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A New Social Direction Triggered by the Great Tohoku Disaster

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This English-language paper is a revised and expanded version of the German-language article "Führt die Große Tohoku-Katastrophe zu sozialem Wandel?" in *Fukushima: Die Katastrophe ihre Folgen*, edited by György Széll (2013).[1]

The Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, accompanied by the secondary disasters of the great tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear accident—hereafter, collectively referred to as the Great Tohoku Disaster—wrought a death toll as high as 19,500 and displaced as many as 335,000 people. Many people living throughout an extensive area experienced the major quake and its aftershocks and had no choice but to live under rolling blackouts. The nuclear accident, which resulted in the worst possible scenario, exerted an extremely serious radioactive impact on a massive area that will last for decades. A Cabinet report has estimated that losses caused by the earthquake and tsunami will amount to up to 17 trillion yen.[2] Costs related to damage from the nuclear power accident continue to accrue but as of 2015, the total costs of compensation for the victims, radioactive decontamination, the on-site treatment of radiation-contaminated water, and so on, were estimated at approximately 12 trillion yen. In the aftermath, many survey reports[3] mentioned that terrible images of victims not only attracted wide sympathy and offers of assistance, both domestically and overseas, but also triggered many people to reconsider their daily actions and thinking.

Looking back further, past freak occurrences such as great disasters, wars, and epidemics in Japan have, on occasion, triggered the founding of mutual-aid organizations. The government is strongly buttressed by a bureaucratic system; hence, it has been difficult for civil autonomy to arise in Japanese society. In this sense, movements instigated by common people under various circumstances, independent of public support, have been unusual and exceptional. Neighborhood associations, which continue to function as community groups for residents, have their origin in activities for self-defense against cholera epidemics that occurred around 1880; subsequently, neighborhood associations rapidly became widespread after the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923.[4] The year the Great Kobe Earthquake occurred, 1995, is called "Year One of Volunteerism"[5] in Japan, as it was a year in which voluntary

[1] Széll, G., & Czada, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Fukushima: Die Katastrophe und ihre Folgen*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
[2] Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government. (2011). "*Chiiki no keizai*" ("Local Economies"). Tokyo: Cabinet Office.
[3] Dentsu Communication Institute. (2011), "*Shinsai ikkagetsugo no seikatsu ishiki*" ("Consciousness among Consumers One Month after the Disaster"). Tokyo: Dentsu.
[4] Nakamura, H. (1995). "*Senzenki no Chonaikai*" ("Neighborhood Associations in Prewar Japan"). In Hayashi (Ed.), Technology and Urban Society. Tokyo: United Nations University Press.
[5] Tatsuki, S. (2000) "The Kobe Earthquake and the Renaissance of Volunteerism in Japan." *Bulletin of the Faculty of Sociology*, Kwansei Gakuin University, 185–196.

disaster relief activities took place at an unprecedented scale. This experience pushed the government to enact a special new law to promote NPOs. [6,7]

Subsequent to the Great Kobe Earthquake, has it been possible during and since the Great Tohoku Disaster to observe the germination of something suggestive of civil society? Following a brief outline of the general social impact of the disaster, this paper discusses the possibility that the Great Tohoku Disaster has triggered a new social direction. Since the term "civil society" originally came into use, provoked by political movements during the Revolutions of 1989, the concept has been amply discussed and many conflicting definitions have been offered. In this paper, civil society is simply defined according to the definition presented in the Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior:

> Civil society is the totality of non-state institutions, organizations and civil associations functioning in the public domain. These are grassroots organizations which are relatively autonomous from the state and based on voluntary membership. [8]

