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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the eighth volume of the *Japan Studies Review* (JSR), an annual peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the joint efforts of the Southern Japan Seminar and the Institute for Asian Studies at Florida International University, with partial funding from the Japan Foundation. JSR continues to be both an outlet for publications related to Southern Japan Seminar events and a journal that encourages submissions from a wide range of scholars in the field.

Appearing in this issue are four articles on a variety of topics related to Japanese society, including centralized as well as local educational systems, party faction and coalition dynamics in politics, the mirror poetics of Kawabata's "Snow Country," and the symbolism of blind characters in *Zatō* plays.

The first article, "Importance of 'Local' in a Centralized Educational System: A Blumerian Study of School Uniform Changes in Japan" by Yuichi Tamura, examines whether the Ministry of Education's guidelines set on global and national levels are incorporated by "local" educational systems. Analyzing the changes of school uniforms through records, surveys, and interviews in Joyo and Nara City junior high schools, it is observed that local variations in school regulations are determined by educators' interpretations of students' rule violations, community culture, and other factors.

Following this, "Party Faction and Coalition Dynamics in Japan" by Monir Hossain Moni analyzes the loss of Japan's political stability in 1993 causing disorder in existing political structures. The rapid shuffling of power due to conflicts between organizations, loss of credibility, and corruption, has made it difficult to devise basic policies on certain key issues, thereby leading to people's mistrust. At the time of the election of Koizumi in 2001, the question was asked whether he would make for a truly different approach.

The third article, "Kawabata's Mirrored Poetics" by Masaki Mori, describes how Kawabata Yasunari's fiction-making techniques in "Snow Country" combine ideas and techniques of Western literature with classical Japanese poetics, such as *tanka* and *haiku* poems. The lengthy passage of Kawabata's mirror scene reveals his appreciation for Japanese literary ambiguity, which includes multiple levels of meaning and symbolism.

The final article, “Zatō Plays in Kyōgen: Satire and Symbolism” by Junko Baba, deals with the physical blindness of its characters as a metaphor for mental blindness and also as a devastating criticism of the higher social ranks.

Also featured in this issue are two essays. One is “Japanese Business Schools as *Senmon Gakkō*, with Special Reference to the U.S. CPA Examination” by Kiyoshi Kawahito, who points out the difficulties of being an accounting student in Japan and the problems being faced by those interested in making the CPA examinations. Second, James W. Heisig’s essay, “The Place of Japanese Philosophy,” focuses on the universality of philosophy and the contributions of Japanese thought to the philosophical traditions of East and West.

Additionally, the volume contains four book reviews of recent publications on Japanese studies. Christopher Benfey’s study of how the encounter between Japanese and American scholars during the Meiji period influenced each others’ lives and works is reviewed by Daniel A. Metraux of Mary Baldwin College; Gail Dubrow and Donna Graves’s work concerning the rapidly disappearing landmarks of Japanese American migrants and their efforts to preserve these, which reveals hardships faced in America by Nisei, is reviewed by Masaki Mori of the University of Georgia; Anne Walthall’s edited volume introducing the lives of modern Japanese men and women which are not often described in historical studies is reviewed by Tinaz Pavri of Spelman College; and James Arraj’s book focusing on the question of whether Buddhist enlightenment can be compared to the Christian spiritual experience is reviewed by James W. Heisig of Nanzan University.

Please note: Japanese names are cited with surname first except for citations of works published in English.

Steven Heine, Editor

Re: Submissions, Subscriptions and Comments

Submissions for publication, either articles or book reviews, should be made in both hard copy and electronic formats, preferably Word for Windows on a disk (please inquire about other formats). The editor and members of the editorial board will referee all submissions.

Annual Subscriptions are \$10.00 (US). Please send a check or money order payable to *Florida International University*.

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All comments and feedback on the publications appearing in *Japan Studies Review* are welcome.

**IMPORTANCE OF “LOCAL” IN A CENTRALIZED
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A BLUMERIAN STUDY OF SCHOOL
UNIFORM CHANGES IN JAPAN**

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While the centralized character of Japanese education has been widely discussed in the scholarship of Japan studies and comparative education, little attention has been given to educational decision-making at local levels.¹ This paper questions the centralization assumption and examines the local contingencies of educational decisions in Japan. While I do not dispute the significance of the Ministry of Education for setting a standard to be followed by schools, local implementation of the Ministry's guidelines is contingent upon how educators at each school interpret these to fit their needs. Using recent changes in rules as a case, I will show how educators' interpretations of some conditions at these institutions resulted in variations in rule changes. In the 1980s and the 1990s, many schools evaluated the appropriateness of regulations and subsequently relaxed their control of students' lifestyles.² The Ministry of Education issued the instruction to all schools to reassess rules in April 1988,³ which claimed to

¹ Merry White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge: A Commitment to Children* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), pp. 169-170; Edward R. Beauchamp, *Japanese and U.S. Education Compared* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1992), pp. 9-12; James J. Shields, *Japanese Schooling: Patterns of Socialization, Equality, and Political Control* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989); Harry Wray, *Japanese and American Education: Attitudes and Practices* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), pp. 30-31; Sakamoto Hideo, *Taibatsu no kenkyū* [Research on Corporal Punishment] (Tokyo: Sanichi shobo, 1995); and Shoko Yoneyama, *The Japanese High School: Silence and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1999).

² Ministry of Education, *Nichijo no seito shido no arikata ni kansuru chosa kenkyū hokokusho* [Survey Report on Everyday Student Guidance] (1991, 1998); and Nakane Tsuneo, *Gakko no jitsujō* [Current State of Schools] (Tokyo: Fubosha, 1998).

³ The instruction by the Ministry classified school rules into three main

have set the stage for the nationwide deregulation of schools' control over students' appearance and deportment.⁴ Following the instruction to revise rules, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Association of Secondary School Principals in Japan conducted nationwide surveys on student guidance.⁵ The Ministry's reports quantitatively documented the pervasiveness of school rule changes in the late 1980s and the 1990s. In the 1991 report, 69% of secondary schools responded that they had revised their rules between April 1988 and November 1990. In addition, 23% of the schools were in the process of revising at the time.⁶ This trend continued and even intensified in the 1998 study, which indicated that 81% of schools had revised rules between 1993 and 1997, and an additional 8% were considering revision at the time.⁷

While the nationwide school rule changes may be indicative of the power of the Ministry to engineer changes in school practices, I found some variations in rule changes among schools that cannot be attributed to national influences. In Joyo City in Kyoto Prefecture and Nara City in Nara Prefecture, for example, school uniform regulations at junior high schools were identical in the early 1980s: a traditional military style uniform for

types: 1. Rules which need to be enforced totally; 2. Rules which should be considered as goals to attain; and 3. Rules which should be left at students' discretion (Ministry of Education 4/25/1988). This framework was used by school administrators to assess school rules. For example, the city board of education in Uji City in Kyoto Prefecture analyzed existing rules in nine junior high schools under its jurisdiction and classified rules into three types concretely based on the Ministry's instruction. At the school level, an assistant principal in Joyo City in Kyoto commented that the Ministry's framework was used for a reassessment of the rules at his school in the late 1980s (Interview 6/3/1998). The Ministry provided the framework for schools and boards of education to utilize for school rule revision.

⁴ Nakane, *Gakko no jitsujō*, pp. 200-202.

⁵ The Ministry of Education sent a questionnaire to 1,633 secondary schools in 1991 to inquire about each school's effort to assess and revise rules. Ninety percent of those schools (1,472) responded to the questionnaire. Similarly, in 1998, the Ministry conducted a similar survey among 1,653 schools, of which 1,453 schools (87.9%) responded.

⁶ Ministry of Education, 1991.

⁷ Ministry of Education, 1998.

boys and a sailor suit for girls. However, by the mid-1990s, three schools in Joyo City changed their uniforms to a more popular blazer while two others did not change. In Nara City, eight out of nineteen schools preserved the existing regulation, while three schools switched to a blazer and eight others did not use any school uniforms. By examining how such diversity in school uniform rules developed, this paper provides insight as to how nationally legitimated changes in Japan are still contingent, at least in some cases, upon educators' interpretations of local contexts.

Analytical Framework: Blumer's Sensitivity to Local Interpretations of Conditions

My focus on local variations is encouraged by Herbert Blumer's analytical emphasis on people's interpretations. Blumer sensitizes us to look for people's opinions on local specific conditions, which he considers significant for guiding social change. The importance of these conditions and people's understanding of them has been overlooked in past analyses of educational changes that have primarily focused on global and national levels. Recent studies on educational change focus on the global similarity of educational institutional structures and practices, such as the formation of organizations, compulsory mass schooling, and the indoctrination of individualism.⁸ They direct our attention to the global "institutional

⁸ Francisco O. Ramirez, "Institutional Analysis," *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual*, eds. George Thomas, John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez, and John Boli (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987); Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli, "Global Patterns of Educational Institutionalization," *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual*; Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, eds. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations," *Organizational Environments: Ritual and Rationality*, eds. John W. Meyer and W. Richard Scott (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983); and John W. Meyer, "Rationalized Environments," *Institutional Environments and Organizations*, eds. W. Richard Scott and John W. Meyer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

culture,” within which organizational structures are “not only influenced but also internally constituted.”⁹ Global institutional culture refers to “general cultural elements that are in principle applicable to particular institutions (e.g. education, religion, medicine) everywhere across societies.”¹⁰ From this standpoint, therefore, educational change is regarded as a consequence of “the systemic influence of the modern world culture.”¹¹ Rather than being attuned toward political, economic, and social contexts of local schools, educational change is analyzed as a response to the globalized institutional models of educational structures and practices.

Another strand of explanation of educational change focuses on the power of the state. The state-centered view explains alterations in these practices in terms of the state control over education, for example, by examining how the state uses education to develop the meanings of citizenship in countries such as Cuba, Tanzania, and China.¹² Changes in education were attributed to the state’s attempt to impose particular identity and knowledge among the population. Current scholarship on the Japanese educational system with its focus on the Ministry of Education resonates with this analytical focus on state power.¹³ In studying the Japanese

⁹ John W. Meyer, John Boli, and George M. Thomas, “Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account,” *Institutional Environments and Organizations*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Meyer, Boli, and Thomas, “Ontology and Rationalization,” p. 22.

¹¹ Ramirez, “Institutional Analysis,” p. 323; DiMaggio and Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited”; and Meyer, “Rationalized Environments,” pp. 40-45.

¹² Bruce Fuller, *Growing-Up Modern: The Western State Builds Third World Schools* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff, *Education and Social Transition in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Jacques Hallak, *Investing in the Future: Setting Educational Priorities in the Developing World* (Paris: UNESCO, 1990); Don Adams and Esther E. Gottlieb, *Education and Social Change in Korea* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1993); and Michael Apple, *Education and Power* (Boston: Routledge, 1982).

¹³ Yoshio Sugimoto, *Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 120-122; Yoneyama, *The Japanese High School*; Okano Kaori and Tsuchiya Motonari, *Education in Contemporary Japan: Inequality and Diversity* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Shields, *Japanese Schooling*, pp. 215-

educational system, White stresses the decisive roles played by the Ministry of Education in “supervis[ing] all aspects of education.”¹⁴ Shoko Yoneyama comments similarly that “in the past four decades, state intervention in things to do with the content of education became incomparably coercive in Japan.”¹⁵ Postwar educational changes in Japan were engineered by the leadership of the Ministry of Education, whose “priorities had shifted to the dissemination of knowledge and the selection of human resources to meet the emerging needs in the economy.”¹⁶ These scholars explain changes in the educational system and practices in terms of state intervention for economic development and the construction of national identity.

While these explanations provide important insight on macroscopic forces engineering changes in education, this paper raises the question of whether educational changes legitimized by the central authority are automatically incorporated into local practices. Are teachers and school administrators merely adapting to a blueprint set by the central educational authority? Or do they consider their local surroundings before making decisions to change? Informed by Blumer’s analytical framework, I give attention to “local conditions and people’s interpretive processes” that may have had an impact on school rule changes.

Blumer’s thesis on how industrialization influences changes in the structure and culture of local community provides an analytical framework for this study. In his posthumously published work, *Industrialization as an Agent of Social Change*, Blumer argues that the actual impact of industrialization on social change, such as the shift from the extended to nuclear family and the increasing dominance of contractual relationships, depends upon how people in local contexts interpret and respond to the forces of industrialization.¹⁷ According to Blumer:

The industrializing process does not operate in a social vacuum. It takes place always in a social setting with people, culture,

223; White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge*, pp. 169-170; and Beauchamp, *Japanese and U.S. Education Compared*.

¹⁴ White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge*, p. 170.

¹⁵ Yoneyama, *The Japanese High School*, p. 148.

¹⁶ Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Herbert Blumer, *Industrialization as an Agent of Social Change* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990).

institutions, and social organization. It is to be expected that if the social settings differ *significantly*, the changes induced in them by the industrializing process will differ.¹⁸

He further explains his orientation by emphasizing the local interpretive processes through which people and communities orient their responses:

We would have to ask in the case of any given type of industrialization, at what point it enters into group life, what it encounters and what takes place in the encounter....At each point of contact, it is met by people who are called on to respond to what is presented to them. The people bring to their task of responding to varieties of norms, attitudes, wishes, and established ways of action; they are also called on to assess what confronts them and to work out lines of action. Since what they bring to the given confrontation may vary and since their assessments of it may vary, their responses may similarly vary.¹⁹

Blumer encourages us not to be satisfied with an identification of broader historical conditions to explain social changes that are taking place in many locales. Instead, he argues that we must look at how people act based on their interpretations of concrete situations in relation to national and global influences. Inspired by Blumer's orientation, I studied how teachers and school officials interpreted local conditions concerning school rules and whether or not their interpretations led to different outcomes. In this paper, I present how local educators' interpretations of students' rule violations, community culture, and the timing of school rule assessment contributed to variations in school uniforms in Joyo and Nara City. I also argue that, while the national and global forces may exert significant influences on educational changes, it is important to be sensitive to local contingencies of macro-level influences that may lead to diverse outcomes.

Data and Methods

My findings in this paper are derived from two major sources: primary documents, such as written records of school rules and school

¹⁸ Blumer, *Industrialization as an Agent*, p. 134.

¹⁹ Blumer, *Industrialization as an Agent*, p. 133.

newsletters, and interviews collected during my fieldwork in Japan in the summers of 1998 and 1999. I concentrated my fieldwork on two cities, Joyo City in Kyoto Prefecture and Nara City in Nara Prefecture, since I observed local variations in uniforms among schools in these locales. I collected written records of school rules from all five junior high schools in Joyo City and ten of nineteen junior high schools in Nara City. I obtained information about school uniforms from educators in Nara City at the other nine schools.

I also interviewed teachers and school officials in these two cities. In Joyo City, I conducted 13 interviews with members of the city board of education, school principals, and teachers. Eight interviews with school principals, teachers and a city board member were conducted in Nara City. All interviewees had spent at least twenty years in the school district (at the time of the interviews), either as a teacher or an administrator, and thus were in a position to have had a first-hand experience about debates on school uniforms at their schools. Interviews were open-ended, allowing interviewees to take ample time to recollect how school rule debates progressed and what was decisive for the school's final decision for or against change. Interviewees informed me about which local conditions came into discussion and how they were interpreted at their schools in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

Interviewees provided not only spoken information, but also primary documents, including school newsletters, student leaflets published by the student council, and the directives issued by the boards of education to each school, which are rich sources for understanding local processes of school rule changes. Written sources were also used to cross-reference the information provided in interviews, and to reduce the possibility of misrepresentation. Cumulatively, school newsletters, reports from schools submitted to the local boards of education, and interviews provided me with pivotal information on what conditions were taken into consideration and how they were negotiated prior to the decisions made regarding uniforms. This highlighted aspects of educational decision-making that escape many of the studies concentrating on the role of the central authority.

In the following sections, I will first describe variations in school uniforms in both cities and also briefly discuss changes in other rules that were similar across schools. Secondly, I will discuss why such variations in the school uniform emerged in these two cities. I will organize my discussion in terms of three interpretations of conditions that teachers and school officials identify as influential on variations of school uniforms.

School Uniform Changes in Joyo City and Nara City

In comparing rule changes at schools in Joyo and Nara, I found that despite similarities, changes in school uniforms varied locally. For example, all five junior high schools in Joyo City eliminated rules on bags, caps, shoes, and socks. Also, all five schools no longer have rules that prohibit students from going to movie theaters or video arcades. Written records of school rules indicate that hairstyle regulations have changed in all five schools.

Table 1. Hairstyle Regulations in Joyo City

Pre- Change (1980s)	<p>Male students: The front must be shorter than one's eyebrows, the side shorter than the top of one's ears, and the back must be shorter than the collar.</p> <p>Female students: The front must be shorter than one's eyes; if the side or the back touches one's shoulder, she must tie it up (with a band in black, brown, or navy blue).</p> <p>In addition, perm, dye, the use of a ribbon, partial mohawk style, shaving off eyebrows, chap stick, and any make-up is prohibited.</p>
Post- Change (1998)	Both Male and Female: Hairstyle appropriate for Jr. high students; adornments such as a ribbons should not be ostentatious.

Rule changes in Nara City's schools were also similar. A student guidance teacher at Tomio Junior High School told me:

School rules in Nara City are in general similar across schools. But some rules may differ from school to school, due to the character of parents, students, and the community.²⁰

²⁰ Interview 6/16/1999.

I collected written school rule records from ten schools in Nara City. These schools no longer have rules on shoes, socks, and caps, and eliminated the use of school-designated bags. Also, eight of these ten schools had rules on hairstyle regulations identical to those of the five schools in Joyo City in 1998. Written records I collected from the other two schools did not mention hairstyles at all.

In the spirit of Blumer, I looked for variations in local school rule changes at the time when rule revisions were nationally legitimized by the Ministry of Education. What I found was that many schools did make similar rule changes. This suggests that Blumer's emphasis on sensitivity to local variations may not be significant for understanding most school rule changes in Japan. However, I also found that school uniforms that were once identical among these schools varied by the time of my fieldwork. The following table describes uniform rules in these two cities in 1998.

Table 2. School Uniforms in Joyo and Nara in 1998

	Traditional ²¹	Blazer	No Prescribed Dress
Joyo City (5 schools)	2 schools	3 schools	None
Nara City (19 schools)	8 schools	3 schools	8 schools

In the early 1980s, all five schools in Joyo City had a school uniform rule, requiring that male students wear a military style uniform and female students wear a sailor suit. By 1998, three of the five schools changed their uniform to a blazer, while two schools maintained their previous rule. Teachers and school officials told me that the possibility of changing school uniforms was discussed at all five schools. As I will elaborate, what was influential was not the presence or absence of demands calling for change, but local interpretations of students' violations of rules and of community culture.

²¹ Traditional school uniforms imply a military style uniform for boys and a sailor suit for girls.

The uniform rule of the schools in Nara City adds another feature. Nara City has nineteen junior high schools. Three schools established in the 1970s started without school uniforms.²² In the early 1980s, the other sixteen schools had a uniform policy identical to the five schools in Joyo City. By 1998, five schools in Nara City eliminated school uniforms, three schools changed from a military style uniform to a blazer, while eight schools maintained their original rule. The following table summarizes changes in school uniforms in Nara City.

Table 3. School Uniforms in Nara City in the 1980s and in 1998

	Traditional	Blazer	No Prescribed Dress
1980s	16 schools	0 schools	3 schools
1998	8 schools	3 schools	8 schools

How did such variations in uniforms emerge in Joyo and Nara? These local variations cannot be explained if we focus only on the supervisory power of the Ministry of Education. Analyzing interviews and written documents, I found that educators' interpretations of students' rule violations, community culture, and alternatives to traditional school uniforms significantly influenced each school's decision about uniforms.²³

²² The three schools without standardized uniform since their opening are Heijo Junior High, Heijo Nishi Junior High, and Nimyō Junior High. All three opened in the mid-1970s in areas where new housing communities were developed. In these expanding communities, many families with junior high school students settled into new houses. In order to curtail the cost incurred by these families to buy new uniforms, the schools permitted students to wear regular clothes (*Asahi Shinbun* 7/5/1999).

²³ Herbert Blumer defines "interpretation" as "a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action," in Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), p. 5. Following Blumer, in this paper, I use the term as an indicator of ways in which the school uniforms were supported or criticized in association with a given condition, which resulted in the decision to change or not.

Interpretations of Rule Violations

Rules change not when students conform to them, but when teachers cannot sufficiently instruct students to follow them. Students' violations present an opportunity for teachers to consider whether the rules in question are essential for school life and student socialization or can be altered.²⁴

Schools may be more likely to lessen their control when they interpret rule violations as interfering with the achievement of other institutional goals. An important point is that the decision to deregulate may not correlate with the frequency or severity of rule violations. How rule violations are interpreted appears to be more important than the number or the content of violations. In Joyo City, I found three interpretations of rule violations that have differentiated paths and outcomes of school uniform changes. The first type of interpretation is found at Kita Joyo Junior High School, where a sweeping change in rules, including school uniforms, was made in 1987. When students violated rules and the teachers attempted to enforce them, this led to violent encounters. School officials claimed that rules could not be enforced and were counterproductive in the sense that efforts to enforce rules compromised pedagogical purposes.

The second type of interpretation can be found at Minami Joyo Junior High School, where the school uniform did not change. I found that teachers and administrators claimed that they should not change rules just because they were difficult to enforce. The last type of interpretation of rule violations by students was expressed by educators at Nishi and Higashi Joyo Junior High Schools. They viewed rule violations as consistent features of school life, and thus did not interpret violations as a compelling reason to change rules. Interestingly, they did not strongly oppose rule changes, either. At these two schools, gradual changes occurred starting with rules of lesser importance and culminating with modifications of school uniforms. Some had no urgency to change, like Kita Joyo, while others had a strong opposition, such as Minami Joyo. However, both schools took gradual steps to alter their uniform.

Violations Interpreted as a Justification of Rule Changes

Kita Joyo Junior High School was motivated to reduce the strictness of rules in 1987 after teachers and administrators faced rule

²⁴ A junior high school teacher in Joyo City, Interview 6/12/1999.

violations and student violence. Major changes included policies on hairstyles, socks, school bags, caps, and regulations on students' entry into entertainment places such as movie theaters. Hairstyle guidelines were changed from "for boys, length not touching eyebrows in front, ears on the side, collars in the back, and for girls, not touching eyes in front, shoulders on the side" to "hairstyles appropriate for junior high students." Bags and caps prescribed by the school as well as the rule that required students to be accompanied by parents or chaperons when they went to movie theaters, coffee shops, and malls, were eliminated. The school also changed the style of uniforms from a military style to a blazer. The adoption of a blazer was an innovative decision at the time, and Kita Joyo's decision was reported in the national and local newspapers.²⁵

Demands for change at Kita Joyo were raised at a teacher meeting in 1984. In 1983, the school experienced a wave of student violence, and students' nonconformity to school rules was prevalent. A teacher at Kita Joyo in the early 1980s recalls, "When the school was faced with many violations by students, teachers started wondering whether we were struggling about something that had little to do with the purpose of education."²⁶ In May 1983, a student who was improperly wearing the school uniform assaulted a teacher who instructed him to correct the violation. Such an incident was interpreted as an indication that the detailed rules were counterproductive. Nomoto Katsunobu, the principal of the school at the time, commented in an interview in *Mainichi Shinbun*, "Schools supervised so many aspects of students' lives. By reducing school rules, we intended to return some of the tasks to families and redirect our energies to teaching."²⁷ The rules were criticized at Kita Joyo as a hindrance that kept teachers from putting more time and energy into pedagogical responsibilities. In 1985, the school formed a committee to examine the rules. It consisted of nine members, including the principal, the vice-principal, chairs of the faculty committees, and head teachers from each grade. The committee assessed the necessity of each existing rule and

²⁵ Its innovativeness was reported in national newspapers such as *Asahi Shinbun* (2/6/1987) and *Mainichi Shinbun* (2/1/1987), as well as local newspapers such as *Kyoto Shinbun* (1/30/1987) and *Jonan Shinpou* (1/24/1987).

²⁶ Interview 6/3/1998.

²⁷ *Mainichi Shinbun* (2/16/1987).

drew a blueprint for changes. In December 1986, the principal announced the new rules that went into effect in April 1987.

This interpretation of rule violations as counterproductive for educational goals is also advanced at Kasuga Junior High School in Nara City, which is one of the schools that eliminated uniforms in the 1990s. The principal of Kasuga commented on why he supported the elimination of school uniforms:

If there is a uniform, some students will somehow violate the rule. So, we have to instruct or scold them from the first thing in the morning. That doesn't make either me or the students feel better. Also, from my experience, the more we instructed them to follow rules, the more the students violated them. I just didn't see any benefits to the use of a uniform and I supported its elimination.²⁸

School uniform changes were supported by teachers and school administrators when they faced many rule violations. They interpreted student violations as a hindrance to their attempt to achieve pedagogical and student guidance goals. It is important to note that the decisive point was not the presence of rule violations, but how teachers and school administrators interpreted them. The case of Minami Joyo Junior High School, which experienced a comparable extent of rule disobedience but did not change uniforms, illuminates this point.

Interpretation of Violations as Temporary

At Kita Joyo, teachers and school officials questioned the benefits of school rules when students violated them frequently. On the other hand, at Minami Joyo Junior High School, infringement of these rules by students was interpreted as a short-term trend, and some powerful teachers and officials argued that they should not compromise regulations because of the difficulty in enforcing them. Like Kita Joyo, Minami Joyo Junior High also changed many school rules. They formed a revision committee in 1986 and examined the appropriateness of existing rules. Guidelines on caps (1986), hairstyles (1987), school bags (1987), and winter coats (1988) were revised subsequently to allow for more student discretion. In 1989, following the uniform change made by Kita Joyo in 1987, a suggestion was made at the

²⁸ Interview 6/9/1999.

Joyo City junior high school student guidance conference for all five schools to change the uniform to a blazer.²⁹ The conference concluded with the understanding that each school would consider the possibility based on the desires of students and parents, as well as the general community.

Minami Joyo was experiencing violations of the school uniform rule, similar to other junior high schools in the city.³⁰ Students altered the length of uniforms, used buttons in prohibited colors such as red and blue, and embroidered some designs including dragons. Teachers attempted to guide students toward correcting the infraction but were not successful. However, their responses to the violations were different from that of Kita Joyo. The changes were not supported by the school principal, the student guidance committee members, and older teachers, who insisted that rules should not be changed merely because they are difficult to enforce.³¹ A city

²⁹ Information was provided in an interview (05/25/1999) by the section chief at the city board of education in Joyo City.

³⁰ This information was presented by several teachers in Joyo City in interviews. Although there is no specific record of the numbers of student violations, the record of the heads of student guidance section committees meeting from all five junior high schools at the City Hall in May 1989 reports the similarity in the patterns of student violations across schools.

³¹ The system of seniority is often pointed out as a distinctive characteristic of Japanese organizations. See Edwin O. Reischauer, *The Japanese* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Ezra F. Vogel, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1979); and Ken Schoolland, *Shogun's Ghost: The Darkside of Japanese Education* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1990). Thomas P. Rohlen reports that the seniority is significant in every facet of school structure and procedure, including curriculum development, salary structures, and decision-making in the teacher meetings, in Rohlen, *Japan's High Schools* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 172, 175-176. Senior teachers are more powerful in decision-making processes in school structure, partly because they are more likely to hold a position in the faculty committee, especially the head position; in Nakane, *Gakko no jitsujō*. Okano and Tsuchiya point out the importance of seniority apart from the power positions in the committee. Senior teachers are called *jōseki*, literally meaning "the upper seat," in *Education in Contemporary Japan*, p. 187. Even if they do not occupy positions in the committees, their

board member who observed the consideration of changes at Minami Joyo during the 1980s told me:

The argument was that rule violation by students was just a short-term trend and would soon decrease. Moreover, it was argued that children want to test their limits against authority, so they decided to keep the uniform in order for them to have something to test.³²

At Minami Joyo, powerful teachers and school officials defined rule violations as a temporary condition, and argued that rules should not be loosened merely because they are difficult to enforce. It was significant that teachers who favored uniform changes were criticized by powerful teachers. A student guidance teacher at Minami Joyo in the 1980s comments:

Teachers who are confident in student guidance do not rely on rules. They rely on what they believe is right and appropriate, and take time to logically convince kids of the need to act in a certain manner. Other teachers who don't have confidence in their ability to guide students rely on rules. Their favorite phrase is "you have to do so because it is a rule." The latter type of teacher is the one who wants to maintain rules, but when students' violations become pervasive, they want to eliminate those very rules.³³

This comment suggests that some teachers who proposed rule changes were criticized as less competent in guiding students. In such an environment, it becomes more difficult for teachers to call for adjustments. The school uniform change became unfeasible when the claim supporting change was interpreted as a sign of incompetence at Minami Joyo Junior High School.

