changed dramatically. The age of imperialism had ended in the course of the two world wars and, with the advent of the nuclear age marked by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the settling of international disputes by military means became increasingly unfeasible and ineffective.

In terms of the historical stresses between "mobilization for war" and "emphasis on civilian economic strength," the postwar environment was decidedly favorable to the latter—toward civil society and democracy. Even more basic, the fundamental principle governing the nation—the national polity—underwent a drastic transformation through the postwar reforms. The emperor system did survive, though only after having been divested of its absolute authority and relegated to an institution whose role was mainly symbolic and ceremonial. Sovereignty no longer rests with the throne but with the people under the new Constitution that went into effect in 1947.

Alongside popular sovereignty, the postwar Constitution firmly guarantees the autonomy and dignity of the individual in the name of basic human rights. It sets forth the principle of respect for private rights. Whereas the prewar Meiji Constitution restrained individual freedom "as provided by law," the postwar charter guarantees it insofar as it conforms to the "public welfare." Human rights are not subordinate to the state; both the state and individual are subject equally to the public welfare.

In post–World War II society worldwide, the role of the sovereign state entered into a phase of decline. Japan was no exception, especially with the demise of imperialism. Modernization carried out from above by the state had been more or less completed. That did not mean, however, that a powerful state apparatus was no longer necessary for Japan.

Even after the war's end, the Japanese state retained its authoritarian control over the people and the supremacy of officialdom persisted. One reason for this continuity was that the Allied Occupation's reform programs and purge of leaders in positions of official responsibility dealt a devastating blow to all the prewar/wartime establishment, except for the bureaucracy. Apart from the military and the Home Ministry, which were abolished, most government servants came away virtually unscathed.

General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), opted for "indirect rule" in implementing his Occupation policy "through the emperor and the Japanese government." The government here meant those officials and politicians who escaped the purge. Except for a few high-ranking bureaucrats who had served the wartime government, the overwhelming majority of officials were allowed to continue their careers.

SCAP's approach enabled younger bureaucrats to work closely with the Occupation authorities and accumulate much expertise. It was these bureaucrats who filled the gap created by the absence of party politics that had been destroyed by the wartime militarist regime. They also served as a major source of high-caliber political leadership in the prewar period.

The bureaucracy was given an important role to play in reconstructing the war-devastated country. The modernization program carried out since the Meiji period was continued in a different guise for economic development and new nation-building. The leadership necessary for Japan's rise to economic power status from the ruins of the war was provided by such bureaucrat-turned-politician figures as Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967), Kishi Nobusuke (1896–1987), Ikeda Hayato (1899–1965), and Sato Eisaku (1901–1975), and their policies were executed by the bureaucracy. In the crucial early postwar years, many political leaders with nonbureaucratic backgrounds were purged from office. For these reasons, the "modernization from above" continued during the postwar years, despite the fact that objective conditions were ripe for ending the traditional preponderance of official over private.

The New Groupism

Despite all the democratic provisions of the postwar Constitution, individuation did not occur easily in Japanese society, nor was the private accorded due respect as smoothly as one might have thought. The preponderance of officialdom persisted tenaciously in Japan's body politic. Meanwhile, two new types of groupism emerged to take a firm grip on the Japanese public: "people's democracy" and "company first-ism."

The people's democracy brand of groupism was practiced primarily by members of the Japan Communist Party and its sympathizers. By virtue of its wartime resistance against the military regime, the party made a heroic comeback on the political scene after the war. The fact that most of its leaders and activists had been either in jail or in exile during the war greatly enhanced its prestige. Communists preached that capitalism was doomed and a communist revolution was inevitable, hence people should actively commit themselves to the class struggle according to this scientific law of history. Individual self-fulfillment can be achieved, they argued, only by carrying out the historic mission of the proletariat.

From today's vantage point, it may seem unbelievable, but many serious, courageous young people took the communist doctrine at face value and plunged themselves into subversive activism, armed with real weapons and often forced underground. From the late 1940s—the time of the "absolute impoverishment" of the people—to the early 1960s, radical students, unionists, and others were ready to sacrifice themselves for the revolutionary cause.

The free development of individual character and the principles of democracy were part of this radical ideology, but in actual practice individuals were commanded to submerge their personal well-being in the larger interest of the group. A person's existence was considered meaningful only insofar as he or she faithfully followed the a priori dogma that dictated participation in the revolutionary movement.