Interpretation of Violations as Consistent: The Lack of Urgency to Change

While studying school uniform changes in Joyo City, I also found

voices have significant influence on the discussions at teachers' meetings and are respected by administrators and committee members; see Beauchamp, *Japanese and U.S. Education*.

³² Interview 5/25/1999.

³³ Interview 6/12/1999.

that two other schools made modifications from the traditional military style to a blazer, comparable to Kita Joyo Junior High School. Whereas Kita Joyo's changes were led by school officials who revised most rules at the same time, these two schools made gradual transformations by starting with minor rules regarding shoes and socks and culminating in changes in school uniforms.³⁴ Rule violations were interpreted at these schools differently, which distinguished the paths they took toward making changes.

When violations are not interpreted as a problem that requires urgent rectification, debates on rule changes may take longer and outcomes may be reached gradually. A teacher at Nishi Joyo in the late 1980s recalls:

Violations of the school uniform rule occurred, but that has been the case since the late 1970s. There have not been any remarkable changes in violations.³⁵

A former teacher at Higashi Joyo told me that student violations of the uniform rule were prevalent at his school in the mid-1980s, but did not escalate into violent encounters.³⁶ Violations of the school uniform rule by students occurred at Higashi and Nishi Joyo Junior High Schools, but teachers and administrators did not interpret them with the same sense of urgency that became prominent in the case of Kita Joyo. At the same time, this interpretation does not explicitly oppose rule changes, in contrast to the educators' view at Minami Joyo that rules should not be changed just because they are difficult to enforce. Without a pressing need for revision or a strong opposition to change, schools revised rules gradually.

In this section, I discussed three interpretations of rule violations manifested at schools in Joyo City.³⁷ I found that the interpretations of local

³⁴ At Higashi Joyo, the rule on school caps was eliminated in 1985, followed by a nametag rule in 1986, rules on hairstyles and accessories in 1987, and the rule on school bags in 1988. The school uniform was switched to a blazer in 1992. At Nishi Joyo, though in a different order, the rules were also revised gradually, starting from school bags in 1982, school caps in 1987, winter coats in 1988, and school uniforms in 1991.

³⁵ Interview 6/2/1998.

³⁶ Interview 5/25/1999.

³⁷ It should not be thought that each interpretation of rule violations were held and supported by all teachers and school administrators at the school.

educators regarding rule violations by students influenced the uniform changes made by particular schools. When rule violations by students were interpreted as a hindrance for attaining pedagogical purposes, schools were more likely to change rules. On the other hand, schools were likely to keep rules unchanged when rule violations were viewed as a short-term trend and teachers who made claims were labeled as incompetents looking for an easy way out. I also found that when rule violations were defined as consistent features of school lives, neither opposition nor support for sweeping immediate changes became prevalent and rule changes including school uniforms did take place gradually.

Influences of Community Culture

It is easy to overlook how local community culture is taken into consideration for educational decision-making in Japan, whose educational system is characterized by a nationally standardized curriculum and a rigidly structured hierarchy under the Ministry of Education.³⁸ The Ministry of Education legitimated reassessments and revisions of school rules in April 1988, and the 1991 nationwide survey indicates that most schools deregulated their tight control over students' appearance and deportment. However, studying changes in school uniforms in Joyo and Nara City, I found two ways that the local community influenced the emergence of variations in school uniform changes.

First, educators pointed out that the profile of the local community was a significant indicator of the school's decision to change uniforms. In

As Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian warn, decisions to act collectively, in this case to change or not to change school uniforms, leads us to "the illusion of unanimity" among participants, in Turner and Killian, *Collective Behavior*, vol. 3 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1987), p. 28. My analysis of data does not allow any conclusive arguments on whether the decision was unanimous or not. However, it points to which interpretation became dominant in each school, as recalled by those who observed the debates directly. The significance attributed to these interpretive variations is limited in this paper to their influences on each school's decision about uniforms.

³⁸Beauchamp, *Japanese and U.S. Education*; Okano and Tsuchiya, *Education in Contemporary Japan*; Schoolland, *Shogun's Ghost*; Rohlen, *Japan's High Schools*; and White, *The Japanese Educational Challenge*.

some communities there were people who resided in the areas for generations and did not make demands for rule changes. On the other hand, in communities with many new residents, people tended to express views that were against traditional regulations by schools.

Second, educators' views about the local community affected their willingness to change school uniforms. In such cases, it is not the actual profile of the local community, but the views held among educators about the profile that had a significant impact. Although this may be a small part of a much larger trend guided by Japanese national culture and the Ministry's legitimation, it helps identify significant differences in schools influenced by local community culture.

Profiles of Local Community

Tomio Junior High School is one of eight schools that still use traditional school uniforms in Nara City. When I asked the school's principal why they had not changed uniforms, he told me that no requests had been made for uniform changes. He attributed the absence of requests to the lack of residential movement in the school area. The principal states, "Our students are from families who have lived in this area for generations. People don't expect change, so no one asks for it."³⁹ A former teacher at Mikasa Junior High, which pioneered uniform elimination in the city, commented on the other side of the story:

In the district of Mikasa Junior High, families settle because their company transferred them here. So, until the company decides to transfer them, other people will continue to move in. I saw a tendency that people who transfer in express more radical ideas.⁴⁰

These comments suggest that when residential mobility of local communities was high, demands for changes were more likely to be made. Schools located in communities with less movement of residents may have been less likely to receive requests for change. Although studies of schools in Japan tend to focus on the uniformity and centralization of the system, the potential for school rule changes, at least in some cases, has been affected by characteristics of the local communities.

³⁹ Interview 6/16/1999.

⁴⁰ Interview 6/23/1999.

Educators' Views on Community Culture

In Nara City, educators emphasized community differences when explaining attitudes of local residents toward school uniforms. I also found that views of teachers and school officials about their local communities affected their decisions to change school uniforms. Schools appear more likely to have lessened their control when they perceived that community members would support their decisions. How they view the prevailing culture of people in the community was perhaps as important as the objective conditions of the community itself.

An example of how community culture was interpreted in relation to school uniforms is Minami Joyo Junior High School, which retained its traditional military style uniform. Some teachers and school officials at Minami Joyo told me that the view expressed at the teachers meeting was that the local community would not accept the change. A current assistant principal states:

Families around here have lived their entire lives in this region. This is primarily an agricultural region in the city. So, people tend to be conservative.⁴¹

A student guidance teacher at Minami Joyo from 1979 to 1990 recalls that:

There was a debate on the possibility of uniform change. The suggestion was made by some teachers after Kita Joyo changed its uniform to a blazer. But we decided not to change partly because we couldn't imagine that the parents and people in the community would support the change.⁴²

Whether the community in Minami Joyo's school district was more conservative, or not, was less important than the fact that teachers had such a view about the community, which influenced decision-making at the school. A city board member told me that Minami Joyo and Nishi Joyo Junior High Schools had a comparable number of students whose families engage in agriculture. The other three schools in Joyo City had students

⁴¹ Interview 6/3/1998.

⁴² Interview 6/12/1999.

with such backgrounds.⁴³ It is important to note that while Nishi Jojo changed its school uniform, Minami Jojo did not. This suggests how teachers and school officials perceived the school community and may have diversified the schools' decisions, irrespective of its profile.

Interpretations of Feasibility

The feasibility of the elimination of school uniforms as perceived by teachers and school officials also influenced their decisions. Feasibility is defined as "a vague impression about the possibilities inherent in a situation, the facilities or resources needed for carrying out the action, and the ability of the potential actors to carry out the action successfully."⁴⁴ It signifies the actors' calculation of the cultural appropriateness of a decision they are to make and the likelihood of its successful implementation. Educators interpreted proposed changes in rules with reference to what they regarded as feasible at the time claims were made. Some variations resulted when alternatives that seemed unfeasible became accepted at a later time.

The decision to change a traditional military style uniform to a blazer by Tonan Junior High School in Nara City in April 1991 illustrates that the elimination of uniforms was interpreted as impractical. The debate about the change started in 1988, when some teachers voiced their disappointment in the ineffectiveness of their trying to guide students to conform to the school uniform rule.⁴⁵ A student guidance committee suggested that the school uniform be eliminated, but students and parents opposed the idea. A former student guidance teacher recalls:

Because no other school in Nara City had eliminated the school uniform at the time, we were very apprehensive about how the community would respond. So we conducted surveys of parents and students. It turned out that 60% of students and 80% of parents were opposed to the idea of allowing students to choose their own attire. The idea of a blazer came up as a compromise.⁴⁶

⁴³ Interview 5/25/1999.

⁴⁴ Turner and Killian, *Collective Behavior*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Factual information on Tonan Junior High School's uniform change is from interviews of a current and a former student guidance teacher at Tonan during the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

⁴⁶ Interview 6/17/1999.

This points to the importance of the timing of claims against a social condition. The elimination of school uniforms was not supported at the time the claim was made at Tonan Junior High School. On the contrary, when surveys were taken at Kasuga Junior High School in 1995, only 15% of students and 29% of parents opposed the elimination of school uniforms. Kasuga eliminated its uniform in 1997.

The principal at Kasuga Junior High and current chair of the city's public school student guidance committee points out an ironic development:

Schools that switched from a traditional uniform to a blazer early on have not eliminated the blazer. The pattern of uniform changes after Mikasa Junior High School [which set the precedent of change from a traditional school uniform to no rule on student clothes] has been the elimination of rules, and all of the schools that have eliminated regulations never adopted a blazer.⁴⁷

Schools that experienced earlier demands from significant segments of the school organization changed from a traditional military style to a blazer. The elimination of the school uniform was not feasible at the time, and students and the community did not support the idea. Once changed, the argument to eliminate the blazer had not gained momentum at Tonan Junior High School. It is interesting that schools that reassessed and revised rules in ways that reflected the changing lifestyles of youth can now be defined as permitting less individualistic expression, while schools that retained traditional uniforms longer and then eliminated them can be seen as respecting individuality more. Variations in uniforms in Nara City may indicate that school rule changes were influenced by what was perceived as feasible alternatives at the time of discussion and decisions about changes. Once changes have been made, it is apparently less likely that schools will make another revision even though further deregulations were recently made in nearby local settings.

Another interpretation of feasibility is found in Joyo City. There, a school decided not to make changes based on an interpretation about what could be feasible in the near future. At Joyo Junior High School, changing to a blazer was passed up when teachers and school officials claimed that

⁴⁷ Interview 6/9/1999.

switching to a blazer was a short-term trend and the elimination of school uniforms would soon become a possibility.

Joyo Junior High had gone through school rule revisions in the late 1980s. In 1986, rules on school caps were eliminated, followed by the removal of rules on school bags in 1988. In 1990, the school considered the possibility of a uniform change because traditional uniforms did not reflect clothes commonly worn in Japan, and other schools in the area switched or were considering switching to a blazer.⁴⁸ At the teachers meeting, the issue was discussed and dismissed. A teacher at Joyo Junior High from 1990 to 1995 recalls how the discussion ended:

When the issue of school uniforms was brought up at the teachers' meeting, change was passed up due to the view that the blazer was a temporary condition at public schools in Japan. The blazer was considered a compromise between the traditional uniform and private clothes, and the elimination of standardized clothes would be the major trend. So, we should not change twice, but wait until the trend starts and make the change then.⁴⁹

At Joyo Junior High School, claims for the adoption of a blazer were deferred until the elimination of school uniforms became a national trend. As of 1999, Joyo Junior High School still used a traditional school uniform. Teachers and administrators decided to continue to use traditional school uniforms not because they did not agree with the view that school uniforms were culturally obsolete, but based on their prediction that the blazers would also be outdated in the near future. Local educators at Joyo Junior High suspended changes and maintained the status quo since they believed that continuing influences of cultural changes would soon supersede any presently feasible adjustments.

Implications for Future Research on Japanese Schools

The Japanese educational system has been characterized by centralization and standardization. Resonating with this traditional understanding, recent school rule changes were attributed to the Ministry of Education's instruction to revise rules issued in April 1988. While

⁴⁸ Interview 6/11/1998.

⁴⁹ Interview 6/12/1999.

nationwide changes after April 1988 indicate the supervisory power of the Ministry, this paper posed a question of whether anything significant in school rule changes in Japan is neglected if one focuses on national and global forces of change. In the spirit of Herbert Blumer, I conducted fieldwork by looking for variations in school rule changes that cannot be explained in terms of top-down intervention by the Ministry of Education.

I documented the presence of local variations in school uniforms and attempted to better understand how such variations emerged. I found that educators' interpretations of rule violations, community culture, and feasible options on changes influenced decisions on school uniforms. First, student violations of school rules was an important condition in the sense that it provided an occasion for teachers and administrators to assess the necessity and appropriateness of violated rules and to consider the possibility of change. It is important to note that the potential effects of student violations on requests cannot be simply understood by the increase or decrease of violations. How student violations are interpreted at each school setting, especially by educators in positions of power, influences the possibility for rule revisions.

Secondly, community culture also influences the processes of decision-making on the school rule issue. In a community where the local residents have lived in the area for generations, they are less likely to make significant demands for changes in school rules. Also, the community culture can exert an influence, as in the case of Minami Joyo Junior High, where schoolteachers and administrators passed up the possibility of change based on the assumption that the community would not support rule change.

Third, the repertoire of feasible changes when claims were made contributed to the variations in uniforms. Tonan Junior High in Nara City reassessed its rules earlier than others in the district, and its school uniform changed from the unpopular traditional type to a popular blazer. But after Tonan's change, the elimination of school uniforms rather than switching uniforms from one type to another became feasible. Other schools that reassessed and changed rules a few years later eliminated school uniforms altogether.

Another mechanism for variation resulting from educators' views on feasible options was found in Joyo City. Joyo Junior High did not change its school uniform, even though there was openness for change while three other schools in the city varied in the late 1980s based on an anticipation of the increasing feasibility of uniform elimination in the near future. This points to the importance of how educators at each school

assess not only what options are available, but also what options are likely to become feasible when making their decisions about uniform changes.

Nationally legitimized rule changes were not always incorporated automatically into each school practice, but educators assessed and negotiated in reference to some conditions specific to each school community before making decisions about changes. Though these may be small variations in a large trend toward school rule deregulation, attention to local interpretations will lead us to a better understanding of some overlooked aspects of school rule changes. As a conclusion to this paper, I will point to two implications of this analysis for future research on Japanese schools.

First, further studies on Japanese school rule changes can be developed by building upon the findings in this study. Did educators' interpretations of rule violations, community culture, and the feasibility of alternative uniforms come into play in a similar manner at schools in other areas in Japan? Or did they matter differently in other schools? Were there any other conditions that came into play during the school rule debates that were not identified in this study? Further comparative studies will help us understand more about the effects of local conditions and interpretations on school rule changes, providing an opportunity to theorize relationships that connect rule changes, local conditions, and educators' interpretations.

Second, it would be beneficial to examine other aspects of education, such as a curriculum, school organizational structures, teachers' roles, and exams and credentials from Blumerian perspectives. Do local interpretations matter in other aspects of education, or are they only applicable to a small part of school rule changes? If they do matter, how do they come into play in cases of curriculum implementation in a nationally standardized system? Generally, I argue that it is more enriching to examine Japanese schools in terms of both macro (national and global forces) and micro (local contingencies) levels. Our understanding of Japanese education will be more refined and sophisticated by analyzing not only the decisive influences of the Ministry of Education and structural and cultural conditions in increasingly globalized Japan, but also local educators' assessment of their schools and communities which may differentiate eventual educational decisions.

PARTY FACTION AND COALITION DYNAMICS IN JAPAN

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Japan is known by the world for its economic prowess and high quality exports, but not for its politics. Since World War II, Japan has been a country of almost unique political stability. One party ruled for thirty-eight years during a time in which politics were predictable and extremely rapid social change was accommodated without major political disruptions. Then, in 1993, after nearly four decades in power, the largest party split, and political life was thrown into turmoil from which it has yet to recover fully.¹ In Japan, the shuffling of power from one-party dominance to multiparty coalitions, and from coalition to coalition, affected the policy-making process and certain issues in particular.² Political parties are basically coalitions as well as organizations, and this fact is the reason for the partial collapse. Coalitions can last for a long time and develop highly institutionalized structures, but they are also very fragile and may collapse. Even though a party organization appears to be firmly established, continuation depends on whether or not politicians maintain their belief in the existence of the party.³

¹ Bradley M. Richardson, *Japanese Democracy: Power, Coordination and Performance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 1.

² Naoto Nonaka, "Characteristics of the Decision-making Structure of Coalitions," *Power Shuffles and Policy Processes: Coalition Government in Japan in the 1990s*, ed. Hideo Ōtake (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000), pp. 102-124; and Shinkawa Toshimitsu, "Failed Reform and Policy Changes of the SDP," *Power Shuffles and Policy Processes*, pp. 152-182. (This is the first English-language study, and an excellent one, of the coalition era in which seven Japanese political scientists present in-depth analyses of the political change and policy-making process in Japan during the 1990s).

³ For excellent in-depth analysis of the essential coalitional nature of political parties, see Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, "Coalitions and Cabinet Government," *American Political Science Review* 84/3 (1990): 873-890; Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments: Cabinets and Legislatures in Parliamentary Democracies*

Japanese party factions, faction-based intra-party government-leadership coalitions, and inter-party government coalitions all share some of the same characteristics, although only the first two are normally expected to develop complex organizational forms. If coalitional agreements fall apart, organizational super-structures become less meaningful or even irrelevant. Historically, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politicians gained government positions and policy influence in exchange for accepting party policies, procedures, and the faction system. As long as the coalition met the members' needs, the party continued to exist. When the party and its leadership lost credibility in 1992-93, the party's *raison d'être* was weakened. LDP members who changed sides failed entirely. The intra-party's reactions to conflicts contributed to opposing dynamics in the LDP.

One ever-changing condition is the persistence of party institutions and procedures that promote integration and solidarity. Another condition is an intermittent tendency toward fragmentation and crisis. The patterns in the LDP are also seen in the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP) and occasionally in other parties and organizations.⁴ Sometimes Japanese parties and organizations are highly stable coalitions, and at other times, fragmentation and conflict make them volatile and potentially self-destructive. A similar situation in having the potential to collapse can be

(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Lanny Martin and Randolph Stevenson, "Coalition Formation in Parliamentary Democracies," *American Journal Political Science* 45/1 (2001): 33-50; Eric C. Browne, *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies*, ed. John Dreijtsman (New York: Longman, 1982); Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom, eds., *Coalition Politics in Western Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Ian Budge and Hans Keman, *Parties and Democracy: Coalition Formation and Government Functioning in Twenty States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁴ The Japan Socialist Party changed its English name to the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP) in 1991. For an in-depth study of SDP, see Taguchi Fukuji, "Nihon Shakaitō ron" [An Analysis of the Japan Socialist Party], *Chūō kōron* 73/9 (1958): 124-143; and Nippon Shakaitō, ed., *Nippon Shakaitō shi* [The History of the Japan Socialist Party] (Tokyo: Nippon Shakaitō, 1996).

seen in inter-party coalitions, according to recent studies.⁵

To understand Japanese politics today, one must accept that Japan's basic political structure has changed. In recent times, Japanese politics have experienced changes so rapid and thoroughgoing that even careful Japanese observers can hardly keep track of all the details. The country has had nine Prime Ministers since 1990. More than ten new political parties emerged and then disappeared during that time, while the alignment and realignment among political forces has often gone beyond traditional partisan identity. Despite the amazing magnitude and rapidity of political change, few analysts claim that Japan's political transformation has finally stabilized.⁶ The current political change represents a restructuring of the political marketplace, mainly among politicians rather than significant voter realignment on the part of the general electorate.⁷

This paper is basically an endeavor to: (i) examine the paradox of why factions have survived political reform; (ii) analyze the changes and continuities in the attributes and functions of the LDP; (iii) address the question of what shape inter-factional rivalry has taken following the party's loss of its absolute stable majority; (iv) review the coalitional nature

⁵ Richardson, *Japanese Democracy*, pp. 74-75; and Michael Leiserson, "Factions and Coalitions in One Party Japan," *American Political Science Review* 62 (1968): 770-787.

⁶ See for example T.J. Pempel, *Regime Shift* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Gerald L. Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), especially the last chapter. Quoted in Cheol Hee Park, "Factional Dynamics in Japan's LDP Since Political Reform: Continuity and Change," *Asian Survey* 41/3 (2001), p. 428.

⁷ Hideo Ōtake posits two concepts, political restructuring (*seikai saihen*), which he sees as a realignment among politicians, and partisan realignment (*seitō saihen*), which he sees as significant in voter alignment. According to him, a partisan realignment has yet to be seen in Japan. See Ōtake, *Nihon seiji no tairikujiku* [Pillars of Contention in Japanese Politics] (Tokyo: Chūkō shinshō, 1999), pp. 41-44; Ōtake, ed., *How Electoral Reform Boomeranged: Continuity in Japanese Campaigning Style* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998), pp. 66-69; and Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth, *Japan's Political Marketplace* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 59-79.

of political parties; and finally, (v) indicate the future directions of domestic politics in Japan.

The End of the “1955 System”

For most of the postwar period, Japan’s political setup was dominated by the LDP, formed in 1955, and the Japan Socialist Party (JSP).⁸ This “1955 System” continued until 1993, when Japanese politics entered a period of disorder. The basic theme of the 1955 System was the ideological conflict between two major parties with very different world views – a conflict paralleling international affairs – in an era when the world was divided into socialist and capitalist camps.⁹ The two parties

⁸ Japan’s first political party was founded by Itagaki Taisuke in 1874, the Aikoku Koto [Public Party of Patriots], and was later renamed the Jiyuto [Liberal Party]. In terms of policy and ideology, it had much in common with the present-day LDP. For the most comprehensive study of the LDP in English, see Haruhiro Fukui, *Party in Power: The Japanese Liberal Democrats and Policymaking* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972); for an insightful description of the LDP and its internal process in the 1960s, see Nathaniel Thayer, *How the Conservatives Rule Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969); for a view of the party in more recent times, consult Tomita Nobuo, Akira Nakamura and Ronald J. Hrebner, “The Liberal Democratic Party: The Ruling Party of Japan,” *The Japanese Party System: From One Party to Coalition Government*, ed. Ronald J. Hrebner (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1986): 235-282. See also, Haruhiro Fukui, “The Liberal Democratic Party Revisited: Continuity and Change in the Party’s Structure and Performance,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 10 (1984): 385-435; Gerald L. Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 80-116; Satō Seizaburō and Matsuzaki Tetsuhisa, *Jimintō seiken* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1986); and Hans H. Baerwald, *Party Politics in Japan* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

⁹ The term “1955 System” has at least four meanings: (i) the structure of the two-party system formed in 1955; (ii) ideological confrontation between the LDP and the JSP; (iii) major policy differences between the LDP and the JSP on Constitution and security issues since the 1950s; and (iv) collaborative management of Diet affairs by the LDP and the JSP. For details, see Shuichi Wada, “Generation Change and Political Upheaval,”

maintained the appearance of fierce rivalry until the end, but beneath the surface, the relationship gradually evolved into a mutually tolerant and cooperative co-existence. Under the LDP, Japan was able to achieve rapid economic growth thanks to the security guaranteed by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. At the same time, the Liberal Democrats implemented many of the social reforms advocated by the Socialist opposition. As a consequence, voters saw little need for a change in government.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the system of multi-seat electoral constituencies, for the House of Representatives, helped lock the LDP and the JSP into the number one and number two positions respectively.¹¹ During the three-and-a-half decades following the birth of the 1955 System, the LDP generally outnumbered the JSP by a ratio of 2:1. As this pattern solidified, the JSP, instead of making a serious bid for power, gradually settled into the

Power Shuffles and Policy Processes: Coalition Government in Japan in the 1990s, pp. 213, 183-217.

¹⁰ The LDP coalition took form in the 1950s when important interest organizations were formed in several sectors, including small businesses and farming; see Kent Calder, *Jimintō chōki seiken no kenkyū*, trans. Toshiko Calder (Tokyo: Bungei shinjusha, 1991); originally published as *Crisis and Compensation: Public Policy and Political Stability in Japan 1949-1986* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988). Also see Sheldon Garon and Mike M. Mochizuki, "Negotiating Social Contracts," *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 145-166; Michio Muramatsu and Ellis S. Krauss, "The Conservative Policy Line and the Development of Patterned Pluralism," *The Political Economy of Japan*, vol. 1, eds. Kozo Yamamura and Yasukichi Yasuba, *The Domestic Transformation* (Stanford, KY: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 516-554; and Muramatsu and Krauss, "The Dominant Party and Social Coalitions in Japan," *Uncommon Democracies: The One-Party Dominant Regimes*, ed. T.J. Pempel (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 282-305.

¹¹A system of multi-seat electoral districts (called "medium-sized constituencies" in Japan) was in use for the House of Representatives from 1925 to 1996. Each district had three to five seats as a rule (occasionally two or six). The system was faulted for obscuring the will of the people by fostering competition between more than one candidate from the ruling party instead of offering voters a clear-cut choice between parties.

role of perennial oppositionist and remained wedded to positions that were widely regarded as unrealistic.¹² In the area of defense policy, for example, it advocated unarmed neutrality, and where the Korean Peninsula was concerned, it opposed the establishment of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, by which the two countries joined in diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, in the National Diet, the two parties continued to co-exist in a way that belied their superficial antagonism by following an unwritten procedure for negotiating the outcome of important legislation. The situation began to change with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.¹³ The Cold War standoff between the Eastern and Western blocs gave way to a multitude of regional conflicts. Japan was not permitted to respond, due to constitutional constraints, and found itself under attack for refusing to send personnel to troublesome areas. It became increasingly clear to politicians in both the LDP and the JSP that the traditional battle lines of the 1955 System – the Japan-U.S. security arrangements (in the context of the Cold War) and the legality of the Self-Defense forces – were ill-suited to the new global realities.¹⁴

Between 1955 and 1993, party crises disrupted its affairs from time to time. The party's collapse was forecasted, and LDP politicians considered forming new factions. Some of the most severe crises were sparked by the intense factional opposition of Prime Minister Kishi's hard-line leadership (1960), the criticism of Prime Minister Tanaka's

¹² Hiwatari Nobuhiro, "Gojūgonen tisei no 'shūen' to sengo kokka" [The "End" of the 55 System and the Postwar State], *Leviathan* 16 (1955): 121-144; and Nippon seiji gakkai, ed., *Nempō seijigaku 1996: 55-nen taisei no hōkai* [Annals of the Japanese Political Science Association 1996: The collapse of the 1955 System] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995).

¹³ Several famous divisions in the Japan Communist Party have been over ideology, such as the division between pro-Soviet and an internationalist group in the 1950s; see *Asahi Shinbun* (02/27/1973); and Peter Berton, "The Japan Communist Party: The Lovable Party," *The Japanese Party System*, ed. Ronald J. Hrebner (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), p. 119.

¹⁴ Haruhiro Fukui, "Tanaka Goes to Peking," *Policymaking in Contemporary Japan*, ed. T.J. Pempel (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 60-102; and Junnosuke Masumi, *Postwar Politics in Japan, 1945-1955*, vol. 6 (Berkeley, CA: Center for Japanese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1985).

involvement in multiple corruption scandals (1974), cabinet defections during the latter part of Prime Minister Miki's shaky tenure (1976), disputes over Prime Minister Ohira's leadership (1979-80), intra-party tensions over recruiting and other corruption scandals in the late 1990s.¹⁵ Significant conflicts took place in other years but they were not so severe. As a counterpoint to the stable features of the LDP, crises developed in a more or less predictable pattern.¹⁶ While major crises most often resulted from the loss of credibility from party leadership, some were aggravated by differences between mainstream and anti-mainstream factional coalitions and intense internal policy differences.¹⁷

The 1993 General Election and New Party Fever

Around this time, support was building for reform of the electoral system. The focus of the debate was the idea of adopting single-seat constituencies for the House of Representatives to open the door to a genuine two-party system enabling the nation to make a clear choice regarding the path it should take in the years ahead. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki submitted a bill to create a system of single-seat constituencies and proportional representation, but he met stiff resistance from many members

¹⁵ *Tokyo Shinbun* (07/12/1974); *Asahi Shinbun* (11/11/1973); *Mainichi Shinbun* (07/17/1974); *Yomiuri Shinbun* (07/13/1974); *Nihon keizai* (10/24/1976), (11/22/1976); *Yomiuri Shinbun* (08/04/1976); *Kanagawa Shinbun* (08/09/1976); *Mainichi Shinbun* (10/19/1992). See also, Richardson, *Japanese Democracy*, p. 76.