In those days, any young man or woman who showed serious interest in philanthropic and/or volunteer activities for the common good of the people would have been vehemently criticized and ridiculed by followers of the people's democracy as indulging in intellectual naiveté and petit-bourgeois complacency. Such activities, they argued, would serve only to gloss over the real sources of social injustice and widespread poverty.

Up until 1960, when massive demonstrations occurred protesting the ratification of the revised U.S.-Japan. Security Treaty, Japan's political processes were dominated by ideological confrontation between the left-wing reformist forces and the traditional nationalists led by Kishi (who was prime minister from 1957 to 1960) and others who advocated constitutional revision and rearmament. Neither of these ideological positions was successful in fostering respect for human dignity or providing a firm rationale for the importance of private initiatives. Buffeted by these two ideologies, the maturation of a modern civil consciousness based on the concept of individual rights remained on hold in the nation's political life.

Behind the open ideological confrontation of the late 1950s, a new pattern of political process was quietly and steadily developing. In 1955 at the strong recommendation of business groupings like Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations), two conservative

parties merged to form the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), while the left-wing and right-wing socialist groups were unified under the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). That same year, Japan's GNP reached the prewar all-time high and the period of rapid economic growth began. The ruling LDP took full advantage of the booming economy to devise a method of consolidating its base of political support by handing out benefits to various interest groups—business, farming, medical, veterans' groups, etc.—through skillful channeling of subsidies and budgetary allocations as well as legal protection. When Prime Minister Ikeda announced his income-doubling plan in 1960, after the downfall of the Kishi administration, interest politics clearly replaced the ideological politics of the previous decade as the dominant vehicle of the political process in Japan.

Economism of the 1960s

In the 1960s, economics became the primary concern in Japan. For Japanese, this meant the relativization and decline of the two dominant political ideologies of the fifties—the traditional view of the state and people's democracy. Moreover, the inauguration of John F. Kennedy as president of the United States in 1961 and his appointment of Edwin O. Reischauer as ambassador to Japan provided a new context for political perceptions to evolve among Japanese.

A well-known Japanologist, Reischauer presented a positive view of Japan and a new direction for Japan-U.S. relations. Postwar Japan, he argued, was on the road to a remarkable success in both economic development and in the building of a democratic society. In fact, Japan stands out as a model of industrialization and democratization in the modern and recent history of the world. Modernization is a universal phenomenon, as Japan proved by successfully building an advanced society in Asia. With regard to bilateral relations, Reischauer said that the United States and Japan were no longer victor and vanquished, developed and developing nations. Moving beyond a vertical relationship, as advanced industrial democracies the two countries had to become equal partners.

Reischauer's message to the Japanese public was in basic conformity with Ikeda's policy of pursuing rapid economic growth and building a national consensus on political issues. This policy line originated with Prime Minister Yoshida, who signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty with the countries of the Western bloc (i.e., without the Soviet-bloc countries) and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (which allowed the continued stationing of American forces on Japanese soil) in 1951. His choice put Japan on a clear course of reconstruction as a trading nation, placing top priority on economics and entrusting national security to the United States. This policy line bore fruit in the 1960s with Japan's emergence as an economic power.

Ikeda enunciated the concept of the "trilateralism" of Japan, the United States, and Europe. For him, the trilateral idea was a declaration of Japan's identity and integrity as an economic power, rather than merely a member of the Western bloc of nations under the cold war schema.

In 1964, political scientist Kosaka Masataka published an article rationalizing Japan's choice of the option to grow as a maritime, economic nation and acknowledging Yoshida's leadership in making that decision. Novelist Shiba Ryotaro is another who endorsed postwar Japan's adoption of economism. In his best-selling saga *Ryoma ga yuku* (There Goes Sakamoto Ryoma), published between 1962 and 1966, Shiba credited Sakamoto, one of the chief architects of the Meiji Restoration, with recognizing at that early stage that Japan's prosperity would be as a maritime, mercantile nation.

Economism, however, gave rise to the other type of groupism mentioned earlier. It produced many men who became corporate "soldiers." For Japanese who grew up hungry and cold in the ruins of the nation's defeat, working for one of the country's top corporations was a matter of great pride and joy. Once thus enlisted, they became "zealous employees" (*moretsu shain*), driven by their sense of responsibility to their families, strong aspiration for promotion up the corporate ladder, and total devotion to the traditional virtue of diligence. Management, taking full advantage of this mind-set, adopted policies to enhance their loyalty to the company and spur their competitive spirit.

The strong sense of belonging and loyalty to “our company” exhibited by the postwar Japanese corporate warrior was vividly reminiscent of that of the vassals of the feudal lords (daimyo) of early modern times. For these modern-day samurai, the company meant everything. Given the widespread custom of exchanging business cards upon a first encounter in any context, the company one works for and the position one holds became more important than what kind of person one was as an individual. It was this mentality that fostered another brand of groupism, what may be called “company first-ism.” These workaholic corporate soldiers, who were literally ready to die for their companies, sustained Japan’s “economic miracle” in the 1960s.

Where this kind of groupism prevailed there was, needless to say, little room for autonomy of the individual and growth of the civil society. True, with a decade of political confrontation behind them, people had much greater freedom to pursue personal benefits and were beginning to enjoy some affluence, fitting out their homes with the full array of household appliances and even purchasing their own automobiles. The object of their self-identification shifted from political entities to the private enterprise. Selfless devotion to country was replaced by workaholism, as each person became one of innumerable cogs in the corporate machine.

In the long-range perspective of social diversification, however, groupism centered on the corporation, too, was a passing phenomenon. If the economy continued to grow at a rapid pace, it was anticipated that the society would become truly affluent and more permissive toward the self-assertions of the well-educated, highly diverse new middle class.

Indeed, by the end of the 1960s the term “my home-ism” had gained currency in Japan. It reflected the changing attitudes of a relatively small but increasing number of company employees who, rather than being workaholics, sought to give priority to the happiness of their nuclear families. A popular song written and composed by a young female singer of those days begins with “If I had a house built . . .” and goes on to describe the house of her dreams and her image of a happy home. The song ends with: “I want you to be there with me.” It perfectly captured the spirit of my home-ism that was a product of the rapid growth period.

It must be added here that ideologically inspired movements did not disappear completely. During the latter half of the sixties, left-wing groups staged campaigns for reversion of Okinawa to Japan along the lines of their anti-American, antigovernment stance, while the conservative Sato administration sought reversion of the southern islands through diplomatic negotiations with Washington. This was around the time the United States was being drawn into the quagmire of the Vietnam War and the Cultural Revolution was raging in China under the slogan "There is reason in revolution." The international environment seemed to be moving toward intensification of the cold war. If the Sato government had failed to secure the return of Okinawa through bilateral cooperation, the LDP might have fallen from power by the early 1970s, bringing an earlier end to the 1955 system under which the conservatives held the majority and the socialists remained a perpetual minority in the Diet.

Nevertheless, the elements of old-style anti-establishment resistance had lost their vigor and appeal in the course of rapid economic growth. The anti–Vietnam War movement had much broader popular support because it was able to capture the hearts and minds—the civic consciousness—of people who desired peace and gentleness toward others. The antiwar folk song of 1969, "The Case of Francine," was symbolic of such a mood. The May Revolution in France in 1968 and the campus disputes of the late 1960s occurred with similar broad bases of support. All were political struggles at the core but won a broader popular sympathy because of their roots in the counter-culture ethos that sought to challenge the established authority and order as well as in the civic culture of advanced industrial societies seeking self-government, participation in governance, and protection of the environment.

Toward the end of the 1960s, movements of local residents erupted in many parts of Japan involving welfare, the environment, and other issues that had been neglected during the period of rapid growth. Antipollution activism became intense, forcing the government to create the Environment Agency in the early 1970s to confront pollution problems. Another notable development of the decade was the election of reformist governors and mayors in various urban

centers through the combined support of reformist parties and citizens' groups. This itself reflected the diversification of values accompanying phenomenal economic growth.

Similar trends were observed in other industrialized nations. In fact, the 1970s witnessed frequent power changes in many countries. In Japan, too, voter support for the ruling LDP had been steadily declining along with the rise of pluralistic tendencies in society as a result of successful economic development. From the conservative-reformist parity of the early seventies, it seemed all but inevitable that the reformist forces would soon gain a majority in the national legislature. That expectation was shattered by two crises that threatened the very foundation of Japan's prosperity. One was President Richard M. Nixon's new economic policy that took the U.S. dollar off the gold standard and put an end to the fixed exchange-rate system. The other was the oil crisis of 1973, whereby the price of crude oil quadrupled overnight. Both these crises jeopardized the systems of free trade and U.S.-Japan cooperation upon which Japan's economic survival rested.