¹⁶ Satō and Tetsuhisa, *Jimintō seiken*, p. 52; J.A.A. Stockwin, "Political Parties and Political Opposition," eds. Takeshi Ishida and Ellis S. Krauss, *Democracy in Japan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), pp. 89-112; and Gary D. Allinson and Yasunori Sone, eds., *Political Dynamics in Contemporary Japan* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Uchida Kenzō, *Habatsu* [LDP Factions] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1986), p. 10; Masaru Kōno, "Rational Foundations of the Organization of the LDP in Japan," *World Politics* 44/3 (1992): 369-397; Fukunaga Fumio, "Nippon Shakaitō no habatsu" [Factions in the Japan Socialist Party], eds. Nishikawa Tomokazu and Kawata Jun'ichi, *Seito habatsu* [Factions in Political Parties] (Kyoto: Minerva shobō, 1996); and Abe Hitoshi, "Muneyuki shindo and sadafumi kawato," trans. James J. White, *The Government and Politics of Japan* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994).

of his own ruling party, as well as from the opposition, and was forced to step down. His successor, Miyazawa Kiichi, similarly submitted a single-seat constituency bill in 1993, but this initiative was thwarted by the opposition, which was against electing all Lower House members from single-seat districts, as well as some LDP members who did not want to lose their base of electoral support. The electoral reform process, consequently, came to a deadlock. Ozawa Ichiro, Hata Tsutomu, and other LDP Diet members in favor of electoral system reform, subsequently rebelled against the party leadership, and in June 1993 joined the opposition in voting for a motion of “no confidence” against Miyazawa. The motion was approved, and Miyazawa was forced to dissolve the Lower House. The dissident LDP politicians then grouped themselves into two new parties: the Japan Renewal Party led by Ozawa and Hata, and the New Party Sakigake (Pioneer), spearheaded by Takemura Masayoshi and Hatoyama Yukio. Meanwhile, the Japan New Party, founded the previous year by another former LDP lawmaker, Hosokawa Morihiro, saw its popularity boom.¹⁸

The general election that was held in July following the Lower House dissolution was fought on two issues: political reform and the establishment of an anti-LDP administration. While the LDP finished with the most seats, it fell short of a majority. The three new parties joined forces with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and such moderate groups as the Komeito (Clean Government Party) and the Democratic Socialist Party in a non-LDP coalition led by Hosokawa.¹⁹ The LDP was forced to hand over the reins of government for the first time in thirty-eight years. The Hosokawa cabinet was an administration that brought together conservative, middle-of-the-road, and left-wing forces for the single common purpose of political reform. In January 1994, the Diet finally voted for a new electoral system combining single-seat constituencies with a proportional representation ballot, but the following April, Hosokawa resigned under the

¹⁸ *Yomiuri Shinbun* (07/25/1993); *Tokyo Shinbun* (05/27/1994); *Sankei Shinbun* (06/11/1994); *Nikkei Weekly* (05/30/1994); For details see Yamagishi Akira, *Renritsu seiken jidai o kiru* [Review of the Coalition Government Era] (Tokyo: Yomiuri shinbunsha, 1995).

¹⁹ Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, ed. *Renritsu seiken no kenkyū* [Study of a Coalition Government] (Tokyo: Nikkei shinbunsha, 1994); and Daniel A. Metraux, *The Soka Gakkai Revolution* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994).

shadow of a scandal concerning illicit loans.²⁰ Hata Tsutomu then formed another anti-LDP coalition cabinet, but it collapsed only two months after the SDP and Sakigake – disgruntled by the strong-arm tactics of the behind-the-scenes power of administration used by Ozawa – withdrew from the coalition, robbing it of a Diet majority.²¹

The Hata cabinet was followed in June 1994 by an LDP-SDP-Sakigake coalition led by SDP Chairman Murayama Tomiichi. The idea of an alliance between the Liberal Democrats and the former Socialists, arch-enemies throughout the 1955 System, drew fierce criticism from the outset. In January 1996, after completing work on the budget, Prime Minister Murayama abruptly announced his resignation, claiming that he had lost confidence in his ability to lead the government.²² Meanwhile, to qualify for the position of the ruling party, the SDP abandoned its longtime opposition to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the Self-Defense Forces. This loss of identity, along with the changes in the electoral system, ensured that the party would suffer a huge setback in the next general election,

²⁰ The combined single-seat and proportional representation system adopted under the Hosokawa cabinet called for 300 seats in the House of Representatives to be filled by politicians elected from single-seat electoral districts. In addition, the country is divided into 11 blocs, from which a total of 200 Diet members are elected by proportional representation, specifically, voters mark their ballots for a party, and candidates from a list pre-compiled by each party fill in the 200 seats in numbers proportionate to the fraction of the vote that their party received. A candidate may run on both a single-seat district and a proportional representation ballot. The first general election held under the new system was in October 1996.

²¹ Hideo Ōtake, “Forces for the Political Reform: The Liberal Democratic Party’s Young Reformers and Ozawa Ichiro,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 22/2 (1996): 269-294; Ōtake, *Sengo Nihon no ideorogi tairitsu* [Ideological Conflicts in Postwar Japan] (Tokyo: Sanichi shobō, 1996); and Sadao Hirano, *Ozawa Ichirō to no nijū-nen* [Twenty Years with Ozawa Ichirō] (Tokyo: Purejidento-sha, 1996).

²² Yasunori Sone, “Party Realignment and Party Dealignment: Recent Changes Among Japanese Voters,” *Japan Review of International Affairs* 10/1 (1996): 79-97.

plummeting it to the status of a minor party.²³ The LDP's Hashimoto succeeded Murayama as leader of an LDP-SDP-Sakigake coalition government. But in the wake of the October 1996 general election, the support of the SDP and Sakigake was no longer essential to the LDP, and while continuing to cooperate within the Diet, they ceased to play a direct role in the cabinet, leaving the LDP once again in sole control of the government after a three-year hiatus. The SDP and Sakigake formally left the coalition in advance of the 1998 triennial House of Councilors election.²⁴

Consolidation of Opposition Forces

After serving as the LDP Secretary-General under Prime Minister Kaifu, Ozawa emerged as the central figure in the Hata faction's parting from the LDP and regrouping as the Japan Renewal Party, and he also served as the key individual in patching together the coalition government of Prime Minister Hosokawa. He remained an influential opposition figure even after the collapse of the Hata cabinet, asserting that Japan should become a "normal" country that takes on responsibilities and values its views as well as its international clout. The clear goals he set for the nation and his ardor for getting things done shook the political establishment that was known for its failures and opacity. While his forceful style sometimes riled members of his and other parties, he was a key figure in political realignment, guiding the founding and the disbandment of the New Frontier Party (NFP) and the formation of the Liberal Party.²⁵

The Japan Renewal Party, the Japan New Party, Komeito, the Democratic Socialist Party (SDP), and others had merged to form the New Frontier Party.²⁶ By December 1997, NFP leadership election conflicts among rival factions within the party had intensified, and in January 1998 the NFP split into six parties: the Liberal Party; Kokumin no Koe (The Voice of the People); the Reformers' Network; Shinto Heiwa (The New

²³ Hideo Ōtake, *Political Mistrust and Party Realignment in Japan* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Japan Study Center, University of Dhaka, 1999), pp. 1-15.

²⁴ Daniel A. Metraux, "Japan's Search for Political Stability: The LDP-New Komeito Alliance," *Asian Survey* 39/6 (1999): 926-939.

²⁵ Metraux, "Japan's Search for Political Stability," p. 933.

²⁶ Kubo Wataru, *Renritsu seiken no shinjitsu* [The Truth Behind Coalition Governments] (Tokyo: Yomiuri shinbunsha, 1998).

Peace Party), formed by Lower House members of the old Komeito; Shinto Yuai (The New Party Fraternity), formed by members of the old SDP; and Reimei (The Dawn) Club, formed by Upper House politicians from the old Komeito. Shortly thereafter, former Prime Minister Hosokawa's Shinto Yuai (The New Party Fraternity), which had previously split off from the New Frontier Party, merged with former Prime Minister Hata's Taiyo (Sun) Party and Kokumin no Koe (The Voice of the People) to form the Civil Governance Party.²⁷

In September 1996, some members of the SDP and Sakigake came together to form the Democratic Party of Japan. In the hope of keeping the deciding vote between the LDP and the NFP, the SDP was widely criticized for failing to stake out a clear position for or against the ruling party's policies. The turning point came after the NFP's breakup.²⁸ In April 1998, the Good Governance Party and Shinto Yuai merged with the SDP. Being the largest opposition party during this time, the SDP launched a vigorous campaign against the LDP. In the July 1998 Upper House election, the SDP made striking gains under the party's popular leader Naoto Kan.²⁹

LDP Setback in the 1998 Upper House Election

The Hashimoto cabinet, inaugurated in January 1996, had ambitious goals. It pledged to reorganize the country's administrative apparatus (largely unchanged since the Meiji period) to meet the changing needs of a new era and set government finances on a firm footing. Hashimoto called for six major reforms – the bureaucracy (reorganization of the central ministries and agencies), government finances (an end to the issuance of deficit-covering bonds), the social security system (introduction of a nursing care insurance scheme and reform of the health insurance system), the economic structure (deregulation), the financial system (implementation of sweeping 'Big Bang' reforms), and education – and pushed through legislation supporting those reforms.³⁰ Hashimoto also commanded the drafting of a bill to allow the government to continue

²⁷ Metraux, "Japan's Search for Political Stability," p. 935.

²⁸ James Babb, "The Precarious Political Balance in Japan," *Asian Affairs* 30/2 (1999), p. 155.

²⁹ Babb, "The Precarious Political Balance in Japan," p. 155.

³⁰ Sayumi Daimon and Yuko Hani, "LDP May Have to Walk Political Tightrope," *The Japan Times* (07/24/1999).

mandatory leasing of privately-owned land to U.S. military forces in Okinawa – which until then had no written basis – and took steps to consolidate and downsize U.S. bases in the prefecture.³¹ In addition, he oversaw an agreement with Washington to revise the Guidelines for the Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation addressing the bilateral alliance's response to situations in the area around Japan, as well as an agreement with President Boris Yeltsin to resolve the Northern Territories dispute and conclude a peace treaty with Russia by the year 2000.³²

However, in the latter half of 1997, Hashimoto's administration encountered a number of difficulties. The administration's decision to raise the consumption tax from 3% to 5%, repeal a temporary pump-priming tax cut, and increase co-payments under the national health insurance scheme, cost the taxpayers 9 trillion yen, while the collapse of a number of financial institutions, a general credit crunch, rising unemployment, and the East Asian financial crisis dealt further blows to an economy languishing from the after-effects of the "bubble economy."³³ As the economic situation worsened, the administration was forced to reverse its course by allocating 30 trillion yen to stabilize the financial system and reinstate the special tax

³¹ An amendment to the "Law on Special Measures Regarding Use of Land Incident to the Implementation of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement" was enacted in April 1997. This was necessitated by the refusal of landowners and the then governor of Okinawa – acting as a proxy of the government – to sign an extension of the leases for land used inside the Sobe Communications Facility in the village of Yomitan and other bases. The refusal made the occupation illegal, and with other leases due to expire in May 1997, a revision was enacted to establish a legal means for the U.S. military to continue using the land.

³² The older guidelines were provided for the application of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty only in contingencies affecting Japan directly, but the new guidelines, agreed upon in 1997, broadened the framework of defense cooperation to cover peacetime activities and situations in surrounding areas that pose grave threats to the peace and stability of Japan. It also called for enhanced information exchange and policy dialogue, as well as the establishment of a bilateral mechanism for planned and effective joint action.

³³ For example, see Ryuichiro Hosokawa, "Pitfalls Before the Alliance," *The Japan Times* (07/21/1999).

cut. In the initial fiscal budget for 1998, the cabinet abandoned the previously set goal of deficit reduction. Under the fierce public criticism of economic mismanagement, the LDP fared badly in the July 1998 Upper House election, falling short of a majority. As soon as the results were in, Prime Minister Hashimoto announced his resignation.³⁴

Obuchi Leads a New Coalition

Obuchi Keizo rose to power in the summer of 1998 when Hashimoto abruptly resigned from the position, taking responsibility for the less than satisfactory outcome of the election. Obuchi withdrew from power in the spring of 2000 when he suffered a stroke and fell into a coma. On both occasions, Obuchi had to face reality without much preparation. His swift and massive legislation was closely tied to his approach to politics, which was very much similar to that of his two mentors, Takeshita Noboru and Tanaka Kakuei. Obuchi focused on achieving an intra-party factional plurality within the LDP and a parliamentary majority without coalition partners, if possible, and with partners, if necessary.³⁵ He formed an alliance with the Liberal Party and the Komeito Party when he saw the absolute need of a parliamentary majority. He was normally astute and adroit in conducting intra-party and parliamentary deals, as well as focusing on district politics. There was a very dense home-style way of politics in his district, writ largely to the national level. There were two giants, Fukuda Takeo and Nakasone Yasuhiro, who were both former prime ministers from the same party. Survival in the district was the first and utmost priority to Obuchi throughout much of his political life. For example, he made 10-20 phone calls a day whenever he saw possible political gain, met an incredible number of people at his office, and showed up at innumerable gatherings not only on weekdays but also on weekends, often with his wife. In terms of policy substance, he was open and flexible. He called himself a *shinku shusho* (an empty Prime Minister or a vacuum Prime Minister), meaning that he did not stick to serving his own interests.³⁶

³⁴ Yuko Hani, "Passage of Diet-paring Bill Unlikely This Session: Obuchi-LDP Torn Between Honoring Pact, Wooing New Partner," *The Japan Times* (08/07/1999).

³⁵ Yoichi Masuzoe, "Obuchi Extends His Coalition," *Japan Echo* 26/5 (October 1999): <http://www.japanecho.co.jp/sum/1999/260507.html>.

³⁶ Masuzoe, "Obuchi Extends His Coalition."

The Obuchi administration began from the consciousness of its own weakness, an awareness that prompted it to act decisively and forge a grand coalition to ensure its survival. However, in augmenting its power to that degree, the administration paradoxically forfeited the trust of the people.³⁷ The House of Representatives election in July 1993, held under the administration of Miyazawa Kiichi, was called the election that ended the Liberal Democratic Party's de facto one-party rule. The House of Councilors election in July 1998, held under the administration of Hashimoto Ryutaro, also took its place in history as the second stage in the collapse of the LDP's ruling structure. Within a year of being driven from power in 1993, the conservative LDP had returned to the helm by means of an astonishing feat: a coalition with the moderate-progressive New Party Sakigake and the left-wing SDP. After the position of Prime Minister had shifted from Socialist Murayama Tomiichi to LDP veteran Hashimoto in January 1996, and the LDP regained a Lower House majority in the fall 1996 general elections, the "restoration" was virtually complete. There can be no doubt that at this point LDP members were waiting with eager anticipation for an early return to their "rightful" position as the instruments of one-party rule. But the judgment of the people in the July 1998 Upper House election dashed these nostalgic fantasies, and it was the Obuchi administration that emerged from the rubble.³⁸

Obuchi's first task was to pass legislation to stabilize the financial system, which seemed close to the brink after the Nikkei's average shares of the Tokyo Stock Exchange fell below 13,000 points. Without a majority in the Upper House, the LDP leaders found they had no choice but to swallow most of the opposition's demands if they wanted to get some sort of bill through the Diet. This experience left Obuchi determined to acquire the power – meaning the number – he needed to be politically effective.³⁹ The Prime Minister began negotiating with Ozawa Ichiro and ultimately secured an agreement on an LDP-Liberal Party coalition. At the same time, he succeeded in enlisting the cooperation of the New Komeito, which had twenty-four seats in the Upper House – seats that spelled the difference between victory and defeat for government-sponsored legislation. In the

³⁷ Masuzoe, "Obuchi Extends His Coalition."

³⁸ Metraux, "Japan's Search for Political Stability," p. 932.

³⁹ Masuzoe, "Obuchi Extends His Coalition."

Diet, the effect of the Komeito-supported coalition was dramatic.⁴⁰ The 1999 fiscal budget (for the year starting in April 1999) was approved on March 17th, earlier than any other budget since the end of World War II. Controversial legislation opened the door to greater cooperation between Japan and the United States in the area of regional security (as called for in the revised Guidelines for the Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation) and was passed immediately, along with laws that reorganized the central bureaucracy, officially designated the national flag and national anthem, reformed Diet procedures, and permitted wiretapping to monitor criminal activities. Otherwise each piece of legislation might have consumed the Diet's full attention for the life of the cabinet.

Overall, the public seemed pleased with the smooth legislative operation of this political structure. Satisfaction was, without a doubt, partly due to the fact that a depression had been averted and the economy was finally showing signs of life, but it is also true that the people had been dissatisfied with the pace at which the administrative and legislative branches moved. A month after the closure of the year's ordinary Diet session in August, the Obuchi cabinet's approval rating reached its peak at 57%.⁴¹ In October, however, the Komeito, which had been active behind the scenes, emerged from the shadows and formally joined the coalition, securing a cabinet position in the process. Very quickly, the aura surrounding the Obuchi administration began to fade. Ozawa insisted on speedy policy changes, threatening to leave the coalition if his demands were not met. At the same time, a number of religious groups that had previously supported the LDP were openly critical of the role of the Komeito, which is closely connected with the lay Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai. Soon thereafter, the cabinet's approval rating began to slide.⁴² As these developments suggested, a substantial group of LDP supporters – even those who tolerated a coalition that was once the Japan Socialist Party – perceived Soka Gakkai and its political arm, the Komeito,

⁴⁰ *Asahi Shinbun* (09/22/1999), (04/11/2000), (08/01/2000), (11/21/2000).

⁴¹ Takashi Inoguchi, "The Future of Liberal Democratic Party Politics: Obuchi's Legacy," *Global Communications Platform* (April 2000): http://www.glocom.org/opinions/essays/200004_inoguchi_obuchi/index.html.

⁴² Inoguchi, "The Future of Liberal Democratic Party Politics: Obuchi's Legacy."

as too far outside traditional mainstream politics to be an acceptable coalition partner.

Mori's Role in Coalition Government

Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro went into office after his predecessor, Obuchi Keizo, had a stroke in April 2000. Since then, he saw his popularity plummet as a result of a string of verbal gaffes. Not that it was rock-solid to begin with: the launch of his premiership was highly opaque – he was chosen in back-room deliberations by top officials in the LDP – and this harmed the legitimacy of his administration from the start.⁴³ Mori followed with a string of statements about becoming Prime Minister, including referring to Japan as a “divine nation centered on the emperor,” expressing hope that nonaligned voters would “just stay home and sleep” on election day, and publicly mentioning a plan for North Korea to “save face” by having Japanese suspected to have been kidnapped by North Korea found in a third nation. Opinion polls showed public support for his cabinet sliding to less than 20%.⁴⁴

The Democratic Party of Japan and other opposition parties, proved unable to mount a serious challenge to LDP and its partners in the ruling coalition: the New Komeito and New Conservative Party. In November, against this backdrop, Kato Koichi, an LDP politician widely seen as a possible future Prime Minister himself, came forward with criticism about the Mori administration, stating that he would support a “no-confidence” motion that should be submitted by the opposition. This move by Kato, a former Secretary-General of the LDP, was endorsed by another prominent Liberal Democrat, former LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Yamasaki Taku, and a new element of tension was thrown into the political picture. This tension sprang mainly from their ability, being that both were leaders of factions within the LDP, to pass the motion. A look at the numbers in the House of Representatives showed 45 members that belonged to Kato's faction, 19 in Yamasaki's, 9 members of the ideologically similar Twenty-first Century Club, and 8 independents. Given

⁴³ Doug Struck, “Japanese Leader Sidelined by Stroke; Top Official Named as Interim Premier,” *The Washington Post* (04/03/2000).

⁴⁴ Doug Struck, “Japanese Leader Tips Over His Tongue: Mori Expresses Regret for Comment Suggesting Sovereignty of the Emperor,” *The Washington Post* (05/17/2000).

full attendance in the Lower House, if Kato got the cooperation of just 50 of this total, he could join with the 190 members of the four opposition parties to push through a “no-confidence” motion and thereby topple Mori’s administration. The key was for Kato and Yamasaki to maintain the solidarity of their respective factions in backing the move.⁴⁵

In response, the executive officers of the LDP and the leadership of the party’s mainstream factions set out to lure defectors from the Kato and Yamasaki groups and build a solid majority to defeat the no-confidence motion. Meanwhile, LDP Secretary-General Nonaka Hiromu and Kato took their battle to the media, appearing on television and elsewhere to make their cases. Kato publicly claimed he “could not support a cabinet that was opposed by 75% of the Japanese people” and boasted that he had “100% confidence” in his ability to get the motion passed.⁴⁶ But the LDP’s establishment tactics paid off, and more than half of Kato’s faction abandoned him. While 17 of the Yamasaki group’s 19 members remained true to the cause, it was apparent that the necessary votes were no longer there.⁴⁷ Having dealt with the blow, Kato called to consider the no-confidence motion just before the November 20th Diet session and declared that he would not vote for the motion but would adopt a weaker form of protest by making himself absent from the session. Many of Kato’s faction members had backed down due to Nonaka’s threat that any LDP representative who did not vote in favor of the administration would face harsh consequences, including expulsion from the party. This left the powerful LDP politicians with enough power to battle the opposition in single-seat electoral districts. The heightened prospect of losing in future elections caused all but 21 representatives to abstain from the vote with Kato. In the end, the coalition partners were able to defeat the opposition’s motion. Kato’s attempted coup d’état had been quashed.⁴⁸

The public, which had looked hopefully to Kato when he raised his banner of protest, was crestfallen when he lowered it. His political career

⁴⁵ Dong Struck, “Mori Apologizes for Remark,” *The Japan Times* (05/18/2000).

⁴⁶ Minoru Tada, “Mori Lands in Hot Water Again,” *The Japan Times* (06/09/2000).

⁴⁷ Tada, “Mori Lands in Hot Water Again.”

⁴⁸ Yoshikatsu Takahashi, “Mori Yoshiro Aims High: New Prime Minister Promises ‘Rebirth of Japan,’” *Look Japan* 46/532 (July 2000): 4-8.

effectively came to an end and the Japanese people's faith in politics was shaken to its very core by the whole drama. Kato's failure was rooted in his lack of a carefully thought-out strategy. While he did make skillful use of the media, he had no concrete plans for cobbling together a majority for the vote and did not strive to form ties with the opposition, placing victory further out of his reach. Kato also made use of the Internet to get his message across, but the portion of Japan's population connected to the Web did not yet constitute a majority, and – especially in the case of politics – there is only so much that online activities can accomplish. Japan's political hub in Nagatacho functions according to rules that differ from the Internet and the media. This is another factor to which Kato was not sufficiently attuned.⁴⁹

Furthermore, there was almost no policy debate to be seen in this round of political strife. Prime Minister Mori merely carried forward the previous policies of the Obuchi administration, seeking to spark the economy through measures of fiscal stimulus. But the massive outlays for public work failed to produce positive ripple effects to the expected degree; meanwhile the total debts of local and national governments ballooned to 600 trillion yen.⁵⁰ Kato placed his focus on these issues, stressing the need to chase the twin goals of economic recovery and fiscal health. He specifically urged that Japan abandon its single-minded pursuit of economic revitalization and the resulting bleeding of the nation's finances by gradually turning the rudder toward a return to fiscal balance. Mori responded by claiming that it was too early to make such a move, and that invigorating the economy must remain the central goal. This was the major policy bone of contention between the two, but it saw no debate as they focused more on scraping together a majority in the Diet.⁵¹

Prime Minister Mori reshuffled his cabinet on December 5th. His new administration included two former prime ministers, Miyazawa Kiichi and Hashimoto Ryutaro, but the cabinet's popularity ratings had yet to

⁴⁹ Takahashi, "Mori Yoshiro Aims High."

⁵⁰ James Conachy, "How Long will Japanese Prime Minister Mori Last?" *World Socialist Web Site*, 1 August 2000: <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/aug2000/jap-a01.shtml>.

⁵¹ Minoru Tada, "Mori Criticized Over Kidnap-Resolution Plan Blunder," *The Japan Times* (10/22/2000); and Maeda Toshi, "With Shield Gone, Mori May Be Next," *The Japan Times* (10/28/2000).

improve. At the same time, Nonaka stepped down from his post as Secretary-General, noting that although Mori had managed to hold on to his office, this did not mean he had gained the people's confidence. It appeared that attempts to remove Mori from the top spot had already been underway behind the scenes. The Liberal Democrats feared they would not perform well in the House of Councilors election slated for the next summer with Mori at the helm. The duration of his stewardship remained up in the air, and an uncertain political climate continued.⁵²

The Koizumi Revolution

The election of Koizumi Junichirō as President of Japan's ruling LDP in April 2001 and his swearing in as the country's prime minister constituted a "turning point" in Japanese politics. Dubbed the "Koizumi Revolution," his rise to power was the product of a public campaign, spearheaded by the media, to end the 45-year domination of the government by conservative, nepotistic factions within the LDP and begin to reshape the political system and economic policy. In every previous LDP leadership contest, the outcome had been decided by back-room negotiations between the powerbrokers of the main party factions, with the actual vote being little more than a formality to sanction the deals done beforehand over the allocation of ministerial positions.⁵³ Since Koizumi was supported by only three small factions, the victory of former Prime Minister Hashimoto, the candidate of the largest LDP factional grouping, was considered a *fait accompli*.⁵⁴ However, Koizumi was transformed from a marginalized outsider with little chance of defeating Hashimoto, to a certainty. Unable to win leadership through the factional system, Koizumi made an unprecedented break with party tradition. He resigned from his own

⁵² Yoichi Masuzoe, "Mori Survives an Attempted Ouster," *Japan Echo* 28/1 (February 2001): <http://www.japanecho.co.jp/sum/2001/280116.html>; and *Asahi Shinbun* (02/01/2001), (02/11/2001), (02/19/2001), (03/11/2001), (03/24/2001), (04/26/2001), (04/30/2001).

⁵³ Takashi Kawachi, "The Koizumi Revolution," *Japan Echo* 28/3 (June 2001): <http://www.japanecho.co.jp/sum/2001/280303.html>.

⁵⁴ Kawachi, "The Koizumi Revolution," also see James Conachy, "Koizumi's Election: A Turning Point in Japanese Politics," *World Socialist Web Site* (04/28/2001): <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/apr2001/jap-a28.shtml>.

faction, called for support from across the party, and launched a public campaign. In street rallies and media debates, he called for drastic free market austerity policies to address Japan's decade-long economic stagnation and promised to reform the LDP.⁵⁵ In stump speeches and television appearances during the Upper House campaign, Koizumi repeatedly said:

I will change the LDP. I will change Japan. I believe that most LDP members will eventually support the Koizumi reforms. But if the resisters within the LDP should gather to oppose me, I, as party president, will lead the action to smash the party.⁵⁶

There should be no doubt that these extreme remarks were carefully calculated to attract votes from anti-LDP voters as well. But given the highly charged rhetoric of a national campaign, Koizumi is the only LDP party President and Prime Minister ever to be so severe about his own party that he could threaten to destroy it.⁵⁷

Koizumi responded to public sentiment and came into power. He formed a unique cabinet free of factional politics. Some say that he only formed a new faction; it may be permissible to use small factions to check a dominant factional force.⁵⁸ Although his cabinet appointments were less than perfect – in particular, his selection of Senior Vice Ministers, which seemed mediocre – Koizumi succeeded in forming a cabinet that he could control at his will. A key point in realizing the central role of the Prime Minister in politics is to avoid intervention by the party; that is, to establish the leadership of the Prime Minister over the party. However, this is not

⁵⁵ Kitaoka Shin'ichi, "Can Koizumi the Demagogue Become a True Leader?" *Japan Review of International Affairs* 15/4 (Winter 2001): 278-290.

⁵⁶ Yoshikatsu Takahashi, "Lionheart: The Rise of Koizumi Junichirō," *Look Japan* 47/548 (November 2001): 6-13.

⁵⁷ Hisahiko Okazaki, "Koizumi Need Not Think Twice About Yasukuni," *Daily Yomiuri*, 29 July 2001.

⁵⁸ Ikuo Kabashima, "The Birth of the Koizumi Administration and the July 2001 Election," *Japan Echo* 28/6 (December 2001): <http://www.japanecho.co.jp/sum/2001/b2806.html#>.

easy.⁵⁹ In the case of the LDP, the decision-making body is the General Council (Sohmu-kai), which has dominated by many anti-Koizumi faction members, including former Secretary-General Nonaka Hiromu. They would rather avoid being seen as villains acting against the popular Prime Minister, and probably would try to prevent any overt confrontation until the Lower House elections. After the elections, however, they would be likely to sabotage the Koizumi administration.⁶⁰

When Koizumi took office as Prime Minister in April 2001, popular support for his administration was extremely high. In poll after poll, his approval rate was beyond 80% and hit a record high in Japan. It then hit 90% momentarily and maintained a similar level until conflicts among cabinet members, notably involving the Foreign Minister at the time (Tanaka Makiko), began to leak out. After that, scandals and mishandling of events by bureaucrats at Ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and Fisheries, Health and Education, the Defense Agency, along with a number of misdoings by members of the Parliament, generally distracted people's confidence in politics. The popularity rate gradually slid down to a figure of 43%. What is significant is that the number of people disapproving superseded those who approved, at the disapproval rate of 46%.⁶¹ In retrospect, during the first six months in office, Koizumi could have done almost anything to accomplish his political agenda backed by the awesome support rate, and none of the resistance forces could have stopped it. What he was doing at the time, however, was apparently sorting out his objectives and strategies instead of pushing for his agenda. He, thus, lost the most critical and valuable time frame to realize his political will. By the time he began to present his specific plans, his cabinet had already begun to show hints of cracks, and his opponents prepared to retaliate.⁶²

It is often explained that the dismissal of Tanaka was the real turning point causing Koizumi's popularity to slip, and that it turned out to be the popularity of Tanaka that actually maintained the high support level for the cabinet as a whole. This could be partly true, but it seems the

⁵⁹ Edward J. Lincoln, "Japan in 2001: A Depressing Year," *Asian Survey* 42/1 (January/February 2002): 67-80.