For a resource-poor country like Japan, access to imported oil is a matter of vital concern. Indeed, the fear that Japan could no longer import foreign oil, cut off through the ABCD encirclement[3] in 1941, was what triggered the attack on Pearl Harbor and war against the United States. The impact of the 1973 oil crisis was so strong that the whole country had to return to the original point of departure where "national unity" and "diligence" were the norm. The concerted effort to assure the nation's survival affected labor as well. Trade unions, departing from their confrontational policies to cooperation with management, accepted only half the wage increases they had been accustomed to demanding. When the survival of the whole economy was at stake, they reasoned, there was no point in demanding a greater share of the profit at the risk of destroying their companies altogether.

The economic crises of the seventies dampened a tendency that had been accelerating toward formation of a coalition of citizens' movements and reformist forces. Under the conservative

government's policy of economic revival, the Japanese people reverted once again to their workaholic mode and devotion to the corporation.

The sense of crisis and concerted effort for survival led to a high level of energy conservation, better quality control, and higher productivity in Japanese industry. Most symbolic of this was the production of energy-efficient, environment-friendly cars by Japanese auto makers. Japan's competitiveness in foreign markets increased tremendously as a result, which enabled the country to rise to economic superpower status in the 1980s. That the country successfully coped with the economic crises of the seventies restored confidence and composure among the people in the new decade, in turn paving the way for the rise of civil society in Japan.

Ripening Conditions for Civil Society: The 1980s

The decade of the 1980s was the era of the new conservatism as represented by the politics of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Nakasone Yasuhiro. Neo-conservatism was anti-Soviet, anticommunist, and hawkish military expansionist in external policy. In domestic policy, it advocated private-sector participation in public projects and privatization of public enterprises, stressing the market economy and small government. In contrast to the 1960s, when efforts to achieve social equality had concentrated on expansion of citizens' rights movements and welfare services in line with the public objectives of the "great society," the 1980s was a decade of devotion to the self-activating mechanisms of the market and effort within the private sector to solve problems and encourage private, individual initiatives.

No less than the commitment to further the public interest of the 1960s, the determination in the 1980s to invigorate the private sector without relying on the government provided important conditions for the development of civil society. If the transition from reliance on the "policy-beneficiary" organizations that received government subsidies to "value-promotion" organizations whose objective is to advance the public interest without relying on government is a prerequisite for civil society, Japan had to develop the spirit of "self-help" in the private sector.

What factors in the 1980s worked to awaken awareness in the private sector of service to the public interest? There were a number of significant developments resulting from Japan's growth into a mammoth economy. The unprecedented expansion of the trade surplus forced Japan to seek some measures for recycling the surplus. A dramatic increase in direct overseas investment not only contributed to expanding profits but eventually gave Japanese businesspeople on-site experience in European and American societies where contributing to local society and nonprofit organization activities in the public interest are emphasized. Although engagement with such activities was initially motivated by the desire to assure acceptance of their factories and enterprises in foreign locales, many of these companies were converted to support for the principles of corporate citizenship and philanthropy that underlie civil society, and they began to introduce these activities and ideas into Japanese society.

Also, partly in response to the need to recycle the trade surplus, from the latter part of the 1970s Japanese official development assistance (ODA) expanded spectacularly. By extending ODA to developing countries, Japan was obviously motivated by the expectation that its generosity would strengthen friendly relations with their governments and that it would contribute to building economic resource infrastructures advantageous to Japan. However, as the complexity of international interdependence deepened, a view of "enlightened self-interest" of nations gained sway based on the recognition that the stability and development of the economies and societies of partner countries would also build the foundations for regional and global peace and prosperity, thereby contributing to the national interest of Japan in the long run. In other words, contributing to the welfare of one country came to be seen as an investment in the international public interest, which, in the natural course of events, would circulate and eventually be recompensed. The noblesse-oblige idea that the economically strong had a responsibility to serve the international public interest became widespread among Japanese in the course of this expansion of Japan's foreign aid programs.

Part of Japan's ODA included the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, through which young people were sent abroad to work closely with local people, contributing to development programs through person-to-person exchange. These programs, which paralleled the purposes of many NGOs devoted to international cooperation, helped to spread understanding of the concept of citizen-level activity in line with the public interest.

Also during this period, damage caused by acid rain and global warming resulting from destruction of the ozone layer began to receive widespread attention, and issues relating to the global environment awakened awareness of the shared destiny of humanity and the earth itself. The two chief conditions that fostered environmentalism are the increasing gravity of pollution and the overall tranquillity and affluence in society. In the 1980s, those two conditions were fulfilled in Japan. It was also a time when experts studying issues of global public concern formed an intellectual community. The dissemination of the results of their research worldwide was instrumental in building a world community of shared perceptions. Research institutions, which serve as the intellectual searchlights of society, came to acquire particular importance in matters of governance in the global age.

Another important factor that promoted the advance of civil society in the 1980s was the rising level of educational achievement, including among women. With increased affluence, it became economically possible for women as well as men to continue their studies on the university and postgraduate level. Men with university educations continued to seek careers in secure jobs in the large, well-established corporations, whereas women tended to feel more at home with work in NGOs, NPOs, and other fields in civil society.

Governance and Civil Society: The Post–Cold War Era

More than any other factor, however, it was the ending of the cold war that finally released the forces capable of propagating civil society in Japan. Humankind was liberated from the strategic obsessions of the cold war era. In its place, there was now much talk of "economic

confrontation" and of the "clash of civilizations." Both were based on slightly old-fashioned premises, however. Once the walls came down among groups of nation-states, it was found that the barriers between nations were open everywhere. Not only the borderless economy, but borderless security and borderless culture had already become an everyday affair in the advanced societies of North America, Europe, and Japan. The importance of the state was by no means eclipsed, but as society developed greater depth and complexity through the process of internationalization, the proportion of issues the state could readily deal with markedly decreased. As Daniel Bell pointed out, the state was too small a body to adequately deal with global problems but too big a presence to take care of the concerns of individuals and local communities.

Dealing with the problems that cannot be adequately handled by the state comes under the rubric of "governance." In the absence of a well-developed civil society, all kinds of problems, from global environmental destruction and regional development to matters related to the individual psyche, would be left unsolved. The times are such that the public good cannot be realized unless both the private sector and the government both deal with issues of a public nature. A country where the ethos of civil society is poorly developed cannot become a first-rate nation or earn the respect of the international community. The fundamental challenge of the 21st century is to build societies where the private sector flourishes and that possess a wealth of individuals and private groups with the knowledge and expertise to solve problems and the capacity to express themselves on an international level.

The event that impressed the world with the role of NGOs in an era when governments are either too big or too small was the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This was the product of international trends, however, and in Japan at that stage, no one expected much of NGO, NPO, or volunteer activities of any sort.

All the more amazing, therefore, were the tremendous forces of volunteer energy in Japan that welled forth following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. I myself was witness to this phenomenon from within, although what sparked such a change in Japanese society still strikes me as somewhat of a puzzle.

Kobe University alone lost 39 students to the quake. The students in my seminar at the time moved quickly to ascertain the safety of their fellows, and two days later a female student who played a leading role in liaison efforts came to my house with two others to report the news that with the exception of two students, all the others in my seminar had been accounted for. Right after that I received a telephone call informing me that one of the two had been found dead by his father in the rubble of his boardinghouse.

At a memorial service held in the nearby city of Sakai three days later where families and friends gathered to mourn the student of my seminar who had died, 15 other members who had survived the disaster also gathered. After the ceremony I talked with each of them, asking what they had experienced, and it was then that I learned that more than half were ready to volunteer to help deal with the aftermath of the quake. One young man was so overcome with grief at the loss of his classmate that he said doing volunteer work was the only thing that would save his sanity. The two American students in the group, I noticed, pitched in to help as if it was the obvious thing to do. In no time, the network that had been created to check classmates' safety had become a network for volunteer work.

Given the traditions of Japanese society, one might ask about the safety of friends, teachers, or acquaintances, but beyond that, it was the norm to withdraw and take care of one's own situation, not becoming involved in the affairs of others. For the first time, the students in Kobe turned their energies to volunteer efforts based on the kind of civic consciousness we associate with American society.