⁶⁰ Kabashima, "The Birth of the Koizumi Administration."

⁶¹ Kabashima Ikuo, "The Challenge Facing Koizumi," *Japan Echo* 29/3 (March-April 2002): <http://www.japanecho.co.jp/sum/2002/290303.html>.

⁶² Kabashima, "The Challenge Facing Koizumi."

dismissal worked merely as a trigger to bring people back to reality from the frenzy of hope they had placed on Koizumi who, by claiming to rid the country of the old ball and chain, won the seat of Prime Minister unexpectedly. The unexpectedness felt by the people was, unfortunately, shared by Koizumi, and he was not quite prepared in terms of having a consolidated plan to implement his then still vague political intentions. He thus spent his initial days in office, a critical time for him to mold his style and set a direction, sitting and meditating rather than actively selling and promoting his plans.⁶³

What went wrong with LDP politics? Could the Koizumi administration really make a change? One of the main characteristics of LDP politics is the dispersion of power. The power of the Prime Minister is split between the government and the party, where the government is divided into various ministries and the party into various factions, run by consensus decision-making. In consensus-based decision-making, time tends to be wasted and matters cannot be decided, even if just a small minority group strongly objects. As a result, it is impossible to have strong, dynamic politics. The Prime Minister should play a more central and stronger leadership role in politics. This means that Japan must return to the original idea of the parliamentary cabinet system. However, former Prime Minister Mori had a tendency to delegate his power. He often said, "I will ask the party to decide," and "I will wait for discussions in the Diet."⁶⁴ Although the parliamentary cabinet system only signifies that the leader of a majority party becomes the Prime Minister, Mori never showed his desire to play a head role, and very few regarded him as a leader in the first place. Furthermore, his selection as the Prime Minister was done behind closed doors. As a result, the public became very dissatisfied, and voiced their desire for a Prime Minister with strong leadership and clear messages.

Conclusions

It may be argued that factions survive because they not only satisfy the career incentives of individual politicians, but also contribute to the effective management of the party as an organization. The effects of the

⁶³ Kabashima, "The Challenge Facing Koizumi."

⁶⁴ Edward J. Lincoln, "Japan in 2000: The Year that Could Have Been but Was Not," *Asian Survey* 41/1 (January/February 2001): 49-60.

change in the electorate system are distorted by existing factions, which are creatively adjusted to the altered political institution. The utility each faction has for managing party affairs works distinctively to their abolishment, especially for party leaders who have a vested interest in maintaining the institution. Furthermore, since the end of the LDP one-party dominance, the logic of inter-factional coalitions within the LDP has come to be closely entwined with the range of choices available for designing any inter-party coalition strategy. During the past decade of coalition politics, the political framework changed frequently, making it difficult to formulate basic policies. This weakening of international confidence in Japan, as well as the fact that it took nine years to update the PKO law attests to the absence of a “grand design.” In opinion polls conducted by the Cabinet Office from 1998 to 2000, up to 80% said public sentiment was not reflected in government policy. The finding was a reminder of the public’s mounting mistrust of politics amid collusive ties to bureaucracy and business. In 1985, Takeshita Noboru, a key member of the LDP faction headed by Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, bolted the group to create his own faction, “Soseikai.” Soon afterward, Tanaka suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed, thus ending the “Tanaka rule” in LDP politics. Yet, in a poll taken the same year, 56% said public sentiment was reflected in government policy while 46% said it wasn’t. Although the “Takeshita rule” was an extension of the “Tanaka rule,” the end of the Tanaka era came as a shock to the nation that seemed to revive public interest in politics.⁶⁵

At the start of the new century, public confidence in politics reached its nadir, due to the rigid political system and dead-end bureaucratic politics. The extraordinary popularity that Koizumi first enjoyed reflected the public’s deep alienation from the old-fashioned politics of the LDP. Gerald L. Curtis, a professor at Columbia University, who is well-versed in Japan’s political affairs, wrote that the election of Koizumi, who has small power base in the LDP, is historically significant in that it has accelerated the collapse of the LDP’s traditional organizational structure. Koizumi did not become president of the LDP by capturing the party’s vote-getting machinery, or by garnering the backing of important party faction leaders, or by gaining the support of interest groups that gave the LDP money and

⁶⁵ Nabeshima Keizo, “Honored Place in Society: New National Goal for Japan,” *The Japan Times* (01/01/2002).

votes. He won by running against the LDP organization and indeed against the policies that have been the traditional mainstay of LDP politics. The success of the Koizumi administration, he adds, means a transformation of the LDP.⁶⁶ However, the “Koizumi reform” faces growing resistance from the tripartite ruling coalition of the LDP, the New Komeito and the New Conservative Party. It is possible that the Koizumi campaign will fizzle out under pressure from the anti-reform forces in the Coalition. The Koizumi reforms, which will hit special interests, call for sacrifice by the people, not just by the LDP and the industry. In this sense, reform is a double-edged sword for a prime minister who draws his political capital mainly from public support. If the Koizumi program falls through, the public’s mistrust of politics will rise again. Along with his popularity, Koizumi’s political capital would vanish into thin air. To keep his reform plans going, he must not only set clear-cut targets but also have a strategic blueprint for achieving them. Centralizing the policy-making process in the Cabinet, a move to snatch the policy initiative from the ruling parties is a step in this direction.

The appearance of the Koizumi administration shows that Japanese politics is approaching a major turning point. Koizumi opposed the goals of interest groups that long supported the LDP and went beyond insider politics to appeal directly to the public. With his direct style of leadership, will Koizumi and others like him be able to inspire Japan to recover economically and move beyond the historical problems it shares with other nations? Koizumi becoming the Prime Minister was a profoundly significant event in Japanese politics. His optimism and charisma set him apart from other politicians, and his popularity helped find a receptive audience for his calls of painful reform. With traditional pillars of support for the Liberal Democrats crumbling, so has the idea of an infallible bureaucracy. Koizumi’s reform task has not been easy one, though. As Curtis stated in 2001:

If Koizumi leaves office without having accomplished much in terms of policy, he may be remembered as a kind of Japanese Mikhail Gorbachev, the man who helped destroy the old order without creating a new one. If Japan is lucky, however, Koizumi will use his support among the Japanese public to force the LDP,

⁶⁶ Keizo, “Honored Place in Society.”

the bureaucracy, and the Diet, to do what he promised the Japanese public he would do: reform the financial system, reduce wasteful government spending, and put a new modern foundation under the LDP and under the political system that will carry Japan through the coming turbulent decades of the twenty-first century.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Gerald L. Curtis, "The Koizumi Administration: Its Significance and Prospects," *Japan Review of International Affairs* 15/4 (Winter 2001), p. 303.

KAWABATA'S MIRRORED POETICS

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Section One

In the two initial scenes of *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*) by Kawabata Yasunari, mirrors reflect images of two main female characters. The first case is given far more textual weight, and by comparison the second instance receives only a cursory treatment. The novel's beginning section, including the first mirror scene, was originally published in 1935 as a short story titled "The Mirror of an Evening Landscape" ("Yūgeshiki no kagami"). This underlies the central importance of the mirror scene assumed from the textual conception. Furthermore, Kawabata kept on writing the story for the next thirteen years until 1948 due to his peculiar writing habit.¹ Realizing the still unexhausted potential of lyricism in a short story, he often continued to add one sequence after another intermittently in the form of an independent short story without necessarily having a structurally solid plan in mind, which eventually led to the formation of some of his major novels. Given this manner of composition, it is not too difficult to understand that the initial mirror image significantly affected the rest of *Snow Country* in its making. As Nakayama Masahiko says, the first few pages containing the mirror scene already constitute one climax that occasioned the entire work, and Anthony V. Liman considers the mirror "closest to Kawabata's aesthetic ideal."² Aside from the novel's introductory sentence, this particular mirror scene is arguably the most celebrated spot in Kawabata's entire oeuvre. There has been an intense debate about the passage since its inception seven decades ago; this might seem to preclude the possibility of any new meaningful findings.

¹ Kawabata Yasunari, *Snow Country*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Vintage, 1996), p. 7. Unless otherwise noted, all references to this work are to this edition. (In fact, Kawabata continued to make minor textual modifications until 1971).

² Nakayama Masahiko, "Kyūsai toshite no bungaku: *Yukiguni* to sono futsuyaku ni tsuite," *Gendai bungaku* 29 (1984), pp. 55, 62; and Anthony V. Liman, "Kawabata's Lyrical Mode in *Snow Country*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 26/3-4 (1971), p. 276.

Nevertheless, we can assume that this particular image manifests, unintended by the author and unacknowledged as it might have been so far, his covert statement about his artistic stance on writing fiction.

Section Two

The scene in question takes place when the male protagonist, Shimamura, takes a solitary train ride shortly after the story's onset. In a flashback, hours earlier in the same trip, we find him attempting to remember in vain a young woman, with whom he briefly got involved at a hot springs resort the previous spring. He does not know yet that she has become a full-fledged geisha with a professional name, Komako. With nothing else to do, he plays with his left hand and thinks that the hand alone, especially his index finger, "seemed to have a vital and immediate memory of the woman he was going to see."³ In sharp contrast to this implied, keen sensuality of Komako's body, a girl sits diagonally across the aisle and impresses him as intangibly appealing. This girl, Yoko, whose name Shimamura accidentally comes to know later, initially attracts his attention because of her assiduous care for a sick young man she accompanies. But what arouses his real interest is her beauty, yet this is not necessarily a matter of physicality. In his flashback, when the train is going across a snowless region at dusk, before it reaches the tunnel, she enchants Shimamura with "something coolly piercing about her beauty."⁴ For some time he has been stealthily watching her image mirrored on the window glass with the distant hilly landscape behind.

In the lingering twilight, details of the passing mountains are still visible. But the day has lost enough strength to enable Yoko's image to be reflected on the window glass against the sliding, monochromatic distance. The whole scene is an effect of weak lighting inside and gathering darkness outside. As a result, both Yoko's opaque face and the background scenery are floating on the same transparent plane. The subtle interplay of light and darkness prevents either image from gaining dominance over the other and instead places them in one harmonious perspective. The beauty of the faint mirror resides in this tenuous balance, and culminates when a cold, distant fire in the hills shines through the pupil of Yoko's reflected image.

The scene commands attention beyond its immediate context on

³ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 7.

⁴ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 8.

multiple levels. For example, indicative of Kawabata's strong curiosity with a new art form, Yoko's reflection is perceived as a movie segment that utilizes the technique of superimposition. At the same time, this mirror is related to a second mirror, a part of the story that was originally titled "A White Morning Mirror" ("Shiroi asa no kagami"). On this actual mirror, Shimamura finds Komako's fresh red cheeks and her rich black hair "floating in the middle of" the reflected whiteness of the bright morning snow.⁵ The two mirrors mainly reveal the sharp contrast between Komako's sensuality and Yoko's bodiless charm. One peculiar fact pertains to the initial mirror. The description retentively dwells on itself. In Edward G. Seidensticker's English translation, the entire passage shows Shimamura's furtive observation of Yoko, lasting short of nine pages, and its central passage of four paragraphs about her mirrored image takes up one and a half pages. The content does not justify the length. Within the textual space, Yoko's eye shining with a distant light is mentioned twice. Each time the girl's glistening eye is similarly described as of unearthly beauty.⁶ As Isogai Hideo points out, Kawabata apparently "makes efforts" to offer "a thorough explanation" of the scene with "a spirit of persuasion verging on tenacity," in order to justify her floating eye as a conceivable phenomenon, entailing a sense of redundancy as a consequence.⁷

By nature, *Snow Country* is a kind of "lyrical novel" or "prose poem,"⁸ in step with classical Japanese narratives, such as *The Tale of Genji*

⁵ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 48.

⁶ Concerning Yoko's face overlapping with the distant fire, Nakayama also points out this repetitious treatment, in "Kyūsai toshite no bungaku," p. 136.

⁷ Isogai Hideo, "Yukiguni no shasei," *Kawabata Yasunari: Gendai no biishiki, Kokubungaku kenkyū sōsho*, eds. Takeda Katsuhiko and Takahashi Shintarō (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1978), pp. 34-35. Isogai suspects that the author's lack of confidence in this image led to the excessive justification (p. 36). (All translations from Japanese secondary sources are mine.)

⁸ Itō Sei, "Yukiguni," *Itō sei zenshū*, vol. 20 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973), p. 163; Hasegawa Izumi, "Kawabata Yasunari ronkō," *Hasegawa Izumi chosaku sen*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1991), p. 310; and Nakamura Mitsuo, *Ronkō Kawabata Yasunari* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1978), pp. 91, 167. Liman finds in Kawabata's narratives "some typical, universal aspects

(*Genji monogatari*).⁹ The work lacks a well-defined plot structure. Flashbacks are suddenly mixed in, while relevant information is often left out. The unresolved ending does not give the reader a firm sense of fulfillment or closure. The story is mainly narrated, but not exclusively, from Shimamura's perspective, although he is not the narrator. In this mode of perception, the narrative viewpoint solely focuses on the items that Shimamura finds worth noticing, either for an aesthetic value or for mere interest. As a dilettante, Shimamura directs his attention at beautiful objects around him, including Komako, whose entire way of life he considers a wasted effort and therefore all the more pure and beautiful for her largely unrequited love and devotion. The reader is therefore expected to appreciate not a series of actions, which would keep him/her suspended in eager anticipation of the story's unfolding, but rather beauty observed in human affairs as well as in seasonal changes of the mountain environment. In spite of its form as a novel, *Snow Country* is lyrically poetic rather than linearly progressive in a diachronic structure.

With this overall nature of the text in mind, we can consider the mirror scene as an aesthetic moment when the story's urge to proceed freezes temporarily for a maximum artistic realization of potential lyricism. Therefore, the magic disappears as soon as "it becomes dark and Shimamura can see nothing but darkness outside."¹⁰ Such an aesthetically charged moment is comparable to what *tanka* and *haiku* poems provide in classical Japanese narratives. Compared with the lyrical moments those poems bring about, however, the story's dwelling on Yoko's phenomenal eye still proves too explanatory with redundancy and minute description, unnecessarily stretched beyond what the context demands. Against the authorial efforts to freeze the moment, the composite mirror is constantly shifting and steadily turning dark as Shimamura wonders whether it is "symbolic of the passage of time."¹¹ Apart from the basic doubt of the

of lyrical or lyricized prose," and considers them written in a "poetic, imagistic lyrical mode," in "Kawabata's Lyrical Mode," pp. 267, 285.

⁹ Isogai Hideo, "Yukiguni: Sakuhin bunseki no hōhō," *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō kankōkai*, ed., *Kawabata Yasunari*, *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō sōsho* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1973), pp. 208, 212.

¹⁰ Kin'ya Tsuruta, "The Flow-Dynamics in Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 26/3-4 (1971), p. 253.

¹¹ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 14.

scene's optical feasibility, a reason for the protracted passage must be sought elsewhere.¹²

Section Three

This scene dually signifies Kawabata's poetics. One aspect concerns a general situation of modern Japanese literature, while Kawabata's personal stance as a writer determines the other. At first glance, the scene exemplifies the importance of darkness that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō ascribes to traditional Japanese sensitivity in the text *In Praise of Shadows* (*In'ei raisan*) composed in 1933-34. Tanizaki argues that the kernel of Japanese culture lies in a deep appreciation of opaque darkness, as well as in literary ambiguity, which produces delicate layers of light in contrast to the West's general fascination with immaculate brightness and stainless transparency.

A classical example is found in Chapter 25, "Fireflies" (*Hotaru*), of *The Tale of Genji*, in which Genji incites a prince into passionate love with his step-daughter, Tamakazura, by showing him only her exquisite silhouette dimly lit with fireflies from behind a paper screen. Such is the case with Shimamura's illusion on the train, which depends on the interplay of weak lighting and gathering dusk. The aestheticism that favors obscurity in physical visibility and literary expression reveals Kawabata's deep indebtedness to classical Japanese literature. It is a well known fact that, during World War II when writers' activities were severely curtailed, Kawabata perused *The Tale of Genji* even between air raids, just as Tanizaki was translating the Heian era text into modern Japanese. He even discussed it as the main theme of his 1968 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, titled "Japan the Beautiful and Myself" (*Utsukushii Nihon no watakushi*). It is precisely this point that Ōe Kenzaburō, awarded the same honor in 1994, criticized in his speech mockingly titled "Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself" (*Aimai na Nihon no watakushi*) from his humanistic standpoint of political engagement.¹³ At the same time, the relative overlap of two optical phenomena is incessantly shifting, which points to another traditional predilection for beauty inherent in transience.

¹² Terada Tōru, "Yukiguni ron," *Kindai bungaku* 8/4 (1953), p. 65.

¹³ Kenzaburō Ōe, "Japan, the Dubious [Ambiguous] and Myself," *Japan: In Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, eds. Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Steven Heine (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 313-325.

The mirror scene in *Snow Country*, however, goes beyond mere traditionalism due to two elements that play a pivotal role: a mirror, and a distant light. The reflective device stands for Aristotelian mimesis, in which neoclassical poetics was based on an emphasis on imitating life and representing it as a meaningful whole. The rise of realism as a reaction to overblown Romanticism can also be traced back to mimesis in its basic tenet of copying life. Japan was then introduced in the late nineteenth century to the Western type of “realism” forming a basis for modern Japanese literature and significantly contributing to the rise of naturalism and the I-novel. Thus, Kawabata’s mirror scene symbolizes the appropriation of a realistic principle into Japan’s fiction-making. But the accidental mirror on the glass window is not a satisfactory metaphor for mimetic representation. It does not shine spotless like a real mirror that reflects back a clear, uncompromising image. Instead, the reflection is ephemeral, half-transparent, and uneven because of moisture that soon clouds its surface. As a result, it allows room for illusion.

If a mirror stands for the Western mimetic tradition, a cold, distant light corresponds to Romantic creativity. Represented by a lamp in M.H. Abrams’ scheme,¹⁴ Romanticism exalts imagination and results in originality.¹⁵ This partly manifests itself as Shimamura’s ingrained fascination with the unreal

¹⁴ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953). Kawasaki Toshihiko briefly refers to Abrams’ theory in relation to the mirror scene in, Kawasaki, “Yume ka utsutsu ka maboroshi ka: *Yukiguni* to *kyōzō* no bigaku,” in Hasegawa Izumi and Tsuruta Kin’ya, eds., *Yukiguni no bunseki kenkyū*, Kenkyū sōsho, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 1985), pp. 13-14.

¹⁵ Citing Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey,” Michael C. Brownstein calls this mirror “an image of reality mediated by the imagination,” and he compares *Snow Country* to Shelley’s *Alastor* in several respects, in Brownstein, “Kawabata Yasunari’s *Snow Country*,” *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective: A Guide for Teaching*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 485-487, 491. Alluding to Abrams’ theory, Tsuruta states that “the essential feature of a mirror or a lens, unlike a lamp, lies in its self-denial,” in “Flow-Dynamics,” p. 253.

beauty that his own perception produces.¹⁶ As a symbol, the distant light in the mountains, albeit essentially oxymoronic as “a cold fire,” resembles a lamp in the sense that each emits its own light, in contrast to a mirror that simply reflects borrowed light. The flame, however, does not emanate from a container that tamely illuminates its immediate surroundings for a definable purpose. Rather, it is a fire of unlimited potential in the wilderness, which if left unchecked, could spontaneously spread out and consume everything in its way. In such spontaneity of inexhaustible furor, this “cold light of idealism” symbolizes Romanticism even better than the lamp.¹⁷ Overlaid with two opposing trends of Western literature, Kawabata's temporary mirror turns out to be more than a mere flat space of illusion.

An auditory variation heightens the same effect toward the end of the novel. Shimamura feels an impending necessity to leave Komako when he unwittingly imagines the tiny sound of her clogs approaching his inn as the tinkling of a bell in the midst of winds passing through pine trees in early winter. To hear a wind blowing through pine is at once a common experience in everyday life as well as a celebrated motif that suggests the pathos of impermanence in classical literature. Like overlapping images on the train window, a bell's faint tinkling as an imaginary focus is superimposed upon two rustling layers of indistinguishable pine needles, and the steps of a woman's clog suddenly dawn upon his consciousness out of this composite indistinctness. The epiphany poignantly reveals that Shimamura has been trammelled in Komako's growing passion and this prompts his resolve to leave her shortly. The shock arises from a synesthetic shift. Unlike the mirror scene, this aesthetic experience that should center on the finer, indefinable sense of listening is abruptly replaced by the more obtrusive visual, the image of Komako's approaching feet. The tenuous balance of mimesis, imagination, and traditional aesthetics obviously derives from the same creative principle the initial optical model exhibits.

The half-

¹⁶ In this sense, both Gwenn R. Boardman and Richard C. Buckstead regard Shimamura as a man of romantic temperament, in Boardman, “Kawabata Yasunari: Snow in the Mirror,” *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction* 11/2 (1969), pp. 10, 15; and Buckstead, “The Search for a Symbol in Kawabata's *Snow Country*,” *Asian Profile* 1/1 (1973), pp. 159-160.

¹⁷ Buckstead, “The Search for a Symbol,” p. 161.

transparency on which Yoko's image floats consists of three distinctive poetics: two Western and the third Japanese. As a result, the mirror scene is not so mimetic as to be simply realistic. It does not derive solely from imagination. This has little to do with the fact that the entire story is fictional, although somewhat indebted to the author's actual experience. As a compositional principle, neither realism nor Romanticism is a dominant factor, and yet both are there, shrouded in a traditional mist of dark opaqueness and the beauty of evanescence.¹⁸ Probably, Kawabata himself did not consciously seek for an intercultural blending of creative modes when he was writing *Snow Country*. In addition to the poetics of ambiguity that was an inherent part of his cultural upbringing, there is little doubt that Kawabata understood, intuitively at least, two major tendencies of Western literature in the nineteenth century. After all, he studied English at the Imperial University of Tokyo before he switched his major to Japanese. In "Ryoshū no Nihon," (1936) he even mentions "realistic spirit" and "Romantic spirit" along with traditional Japanese poetic sentiment.¹⁹ Most relevantly, despite certain simplifications, the scene is laden with cultural convergence and attests to the defining nature of modern Japanese literature that lies behind Kawabata's writing. The history of modern Japanese literature reveals a continuous tampering of its heritage with heavy influence absorbed from the West. By writing *Snow Country*, especially the first mirror scene at the core of the text's creative impulse, Kawabata proves himself to be a child of his age.

Section Four

The same mirror also suggests Kawabata's stance as an individual artist. It is an implied statement about his fundamental method for fiction-making. In his novels, social reality is spread over the story with certain particularities while carefully reduced to a mere background, never given a chance to become a focus of interest. Onto this dimmed arrangement, Kawabata places creatures of his imagination. As for the story's principal

¹⁸ Hatori Tetsuya argues that Kawabata's "symbolic use of natural objects" in *Snow Country* points to "sublation of the [naturalistic] Sketch School and the Romantic School," in Hatori, "Yukiguni ni okeru shizen," *Yukiguni no bunseki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan sentaa, 1985), p. 109.

¹⁹ Kawabata Yasunari, "Ryoshū no Nihon," *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū*, vol. 32 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1982), p. 608.

characters, they are endowed with names and personalities that are tied to their social environment. Because the author seeks to distill a sense of beauty from their presence, upon close examination, the literary figures, especially female ones, turn out to be incongruous with the realm of credibility. Neither the social background nor fictitious characters command undisputed dominance, nor do they appear to merge with each other in blurred co-existence. The story proceeds with the scheme of unrealistic characters overlapping their social landscape, thereby concocting a sense of unreal beauty in seemingly believable circumstances.

The artistic manipulation readily applies to the main characters in *Snow Country*. For instance, we only know a few superficial aspects of Shimamura's life. He has grown up in Tokyo, has a married life there with his children, does not have to earn a living, publishes writings on dance, and likes occasional hiking in high mountains. The basis of his economic stability is totally unclear. The contradiction of his soft, plump, fair-complexioned physique for an experienced mountain hiker is well noted.²⁰ We know him better as a literary type, as Roy Starrs points out: "the very model of what Nietzsche called a 'passive nihilist' or what nineteenth-century Russian novelists called a 'superfluous man.'" ²¹ In comparison, Komako's life story, although sketchy, is more disclosed. Originally from the snowy province, she grew up in a port town until she was "sold" at sixteen and worked as an apprentice geisha in Tokyo. At seventeen she was "bought" to become a wealthy man's household companion. When that patron died after one and a half years she came back to the spa village. She appears before Shimamura at first as an unnamed, half-professional woman who claims to be nineteen years old. Then, to pay for medical expenses for her music teacher's son, her childhood playmate and reportedly her fiancé dying of tuberculosis, she chooses to become a geisha. Even after his death and the death of his palsied mother, she adheres to her professional contract for a term of four years to pay back the debt.

As expected, Shimamura's perception renders this woman a paradoxical entity from their first meeting. She gives him a consistent impression "above all...of cleanness, not quite one of real

²⁰ Terada, "Yukiguni ron," p. 61.

²¹ Roy Starrs, *Soundings in Time: The Fictive Art of Kawabata Yasunari* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1998), p. 132.

beauty.”²² He is immediately drawn to her with an “impression” that she is “wonderfully clean and fresh” to “the hollows under her toes.”²³ This observed quality constitutes a significant part of her irresistible attraction for Shimamura.²⁴ The cleanliness of the body metonymically extends to her meticulous tidiness in personality in such forms as a diary, recording all the novels she has read, cleaning a room thoroughly, and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, apart from her regular work as an entertainer at hotel parties, she has several special customers. Not to mention her past patrons in Tokyo, which include a man from Hamamatsu who has sought to marry her and a longstanding patron who she needs financially but cannot physically accept, there is Shimamura who she passionately favors against her reason.

Although she protests at first that sexual catering is not required of a geisha at the hot springs resort, she obviously has physical relations with her select clients. Following a “too self-evident” pattern, traditionally established and institutionally sanctioned as Kawamoto Kōji explains, her rapport with Shimamura is defined in unspoken mutual understanding to her underlying sorrow and mortification.²⁵ In an intimate exchange with Shimamura, she reveals “her full, warm breasts... ‘caressed’ into unequal development.”²⁶ Komako’s charm thus originates in an unlikely paradox of a totally clean woman who is physically available to multiple men in partial prostitution.²⁷ Accordingly, Tsuruta Kin’ya regards her as a symbol of

²² Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 32.

²³ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 18.

²⁴ Hayashi Takeshi argues that Komako’s cleanliness undergoes change by the time of Shimamura’s third visit, in “Kawabata Yasunari,” *Kanshō Nihon gengai bungaku*, vol. 15, ed. Hayashi (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1982), pp. 137, 139. For a similar view, see Shin Reishuku, “Yukiguni ron: Shimamura to Komako no kankei o chūshin ni,” *Nihongo to Nihon bungaku* 7 (1987), p. 25.

²⁵ Kawamoto Kōji, “Geisha no koi: Jyaanera shōsetsu toshite no Yukiguni,” *Nihon bungaku no tokushitsu*, eds. Hirakawa Sukehiro and Tsuruta Kin’ya (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1991), p. 271.

²⁶ Boardman, “Kawabata Yasunari,” p. 11. Boardman calls Komako “the very essence of ‘a woman of the pleasure quarters,’” p. 11.

²⁷ Kawabata employs the same paradox in a short story titled “The Morning Nail” (*Asa no tsume*). Tachibana Masanori calls this paradox “cleanness

“purified sex” while Terada Tōru calls her “nothing but a paradoxical abstract.”²⁸

An even better instance, and therefore a more problematic case, is Yoko because the author admits that, unlike Komako, she is not modeled after a real-life person and is a product of his pure imagination. When the train comes out of a long tunnel and stops at a snow-covered station at the beginning of the story, Shimamura is entranced to hear her call to a station master with a voice that is repeatedly described later as piercingly clear and beautiful. Yoko's unphysical presence also stems from her visual appearance, or more specifically, her eyes that are often noted with the same qualities. Her beauty consists of these two dissected elements: the voice, which is clear to the point of evoking sadness, and the glistening eyes that dart off a piercing look. The rest of her corporeity is basically left out, as if it were not worth noticing, until the very last scene where a leg, “a truly physical detail about Yoko,” finally “penetrates Shimamura's perception” in a passage that describes her unconscious fall amidst a burning warehouse.²⁹ Simply put, she is “a physically transparent presence.”³⁰ Not encumbered with physical weightiness, her perceptible being essentially consists of voice and a look,³¹ and her paradoxical quality

containing impurity,” in *Iiki kara no tabibito: Kawabata Yasunari ron* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1981), p. 102. Akamatsu Masayuki thinks that Shimamura renders Komako “a virtual image” by way of the word, “clean,” in Akamatsu, *Genkei to shazō: Kindai Nihon bungaku ronkō*, ed. Shigematsu Yasuo (Fukuoka-shi: Genkei to shazō kankōkai, 1986), pp. 447-448. See also Kondō Hiroko, “Kawabata Yasunari: *Yukiguni*,” *Kokubunbaku kaishaku to kanshō* 58/4 (1993), p. 164.

²⁸ Tsuruta Kin'ya, “*Yukiguni* no Yukio wo kangaeru,” *Yukiguni no bunseki kenkyū*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 1985), p. 86; and Terada, “*Yukiguni* ron,” p. 61.

²⁹ Liman, “Kawabata's Lyrical Mode,” p. 283.

³⁰ Ueda Makoto, “*Yukiguni* no sakuhin kōzō,” *Kyojitsu no himaku: Yukiguni, Kōgen, Bokka, Kawabata Yasunari kenkyū sōsho*, vol. 5, ed. Kawabata bungaku kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 1979), pp. 77, 82.

³¹ This view of Yoko, in contrast to Komako's physicality, is widely held. See, for example, Liman, “Kawabata's Lyrical Mode,” p. 282; Tatsumi Satoshi, “Kawabata Yasunari *Yukiguni* ni okeru topos: Nichijō kara no dakkyaku,” *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū* 30 (1995), p. 52; and Tsuruta Kin'ya,

is further enhanced through synesthetic expressions, such as “coolly piercing,” that describe her.³² Accordingly, Yamada Yoshirō considers Yoko in Shimamura’s view “an assembly of aesthetic fragments and not even formed as a personality.”³³ She is also ageless, “an eternal virgin” in Tsuruta’s phrase, when Kawasaki finds “Yoko’s age unknown throughout the work,” unlike Komako’s.³⁴

Likewise, her social existence is of a dubious nature. Her biographical information is not provided. She is supposedly a country girl who has grown up in the unnamed, yet easily identifiable, eponymous northern region. Singing folksongs, she often engages in agricultural labor or menial service. Despite her local upbringing, she fluently spoke standard Japanese, to the finesse of grammatically challenging polite expressions without ever reverting to a village dialect. She might have spent a short time as a prospective nurse in Tokyo in pre-WWII compulsory education, which placed great emphasis on learning to speak a standardized language for consolidating the nation. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that a girl with a somewhat defective reasoning capability, who probably graduated from a local elementary school, speaks it with native ease. Her speech is even more striking, considering the fact that her accent apparently lacks the slightest provincial inflection even when she talks to villagers. At least Shimamura does not detect it at all from the very first moment he hears her speak on the train. Altogether, she presents another paradox of an urban fairy, clothed in rural mores and costumes, not nature-bound like “a mountain spirit,” “a tree spirit,” or “a spirit of snow.”³⁵ She is essentially

Kawabata Yasunari no geijutsu: Junsui to kyūsai, Kokubungaku kenkyū sōsho (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1981), p. 73.

³² Ōshima Maki points out the frequent use of synesthesia throughout this work in Ōshima, “Kawabata Yasunari *Yukiguni* no hiyu hyōgen: Gaikokujin ryūgakusei no shiten yori,” *Hyōgen kenkyū* 57 (1993), pp. 14-16. This suggests the paradoxical nature of not only Yoko, but of the entire story.

³³ Yamada Yoshirō, “*Yukiguni* ni okeru Yoko zō,” *Tōhoku daigaku bungei kenkyū* 97 (1981), p. 48.

³⁴ Tsuruta, *Kawabata Yasunari no geijutsu*, p. 73; and Kawasaki, “Yume ka utsutsu ka,” p. 19.

³⁵ Thomas E. Swann, “Kawabata no *Yukiguni* no kōsei,” *Kawabata Yasunari: Gendai no biishiki*, Kokubungaku kenkyū sōsho, eds. Takeda

“an almost unrealizable, abstract presence,” in Isogai’s terms.³⁶ Although she spent just a few years in the capital city before she returned to the story’s locale, Komako also speaks the “untainted” language artificially modeled after the Tokyo dialect. Generally in Kawabata’s fiction, characters rarely speak a dialect with a regional accent. He apparently regarded such utterance as cacophonous to his aesthetic construct.

In Shimamura’s perspective, readily incorporating the first mirror as “a sort of symbolic world not of this world,” Komako and Yoko are on a par with his aerial Western dance.³⁷ With no need to make a living, he indulges himself in imagining “phantasms” of ballet and writing about it, precisely because he and other Japanese cannot see its actual stage performance.³⁸ He calls it “an art in another world” and “an unrivaled armchair reverie, a lyric from some paradise.”³⁹ He then acknowledges that he unknowingly might have been treating Komako like his Western dance. The author purposefully does the same to his characters, especially the two female figures. Situated in a credible, non-fantastic text, however, they are portrayed realistically enough to blend into their social milieu. Accordingly, they are endowed with certain social attributes only to the extent that those attributes do not mar their unreal quality.⁴⁰ As Isogai asserts, the two women’s “realistic aspects of daily life are not supposed to appear vividly.”⁴¹

The social background is similarly treated in Kawabata’s poetic scheme. Set at a particular historical moment, the novel inevitably shows

Katsuhiko and Takahashi Shintarō (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1978), pp. 20-21; Tatsumi, “Kawabata Yasunari *Yukiguni*,” p. 52; and Tsuruta, “Flow-Dynamics,” p. 254.

³⁶ Isogai, “*Yukiguni no shasei*,” pp. 38-39. Isogai further points out the incompatibility between Yoko’s image and the image of the agricultural labor she is engaged in.

³⁷ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 9.

³⁸ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 25.

³⁹ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 25.

⁴⁰ Although Akamatsu mentions a urinal Yoko carries in one brief scene as indicative of the substantiality of her everyday life, a cursory reference to this tool is actually a typical example of Kawabata’s blending technique in, Akamatsu, *Genkei to shazō*, p. 458.

⁴¹ Isogai, “*Yukiguni: Sakuhin bunseki no hōhō*,” pp. 207, 209, 211-212.

people's way of life and changes that affect it.⁴² The train, for example, is an important device. The story begins with Shimamura riding toward the hot springs resort. Without it, he would not come and go so easily as he does. We soon realize that the train line arrived the previous year at the isolated village, which, according to Komako, was a very lonely place. But now, many visitors and seasonal tourists come from Tokyo, including skiers for whom the village made an advertising poster using Komako and a colleague of hers posing as skiing models. All this means is that this place is increasingly tied to the capital city for its economic basis, while – as Komako and Yoko once did – more and more cheap labor relocates to the metropolitan area where it is most needed. With easy passage to the city now available, even those who stay behind begin to think of the city as the center of their imagination, thereby relegating their own home to a further peripheral position than ever before. This is illustrated by Komako's longing for urban culture, which in part prompts her attachment to Shimamura, who is after all, a culturally pampered escapee from the city. The train not only brings about comfortable transportation but also helps to deprive local people of their autonomy and identity, psychologically as well as economically. All these changes that are encroaching on rurality due to the arrival of a train system, can be glimpsed in scattered references, but they are persistently kept inconspicuous as part of the dimmed social background.⁴³ They must not stand out enough to threaten Shimamura's dreamland on the other side of a long tunnel.

The visitors that the train brings are not limited to tourists and skiers who can afford sojourning at a resort for the pursuit of pleasure. Upon returning for what is to become his last visit, Shimamura finds a Russian vendor selling cheap merchandise in the entrance hallway of his

⁴² Richard Torrance discusses “social realism” in *Snow Country* along with naturalism and cinema, which Kawabata appropriated as “popular literary languages ‘in the air’ in the 1930s and 1940s,” in Torrance, “Popular Languages in *Yukiguni*,” *Studies in Modern Japanese Literature: Essays and Translations in Honor of Edwin McClellan*, eds. Alan Tansman and Dennis Washburn (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1997), pp. 247-259.

⁴³ In this sense, Terada in “*Yukiguni ron*” calls the lives of all the people in the mountain community, except for Yoko and Komako, “a shadow play,” p. 61.

hotel. He guesses she is in her forties. Because of her many peddling trips, her clothes look dirty. Evidently, she is one of many Russians who fled from their communized homeland after the revolution and came to Japan as refugees. Some of them chose to stay in Japan, hoping that imperial Japan would fight communist Russia and restore czarism.⁴⁴ One might be tempted to interpret this Russian refugee as an unmistakable political reference. Her presence might bespeak Japan's colonial ambition in the 1930s, which led to strife with China that triggered World War II in Asia. This resulted in military conflicts with the Soviet Union on the Manchurian borders.

At the same time, Shimamura's occasional visits to the mountain resort might be taken in a domestic context, not simply as an escape from the tedium of everyday life in Tokyo, but more urgently as flight from political uncertainties veering toward totalitarianism, including two major coups d'état in 1932 and 1936. This finally results in his encounter with the Russian peddler. Such a reading is possible, but an intrusion of external reality is too abrupt and out of joint with the rest of the story. At best, the Russian's presence helps us ascertain the novel's temporal setting, denying any more justification for further historicizing. As Tanaka argues, *Snow Country* stands "beyond reach of the ideology of 'modern imperialism'" and "confronts 'history' as a perspective."⁴⁵ Suggestively, no sooner does Shimamura cast his eyes on the Russian vendor than she packs up her goods and walks away.

Although they are perceptible, the details of social reality are scarcely highlighted and never foregrounded in Kawabata's novels.⁴⁶ Instead, they remain indistinct in the background, deprived of any claim for substantial significance of their own. Against this background hover his

⁴⁴ As representative of such Russian refugees, a character named Kyrilenko in Tanizaki's *Makioka Sisters* [Sasameyuki] (1943-48) expresses this idea. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, vol. 15 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1968), p. 126.

⁴⁵ Tanaka Minoru, "'Sensō' to Kawabata bungaku (ge): 'Shizen' to iū 'tasha': *Yukuguni*," *Kokugo tsūshin* 322 (1991), p. 14.

⁴⁶ Tsuruta thinks that Kawabata's careful selection of the story's locale, which is not "a never-never land," amounts to "a dimming of lights in a theater" through "reduc[ing] the glare and rawness of the real world," in "Flow-Dynamics," pp. 251-252.

imagined creatures.⁴⁷ They are endowed with certain social trappings so that their contours merge well into their surroundings, but their essence lies in unreality. One might argue that novelists use the same technique all the time in their fictional writings, and that it is by no means Kawabata's monopoly. With other writers, however, characters are supposed to appear fully "realized" with a distinctive identity that is maximally shorn of improbability, while social elements can often stand on their own significance.⁴⁸ As Satake Isamu points out, Kawabata tends to "pursue a delicate world that is not reality although close to it" in mirrors, illusions, and dreams.⁴⁹ In fact, the aesthete Shimamura leaves Komako and his supposed dreamland, and it is difficult for him to take notice of their reality during his third visit. Kawabata's fiction is outstanding for depicting well-disguised imaginary beauty that keeps a tenuous balance with careful, low-profiled reality around it.⁵⁰ Thus, the first mirror scene of *Snow Country* can be considered an artistic manifestation of the author's notion of fiction-making or even an unacknowledged yet tacit statement about his poetics.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Looking back at *Snow Country* much later in his writing career, Kawabata reportedly called all the characters "ghosts"; see Tachibana, *Iki kara no tabibito*, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Tsuruta summarizes the plot of a Western novel as the protagonist's "process of differentiating the self from its environment," in "Flow-Dynamics," p. 265.

⁴⁹ Satake Isamu, "Kawabata Bungaku ni okeru 'kagami' ni tsuite: *Yukuguni to Suigetsu* o chūshin ni," *Kōka joshi daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 19 (1981), p. 67.

⁵⁰ Kawabata sometimes expressed his detachment from reality, as he says in "Bungakuteki jijoden": "I've never aspired to know [truth and reality] or to approach them. Instead, I'll probably live and die in false dreams" (my translation). This implies that he did not completely ignore life's circumstances. Kawabata Yasunari, "Bungakuteki jijoden," *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū*, vol. 33, p. 87. See also his "Dokuei jimei" (1949).

⁵¹ Some critics consider Kawabata's fiction totally lacking in social contours, but such an outlook ignores the essence of Kawabata's fiction. See, for instance, Hasegawa, "Kawabata Yasunari ronkō," p. 341; Akihira Sugiura, "Kawabata Yasunari ron," *Gunzō* 9 (1954), pp. 153-162; Terada Tōru, "Kawabata Yasunari ron," (1948); *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō kankōkai*, ed., *Kawabata Yasunari*, p. 50; and Tsujimoto Chizuru,

Section Five

We have seen the first mirror scene as dually representative of Kawabata's poetics on an individual level as well as in a general literary situation. A third stratum of symbolic reading uncovers the overall complexity of creativity when these two strata correspond, respectively, to Yoko's reflection and to the darkening landscape outside that enables the translucent mirror. Kawabata employs his personal method of fiction-making against the background of general tendencies in contemporary Japanese literature. But his individual technique and the general literary situation are neither contrasted nor to be seen as verging toward fusion. One comes out of the other and Kawabata's originality is based on their interplay. In this viewpoint, a cold fire in the distant landscape acquires great significance as an integrating focus. Metaphorically, the light stands for a new element that emerges from the general background and transfixes the center of Kawabata's philosophical stance as a writer, for the time being at least amid the ceaseless flux of theories and literary modes. Feebly small and hovering as it might be, the flickering light thereby unifies the author's literary world and contextualizes it. All of a sudden, compared to an insect (noctiluca) that emits phosphorescent light in the nocturnal sea,⁵² this image recalls another unusual comparison of Komako's lips to "a beautiful little circle of leeches,"⁵³ and the transient light shimmering through the eye is strongly suggestive of Kawabata's Modernist affiliation.

In his late thirties, Kawabata was no longer blatantly experimenting with new trends of Western literature as in his younger days of Neo-Perceptionism (*Shin-kankaku-ha*). As with his interest in cinema and ballet, however, he remained conscious of new literary methods and techniques imported from the West.⁵⁴ In fact, many elements usually linked to his cultural heritage, such as deliberate ellipsis, associative shifts of

"Kawabata Yasunari no bigaku: *Yukiguni* to no kakawari," *Ritsumeikan bungaku* 508 (1988), p. 953.

⁵² Neither the insect nor its academic name is mentioned in Seidensticker's translation.

⁵³ Kawabata, *Snow Country*, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Hasegawa Izumi, "Kindai bungaku ni okeru *Yukiguni* no ichi," Kawabata bungaku kenkyūkai, ed., *Kyojitsu no himaku: Yukiguni, Kōgen, Bokka*, Kawabata Yasunari kenkyū sōsho, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan sentaa, 1979), pp. 106, 110.

thought,⁵⁵ asymmetrical structure,⁵⁶ and the juxtaposition of incongruous images⁵⁷ are easily ascribable to Modernist influences as well.⁵⁸ A ray at the center of a heavily charged scene implies that in a way closely tied to, but not simply mimicking, contemporary literary techniques, he succeeded in presenting himself as an important Modernist writer. In its multiple levels of symbolism lurking therein, the first mirror scene in *Snow Country* reveals the very nature of Kawabata's art.

⁵⁵ Iwata Mitsuko relates this technique to *renga* and the Joycean stream of consciousness, in Iwata, *Kawabata bungaku no shosō: Kindai no yūen* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1983), p. 184. See also Liman, "Kawabata's Lyrical Mode," pp. 271-72; Naomi Matsuoka, "Japanese-English Translation and the Stream of Consciousness," *Tamkang Review* 19/1-4 (1988-1989), pp. 541-544; and Ozawa Seimei, *Kawabata Yasunari bungei no sekai* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1980), pp. 150-151.

⁵⁶ Citing Kawabata's reference in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech to the traditional Japanese garden that is asymmetrical in contrast to the symmetrical Western garden, Thom Palmer discusses "the suggestive power of" the writer's "asymmetrical text, spreading ever outward," in Palmer, "The Asymmetrical Garden: Discovering Yasunari Kawabata," *Southwest Review* 74/3 (1989), pp. 391-392.

⁵⁷ In the introduction to his translation of *Yukiguni*, Seidensticker talks about "a mating of opposite or incongruous terms," which enables the story "like a series of brief flashes in a void" as "a meeting between haiku and the novel" (pp. vii, viii). See also his "Kawabata Yasunari," *Gendai no esprit* 35 (1969), pp. 58-59, 66-67; and Starrs, *Soundings in Time*, pp. 119-123, 135-136.

⁵⁸ Brownstein infers "a basic affinity between classical Japanese aesthetics and twentieth century modernism" from the fact that "elements of both can be detected in a novelist like Kawabata or a poet like Ezra Pound," in "Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country*," p. 483. Starrs also points out inherent affinities and mutual influences between modernist and traditional Japanese techniques, centering especially on juxtaposition, and argues that Kawabata's "traditionalism was a natural outgrowth of his modernism," in *Soundings in Time*, p. 126.

ZATŌ PLAYS IN KYŌGEN: SATIRE AND SYMBOLISM

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Overview

Zatō plays are of the Kyōgen repertoire in which protagonists are portrayed as blind men. These plays have been the subject of controversy due to the ethical problem of ridiculing the blind. The purpose of this study is to reexamine the satirical and symbolic meaning of blindness within the plays. Blindness is the essence of the Kyōgen play and is a common feature of this repertoire.

The satirical nature of Kyōgen humor is directed at the misconduct of the ruling class. The Zatō plays are analyzed here from historical perspectives as well. Historical facts concerning the blind in the medieval era are presented to show their unique position in society. Understanding the hierarchy within the Todoza, an association of blind singers in *The Tale of Heike*, is key to understanding the satire which is directed towards the high-ranking blind characters in Zatō plays.

The symbolic use of blind characters is crucial for understanding the play's humor. Physical blindness can be interpreted as a metaphor for mental blindness, referring to the state of mind which is unaware of or refuses to accept reality. The goal of the humor is to strip away the masks of mental blindness and disclose the ultimate reality that allows no room for vanity, blind belief, or gullibility.

Introduction

Differences in opinion exist as to how to interpret Zatō, or “blind character” plays. In fact, Zatō plays have been controversial because of the commonly shared view that it is unethical and cruel that blind characters within the texts are ridiculed or harassed due to their condition of blindness.¹ More recently, however, Yamamoto Tojiro, a Kyōgen performer of the Ōokura school, has challenged this viewpoint and claims

¹ Koyama Hiroshi, et. al., *Kyōgenshū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1961), p. 165; Toida Michizō, *Chūsei no engeki* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1958); and Satake Akikhiro, *Gekokuujō no bunka* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1967).

that “the focus is on the handicapped mind of people, by showing the physical blindness on stage.”²

Koyama Hiroshi asserts that blind characters in Kyōgen are *naburi*, “the object of ridicule,” and are being harassed; others echo this view and claim that Zatō plays are “cruel.”³ Some claim that the theme in a Zatō play is not very different from any other Kyōgen repertoire.⁴ Jacqueline Golay suggests that the portrayal of blind characters as “dumb, silly, deceitful, joyful and lyrical” is commonly shared with any Kyōgen repertoire whose theme is to ridicule human foibles.⁵

Assuming that Zatō plays represent the core essence of Kyōgen comedy in their richness of satire and symbolism, this paper aims at discussing how the Zatō repertoire can be a significant representation of the Kyōgen play. The satire is directed towards the high-ranking blind characters within the Todoza, a nationwide guild of blind-priest singers in the *Tale of Heike*. Hashimoto Chosei suggests that the blind characters who are members of the Todoza are class-conscious, and at the end of Zatō plays, portraying harassment towards the higher ranked blind characters is designed to ridicule these blind men in Todoza.

William LaFleur suggests that the symbolic use of blindness (i.e. physical blindness) can be interpreted as blindness of the mind.⁶ The

² Yamamoto Tojiro’s claim is based on the premises that having sympathy towards handicapped people is in itself prejudice since the sympathy emerges from the viewpoint of a person without a handicap and is superior to handicapped people. Yamamoto warns that this kind of hypocritical sympathy is a by-product of conceited intellectual views shared among those in the ruling class who take advantage of social hierarchy, in Yamamoto, *Kyōgen no susume* (Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku shuppan, 1993), p. 95.

³ Koyama, *Kyōgenshū*; Omote Akira, “Tenshō Kyōgen bon ni tsuite,” *Bungaku* (1972), pp. 24-27; Toida, *Chūsei no engeki*; and Satake, *Gekokujyō no bunka*.

⁴ Yokoi Kiyoshi, *Chūsei minshū no seikatsu bunka* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku shuppan, 1975), p. 317; and Jacqueline Golay, “Pathos and Farce: Zatō Plays of the Kyōgen,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 28 (1973), p. 142.

⁵ Golay, “Pathos and Farce,” p. 142.

⁶ William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 142.

symbolism of blindness, therefore, refers to a level of consciousness that is oblivious to reality in a way that reflects a person's underlying vanity or hypocrisy. While pursuing an understanding of ultimate reality, Kyōgen seems to allow no room for individual vanity, hypocrisy, and gullibility, which are created and/or represented by mental blindness. Yokoi Kiyoshi also acknowledges that Zatō plays include the fundamental laughter of Kyōgen plays and suggests that it is not “handicapped” people that the Kyōgen ridicule, but it is rather the inner distortion of the human mind about which Zatō plays are concerned.⁷

While admitting that the satire is directed towards the upper social rank in Todoza hierarchy, Koyama Hiroshi criticizes the plays that deal with the blind wanderers outside of the Todoza hierarchy who are cruelly harassed by the non-handicapped.⁸ I would like to argue, however, that satire towards the higher-ranking blind is more predominant among Zatō plays, which include high ranking blind people of Todoza, whereas the plays about blind wanderers can be richer in the symbolic meaning of blindness. Thus, in this paper, the main discussion will be on how sarcasm and the symbolism of blindness are expressed in different categories of Kyōgen plays.

History of the Blind in the Japanese Medieval Era

Before a further analysis of Zatō plays, I will present a brief historical overview of blind people during the Muromachi (1334-1573) and Edo (1600-1867) periods when Kyōgen plays were first established in the form of written texts.

Some blind people of the Muromachi and Edo periods enjoyed special privileges as singers of *The Tale of Heike*. *Heike* singers formed their own association called Todoza, which was established in the Muromachi period and abolished after the Meiji period.⁹ There was a hierarchy of five ranks in this association (from highest to lowest): Kengyō, Betto, Koto, Zatō, and Shomo. This ranking is an important key to understanding Zatō plays.

⁷ Yokoi, *Chūsei minshū*, pp. 317, 322.

⁸ Koyama, *Kyōgenshū*, p. 135.

⁹ Henchōsha Bunkkyō Minzoku Gakkai, ed., *Bukkyō minzoku jiten* (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu ōraisha, 1993), pp. 144-145.

In the Edo period, under the auspices of the Tokugawa shogunate, high-ranking members of Todoza were given the privilege to loan money, Zatō kin, to the public. Golay believes that this privilege suggests a concerned view towards the blind because “the blind people’s inability to see the world around them did not prevent them from finding a legitimate place and function in society.”¹⁰

This positive interpretation also derives from the supernatural power of blindness, as based on esoteric Shinto belief. Hyodo Hiromi refers to the eminent Japanese folklore scholar Yanagita Kunio, who presumes that “there is an ancient custom of damaging one eye and breaking one leg of the *yorimashi*, a Shinto priest who is sacrificed to a god.” Due to this religious custom, it is believed that those who blind their eyes have supernatural powers. . . some people were even willing to damage their eyes in order to attain this supernatural power.”¹¹ Another positive example of blindness can be observed in the Noh play where the legendary figure of Kagekiyo blinds his own eyes in an act of defiance as a defeated warrior so that he would not have to see his enemy.

These positive depictions of blind people and their special status does not necessarily mean that they are free of prejudice from society. In fact, the other side of the coin is also true in terms of a religious interpretation of blindness that is represented by the Buddhist view. According to Buddhism, blindness is considered the consequence of a sin (*hibo daijyo no tsumi*), which the blind person committed during his/her former life.¹²

¹⁰ Golay, “Pathos and Farce,” p. 141.

¹¹ Hyodo Hiromi, *Heike mogatari: Katari no gentai* (Tokyo: Yuseidō shuppan, 1987), p. 115 (Translation is mine).

¹² Examples of Buddhist interpretations of blind characters are in the Noh plays *Semimaru* and *Yorobōshi*. In both plays, the Shite, or “lead character,” accepts his/her blindness as the consequence of a sin committed in a former life. The Shite tries to endure his/her misfortune as a way to regain good karma in the next life. Yokoi points out the irony of this situation. Though Buddhism seeks to save unfortunate people in the name of Buddha, the physically handicapped are inadvertently discriminated against, in Yokoi, *Chūsei minshū*, p. 315. The Buddhist *rokudō* system of transmigration through six realms according to the law of karma seems to be incorporated within social mobility, *gekokujō*, “below conquerors

Instead of the gloomy view of the Buddhists' interpretation of blindness as a different form of retribution, however, it seems that Kyōgen accepts the reality of blindness as it is, and instead ridicules the high-ranking blind within the Todoza system or makes fun of mental blindness.

Major Themes in Zatō Plays

This paper analyzes thirteen Zatō plays based on two major themes of satire and symbolism. The first eight involve the confrontation between two differently ranked blind characters and are discussed in terms of satirical themes. In the satirical plays, the Shite, or lead character, is most likely a high-ranking blind person who is the target of ridicule by Ado, a blind person of lower status. The other five plays are classified as symbolic. The plays are further categorized by whether or not they include a confrontation with or without a third person as an instigator, except for Futari Zatō, in which two blind men compete by reciting the *Tale of Heike*. In *Nunokai*, *Umkakari*, and *Hakuyo*, two blind men fight over an object without the instigation of a third party, but in *Dobukacchiri*, *Chakagi*, and *Mari*, the fighting is triggered by a third party. The symbolic plays deal with the hypocrisy of high-ranking aristocrats in Kyoto, as in *Tsukimi*, *Kawakami*, *Saru*, and *Inukai Zatō*, or with the theme of marital love in which the husband is a blind man, as in *Kawakami*, *Kiyomizu*, *Goze Zatō* and *Saru Zatō*. Furthermore, the major themes of marital love can be classified as: 1) appreciation of love and acceptance of physical blindness, as in *Kawawakami*, or 2) deluded love, as illustrated by the extra-marital love affair in *Saru Zatō*.

Satirical Meaning of Blindness

above.” This unity of religious belief and social instability accounts for the underlying hope of blind persons to attain good karma in the next life. In *Semimaru*, both Semimaru and his sister Sakagami are descendents of the royal family of the emperor. Sakagami is ridiculed by the commoners for her physical deformities and laments that “everything is upside-down in this world,” in Sanari Kentaro, *Yōkyoku taikan*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1964), p. 1680. However, the tragic element of the play is given reprieve with the underlying belief and suggestion of salvation for both Sakagami and Semimaru in their next lives, in Yokoi, *Chūsei minshū*, p. 313.

In the plays where the Todoza hierarchy is evident, the underlying theme is satire of the higher-ranking blind person, similar to the way that Taro and Jiro Kajhya outwit their lord in the Shomyo repertoire of Kyōgen. In order to understand the satire that is targeted towards the high-ranking blind people in Todoza hierarchy, it is crucial to see the social rank of all characters in Zatō plays. Again, the rank in Todoza varies from Kengyō, Betto, Koto, Zatō and Shomo (highest to lowest). It should be noted that Shomo is a servant below the official ranking of titles and he serves all the different ranks in Todoza. Table 1 shows the rank of blind characters that are in the category of satire as I discussed earlier. The Tenshō text is the oldest written Kyōgen text that recorded the original form of Kyōgen plays during the Muromachi period.¹³ Among all the schools listed in Table 1, the Ōokura school (Busei 10) is one of the oldest and appeared before the early Edo period, whereas the Sagi and Izumi schools appeared later.