Not only students but the victims of the quake themselves went out of their way to help each other. Back in 1923, at the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake that struck Tokyo, antiforeign

rumors had set off group hysteria that resulted in the murder and maltreatment of Korean residents. In Kobe as well, there were people who were concerned only with the protection of themselves and their families, and in some cases government-level responses had virtually criminal results because of reliance on routine rules even in the face of crisis and lack of an adequate crisis-management policy. On the whole, however, the level of private, individual initiative in dealing with the catastrophe was unprecedented. This came not only from the victims themselves and others in the area but from the 1.3 million volunteers who came forth to help, and the astronomical sum of emergency relief aid that poured in from private sources around the world.

Certainly the information revolution and internationalization contributed greatly to this unexpected manifestation of civic consciousness in Japan. Conditions in the devastated area immediately became known throughout the world, and reporting on the quake was heard throughout Japan and in the disaster zone itself. Distorted views and mistaken responses could be corrected through international communication. When the remark of the governor of a neighboring prefecture, in responding to requests for relief assistance, to the effect that Kobe should basically look out for itself, was taken up in the news, it unwittingly revealed both how poor his understanding of the circumstances and how meager his civic spirit were.

When it was reported from Ministry of Finance sources that the government would not provide relief assistance from public funds for individual quake victims for fear of conflicting with the letter of the law, we shuddered at the unchanged horror of officials who considered it their responsibility to the state to put the logic of the bureaucracy above the lives of citizens. It made us all the more grateful for the praise we read in the newspapers penned by novelist Shiba Ryotaro, who observed from the sight of victims sharing what little food and supplies they had, that "[the people of] Kobe had lost a great deal, but at least they had not lost their 'hearts.'" I was also very encouraged when I read an article entitled "Thank you, People of Kobe," by then Washington-based *Asahi Shimbun* bureau chief Funabashi Yoichi, who reported that the U.S.

media were quite impressed with the courageous handling of the disaster by the victims of the quake.

Of course, the above anecdote is just a personal experience, but I do believe that our internationalized media communications have made it possible for us to see ourselves as if in a mirror and to correct our own behavior as necessary. I am convinced that it played a significant role in guiding the responses not only of the victims and other local citizens but of the nation as a whole.

Behind the phenomena that came to the fore with the Kobe disaster were the maturation of conditions that I have examined in this chapter. Tracing its roots to the modernization period and nourished after World War II, particularly during the 1960s and 1980s, the ethos of civil society has developed to such an unexpectedly high standard since the ending of the cold war that it can easily rise to the surface in an emergency.

CONCLUSION

When Japanese political scientists use the term "civil society," it is usually as the abstract concept of the society of citizens in contrast to the apparatus of the state. The same term may remind Americans of more specific, nongovernmental private organizations. The society of citizens and private organizations are not conflicting concepts. Associated among Japanese with the society of citizens, civil society is still thought of as displaying the indispensable elements of independent individuals and their autonomous private organizations. When seen, as among Americans, as referring to private organizations, civil society is understood as making up the entirety of the society of citizens that flourishes from the activity of such private organizations. In other words, civil society in its broad sense is a citizens' society that consists mainly of private organizations, such as NPOs and NGOs, and is also the realm in which these organizations are active.

At the beginning of this chapter, I cited three conditions under which civil society emerges: the presence of a pluralistic society, respect for the private, and popular awareness of the public interest. Has Japanese society today achieved these conditions?

It may be said that Japanese society has made great progress as far as pluralism is concerned. In any society where modernization has been forcibly initiated from above, state authority grows too strong no matter what political system is adopted. The idea of "respect for authority and contempt for the masses" was fostered in Japan not only by traditional factors but also in response to external crisis and the necessity for modernization initiated from above. When the post–World War II reconstruction drive and rapid economic growth, once again orchestrated by initiative from the top, were complete, a large middle class stretched across the spectrum of Japanese society. While the tendency toward uniformism and groupism can still be found in society and people's attitudes, the social structure is more diverse than it has ever been.