Table 1: Ranking of Status in Todoza Hierarchy Among Zatō Plays

Plays	Text	Shite	Ado
Dachin Zatō	TNS	Zatō	Shomo
Umakari Zatō	TNS	Zatō	Shomo
Nunokai Zatō	TNS	Koto	Zatō
Mari Zatō	TNS	Kengyō	Shomo
Mari Zatō	IZM	Koto	Kikuchi (Zatō)
Hakuyo	IZM / SGI	Koto	Zatō
Futari Zatō	OKR	Kengyō	Koto
Dobu Kacchiri	IZM / SGI	Koto	Zatō
Chakagi Zatō	SGI	So-Kengyō	Kengyō, Koto, Zatō

Note: Shite: (Leading character)

Ado: (Supporting character)

Izumi school: IZM

Sagi school: SGI

¹³ Ōsone Akinosuke, et. al., *Kenkyūsha koten bugaku gekibungaku* (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1975), p. 37.

Tenshō school: TNS

Ōokura school: OKR

Among the plays dealing with the direct confrontation between two rankings of the blind Todoza members, four out of nine plays listed above are in the Tenshō text. The theme of a satire directed towards the higher rank seems to be predominant in the Tenshō text. In the development of dramatic sophistication in Kyōgen from farce to full-fledged comedy, the main technique of slapstick in Tenshō expresses satire through the sophistication of the plot. Plays under this category will be analyzed according to the level of plot sophistication, from the least sophisticated plays in Tenshō to the utmost sophisticated plays in later texts that provided a basis for the ridicule or use of the third-person device.

The typical plot ends with the high-ranking blind character being kicked or harassed by a low-ranking blind character, as in *Nunokai Zatō*, *Umakai Zatō*, *Hakuyo*, *Mari Zatō*, *Chakagi Zatō*, *Futari Zatō*, *Dachin Zatō*, and *Dobu Kacchiri*. *Futari Zatō* is the exception, in which two blind characters compete to prove their skill in *Heike*. The fights between two blind characters of different ranks were all triggered within the simple plot based on an argument over an object.

The three plays, *Nunokai Zatō* (Taiso), *Umakari Zatō* (Taisho) and *Hakuyo* (Izumi and Sagi), share a similar plot about fighting over an object, e.g. a piece of cloth in *Nunokai Zatō*, a horse in *Umakai Zatō*, and a biwa mandarin in *Hakuyo*. The objects which the two blind characters fight over are used to provoke a simple, childish dispute. In these plays, the Ado assaults the Shite, who is of a higher rank. Hashimoto points out that “Zatō plays seem not to end without having the Kengyō and Koto thrown down by the Zatō or the Shomo.”¹⁴ The development of the characters or their legitimate reasons for these fights seems to be of least concern in Tenshō texts. The first texts of Kyōgen simply aim to elicit laughter from the audience by inverting the target to be attacked within the Todoza hierarchy.

While sharing the identical plot and the same wordplay as a *renga* poem, *Hakuyo* (Sagi) shows more sophistication as a drama than its original model play, *Umakari* in the Tenshō text, by providing a good reason for the Koto to be ridiculed. The Koto is described as an obnoxious person who misuses his authority by insisting on borrowing a biwa mandarin from the

¹⁴ Hashimoto Chōsei, “Tensei kyōgenhon no shukka zatō kyōgen,” *Kokugo to kokubungaku* (1974), p. 34.

owner regardless of the fact that Hakuyo (the name of the Zatō) is the first to request it. When arguing his point, the Koto scorns the Zatō by saying, “Hakuyo zure ga Kotode gozzareba, ozashiki de deruto mōshitemo kouta ka hayamonogaatari de sumu Kotode gozaru. Arewa biwa irimasennu (Biwa is not needed when Hakuyo and the like are expected to sing popular songs or requested to perform the shorter version at the drinking table).”¹⁵

In fact, a biwa, which is used as an accompaniment for singing the *Tale of Heike*, is considered a status symbol because only those ranked above the Koto are allowed to sing *Heike*. Therefore, the Zatō’s insistence on his right to borrow a biwa is a protest against authority, which offends the Koto. Compared to its Tenshō counterpart, in which a horse is fought over, the Sagi text shows more elaboration in using a biwa as a symbolic status symbol. When both characters are told to compete with each other by composing a *renga* poem for Hakuyo (the owner of the biwa), the Zatō ridicules the Koto: “Sakamorino Sakamorino / Zashikie hitono yobazareba / yobasuzareba kasu Koto wa mon ni tatazumi (Since Koto, who is as bad as ‘sake kasu,’ is not invited to the drinking party, sake lees stay at the gate).”¹⁶ The implication here is that if Hakuyo is not allowed to sing *Heike* at the drinking party, the Koto is even worse for he is not even invited to the party just like the useless sake lees (Koto). In reply, the Koto composes the poem saying, “Niwanaka e Niwanake / Hakakkeno geta nugisutete, nugisutete / Hakuyo nakuwa tanie hokase. (In the garden, in the garden / there is a worn-out pair of wooden clogs / They should be thrown into the valley, since there is no use for wearing them, ‘Hakuyo nakuwa’).”¹⁷

In this poem, the pun is on “Hakuyo” as in “Hakuyo nakuwa” meaning both “no use of wearing them” and the name of Zatō, “Hakuyo.” Both the Koto and Hakuyo make an insulting pun with their competitor’s name and the result is a tie, which shows Hakuyo is no less witty than the Koto.

There are four plays, *Dobukacchiri* (IZM, SGI), *Chakagi Zatō* (SGI), *Mari Zatō* (IZM), and *Dachin Zatō* (TNS), in which the direct interference of the third person or a non-blind passerby causes a fight with the blind character. The passerby triggers the fight with childish, practical

¹⁵ Fujikawa Hisashi, *Kyōgenshū* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun, 1954), p. 270.

¹⁶ Furukawa Hisashi, *Kyōgen zenshū: hyochu* (Tokyo: Murasaki no kokyosha, 1950), p. 271.

¹⁷ Furukawa, *Kyōgen zenshū*, p. 271.

jokes, such as drinking sake from sake cups waiting to be served, as in *Dobukachiri*; putting pepper in a tea cup, as in *Chakagi Zatō*; moving a ball with small bells causing the blind characters to collide (*Mari Zatō*); or by simply joining in on the harassment of the non-blind person (*Dachin Zatō*). Particularly in *Mari Zatō* and *Dachin Zatō*, the Shites know that the third party is harassing them, but the Ados of the lower ranks are still able to take advantage of the situation by attacking the Shite and pretending that it was done by the third party.

The focal point of contention arises from the different interpretation of the non-blind passerby. Koyama and Yokoi denounce the humor employed in Zatō plays on the grounds that the non-blind passerby harasses the blind character. Since these plays do not appear in the old Tenshō texts, the technique of using a passerby is considered a device to enhance the sophistication of the dramatic plot. His role is not developed as a full character but is treated as a mechanism for the play. The fact that the passerby is the only person who can physically see provides the third-eye from the viewpoint of the audience. He further acts as an instigator of a fight between the two main characters. For example, in *Dobukacchiri*, the passerby sneaks in and empties out a sake cup which Kikuchi was serving to Koto. The fight between the two blind characters was instigated by the passerby's practical joke of stealing sake; therefore, Koto believes that Kikuchi stole his sake, since neither blind character can see the passerby. Thus, the passerby should be considered a device for the sake of the sophistication of the dramatic plot rather than as a controversial and unethical way of ridiculing handicapped people.

The Symbolic Meaning of Blindness

In this category of Zatō plays, the Shite or the leading character, who is the target of ridicule, is mostly the blind person who is either the Zatō, the lowest rank in the Todoza system, or even the one without a title, except for *Kawakami* of the Sagi text.

LaFleur takes an insightful look into the meaning of satire rendered in the Zatō plays: “physical blindness becomes in Kyōgen a vantage point from which satire is directed at all forms of faith in ‘the existence of the things not seen.’”¹⁸ Based on LaFleur's claim, physical blindness can be interpreted as a metaphor of the blindness of the mind.

¹⁸ LaFleur, *The Karma of Words*, p. 142.

The symbolic use of blindness in *Zatō* plays aims to ridicule either people's ignorance or the denial of the realities of daily life. Unlike the Buddhist connotation of blindness of the mind as an obstacle for attaining enlightenment, *Kyōgen's* connotation of blindness is strictly limited to things that are down to earth. The symbolic meaning of blindness of the mind includes vanity and the hypocrisy of non-blind people with high status, as in *Tsukimi*, or the gullibility of those who believe in conventional ideas and values. Another dominant symbolic theme is the delusion of either the refusal of the acceptance of physical blindness in favor of mental blindness, as in *Kawakami*, or the external infatuation and possessive love between a married couple, also seen in *Kawakami* and *Saru Zatō*. The theme of love between married couples is especially emphasized when it is depicted as a pun, as in the appreciation of an affectionate, devoted wife (妻) as opposed to physical eyes (目), which are both pronounced "me."

In *Tsukimi* (SGI), an interesting contrast is set between the Shite, the Koto who is from Shimogyo, an area of Kyoto occupied by merchants and lower-class people, and the Ado, a man from Kamigyō, an upper-class area of Kyoto. This contrast is used effectively when the Koto and Upper Kyoto men meet and share their mutual interest in moon-viewing. The Koto says to the Upper Kyoto man that "Konata niwa Jokyo jya to ooseraruru hodoni sazo asobasu de gozaimasho (Since you told me that you are from Upper Kyoto, I assume you would compose a good poem)."¹⁹ Flattered, the Upper Kyoto man brags about himself, saying it is easy to compose a verse or two. However, both of them recite standard poems and end up laughing at each other. The Upper Kyoto man seems no more educated than the Koto from Shimogyo. They share sake, sing, dance and enjoy the night. When they decide to go their separate ways, the Upper Kyoto Man is struck by an urge to harass the Koto. He turns around and assaults him. After being attacked, the Koto is chased by a fierce-looking dog.

The end of the play seems to add insult to the Koto's injury. The theme of satire attached to social rank seems to be reminiscent of earlier themes in *Zatō* plays. However, the sophistication of the play provides more reason for the Koto to be ridiculed: the Koto frequently flatters the Upper Kyoto man, which shows the Koto's propensity towards vanity. Even after it becomes evident that the Upper Kyoto man is not capable of

¹⁹ Furukawa, *Kyōgen zenshū*, p. 294.

composing a poem, the Koto tries to complement the man when he sings a popular song. The Koto says, “Jokyo to uketamaareba utai made ga kakubetsu ni kikoemasuru (Knowing that you are from Upper Kyoto, even the popular song chanting sounds special when you sing).”²⁰ The Koto’s repetition of “Upper Kyoto” when describing the man shows the Koto’s appreciation of conventional cosmetic value that anyone from that area of noble taste and culture would have. By flattery, the Koto himself becomes a mirrored vanity image of the Upper Kyoto man. Kyōgen lampoons the vanity of people with high status.

Comparing the same play in two different texts, the Shite is the Koto in the Sagi text. In the Ōokura text the Shite receives less harassment simply because he is the Zatō. The focus of satire in the Ōokura text shifts from the blind character to the Upper Kyoto man.

The shift of ridicule is done through a sympathetic tone with pathos towards the Zatō who is innocently deceived by the mischievous and hypercritical Upper Kyoto man. The Shite is simply described as an innocent victim and his naiveté shows when he cannot recognize that the man he shared a good time with is also the man who assaults him. “Omoeta omoeba ima no yatsuwa saizen no hito hikikae nasake mo nai yatsura de gozaru (Thinking of the man I just encountered, he is so different from the man I met a while ago).”²¹ Zatō’s gullibility may elicit laughter from the audience, but the laughter is not purely due to the satirical nature of the scene. There is also sympathy for Zatō because of his innocence, which adds pathos to the play.

Regardless of whether the scene represents an exceptional event or the real nature of the Upper Kyoto man, Kyōgen aims to reveal the reality of the people. It becomes a satire when the humor is directed towards people of higher rank (who are revealed to be no different from the people of the lower class). The satire rendered in the Ōokura version of *Tsukimi* is a psychological drama in which vanity symbolizes blindness of the mind, making it a sophisticated drama.

Another remarkable symbolic meaning of blindness in Kyōgen plays deals with the love between a blind man and his wife, who is not blind. Among these plays, some express sympathy and affection towards blind people by having blind characters that accept their physical blindness

²⁰ Furukawa, *Kyōgen zenshū*, p. 296.

²¹ Koyama, *Kyōgenshū*, p. 335.

and refuse to be mentally blinded through the rejection of reality. Significantly, the Shites in both *Kiyomizu Zatō* and *Kawakami* are the *Zatō* and a blind person with no title, respectively. Both plays end with happy couples that show sympathy and affection towards blind characters and low-ranking people, with no satire suggested.

In *Kiyomizu Zatō* (IZM) and *Goze Zatō* (TNS), a blind man and woman, who are both looking for a spouse, are happily matched with the blessing of Kiyomizu Kannon Boddhisatva. The play's setting is almost identical to the *Moshizuma* (Seeking wife) plays in Onna Kyōgen's women category, like *Tsuribari*, *Nikuyuhachi*, and others. However, unlike other similar plays in which the Shite, who is given an ugly bride by a god and subsequently tries to run away from her, both the blind man and woman end up happily together.

Tagani ni me mienau nakanaredo mo
chigirito nareba ureshisayo
chitsuka tatenuru nishikigimo
aawade kuchinishi narainaru nani
tokimo utssazuashite
fufuto narazo ureshiki.²²

(Translation)

Although we are both blind,
We are so happy to have a marriage vow.
Even one thousand brocade trees for appealing love
rot before meeting the love.
We became a married couple
without waiting for the time to come.

In *Goze Zatō* (TNS), which has a plot identical to *Kiyomizu*, the blind man sings at the beginning of the play:

“Waga yononakawa makkuroni, waga yononaka wa makuroni me
no naki Kotokoso kanashiki (My world is so dark, my world is so
dark. It is a pity that I do not have my eyes and wife).”

²² Nonomura Kaizō, *Kyōgen shūsei* (Tokyo: Nogaku shorin, 1974), p. 123.

In the annotated text of Tenshō Kyōgen Bon, Kanai explains that the word “me” means both “eye” and “wife.”²³ Although the blind character has no “me 目 (eye),” he is given another “me 妻 (wife)” at the end of the play. If physical blindness or the lack of physical eyes helps people see into the substance of love, the fact that the latter “me 妻 (wife)” is given at the end of the play shows that the blind man is given the mind’s “me 目 (eye)” as the result of attaining the substance of love or life.

In the play *Kawakami* (Sagi), the wife shares common traits with those of a typical *wawashi onna* (shrewish wife) of Onna (women) Kyōgen.²⁴ The *wawashi onna* is a domineering wife who nags at her husband, yet demonstrates deep affection underneath. In *Kawakami*, the husband’s wish to regain sight comes true through a divine revelation of the Boddhisattva Jizō, under the condition that he divorce his wife. When the wife is told that her husband must divorce her, she becomes furious:

MaKoto ojizo no ojigen naraba
 nakayo soetokoso oseraremashoni
 konaka made naitamono o ribetsu seito
 aruyo no do yokuna ojizo naraba
 korekara maitate tsukami saite shirizoko
 satemo satemo harano tatsuKoto²⁵

(Translation)

Since it is a revelation of the Jizō,
 they should tell us to get along well.
 If they told you to divorce your wife,
 Jizō has no mercy.
 I will go and rip it off
 I am mad, I am so mad.

²³ Kiyojimitsu Kanai, *Tenshō kyōgenbon zenshū* (Tokyo: Kazama shobō, 1990), p. 575.

²⁴ Carolyn Marley, “The Tender-hearted Shrews: The Women Character in Kyōgen,” *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 22 (1988), p. 46.

²⁵ Furukawa, *Kyōgen zenshū*, p. 102.

Historically, Jizō is considered to be one of the most benevolent and popular Japanese folk gods. The wife finds it unthinkable that Jizō would give unreasonable conditions. In the Izumi text,²⁶ the wife clearly states that it is god's and Buddha's responsibility to make a good match between a couple, but not to destroy it. The underlying affection of the wife and the acceptance of reality is a dominant theme in this play. The anger displayed by the wife in the above example demonstrates her strong attachment and love towards her husband. Breaking his promise, the husband chooses to give up his newly gained eyesight to Jizō and remains blind and married to his wife. The play ends with warm love and concern exchanged between the couple in the Izumi text:

Wife: No itoshii hito Kohira e gozare.
 Husband: Te o hiite kuresashime.
 Wife: Kokoro e mashita.²⁷

(Translation)

Wife: Oh my dearest one, please come here.
 Husband: Please hold my hand.
 Wife: Certainly.

In both the Izumi and the Sagi text, the caring wife guides her husband in the right direction, realizing her ability to serve as his eyes. The theme is parallel to the use of the word “me,” as discussed above, as a pun meaning both eyes and wife in *Goze Zatō*. If the blind man has a “wife 妻” who serves as his eyes, he no longer needs his physical “目 eyes.” In this context, the condition Jizō gives to the blind man is legitimate and the implication is that the blind husband should be aware of reality when choosing between his wife and his eyesight. If this reinterpretation of the hidden message of Jizō is valid, *Kyōgen* attaches the meaning of acceptance of reality as an alternative interpretation to the conventional Buddhist belief of blindness as retribution for sins committed in a former life. In other words, *Kyōgen* is simply “delighted in bringing the object down to earth and to an everyday diminution,” as Golay suggests.²⁸

²⁶ Nonomura, *Kyōgen shūsei*, p. 100.

²⁷ Nonomura, *Kyōgen shūsei*, p. 102.

²⁸ Golay, “Pathos and Farce,” p. 140.

In a way, *Kawakami* is a tragedy because the blind man loses his sight again. This is the only play in *Kyōgen* that refers to the Buddhist connotation of blindness as an indication of a sin from a previous life: “Kore kaya Kotonō tātōe nimo shkuju ni meno tsubururutowa. Iwa no minoue ni shiraretari (Is this what they mean when blindness is due to your karma from a previous life?)”²⁹ “Your destiny is revealed in this life.”³⁰ Nevertheless, in the last scene, in which the husband and wife leave the stage to live happily ever after, they weep together over the misery of blindness, assuring the audience that the couple cares for each other and making us believe that the couple will be happy just as they were before. Thus, the common theme shared by *Kawakami* and *Kiyomizu* seems to be the acceptance of reality and finding happiness in things as they are.

While the wife in *Kawakami* finds happiness despite her husband’s physical blindness, wives in other plays abandon their blind husbands because their minds are blurred by the seduction of another man. In *Saru Zatō*, the wife shows hesitation as she is tempted to run away with a monkey trainer. The wife says to the monkey trainer, “Osana najmimi o sutete kodo e ikuzo. So noyna Koto wa iutemo kuresashimasu na. (How can I leave my husband who I have known since I was a child? Do not tell me such things).” Nevertheless, she succumbs to temptation in the end.

It is significant to note that the wife tells her blind husband, “Matt men mieru mono wa mitonai mono mo mieneba narimasezu. Yuenaimono o miidashi tewa warui kokoromo demasuru (Those who can see are forced to see something undesired and are tempted to do the wrong things),” in reply to her husband’s envy of people who can see.³¹ The wife succumbs to the temptation of running away with the monkey trainer due to the fact that she can see and her mind is blinded as a result. The wife’s dialogue is the key to understanding the symbolic meaning of this play. Ironically, the fact that the wife is able to see causes her mental blindness, and as a result, she leaves her husband.

Symbolism is also evident in the string that the blind husband uses to tie himself to his wife under the suspicion that she will leave him at the flower-viewing site. Ironically, the blind husband finds that his wife is substituted by a monkey at the end of the string in the climax of the story.

²⁹ Furukawa, *Kyōgen zenshū*, p. 102.

³⁰ Nonomura, *Kyōgen shūsei*, p. 102.

³¹ Nonomura, *Kyōgen shūsei*, p. 190.

Although these wives may be criticized due to their adultery, the blind husbands are also not without fault because of their possessiveness. Yamamoto finds that the string is a symbol of possessive love that is observed among many men in general:

Many men tie their women with various kinds of strings. It can be financial, habit, social status, beauty, violence, intellect, attraction, etc. Although they tie their women with the invisible string, they may be blind to see what is deep in the heart of the woman.³²

In this sense, the possessive love of men in general is not any different from the blind husbands of the Kyōgen plays.

Conclusion

The significance of these plays can be summarized on two levels: 1) the satire of the high-ranking blind as a common theme of Kyōgen plays, and 2) the symbolic meaning of blindness. These two features can be best seen as expressions of the realistic approach found in Kyōgen plays, as opposed to the idealistic and didactic approach of Noh plays.

Further observation indicates that the satire of *Zatō Kyōgen* also derives from the basic attitude of Kyōgen to reveal reality while ridiculing the blind belief towards the cosmetic value of high-ranking people. It is clear that the satirical meaning targeted towards the high-ranking blind person is predominant in plays in which two blind characters with different ranks ridicule each other through wordplay, whereas symbolic meaning is more explicit in the *Zatō* plays in which the lead characters are either blind persons with low rank, *Zatō*, or have no title at all.

It can be concluded that plays in Kyōgen are neither immoral nor a manifestation of discrimination, but have a literary significance of their own in terms of reflecting the dynamics of satire in the medieval era of *gekokuujyō*, when commoners strove to gain power over the ruling samurai class. This element adds to the symbolic meaning of unmasking physical blindness as a vehicle for the major theme of Kyōgen realism. Thus, it is the utmost realism of Kyōgen, which strips away hypocritical delusion through satire by ridiculing people of higher social class or rank, that epitomizes the major themes of *Zatō* plays.

³² Yamamoto, *Kyōgen no susume*, pp. 112-113 (Translation is mine).

**JAPANESE BUSINESS SCHOOLS AS *SENMON GAKKŌ*,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE U.S. CPA EXAMINATION**

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In April 2001, the Japanese accounting system officially adopted the International Accounting Standards, which greatly resemble U.S. standards. This long-anticipated change, along with the rapid globalization of business transactions in Japan over the last decade, increased the value of the American Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation in Japan, hereafter called U.S. CPA, and prompted aspiring Japanese accountants to take the U.S. CPA examination instead of, or in addition to, the much more difficult Japanese CPA exam. As a result, Japanese applicants for the CPA examinations in such states and territories as Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam have far outnumbered American applicants in recent years.

Unlike Japanese CPA designations, which are nationally administered, their American counterparts are administered by individual states. Although the exam questions and dates are the same throughout the U.S., qualifications for taking the CPA examination, as well as those for certification and licensing, vary considerably among states.

Moreover, unlike Japanese examinations, which can be taken by all aspirants irrespective of their educational background, CPA examinations in the U.S. are typically open only to those who have earned at least a bachelor's degree and a considerable number of course credits in accounting and business. Some states are more demanding than others. As a result, in the U.S., it is primarily colleges and universities that provide essential preparations needed for the CPA examination.

On the other hand, the Japanese specialist training schools, not colleges and universities called *daigaku* but rather *senmon gakkō*, provide education and training for a variety of accountants, including *zeirishi* (licensed Tax Accountants or Enrolled Agents) and *konin-kaikeishi* (Certified Public Accountants). These schools are attended not only by fresh high school graduates, but also by *daigaku* students (which is called "double schooling") and other adults. It is said that over the years these schools have produced more than 90% of all CPAs in Japan.

Ironically, American examination boards do not recognize *senmon gakkō* course credits towards the qualification to sit the CPA examination. Another irony is that although the U.S. CPA administrators recognize course

credits from Japanese universities, the latter cannot flexibly offer accounting and business courses to meet the general public demand.

In these circumstances, some accountant training centers or schools legally operate as business corporations, rather than educational institutions, and have begun to spring up and establish ties with U.S. universities, offering their courses in Japan which count toward the qualification to sit the CPA examination. To meet the competition, traditional accounting schools operating as *senmon gakkō* have been forced to follow suit. Linking with the American universities enables students to accumulate enough credit hours as quickly as possible to qualify for the U.S. CPA examination. It would not be surprising to find some questionable practices (e.g., the replacement of English with Japanese as a teaching language, fewer class-contact hours, and simpler test questions).

This paper contends that better approaches should be followed to address the issues of the U.S. CPA examination for the Japanese. The most logical and practical approach is to have *senmon gakkō* credits counted as collegiate credits by American examination boards. A second logical but less practical approach would be to encourage Japanese universities and junior colleges to process student admissions and course offerings on a quarterly or semester basis. Other approaches involve some structural reforms of the Japanese education system.

The paper will discuss the characteristics of the Japanese education system in the above context; delineate the Japanese *senmon gakkō* with special attention to business schools; elaborate on issues surrounding the U.S. CPA examination for Japanese applicants; and explore solutions and policy implications.

Japanese Educational System and Its Characteristics: A Review

The present Japanese education system, which was installed after the end of World War II on the basis of recommendations by American experts, is called the “6-3-3-4 system.” The numbers signify 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of middle school (lower secondary education), 3 years of high school (upper secondary education), and 4 years of university (*daigaku*), in which the first nine years are compulsory. In addition to educational institutions that correspond to the 6-3-3-4, other schools exist, which include nursery schools, kindergartens, specialist training schools (*senshū gakkō* and *senmon gakkō*), 2-year junior colleges (*tanki daigaku*), graduate schools, and other miscellaneous schools, including those which are

operated as a business for profit. It should be noted that larger firms and organizations typically provide extensive in-house education and training programs to their employees.

Although high school education is not compulsory, nearly all middle school graduates enter high school (e.g., 96% in 2000), and more than 90% of high school entrants complete their education. Of high school graduates, approximately 50% (e.g., 49% in 2000) enter a 4-year university (40%) or junior college (9%), and approximately 20% (e.g., 21% in 2000) enter a specialized training school.

Despite the historical background of adopting American recommendations, the Japanese education system differs from the U.S. system in many ways. Some of the Japanese characteristics linked directly or indirectly to the theme of this paper are discussed below.

First, Japan's highly competitive entrance examinations, given every spring, determine who can enter which college or university. No other period of examination or admission exists. Since their success in a career, as well as social prestige, is significantly influenced by the university they graduate from, many ambitious high school graduates study one or more years, typically at preparatory schools called *yobiko*, aiming for a top-level university instead of entering into what they consider a mediocre institution. For this reason, the Japanese education system is sometimes called the 6-3-3-X-4 system.

Second, to enter a prestigious university, students must study at a first-class high school. Since high school education is not compulsory, which school students can enter is determined by an entrance exam. As a result, pressures and incentives for academic excellence, which already begin at the elementary school level, become increasingly strong during the middle school period (7-9th grades). For this reason, additional schools for study purposes (afternoons, evenings, and holidays), generally called *juku*, are prevalent all over Japan.

Third, the number of annual K-12 school days is significantly larger in Japan than in the U.S. The rule of thumb has been 240 days per year in Japan and 180 days per year in the U.S., causing a difference of 60 days per grade or 720 days for grades 1-12 (i.e., $60 \times 12 = 720$). These figures mean that the average Japanese high school graduate has studied four more years than the average American high school graduate ($720/180=4$). It is reasonable to say, without even referring to the amount of homework and International Education Assessment (IEA) findings on comparative

competency in mathematics and science, that the average Japanese high school graduate has the educational background of an American student at the end of the college sophomore year in basic subjects such as mathematics, national language, foreign language, and natural and social sciences.

Fourth, the Japanese system of higher education provides less choice and flexibility to students than the American system. Japanese *daigakusei* (college and university students) must declare their major field of study at the time of their admission application and cannot easily alter the field after matriculation. It is nearly impossible for students to transfer from one *daigaku* to another of equal quality. For example, if a student majoring in psychology changes his or her mind and wishes to study accounting or engineering, opportunities are very limited. Moreover, a typical collegiate course lasts for an academic year, not a semester or a quarter, requiring a greater degree of commitment.

Fifth, although tradition has changed substantially, there is a division of function between universities and specialist training schools. The former are expected to teach theories and principles, and the latter are to teach practical market-oriented skills. Thus, qualifications in many fields earned at colleges and universities in the United States are typically acquired at *senmon gakkō* in Japan.

Sixth, Japanese laws and regulations governing education administration provide far less flexibility to *senmon gakkō*, *tanki daigaku*, and *daigaku*. It is extremely difficult for a *senmon gakkō* to acquire the status of *daigaku* or to merge with a 2-year or 4-year college. Similarly, it is very difficult for *daigaku* or *tanki daigaku* to admit students a few times out of the year and offer courses on a semester or quarterly basis.

Finally, English education in Japan is unbalanced. Typically, Japanese students learn English 4 to 5 hours per week in middle school and in high school. After six years of study, and some more in college, they still can hardly converse in English. Although the imbalance has been steadily reduced, the Japanese education system still emphasizes written communication, particularly reading comprehension, over oral communication. It is quite possible that many Japanese who can read Shakespeare or pass the U.S. CPA examination can barely hold a simple English conversation.