Respect for the private was fully recognized in principle in Japanese society after the end of World War II, but that did not mean that the tradition of authoritarian rule led by the bureaucracy had disappeared. The power of the bureaucracy to issue permissions and certifications, handle matters at its own discretion, and exercise broad monopolies on information continues to prevail. The bureaucracy still holds many of the privileges of a semi-independent kingdom that are beyond the reach of democratic controls. Many officials in the bureaucracy are convinced that their institutions represent the sole legitimate agencies that possess the qualifications and the ability to formulate state policy for the public good.

Today, however, this mentality of bureaucratic superiority has been profoundly shaken. Development-oriented policies planned by the bureaucracy and the immense powers needed to implement them have all but become things of the past. As a result, the sense of mission and the devotion that inspired members of the bureaucracy to work long hours day after day despite meager salaries for the sake of serving the state and the people has eroded. The public has been

disillusioned by the recent rash of cases revealing civil servants who took advantage of their positions for personal gain.

The problem is perhaps not so much the moral integrity of individual officials as it is the situation in which the bureaucracy has grown into one huge, unrivaled think tank. What is most urgently needed is a recovery of political leadership capable of using the bureaucracy to best advantage. In order to achieve such a goal, the party system has to be rebuilt, and the process is about halfway through. No less important in the long run is the necessity to expand the work of private think tanks and the development of civil society that assumes responsibility for public issues in general. Both public and private must be equally sturdy wheels of the cart for it to steadily carry the burdens of the public interest, but as society grows more advanced more weight will have to shift from the public to the private. Now that the state has become too big to look after the needs of individuals and too small to deal with the larger, globally related issues, citizens and private organizations endowed with a spirit of self-help and a sense of responsibility for the public good should play a much larger role in its stead.

Is it possible in these times, when even public servants who have lost sight of the public interest are tempted by the pursuit of personal profit, that ordinary citizens might develop a greater consciousness of the public good? Most people would probably say no. Nowadays, one often hears people talk about and decry the changes: Old-style morals have collapsed; everywhere you find people acting selfishly or irresponsibly, taking advantage of the looseness of social rules and constraints.

That tendency is undeniably part of what is changing in Japan, but fortunately it is not the whole story. Quite in the opposite direction, we also find that people today are cultivating a new consciousness that is open-minded and informed and are engaging in more sophisticated forms of activity. Observing the tendencies of university seminar students, for example, one notices that they are less interested in loyal, group-oriented sports-type activity with strict senior-junior distinctions and more inclined to join civic-related activities and groups which are more loosely

structured and where members are relatively independent. Nevertheless, one sees almost no irresponsible students of the kind who fail to turn in seminar reports or absent themselves from activities. While their preferences and character have changed, they are no less hard-working than their predecessors. On the contrary, many now take an interest in the environment and international issues and there are now many more women students, for example, who go on for graduate study or choose to study abroad.

Even professional baseball fans seem to have changed. I attended a game recently after not having been to a baseball stadium for a long time. Where once fans had no eyes for any but their own team and would fall silent even when a member of the other team hit a beautiful home run or performed a fine play, I was surprised to find them reacting quite differently. While naturally eager to see their own players do well and their team win, they now actually showed appreciation for and empathy toward skillful plays and home runs executed by the other team. In this way, I believe, people's thinking is becoming relativized as they develop the empathy to understand universalities that transcend in-group norms, local chauvinism, and narrow nationalism.

The earthquake disaster that hit Tokyo and Yokohama in 1923 triggered shocking attacks on Korean residents of the metropolitan area. Following the 1995 Kobe earthquake, no such antiforeign incidents were observed and local Japanese and foreign residents shared the same relief supplies of rice balls offered by volunteers. Suspicions of people of different nationality were overridden by empathy for other human beings caught in the same calamity. In the decades of peace since the end of World War II, Japanese do seem to have lost their former toughness, as often pointed out in their reluctance to perform dull, dirty, and dangerous jobs, but at the same time they have become more thoughtful of others and more broad-minded in their views. The outpouring of some 1.3 million volunteers at the time of the Kobe disaster must be interpreted as evidence not of a decline but of a heightening of care and understanding for others.

Responding to temporary needs out of sympathy for the victims of a terrible disaster is one thing; engaging in ongoing activity for the public good on a routine basis is another. The large

number of short-term volunteers represent the fringes of a growing bulwark of civic activists. In order to build that bulwark into a solid civil society through which citizens can move beyond such outer-fringe activities and support the core of public service activities on their own initiative, there is still a need for development of both subjective and objective conditions.