***Senmon Gakkō* in Japan**

Some books have been published and many articles have been written in the U.S. about the Japanese education system. These publications typically cover all or part of the 6-3-3-4 system, that is, education in

elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities. They seldom discuss the significant component of the Japanese system, namely the post-secondary education provided by *senshū gakkō* and *senmon gakkō*. A brief explanation is given below. Both *senshū gakkō* and *senmon gakkō* are translated here as “specialist training schools.” They are close to the American connotation of “technical colleges” and “professional schools,” definitely better than that of “vocational schools” and “technical schools” in terms of student background and level of instruction.

Senshū gakkō may offer three types of programs; namely, (1) *ippan katei* (general program – open to anyone), (2) *senmon katei* (specialist program – open to high school or better diploma holders), and (3) *koto katei* (designed as the second half of a 4-year program for middle school graduates). Those that offer the *senmon katei* are called *senmon gakkō*. In 2000, there were 3,551 *senshū gakkō*, of which 3,003 were *senmon gakkō*. Of the *senmon gakkō*, 88.7% (2,665) were private institutions and the rest were public. The number of students enrolled at *senmon gakkō* was 637,308, and of that 313,718 were first-year students.

As mentioned earlier, 21% of high school graduates entered *senmon gakkō* in 2000, as compared with 40% who entered *daigaku* and 9% who entered *tanki daigaku*. In general, the academic background of high school graduates who enter *senmon gakkō* is weaker than that of the graduates who move on to *daigaku*. However, as *senmon gakkō* students study harder and pick up practical and marketable skills, their certification is said to be as good as a bachelor’s degree in many fields. Their rate of landing a job upon graduation is consistently higher than a university or junior college graduate. Some *senmon gakkō* guarantee employment to all of their students who complete their designated program.

Senmon gakkō offers education and training programs of a one- to three-year duration. Two years is typical, and one year is fairly common. If a student attends the school for two years, receives at least 1700 hours of instruction, and successfully completes the program requirements, he or she is awarded the degree of *senmon-shi* (“specialist” or “technical associate”). Under the latest educational reform implemented in 1999, the *senmon-shi* is also allowed to transfer to a university or junior college. In 1999, 473 *senmon-shi* transferred to universities; 458 of them, or 97%, moved to private institutions. In 2000, 1,005 *senmon-shi* transferred to universities; 985 of them, or 98%, moved to private institutions. These numbers suggest that such transfers are not simple and easy.

Senmon gakkō are allowed to offer programs in the following eight areas: medical care (21.9%), engineering (20.4%), culture and arts (17.0%), health (13.5%), business (11.1%), education and social welfare (9.7%), fashion and life science (5.9%), and agriculture (0.5%). The numbers in parentheses indicate the proportion of the 3,003 new students in 2000.

Each area is further broken down into many fields. For instance, the area of business (*shōgyō jitsumu*) includes bookkeeping, CPA accounting, *zeirishi* (Enrolled Agent) accounting, *shihō-shoshi* (Judicial Scrivener), finance, real estate, insurance, international trade, computer information systems, business English, office management, hotel administration, and the like. Similarly, the area of engineering includes aircraft maintenance, electronics and electrical engineering, architecture and civil engineering, industrial design, computer technology, telecommunications equipment and service, automotive inspection, and so on.

It should be noted that *senmon gakkō* are attended not just by high school graduates. They are also attended by university students and graduates to acquire or upgrade marketable skills. The term “double schooling” is used in Japan when a student at a *senmon gakkō* attends another educational institution, typically a university, at the same time. On the other hand, the quality of students and the level of instruction vary greatly, but they are generally considered to be excellent by American standards, owing largely to the solid background in basic education (e.g., mathematics and language) possessed by Japanese high school graduates.

CPA Examinations and Japanese Accounting *Senmon Gakkō*

The CPA examination in Japan, like other prestigious examinations in the country (e.g., Diplomatic Service), is uniformly administered by the central government. It can be taken by any aspiring applicants, including high school dropouts.

The examination consists of three stages. The first test covers Japanese language, mathematics, foreign language (English), and composition. Those applicants who have at least two years of college education are excused from taking the first test. The second test, which constitutes the core of the system, is administered to those who have passed or are excused from the first test. This second test consists of short-answer and essay questions covering four areas: accounting (including bookkeeping, financial reporting, cost accounting, and auditing), business law, and two selections from business administration, economics, and civil law. The

applicants must pass all four areas at the same time. In 1999, a total of 10,265 took the second test and 786 of them passed, signifying a passing rate of 7.7% or 1 out of 13. The third test, which consists of written and oral parts, is given to those who passed the second test and completed the required work experience. The passing rate for this stage is said to be higher than 50%.

University students and graduates who took accounting and related business courses have some advantage over those who majored in literature, philosophy, psychology, etc., and also over those who only have high school education. The subject matter that is learned at their university is largely theoretical and substantially different from what is given on the CPA examination. The normal strategy for all applicants is to take courses at a *senmon gakkō* or any other preparatory school specializing in accounting and business.

The U.S. CPA examination, on the other hand, has the following characteristics: it is given twice a year and the questions are uniform throughout the U.S. The examination covers four areas: (1) financial accounting and reporting, (2) accounting and reporting, (3) business law and professional responsibilities, and (4) auditing. At least 70% of the questions in each category are multiple-choice. Any other objective questions and the remaining parts are short essays. No listening comprehension or oral communication testing is incorporated. A score of 75% or higher signifies passing for each category, and approximately 33% of the applicants pass each category.

Individual states make critical decisions on who will be qualified to take the CPA examination, to receive a certificate, and to hold a license for practice in their respective state. It should also be noted that most states allow partial passing (e.g., two out of the four areas) of the examination as well as the re-taking of failed areas, providing a second opportunity.

Japanese applicants who take the U.S. CPA examination are primarily interested in getting a CPA designation and using it in Japan. They have very limited interest in getting a certificate, and almost no interest at all in getting a license. Accordingly, they tend to choose those states which require the least qualifications for taking and passing the examination, paying little attention to requirements for certification and licensing.

Most states require a bachelor's degree, and a certain minimum number of collegiate credit hours in accounting and business courses as a qualification to sit for the exam. A few states make exceptions. Popular states or territories among Japanese applicants include Maine, Delaware,

California, Hawaii, Illinois, Alaska, Vermont, Montana, and Guam. For example, Hawaii, Illinois, and Montana require a bachelor's degree and 150 credit hours, including 24 in accounting and 24 in business. Maine and Alaska require a bachelor's degree, but the former requires no accounting or business course credits and the latter requires only 15 accounting credits and no business credits. Delaware and Vermont demand only an associate's degree or equivalent, but the former requires 21 accounting credits and the latter requires 30 credits of accounting and business combined.

Japanese business operations became increasingly globalized in the 1990s and as information about the U.S. CPA examination spread in Japan, thousands of accountants and prospective accountants became interested in taking the American examination. Many would rather take the U.S. CPA than the Japanese CPA. This development presented serious problems to Japanese accounting *senmon gakkō*, which were geared to prepare their students for the CPA and other designations in Japan. What seriously affected *senmon gakkō* was that the accounting and business courses they offered were not recognized as credit requirements by American states to sit the CPA examination. This was due to the fact that *senmon gakkō* were not classified as *daigaku* or *tanki daigaku*.

On the other hand, the situation presented great opportunities for some entrepreneurs. Several new accounting and business schools specializing in the U.S. CPA and related American designations (e.g., Certified Financial Analyst, Enrolled Agent, and Certified Management Accountant), have sprung up over the last few years. They are organized as *kabushiki kaisha* (corporation), not as *senmon gakkō*, to escape from the stringent regulations governing the establishment and administration of the latter. By contracting with universities in the U.S., they offer American collegiate credit courses in accounting and business, which would be recognized by American CPA examination boards. Examples include Anjo International, which is affiliated with Montana State University at Billings, the U.S. Education Network, which is affiliated with California State University at Haywood, and the Toranomom Accounting School affiliated with the University of Guam.

Having lost many of their CPA-track students to such corporate-form schools, *senmon gakkō* have recently begun to fight back. The most prominent case is O-hara Boki Gakkō (translated as "O-hara School of Business"), which is by far the largest accounting school in Japan that has reportedly produced more than 75% of all Japanese CPAs in the past. The

school has recently entered into an agreement with San Jose State University to offer the latter's business and accounting courses in Japan. Still, *senmon gakkō* like O-hara face an uphill battle in competing with new schools.

Finally, from a third party's standpoint, there is a serious concern about accounting and business courses offered in Japan. If the primary purpose of these courses is to let the students earn enough American college credits as quickly as possible, then they may not be taught in the way accreditation organizations desire. Questionable practices may be incorporated, including the use of Japanese rather than English as a teaching language, the reduction of contact hours, and the provision of easygoing tests and/or grading policies to pass the courses. It is both entertaining and annoying to find on websites many comical confessions by Japanese applicants for the U.S. CPA examination stating how they can hardly converse in English at American airports, hotels, and shopping centers.

Conclusions: Policy Implications

As mentioned earlier, educational reform introduced in 1999 allowed the *senmon-shi* to transfer to a university or junior college and have his or her credits at the *senmon gakkō* be accepted by the host institution. This is definitely a welcome step in the right direction, namely universal access to higher education. It also opens up a route for those *senmon gakkō* students who aspire to take the U.S. CPA examination and may have their *senmon gakkō* credits readily accepted by CPA boards in American states.

This reform, however, is not likely to be a major force. First, most *senmon-shi* would probably not be interested in transferring to a junior college, as they have already completed school work equivalent to junior college education. Second, even if they are eager to move up to a decent university, the latter may not accept such transfer students.

A better approach would be to undertake more fundamental reforms, so that a *senmon gakkō* could move up to the status of a university with relative ease and/or merge with a university or junior college. In particular, the merger of *senmon gakkō* and *tanki daigaku* should be a very simple administrative process. The integrated institution should look like many of the community colleges in the U.S. Another approach would be to encourage Japanese universities to process student admissions throughout the year and offer evening courses on a quarter or semester basis.

Given the time-honored practice of admitting students through a once-a-year entrance examination and maintaining specialization among various types and levels of schools, this idea may sound impractical and outrageous. However, the time seems ripe for the move, and as an increasing

number of *daigaku* and *tanki daigaku* cannot fill their enrollment quota because of the *shoshika* (the trend of fewer children per couple), the concepts of lifelong education and of universal access to education have gained momentum. At the same time, the temporary employment of faculty and staff has become easier with the weakening of the lifelong employment system.

In the meantime, Japanese accounting and business *senmon gakkō* should appeal to relevant U.S. organizations, particularly the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), systematically and logically to have their course credits accepted for the CPA examination. The appeal should stress the difference between Japanese and U.S. educational systems, particularly the basic educational background of Japanese high school graduates and the advanced level of instruction at *senmon gakkō*. Such an appeal has a good chance to succeed because American organizations are generally responsive to any rational and thoughtful idea.

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THE PLACE OF JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY

English translation of 日本の哲学の場所: 欧米から見た
日本の哲学

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For the first time in the twenty-first century, philosophy is headed towards becoming philosophically universal. Although philosophers have aimed at such universality from the beginning, they have been bound, for the most part, by cultural assumptions that have blocked the path before them. This is a rather bold statement to make for a legacy that reaches back over twenty-five centuries, but I know of no humbler way to express what seems to be taking place. The fact is, the philosophical tradition from the pre-Socratic era to the present has suffered from a certain failure of coincidence with its own aims that have become too much of a problem to ignore any longer. The full story of how this internal contradiction became a habit of thought, and how these challenges were systematically parried, may have to wait for the wisdom of hindsight. For now, it is enough to recognize that the cracks in the habit are too wide for it to hold together much longer.

The idea of philosophical universality, as we have come to know it, is a rather peculiar logical mixture. To make this clear, first consider the following two propositions:

- (a) Language is universal.
- (b) English is a universal language.

On the surface, both statements seem to be true enough, but the adjective *universal* has different logical functions in each of them. In the case of language as such, the term refers both to a synchronic historical fact that is at the same time a diachronic fact. That is to say, independent of culture, time, and economic and political conditions, there is not, nor has there ever been, a human society without language. But in the case of the English tongue, the claim is only synchronically, not diachronically, universal. Even if English should in fact become the second language of every human society on earth, this would still be conditioned by historical circumstances.

It was not always so and there is no reason to assume it will remain so forever. Nor does this disallow the possibility of other equally universal languages. The idea of universality allows for enough ambiguity that it can be applied to the general notion of language and to the dominant tongue of the present without the two propositions contradicting each other.

Now consider two more propositions:

- (a) Philosophy is universal.
- (b) The Western philosophical tradition is a universal philosophy.

Logically, they are of the same type, but the contradiction is more problematic. The claim that philosophy as such is universal implies that there is no society in which philosophy has nothing to say, just as there is no society that does not have a contribution to make to philosophy. To accept this claim is to orient thought towards the pursuit of truth wherever it is to be found; to dispute it is to forfeit that pursuit for bigotry. On the contrary, the statement that the particular philosophical tradition of the West, in all its variety of forms and throughout its long and illustrious history, constitutes a universal philosophy, in the end is a mere synchronic fact, not a diachronic one. There is no doubt that Western philosophy has been studied and applied across times and cultures, and in that sense it qualifies as *de facto* universal. But it is not universal in the same sense in which philosophy itself is. Its universality is that of a *historically dominant particular*. The fact that this dominance has lasted so long tends to blur the distinction between philosophy and Western philosophy, and thus to exclude the claim of other philosophical forms to universal relevance.

However, there is one important difference between philosophy and language. Whereas a particular language like English can absorb elements from other languages in the process of becoming dominant, it cannot open itself to the basic structures of other languages without losing its identity. There is no such thing as a “linguistic forum” in which different languages can communicate with each other through a shared grammar. Philosophy, on the other hand, is of its nature a forum for dialogue, and as such, not only can extend itself across particular traditions, but must do so. In other words, it is committed from the start to making the universality of historical dominance subservient to the universal search for truth.

It is this transition from the universality of cultural dominance to a properly philosophical universality that has begun to take place in our

times. Resistance to the change in conventional thinking is understandably strong, though rarely expressed directly. One of the clearest statements ironically comes from Martin Heidegger who, despite the influence of Taoist and Buddhist thought on his turn away from metaphysics, obscured the patrimony in an insistence on the dominance of the Western philosophical tradition:

The often heard expression “Western-European philosophy” is, in truth, a tautology....The word *philosophia* appears, as it were, on the birth certificate of our own history; we may even say on the birth certificate of the contemporary epoch of world history which is called the atomic age. That is why we can ask the question, “What is philosophy?” only if we enter into a discussion with the thinking of the Greek world. But not only *what* is in question – philosophy – is Greek in origin, but *how* we question, the manner in which we question even today, is Greek.¹

In more measured terms, the analytic philosopher Arthur Danto rejects the contribution of Asian thought, as he resists calling any of it “philosophy,” to Western moral philosophy on the grounds that it is too alien:

The fantastic architectures of Oriental thought...are open to our study and certainly our admiration, but they are not for us to inhabit....The factual beliefs they take for granted are, I believe, too alien to our representation of the world to be grafted onto it, and in consequence their moral systems are unavailable to us.... No one can save us but ourselves.²

In each of those instances, both of which are typical, the rejection of Eastern philosophies from the forum is proportionate with the problem at hand. It is a question of a habit of thought – the habit that I said at the outset is

¹ Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* (New Haven, CT: College & University Press, 1958), pp. 31, 35. See Reinard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on his Work* (London: Routledge, 1996).

² Arthur Danto, *Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral Philosophy* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. vii, x–xi.

showing signs of coming apart at the seams. I believe the closing of the forum, and hence the notion of “philosophical tradition,” to what lies outside the West, is primarily a failure of will. The logical reasons against it, and the non-coincidence with the founding principles of philosophy, are too obvious. What is needed is a cultural disarmament of philosophy, a deliberate decision to abandon the aim of global dominance, and the liberation of universality from particularity. This is what I meant by making philosophy, philosophically universal.

There is a Sufi story about a group of pilgrims making the Haj to Mecca. The time comes for prayer and the pilgrims pause to spread their rugs on the ground and bow their heads down towards the Holy City to pray. One of them, a simple craftsman, bows down in the opposite direction, with his feet pointed to Mecca. An Imam happens to walk by and begins to upbraid the man in front of the others, “Blasphemer! Do you know that it is an insult to point your feet towards God?” The man stands up to face the Imam, “I am sorry master, I did not know. But if you could be so kind as to show me where God is not, I will point my feet in that direction.” The same question must be put to the Western philosophical tradition: Show us a culture or society in which philosophy has nothing to say and which has nothing to contribute to philosophy, and let us exclude them from the philosophical forum. In the meantime, let us suffer the irreverence of de-Westernizing the philosophical forum as a necessary means to expose the unreflected bias that has coiled itself up like a snake in the bosom of philosophy.

Cultural Block Universe, East and West, Western Learning and the Japanese Spirit

The cracks in the habit of seeing philosophy as a fundamentally Western enterprise have shown up mainly in the West, where they have reached a breaking point in the past generation. This could not have happened without positive inspiration from the East. One of the strongest stimuli from modern Asia is well known not only in Japan but also in the West. Nishida Kitarō and principal figures in the Kyoto school after him, like Nishitani Keiji and Tanabe Hajime, are thought to have opened the philosophical forum to a truer universality. Although I was fortunate enough to live in Japan while this was going on, I am not in a position to account for the fascination with these thinkers or the reasons for their success. At most, I can try to reflect on some general impressions I have gathered over the past twenty years of contact with scholars from the West

interested in their writings. In doing so, I refrain from dealing with particular concepts in order to focus on what I called earlier the ongoing cultural disarmament of philosophy.

The first impression, I am afraid, will fall hard on the ears of professional Japanese philosophers, but I shall repeat it nonetheless. The contribution that Western philosophers look for in Japan is not the sort of contribution that mainstream philosophy in Japan has been trying to make in the past 150 years. The ideal of “Western learning, Japanese spirit” that inspired early interest in philosophy was an internal matter for Japan’s process of modernization and, as such, was of interest to students of Japanese intellectual history, but held little interest for the philosophical community. Preoccupation with the enhancement of the Japanese spirit retreated further and further into the background, so that by the 1960s it had become virtually invisible for most of Japan’s students of Western philosophy. The West expected another ideal to take its place, namely the ideal of making a Japanese contribution to a philosophical world forum. So far, Western philosophers have tended to ignore Japan because they perceive that this has not taken place.

In the opening remarks to the first issue of *Philosophy East and West*, John Dewey, although not a student of the East, expressed a positive mood of openness to an Asian contribution to philosophy:

Under the pressure of political *blocs* that are now being formed East and West, it is all too easy to think that there are cultural “blocks” of corresponding orientation. To adapt a phrase of William James, there are no “cultural block universes” and the hope of free men everywhere is to prevent any such “cultural block universes” from ever arising and fixing themselves upon all mankind or any portion of mankind. To the extent that your journal can keep the idea open and working that there are “*specific* philosophical relationships” to be explored in the West and in the East and between the West and East, you will, I think, be contributing most fruitfully and dynamically to the enlightenment and betterment of the human estate.³

³ John Dewey, “On Philosophical Synthesis,” *Philosophy East and West* 1/1 (1951), p. 3.

To the eyes of the West, this is a challenge that rank-and-file teachers and scholars of philosophy in Japan have ignored. Structurally, Western and Asian philosophies have been kept at arms length in Japanese academia, remaining even more isolated than in Western academia. The fact that this has brought suffering to a number of young doctoral students in the country eager to break the mold is an indication that things may be about to change. But for now, the idea of philosophy contributing to the “enlightenment and betterment” of humanity is all but eclipsed by the preoccupation with earning recognition as a specialist in the words of one or another Western thinker. Seen from the outside, the “system” has failed to produce either Western philosophers raised in Japanese culture or Japanese philosophers fluent in Western philosophy. It is important for the career and self-image of a young academic to publish in international journals, but it is not met with comparable recognition in the West. In Japan, the concern is to produce a higher percentage of distinctively Japanese contributions. Time and again, Japanese academics disappoint their Western counterparts by mirroring their own standpoint back to them, often clumsily, thus reinforcing the impression that they would be better suited to offer the kind of unique criticisms and original viewpoints that one would expect of a culture different from the West.

In some cases, the shock of discovering this fact has led some scholars to look more seriously at Japan’s original philosophical ideas and try to represent them to the West. My impression is that these efforts are taken more seriously abroad than they are inside Japan, where the idea of belonging to a “cultural block universe” seems to be a necessary condition for self-identity, or where treading outside one’s specialization is viewed as a philosophical sin rather than a virtue. In this way, the efforts have contributed to the bias that this Western philosophical tradition is, and should remain, primarily a Western phenomenon.

What is captivating about the Kyoto school philosophers is that they did take up this challenge, aiming at a contribution to philosophy made as persons *of* Japanese culture but standing *on* a world forum. They spoke not as one cultural universe facing another, but as one culturally determined human mind to any mind that wished to listen, Japanese or foreign. Curiously, there is little complaint in the philosophical writings of Tanabe, Nishitani, or Nishida about the exclusion of Japanese thought from the philosophical tradition. Rather than rattle their chains at being denied access to the philosophical tradition as equals and studying it as a foreign object, they simply set out to do philosophy. They did it for a Japanese

audience, making no efforts to have their works translated for Western consumption. If their Japanese readership found them hard-going at times, and complained about what they were doing to the language, the Kyoto school works read quite naturally in translation and – insofar as I am able to judge – on a whole, read better in Western language than their Western counterparts' translations read in Japanese.

These efforts, as it turns out, have been much stronger arguments against exclusivity than any complaints against the cultural hegemony of philosophy. They can be read, with profit, by philosophers in the West with little or no knowledge of Asian intellectual history. This says a great deal about the quality of their performance. As I have never hesitated to state, they stand shoulder to shoulder with the best Western philosophers of their age. They are not only intelligible to the West, but they have also made a distinctive Japanese contribution to the philosophical tradition. Perhaps this is why the slide away from “specific philosophical” questions into the defense of a “cultural block universe” during a brief period is eyed with such disappointment. It hardly had the effect of discoloring their whole work; on the contrary, it is the adventure of their work as a whole that has discolored their more or less nationalistic escapades of thought, to the point that no nationalist or Japanist (Nativist) for the past fifty years has cited Nishida, Tanabe, or Nishitani in their support.

Redefining the Notion of Philosophy

The Kyoto school, in any case, is only a small part of the challenge of Asian thought to the Western philosophical tradition. Indeed, its successes have prompted attention to more general demands lying beneath the surface for entirely too long. If these demands are not met, it is likely that they will slip back into oblivion, at home and abroad, as quickly as they rose to attention. Fundamentally, I see two problematic areas, the first one more conscious in the West and the second in Asia. In neither area can one count on leadership from educational establishments. On the contrary, they will almost certainly wait until a path of least resistance has opened before stepping up and announcing their permanent “reforms.” The initiative will have to come from within the community of scholars and the young students themselves.

The first area has to do with redefining the notion of philosophy in the West, so as to return to the philosophical forum an examination of the realms of intellectual history and activity in the East from an exile to the departments of Asian Studies or Religion. Current definitions will only be

displaced by a deliberate effort to name large areas of thought as “philosophy” without the qualification of “Asian,” which seems – at least at present – to cancel out what it means to specify. If the Japanese studying philosophy abroad were to meet the custom of having Asian thinkers dealt with as a normal part of courses on epistemology, cosmology, logic, and the history of philosophy, it is likely that they would bring the habit back with them before long. But, however this comes about, it will require texts to work with.

Journals and cultured societies dealing with a range of Asian philosophies have generated a wealth of material in the West over the past fifty years, which has led to a revision of contents in recent encyclopedias of philosophy, and to an impressive array of doctoral dissertations and monographs on particular scholars. Still, the results are fragmented. In the case of Japan, there is still no comprehensive sourcebook of material from Kūkai to Nishida available in any Western language.⁴ It is a project many of us have talked about for the past fifteen years, but has yet to surface.

A second problematic area that bedevils the introduction of Asian thinkers into the philosophical world forum is the absence of an Asian philosophical tradition to compare with the West. The very idea of comparison is a difficult proposition on almost every count. To begin with, its underlying assumptions seem to be at odds with one another. On the one hand, the question could only arise from within a context that has such a

⁴ The only works of any length I know of by Western scholars dealing with this wide picture are: Gregor Paul, *Philosophie in Japan: Von den Anfängen bis zur Heian-Zeit* (Munich: Judicium, 1993), which only goes up to the Heian era and works from a definition of philosophy that would exclude the Kyoto school philosophers; Peter Pörtner and Jens Heise, *Die Philosophie Japans: von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1995), which is extremely limited in its treatment of thought since the nineteenth century; and Jesús Gonzáles Valles, *Historia de la Filosofía Japonesa* (Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 2000), which treats pre-nineteenth-century thought in too cursory a manner. The recent book by H. Gene Blocker and Christopher I. Starling, *Japanese Philosophy* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001), offers a good survey and statement of the problem but is too short to serve the purposes of a working text.

tradition, rather well defined, long studied, and widely accepted both academically and spiritually. This is the standpoint that sets out looking for similarities, overlaps, and differences. Whatever else it finds is likely to reconfirm the validity of the standpoint from which it set out, even if sorting out the findings is enough of a job without worrying about whether the original question might have been biased from the start.

That is one side of the picture. On the other hand, if this sort of comparative tradition is *not* sought, everyone ends up a great deal poorer. What Western intellectual history describes as “philosophical” gives a kind of magnet effect to dip into the vast spiritual resources of the East and draw out whole clusters of phenomena that are not often seen as having anything to do with one another. Not only does it offer a challenging counterposition to the philosophical tradition of the West, it suggests new affinities and different ways of understanding the East itself.

These two implications would appear to cancel each other out. If one focuses on covert “Orientalism,” one foregoes the possibility of stimulating a new self-understanding in Eastern traditions. Directing the focus on the search for philosophical ingredients in the East, one easily lose sight of the inventiveness and exportation of categories going on.

It would seem simple enough just to propose a less parochial definition of philosophy, one open to variations wider than those known in the West. Unfortunately, the impasse remains, because more is involved than merely overcoming the disparity between the one who controls the questions and the one being questioned. In an important sense, there is nothing like a philosophical tradition in the East for the simple reason that in matters of spiritual tradition in general there is no “East” in the same sense that we can speak of a “West” – at least not yet. The difficulty does not lie in the traditions that might constitute a cross-cultural “Eastern philosophy” that are too many and too varied to permit a general classification. It is rather that these differences are not viewed within a tradition of shared texts. Geographically, and even more politically and economically, the East can be roughly identified. But the spiritual heritage of particular regions remains locked behind the heavy iron bars of language.

In the West, variety is the key; and culture, geography, and language play an important role. The difference is that major texts have been translated into languages that make them available to the general public. For the scholar, a reading knowledge of classical languages and a couple of major European languages leaves one equipped to survey the entire field comfortably. Or perhaps better put, it makes possible the idea of

a field. This situation does not exist in Japan and its neighboring countries in the East. Over fifty years ago, the British historian, E. W. F. Tomlin, complained that only one ten-thousandth of the relevant literature in the East has been translated into Western languages.⁵ The situation in the East, though better, is still appalling. The lack of a common fund of translated texts available to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean scholars is aggravated by the fact that the number of scholars who can move freely in these three languages is no more than a small coterie. Broaden the scope to Mongolia, Central and Southeast Asia, and the distance from a true “philosophical tradition” grows greater still. What we have, instead, are particular traditions of thought – in the Far East, one thinks of the examples of Kamakura Buddhism, Shilla Buddhism, or Neo-Confucianism – that grow from common origins but end up fragmented by linguistic differences. Japanese scholars with knowledge of Chinese can recapture a part of wider history; so can Korean scholars studying the origins of Korean contributions to the field. But a living “tradition” that embraces all three is nonexistent.

As seen from the perspective of the West, without the development of these two projects, general surveys of philosophies, in particular Asian languages in Western languages and a common corpus of texts shared by philosophers in the East, the pursuit of comparative studies is likely to remain piecemeal and beset with Western definitions of what constitutes philosophical discourse.

The Kyoto School of Mysticism

These problems aside, there is still a question of stimulating points of contact between Japanese philosophy and the Western philosophical tradition. Assuming that the notion of philosophy has to be broadened not only geographically but also ideologically, there is no reason to restrict contact with mainstream philosophy itself. Indeed, even with the contributions that Japanese philosophy has to make to Western philosophical questions, there is no reason to restrict their resources to the writings of established philosophers. Rather than seek directly to house Western philosophy in those “fantastic architectures of Oriental thought,” which Danto found uncomfortable quarters, it is possible to enter

⁵ E. W. F. Tomlin, *The Oriental Philosophers: An Introduction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 15; originally published in 1950.

philosophy from its own fringes – in particular from the esoteric traditions of the West which have emerged from underground to play an important role in contemporary modes of thought.