We may celebrate the passage of the NPO Law (officially the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities), signaling the acceptance in society of the NPO and NGO activities that form the core of civil society. Nevertheless, the shortage and inexperience of leadership for organizations engaged in public-interest activities are chronic. On the one hand, many long-established public-interest organizations have depended on government rules, protection, and financial resources for so long that they do not know how to act independently. On the other hand, the NGOs, many of which grew out of leftist or grass-roots citizens' movements, find it difficult to shed their anti-establishment attitudes. Some members of NGOs, while they possess the activists' devotion to dealing with problems, are sometimes guilty of narrow-minded self-righteousness, and without appreciating the complexity and difficulty of issues they sometimes revert to negative or even destructive acts.

There are many NGO activists in the field of international cooperation, meanwhile, who believe that accepting funds that are part of ODA is tantamount to submitting to government authority and to their own spiritual downfall. Some NGO activists with a strong sense of mission believe that their work can more effectively meet human needs than government programs and assert that part of public funds paid to the government in the form of taxes should be apportioned to them for these activities; however, there are very few NGOs that possess the organizational experience and skills to effectively act on this noble sense of mission. A more enabling environment is needed that will facilitate pluralistic and complementary roles for NGOs to make it possible for them to cooperate with government activities or even to rival them. Japan will attain an advanced civil society when NGOs can sometimes obtain access to government funds for their activities without giving up their autonomy from the government and when they have

developed high-caliber skills that will even influence government activities to greater improvement.

As important as and inseparable from these subjective conditions are social and institutional conditions. In the United States and Europe, NGO and NPO activities take place in a culture of giving and traditions of volunteerism and philanthropy that are firmly and widely rooted among the people. Conditions in these countries are immeasurably more favorable to such activities than in Japan. It is only a few years since the flood of 1.3 million volunteers that descended on Kobe to help deal with a disaster finally succeeded in arousing public recognition of volunteer activities. This lack of a deeply rooted tradition of volunteerism and philanthropy makes all the more decisive the role of institutional inducement efforts in order to encourage development of civil society. The framework for tax deductions on donations to organizations engaged in public-interest activities is far more limited in Japan than that in the West, for example.

On the premise that the government alone is best able to judge what is in the public interest, Japan has maintained a long tradition of paying all taxes to the government and leaving it to officialdom to decide how those resources will be divided. On this point as well, some diversification is needed. Whether it is for welfare, for education, or for international cooperation, as long as it is for a purpose in the public interest there should be room for the idea that the use of at least part of tax revenues should be left to the discretion of citizens themselves. By allowing a fixed deduction on income tax for donations to nonprofit public-interest organizations, citizens can assure that part of their tax payments will be spent for a certain purpose they can determine themselves. The same principle should be made to apply to inheritance taxes. It should be made possible to extend to people the freedom to decide on the basis of the value judgments they have developed during their lifetime how a fixed amount of the wealth they have accumulated over a lifetime will be spent in an area of activity they choose. In that sense, the clauses regarding tax deductions on donations which were omitted from the recently approved NPO Law are extremely important in order to foster a culture of giving and

civil society in general in Japan. Have we not reached a stage at which we can think of tax not just as something arbitrarily "taken away," but as money we voluntarily invest through the tax deduction system in an area in the public interest that we think particularly important?

NOTES

1. Information on this topic is primarily available in the multivolume *Nihon kyokasho taikei* (Comprehensive series on textbooks in Japan) (Kodansha 1961–1965). The section titled "Kindai kyokasho sosetsu" (Textbooks in the modern period: A general introduction) in volume 1 (Kodansha 1961) was particularly helpful.
2. On this subject, the study by Muramatsu, Ito, and Tsujinaka (1986).
3. After the Manchurian Incident of 1931, the military increased its control over political processes in Japan. The military-led government opened hostilities with China in 1937 that continued, and following Germany's military successes in western Europe in the spring of 1940 Tokyo signed the Tripartite Pact with Berlin and Rome. In dire need of oil and other resources, Japan subsequently sent troops to French Indochina and threatened to invade the Dutch colony of Indonesia. In response, the "ABCD" powers—the United States, Britain, China, and the Netherlands—joined forces to contain Japan.

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