Far from mere compliance with the fads of “New Age” thinking, what I have in mind is very much in line with what the Kyoto school philosophers were doing. The criticism that these thinkers have blurred the lines between religion and philosophy that have taken so many centuries to draw – and hence to liberate philosophy from being a mere *ancilla theologiae* – is likely to be taken seriously only in those circles least disposed (because of theological intolerance) to accept the contribution of Japanese philosophical thought to begin with. Still, at the same time, it is important to keep the philosophical tradition distinct from apologetic “theologies” affiliated with particular belief systems or sacred texts of whichever historical religion.

This is not the place to argue for the affinities between the esoteric traditions of the West from Gnosticism to alchemy with the history of Japanese philosophical thought. Suffice it to say that there is at least one element of that tradition that has already served as a meeting point and that needs to be explored further, namely, mysticism. It comes as no surprise to find the great Italian scholar of mysticism, Ellemire Zolla, declaring that the philosophy of the Kyoto school is “the most important philosophy of the twentieth century.”⁶ The fact is, the interest in Western mystics by Japanese thinkers has opened the theorists in the West to the contribution that Eastern philosophy has to make to their own thinking.

The question is vast, but perhaps central is according the primacy in philosophical thought to experience – the starting point for Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani – that provides the immediate point of contact. Happily, this contradicts a longstanding way of contrasting Japanese and Western thought that continues to obstruct the idea of a common philosophical forum. I allude to one example.

For many years, D. T. Suzuki was fond of likening Zen to Western mysticism in his attempt to explain it to his audiences in the English-speaking world. Heinrich Dumoulin repeated the comparison in his 1959 book, *Zen: Geschichte und Gestalt*. When the 1965 English translation

⁶ This comment is cited on the cover of the Spanish translation of Nishitani’s *La religion y la nada* (Madrid: Siruela, 1999).

reached D. T. Suzuki, the year before he died, he wrote a review in English where he states:

I cannot go further without remarking on the major contention of this book, which is that Zen is a form of mysticism. Unfortunately, some years ago, I too used the term in connection with Zen. I have long since regretted it, as I find it now highly misleading in elucidating Zen thought. Let it suffice to say here that Zen has nothing “mystical” about it or in it. It is most plain, clear as the daylight, all out in the open with nothing hidden, dark, obscure, secret, or mystifying in it.⁷

To anyone familiar with the major texts of the Western mystical tradition, the attempt to disassociate it from Zen on the grounds of its obscurity sounds wildly off the mark. If anything, the literature of Zen reads darker and more mystifying. But there is more to Suzuki’s words than meets the eye.

Absent of the first-hand experience of sitting in meditation, much in Zen appears alternatively esoteric and ridiculous. The same holds true for those who read the texts of Western mysticism without any feel for the experiential basis. This is why masters of both traditions have insisted, as Master Suzuki himself does, that bewilderment is not the fault of the tradition but of those who look at it from the wrong standpoint. What Suzuki was offering to his Western readers was not an arcane Oriental wisdom, but a straightforward remedy for what he saw as fundamental “rationalism” and addiction to a two-valued logic of Western intellectual history. The mystical tradition, as he understood it, did no more than replace rationalism with mysticism – hence the need to disassociate Zen from it.

As the understanding of Western mysticism increased in Japan, Suzuki’s strictures were not only forgotten but turned on their head as Western mysticism came to be seen as a way to help clarify the philosophical foundations of Zen. Still, I think Suzuki has put his finger on a question of importance to many Western students of Japanese philosophy.

⁷ D. T. Suzuki, *The Eastern Buddhist* 1/1 (1965), p. 124. In the same year, as we know from his later writing, Suzuki was reading Eckhart’s *Sermons*.

Conventional wisdom in Japan, both popular and scholarly, subscribes to Suzuki's criticisms of Western rationalism as somehow unsuited to the national temperament of the Japanese. While there is virtually no major movement or thinker in the intellectual history of Europe and the Americas that does not have its coterie of specialists, the study is carried on with the cold eye of the objective scholar, and applications to the realities of everyday Japan are filtered through more or less explicit assumptions of inalienable cultural differences. In this way, benefits or "rational" thoughts are given free rein to penetrate those aspects of modern life that depend on it but remain a forbidden entry to the unfolding of the Japanese soul from ancient times to the present. Matters of science and reason that are held to transcend cultural differences are pursued with the same fervor and devotion to objectivity as anywhere in the world. Matters of the heart, language, and religious experience are restricted to the collective, though widely varied, pursuit of a self-understanding that will – indeed *must* – forever elude the understanding of the West. The fact that this assumption fits the archetype in the form of rationalism found in any number of styles in modern societies, known as ethnocentrism, is itself the subject of objective study in Japan, but self-understanding is deliberately kept immune to influence from the results of such comparisons. Indeed, this self-immunization is seen as an unavoidable consequence that will never make sense to the prying eyes of the outside observer.

The Western scholar of Japanese philosophy, though seeking to make philosophy truly universal, often feels shackled by this subtle opposition. This is why things like the dialogue of Kyoto school philosophy and the mystical tradition of the West, which directly challenges the modes of language and thought that uphold this conventional wisdom, are so welcome. The dominant metaphor for criticizing rationalism as unsuited to understanding the depths of Eastern spirituality is really very simple. Spirituality is like a fixed amount of water to be divided between the glass of "reason" and the teacup of "feeling." The West puts the greater part of the water into the former, the East into the latter. As reason increases, feeling decreases, and vice versa (some, and Suzuki was among them, would replace feeling with "experience," but the effect is the same). When one is doing scientific research or writing about Western history, one empties the teacup into the glass; when thinking about the Japanese soul, one empties the glass back into the teacup. Every attempt to seek a "balanced" approach in self-understanding has to reckon the loss of what defines each, hence, ending up with an artificial and meaningless portrait.

The Kyoto school philosophers, like many students of the Western mystical tradition, raise a voice in protest against this way of thinking. Both show a dualism of reason and experience to be a caricature as much as of the Eastern mind as of the Western. They show it not in any secret encoding hidden within the texts but very much on the surface. They see the human capacity for reflection like a small island set in a vast sea in the mystery of existence. To make the island larger does not reduce the size of the sea. It increases the size of the shoreline, hence, its contact with mystery.

The clue to keeping this viewpoint foremost, as we learn from mystical literature, is not to challenge its lack, but rather to insist on the primacy of experience. Primacy does not have to mean temporally first, or even hierarchically first, as Nishida and Suzuki tended to think. There is no need to see the primacy as one of comparing value, as in the claim that “experience is primary to reason.” I would rather understand the term to mean “absolutely and immediately relative.” That is to say, it always comes into the picture, it is always part of the equation, and it is unavoidably present. This is not to say that it is itself an absolute, or that it somehow transcends or eclipses reason, memory, and moral judgment. It merely states that whereas most things are related indirectly to most others, in mysticism, as in the Japanese philosophy of the Kyoto thinkers, experience is *always directly related* to any discussion. Conversely put, to abstract from concrete experience is as serious an offense as a logical contradiction is in syllogistic thinking. I believe it is this affinity that has drawn scholars of mysticism to an interest in the Kyoto school, and Kyoto school philosophers to mysticism. If this be “fantastic architecture,” then it is an area of philosophy’s own background – or underground – that it has not figured out how to incorporate into the philosophical forum. Here again, it is the universality of philosophy that is the greater victim, not that which has been excluded. The word “philosophy” may be, as Heidegger says, inscribed on the birth certificate of Western history. But unless its many other names are recognized on the birth certificate of other civilizations, there is little hope of a world philosophical forum rising up to stem the ongoing colonialization of thought that marches under the banner of “the global human community.”

BOOK REVIEWS

Christopher Benfry, *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics and the Opening of Old Japan*. New York: Random House, 2003. xviii + 334 pp. ISBN: 0-375-50327-7.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Metraux

Christopher Benfry, a professor at Mount Holyoke College, presents a fascinating account of the encounter between Japanese and American intellectuals throughout the Meiji period (1868-1912). Benfry introduces us to some of the leading cultural figures of that day including Herman Melville, Kakuzo Okakura, Isabella Gardner, John Manjiro, Henry Adams, John La Farge, Lafcadio Hearn, and Theodore Roosevelt by presenting carefully detailed portraits of their influence on both cultures.

Benfry argues that when the United States entered the “Gilded Age” after the Civil War, there was a “tremendous vogue” for all things Japanese, including an intense interest in art, culture, and religion. No region of the United States was more enamored with Japan than New England. This affinity is hardly surprising since New England had sent merchant and whaling ships into Asian waters – past Java and Japan, and on to Shanghai and Calcutta – since the late 18th century.

Boston’s intellectual elite from the mid-19th and early 20th century had an intense interest in Asian philosophy and religion. Emerson and Thoreau had looked to Hinduism and Buddhism for sustenance as early as the 1840s and in subsequent decades a growing number of the city’s thinkers and writers, “deeply disaffected by the vulgarity and superficiality of American culture” in the decades following the Civil War, turned to Buddhism and voyages to Asia to find what some of them considered to be superior civilizations or traditions.

Many of these aristocratic New Englanders, according to Benfry,

Discerned in the traditions of Old Japan, an alternative social order of hereditary aristocracy, austere religion, and aesthetic cultivation. In the self-sacrifice of the samurai, they detected the stern ethos of their own Puritan forebears. (Were they not themselves, amid the corrupt governance of the Gilded Age, leaderless *ronin* in search of a cause worth fighting for?) In the martial arts of judo and archery,

they discovered something like that soldiery virtue lost in an age of soft prosperity – the “Gilded Age” of American millionaires. And in Zen austerity and reserve, they found confirmation of their own recoil from Victorian excess and ostentation. In old Japan, in short, they thought they glimpsed a Golden Age, a world they were eager to visit before it disappeared (p. xiv).

The irony, of course, is just as the Bostonians were falling in love with Old Japan, Japan was reinventing itself as a modern state. In a quarter of a century Japan evolved from a feudal backwater to an international power. Yet while Japan was modernizing itself, Henry Adams and artist John La Farge traveled across the country collecting art, studying Japanese and Asian religious themes, and visited an endless array of temples. Lafcadio Hearn studied traditional Japanese folklore and Buddhism and introduced both of these to the West in his exceptionally popular books. Edward Sylvester Morse became the world’s leading expert on Japanese marine life and architecture, his publications on the topic strongly influenced later architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. Astronomer Percival Lowell wrote books on Japanese culture and religion while spending ten years in the East.

Isabella Gardner and Ernest Fenollosa came to Japan as collectors and students of Japanese art and returned with large collections that today grace the Gardner Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Then we are introduced to Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow, who lived in Japan for many years studying the country’s art, religion, and martial arts. He later returned to Boston to run the Japanese art collection at the Museum of Fine Arts and introduced his close friend, Theodore Roosevelt, to *jujitsu*.

The President became an ardent practitioner of the sport and greatly admired many aspects of Japanese culture. We also get an in-depth view of *The Book of Tea* by Kakuzo Okakura, which remains an excellent seller. We follow Okakura as he traveled with Fenollosa across Japan collecting religious and other art objects, and observe how he later played a critical role in building the Buddha room in the Gardner Museum and also building the outstanding Buddhist collection in the Museum of Fine Arts just across the street.

Other scholars have written articles and monographs about the experiences of some of these individuals in Japan a century or more ago. What makes this book so rewarding is how Professor Benfey integrates these people as a group and shows how their activities and encounters

influenced each other. Fenollosa, Gardner, Okakura, La Farge, and Adams knew each other, but it is only here that we can see how their work on Japan was affected by their interactions. Even more fascinating is our introduction to lesser-known figures such as Mabel Loomis Todd, the first woman to climb Mt. Fuji and one of the first Western figures to express an interest in Ainu culture and religion, and Fenollosa's young beautiful wife Mary, who strongly influenced Hearn with her interpretations of Japanese Buddhism.

Professor Benfey's meticulously researched and elegantly written study provides a very clear depiction of two nations that became fascinated with each other as they both came of age in the midst of the imperialist era. This sense of fascination, though marked by periods of great anger and violence, continues today. The student of Japanese history and religion, however, will have a much clearer view of how this sense of wonder grew by reading *The Great Wave*.

Gail Dubrow with Donna Graves, *Sento at Sixth and Main: Preserving Landmarks of Japanese American Heritage*. Seattle: The Seattle Arts Commission, 2002. 220 pp. ISBN: 0-295-98245-4.

Reviewed by Masaki Mori

With regard to historical issues that concern Japanese Americans, the experience of relocation and internment during World War II invariably looms, followed by either the Issei adjustment to hard life in a new land or by the social, generational conflict in which the Nisei found themselves. Writings on groups of Japanese ancestry, fictional or non-fictional, tend to address all of these three issues in an interrelated way with varying emphasis. It is, however, not easy to find a research project that provides a vivid yet balanced perspective that reveals ordinary aspects of these people's lives. This book of ten chapters, of which Dubrow wrote eight and Graves contributed the remaining two, offers such a perspective with an abundance of period photos accompanied by apt explanations.

Supported and published by the Seattle Arts Commission, *Sento at Sixth and Main*, results from a sense of urgency about the rapidly disappearing architectural traces of Japanese American heritage. The documentation covers many aspects of daily life of the first two generations, starting with hard laborers of the early Issei immigrants, who formed thriving communities, and due to forced evacuation, saw their

demise, concluding with the pastime of bowling generally preferred by the Nisei after World War II. The ultimate goal is to have each site's social and cultural significance in the nation's migration history recognized publicly and registered officially as such on local, state, and federal levels. In some cases, county or state authorities have already designated the sites as historical landmarks, thereby providing them with needed protection, and the authors advocate acknowledgement at a higher governmental level. Many other buildings, however, have been neglected to the ravage of time, either simply forgotten, waiting to be unearthed archeologically, or subjected to intentional demolition such as arson and urban restructuring. In these cases, a call for deserved recognition and preservation is obviously more pressing. Covering a century of footsteps by the Japanese Americans on the West Coast, the ten chapters are arranged in chronological order with each chapter devoted to a select focal point in time and space.

The first chapter delineates the Japanese camp at Selleck in the state of Washington, which was one of the locations of a thriving lumber industry in the Northwest, secluded from regular human habitation, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Parallel to railway construction in those days, heavy labor coupled with coarse living conditions in the mill was rarely chosen by anybody but hardworking Japanese migrant workers. Although unacknowledged, they made essential contributions to the rapid development of the coastal states that needed a large, constant supply of building material.

The next two chapters document the lives of the workers, as well as newer immigrants, after leaving hard labor in the wilderness during the century's early decades. Chapter 2 illustrates agricultural production in which most Japanese migrant workers were originally engaged, for example, the Neely Mansion in Auburn, Washington. Although the ethnicity of its residents changed a few times, the farmhouse is now represented as the first Caucasian settlement, not reflecting its multicultural past. Chapter 3 shows Natsuhara's store in the same town, which supplied sought-after groceries and other merchandise to an increasing number of Japanese households scattered around the state. Destroyed by arson shortly after the owner's death in 1999, the store demonstrates the need to protect surviving Japanese American landmarks.

The middle three chapters follow the next immigration trend to urban life in Seattle, when communities in cities and towns were prospering prior to World War II. At the same time, the focus of interest shifts from the hardships that the Issei encountered to a gap of expectations between

them and their American-born children, on whose collective memory this book heavily depended to reconstruct the past. Chapter 4 deals with the Nippon Kan Hall in which various cultural activities took place. Chapter 5 recounts the Hashidate-Yu, one of the public baths, and Chapter 6, the Kokugo Gakko infusing Japanese identity into Nisei children. When open hostility of many guises limited the immigrants' range of social engagement, these establishments served as important meeting points to enhance a sense of communal cohesiveness. This was the case with Japanese language schools, to be attended daily after regular schooling, against which many Nisei hold an enduring grudge. In contrast, the children familiarized themselves with the bathing culture of Japan with great joy. The interior of the public baths remain relatively intact to this day, and everyone shares in its fond memory. The Sixth and Main bathhouse thus stood "at the heart of Seattle's Nihonmachi [Japantown]," physically and metaphorically (p. 84). The book is titled after this location for its symbolic value, and the chapter's placement at the center of the book might not be a mere editorial coincidence.

The next three chapters deal with the vicissitude of Japanese communities in California during the critical war period, respectively centering on activities around the Enmanji Buddhist Temple in Sebastopol, the Kuwabara Hospital, a nearby midwifery in San Jose, and Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. Chapter 9 briefly mentions the evacuation in a few pages. Given the grave consequences of wartime experience for Japanese Americans, this light treatment is almost alarming at first. With the book's principal aim at preserving the rapidly disappearing landmarks of the group's heritage, however, it is understandable that the authors placed little weight on camp sites, many of which have already gained substantial recognition and have been well documented. And after all, living in camps meant unusual circumstances away from regular life, to say the least. The last chapter sheds light upon the Holiday Bowl that functioned as the sporting hub of Nisei social life in Los Angeles when the established community was on the decline as a result of internment and the general exodus of its residents to suburbia.

The text's objective narration is interspersed with emotionally-fraught recollection of individuals' past experiences. A few notable examples include: the death of a three-year-old girl due to the hazardous location that the Natsuhara family had to accept in their limited choice of residence; the taste of an ice cold soda pop that brought children to near ecstasy after a very hot bath in the *senjo*; and the familial, relaxing

atmosphere of the bowling alleys in the midst of racial exclusion by the sport's national league. Such succinctly-cited personal accounts render each site inseparable from people's lives, thereby making it more palpable to the reader.

The book project deserves a larger font size. The small print might incline a potential reader to forego reading through it after a quick look at a few pages. A larger format would also be desirable to view photographic details of the many images included. Undoubtedly, the final production does not reflect the authors' best intentions. Some people might also feel a slight uneasiness about topical inconsistency when, after the first six chapters, the focus abruptly shifts from Washington to California without any explicit rationale being given. This was inevitable, however, considering the fact that the Japanese American population, along with its architectural vestiges of the past century, is spread all over the West Coast. Overall, the book is effectively designed to achieve its main goal of bringing the plight of the group's architectural heritage to public attention for urgent action, and the project is praiseworthy for this reason alone. At the same time, the work will be instrumental for preserving the rapidly fading memory of the lives of immigrants and their families as they actually lived in the last century.

Anne Walthall, ed. *The Human Tradition in Modern Japan*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002. 241 pp. ISBN: 0-8420-2912-5.

Reviewed by Tinaz Pavri

This volume, edited by Anne Walthall, is a welcome addition to the ever-burgeoning arena of Japanese studies. A collection of biographical sketches, primarily by historians (and an anthropologist), the book seeks to fill what it correctly perceives to be a void in the field. While there is greater and greater interest evinced by students and the general public in Japan, many of the portraits of Japanese life that are available tend to be caricatures rather than true reflections of people and their life in modern Japan. In offering the reader an in-depth look into the lives of Japanese people from different spheres of life and eras, the authors want to present the "true" Japan on its own terms through the stories of ordinary Japanese people, rather than offering yet another academic analysis of the seemingly interminable question of what the essence of "being Japanese" really is.

The book is divided into five sections, starting with the Tokugawa era and moving on to the Meiji Restoration, the late 19th century period of modernization, and the pre-war and post-war twentieth century. According to Walthall, the encompassing time frame was chosen to underline and to help examine the importance of these centuries for an understanding of modern Japan. Each section comprises the “stories” from that era – of men and women from all walks of life, from diverse professions and of varied qualifications. For instance, the section set aside for the Tokugawa shogunate includes a chapter on Shinanomiya, daughter of Emperor Gomizunoo (1596-1680), and shows her little-known position in the court of the Emperor as an exalted female as well as the inherent contradictions of gender and class. Our expectations of rigid restrictions on her movement and a strictly-circumscribed lifestyle are pleasantly belied by the reality of her accounts of juggling multiple duties as a wife, mother, and daughter.

In the section that spans the early twentieth century, there is a startling chapter on the feminist writer Yoshiya Nobuko, who was one of the first notable Japanese women to live openly with her female partner. Letters penned between the two offered a glimpse into the difficulties faced by educated Japanese women of that time who rejected the norm of a “good wife, wise mother” role, and as in Nobuko’s case, boldly chose a most unusual path. This chapter in particular also affords the reader a context of discrimination and hostility based on sexual orientation that is easily generalized to other countries and regions. Japanese laws at that time that prevented women living together in the same house echo similar laws, which have effectively discriminated against same-sex couples in other countries.

Indeed, one of the volume’s greatest strengths is this element of surprise that confronts the reader and breaks down previously held conventional notions of life in modern Japan. Here are the stories that are not often told about people who are not featured in the panoply of existing writings on Japanese society. Even when highlighting the biography of a more “conventional” woman, one who lived willingly within the parameters of the dictate of a “good wife, wise mother” role, we are still struck by the strong personal ambition and aspirations of such an “ordinary” woman. While accepting many of the prevailing norms of late nineteenth century patriarchal Japanese society, Hatoyama Haruko still devoted her life to raising the educational level of Japanese women and was able to attain many successes.

The volume is careful to include a focus on the lives of both men

and women along with the ordinary and the unique. Walthall mentions that there was an attempt to balance the number of chapters on men and women without imposing artificial numerical quotas on how many could be included. This is successfully accomplished. Other chapters in the volume examine the life and work of Jahana Noburu, a scholar and minority activist from Okinawa; Matsuura Isami, the patriarch of a rural family; and the early-twentieth century Marxist economist, Takahashi Masao.

Overall, the *Human Tradition in Modern Japan* is an interesting and eye-opening collection of individual stories that highlights social, economic, cultural, and political transformations focusing on different time periods. For the reader, it affords a rich context with which to study and understand Japanese society, politics, and history. One drawback, however, is that the volume lacks any kind of theoretical framework, instead presenting each of the chapters as stand-alone stories. In the case of other chapters, this format ends up delivering a journalistic, or informative, account of the individual's life accomplishments or trials. A theoretical framework that informed and infused the different chapters in the book might have mitigated this problem to an extent.

This having been said, however, the book enriches the literature on modern Japan and will go a long way in providing readers with a richer and more intimate knowledge of the country and people that they are studying. Finally, focusing mainly on the ordinary (and extraordinary) lives of people, the reader acquires a much more realistic picture of the country than is gained from those books that would primarily examine the rich, famous, or politically powerful. This perhaps, is the volume's greatest strength: the simple and unadorned look at those people and events that ordinarily might be sidelined in our study of Japan, but which when highlighted, afford a deeper and more intimate understanding of the country.

James Arraj, *Christianity in the Crucible of East-West Dialogue: A Critical Look at Catholic Participation and God, Zen, and the Intuition of Being*. Chiloquin: Inner Growth Books, 2001. 345 pp. ISBN: 0-914073-03-6.

Reviewed by James W. Heisig

This volume contains two books: the first, a new work, and the second, a reprint with minor corrections of a work that was first printed in 1988. I will focus my remarks chiefly on the former.

To begin with, let it be said that this is the first book-length attempt I know of to question whether the content of Buddhist enlightenment and the Christian experience of divine grace can be compared or understood in terms of each other. The author's assumption from the outset – an assumption, let it be said, based on other works of his that I have not read – is that they cannot, and claims to the contrary are a betrayal of faith. If anything, his efforts to argue the case have persuaded me more than ever that the question needs to be taken more seriously by Christian theologians.

That said, I am not sure that his proposal of “a theological conversation in which theology looks at the vital issue of its relationship to faith, and the need of Catholic theology to actually scrutinize what can be said, and what would be in opposition to Christian faith” is the right place to begin (p. 101). Certainly, a self-reflective and rational tradition like Christian theology needs to draw borders and set limits. But at a time when the fact of religious pluralism has stepped beyond the confines of doctrinal differences to generate interest in pluralistic spiritualities *across* traditions and *within* individual believers, the context of the question cannot revolve around the single, unmovable center of truth-claims, as these books attempt to do.

The views that Arraj argues against are all set up as variations on the assumption that Christianity can be understood in terms of Zen. (The chapters on Hinduism and Islam are by and large incidental to his case, and the fact that the writings of Raimon Panikkar and Wilfred Cantwell Smith do not figure at all, suggest that this is new territory for the author). These views are skimmed from the surface of a broad spectrum of contemporary thought. Practitioners of Zen are painted into a corner of having to clarify their stand on doctrinal questions that are generally of secondary concern to them. Synopses of essays and books by theologians of religion are laid out in tandem to give the impression of a conspiracy to reinterpret the central tenets of Christian faith in Buddhist categories.

When Arraj writes of things that I am familiar with, his account strikes me as out of focus. When he summarizes works I have not read, I find myself doubting his presentation. The only exception is his account of Jacques Maritain's thought in the second book, which I found a refreshing and even a nostalgic reminder of a sadly neglected thinker. The one book Arraj does lock horns with at some length is Joseph O'Leary's *Questioning Back*. Unfortunately, he does not seem conversant with the mainstreams of twentieth-century philosophical and theological thought and ends up a poor match for the savvy O'Leary, who bears on the hellenization of dogma and

the Western metaphysical tradition. Later on, Arraj tips his hand in more telling terms:

Can we, for example, take various forms of post-modern philosophers stemming from Heidegger or Wittgenstein or Whitehead and create new theologies out of them? We can certainly make use of the insights they provide, but there will come a point when we need to make a judgment of whether these...are compatible with the faith (p. 160).

His idea that first there is faith, and this faith in turn “creates its own philosophical context,” begs the question that O’Leary wants to question (p. 161). I would add that by erasing Whitehead from the picture, he misses some of the most creative theological work done on Buddhist-Christian encounter and falls on his own sword with the later complaint that “for the most part Catholic participants in East-West dialogue find it difficult to imagine that Christian metaphysics really has anything to say” (p. 200).

Remarks on the relationship between the Christian mystical tradition and Zen are scattered throughout, but always made subservient to the same dichotomies: Zen is a “natural mysticism” and focuses on the Self; Christianity is supernatural and focuses on the relation with God. The wall between them can be torn down only by the classical Christian strategy of seeing the former as a preliminary step whose fulfillment lies in the experience of the personal God. Skipping lightly over Eckhart, whom he half-heartedly acknowledges as a possible exception, he calls Van Ruusbroec to his support. Curiously, he relies on the account of Paul Mommaers in *Mysticism Buddhist and Christian* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), while completely passing over the intervening chapters of Buddhist commentary by the co-author, Jan Van Bragt (whose name is misspelled).

The author admits in principle that there may be something for Christianity to learn from Buddhist thought and spirituality: “From a Christian perspective, there is no need to either deny the authenticity and great beauty of enlightenment, or to try to transform Christian contemplation into another experience of it” (p. 51). But whatever we have to learn, it will not be up to the rational standards of Christian thought, since Buddhism lacks a “philosophical position in the classical Western sense of the term” and is concerned only with liberation and enlightenment (p. 211). The caricature is unacceptable, and the reader wonders how Arraj could have read the material he summarizes and still sustain it. He repeats again

and again a certain sympathy towards critics of Christian churches and their failure to face questions from the wider world of religion and contemporary thought, as if to parry the criticism that he is no more than a dyed-in-the-wool conservative, disappointed that the philosophy he knows best has been passed over. But in the end his resistance to learn anything new and concrete from Buddhist thought gives a certain hollowness to his criticisms. Arraj's suggestion that Buddhist emptiness is the virtual equivalent to the no-thing of Aquinas and Maritain, or the *nada* of John of the Cross, and that the idea of no-self can be translated without significant remainder into a neo-scholastic notion of the "affective ego," are both indications of his conviction that there is nothing really important in Buddhism that is not already in Christian tradition.

The second book purports to present a Thomistic appreciation of the nature of Zen enlightenment (including the use of Maritain's thought to generate Christian "kōans"). I have been away from scholastic thought too long to comment on Arraj's interpretations, but I am uneasy about seeing Maritain's "intuition of being" and the shift from "essences" to "existence" at the core of Aquinas' thought. I would have thought that at least the counter-positions of thinkers like Bernard Lonergan, Frederick Copleston, David Tracy, and David Burrell deserved some mentioning. All of them are deeply familiar with scholastic and neo-scholastic thought and all have something quite different to say on the subject of dialogue with other religions and philosophies, but their voices are silent. At the same time, although I find it hard to agree with Arraj's position or methods of argument, I do not mean to exclude the possibility that other currents from medieval thought might shed light on the questions he is raising. Bonaventure's description of spiritual ascent and Ramon Llull's art come immediately to mind.

I repeat: the question Arraj asks is an important one. I am just not sure that his way of posing it and his animus towards alternative answers serves any other audience than those that have already decided on safeguarding the Christian faith against the onslaught of an interreligious world. Readers interested in a scholarly and more positive approach would do well to pick up *Purity of Heart and Contemplation: A Monastic Dialogue between Christian and Asian Traditions* (New York: Continuum, 2001), edited by Bruno Bernhart and Joseph Wong. In its pages Christian monastics speak of their assimilation of Eastern spirituality and methods of meditation into their own contemplative practice. It would be enlightening to hear how people like them would handle the question.

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