1. Social Impact of the Great Tohoku Disaster

1.1 Macroscopic Observations Based on the Archives of the *Asahi Shimbun*

To illustrate the social impact of the Great Tohoku Disaster, a simple analysis of a newspaper archive was conducted. After searching and classifying articles in the archives of the *Asahi Shimbun*, [9] more than 30,000 articles related to the
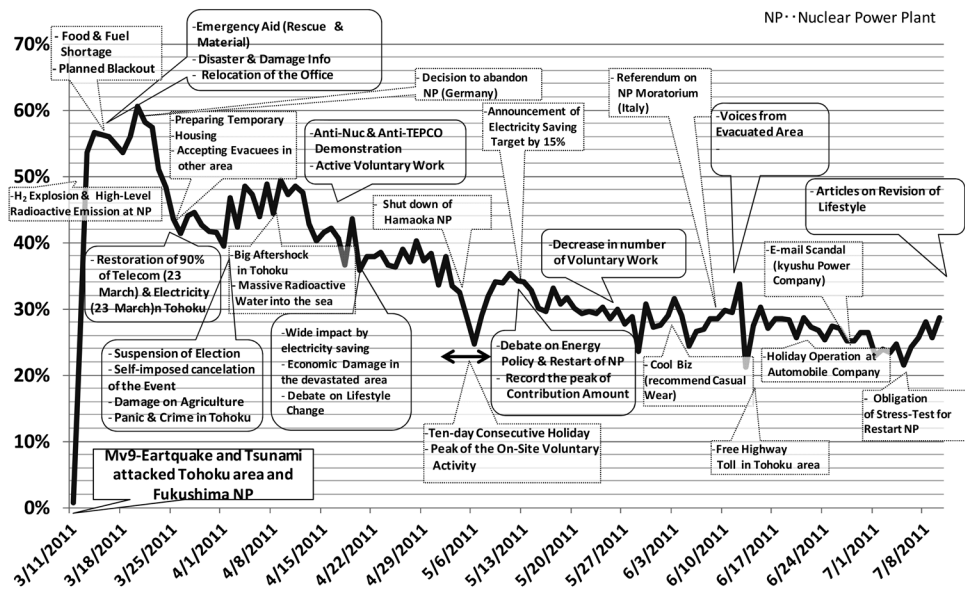

Figure 1. Intensity of the Social Impact of the Disaster (Based on the Archives of the *Asahi Shimbun*)

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[6] Iokibe, M. (1999) "Japan's Civil Society: An Historical Overview." In Yamamoto, T. (Ed.), *Governance and Civil Society in Japan* (pp. 51–96). Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange.
[7] In Japan, NPOs are not differentiated from NGOs in general. Please see 34 for further details.
[8] Dalton, R., & Klingemann, H. (Eds.). (2007). *Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[9] Asahi Shimbun. *Kikuzo* [News archive].

Great Tohoku Disaster published between March 11, 2011 and early July 2011 and their attribute data (hereafter referred to as "data") were obtained and examined.

Intensity of Social Concern

By considering the percentage of newspaper articles on a single day pertaining to the Great Tohoku Disaster out of all articles published on that day, measurable indices were yielded showing the intensity of the disaster's social impact. Figure 1 shows a time series illustrating intensity; the figure indicates that the social impact of the disaster peaked around 10 days after the disaster, when more detailed pictures of the earthquake and tsunami damage, as well as information on the seriousness of the nuclear power plant accident, which hitherto had not been predictable, went public.

Surprisingly, at the peak, 60% of the day's articles were disaster-related articles; concern subsequently started to diminish, especially after the 10-day consecutive holiday starting on April 29. However, it appears that within and beyond the duration examined in this study, there remained a strong concern in society regarding the accident.

Transition of Issue

Classifying articles pertaining to the Great Tohoku Disaster by topic and issue, the largest share—articles related to countermeasures undertaken by the national government and local governments—accounted for 30% (see Figure 2). In only the first two or three weeks after the disaster, articles related to rescue activities in devastated areas, the emergency provision of aid in the form of food and fuel, emergency measures concerning the nuclear accident, and the provision of assistance in the devastated areas by local self-help organizations accounted for the largest share. Subsequently, articles related to support for reconstruction
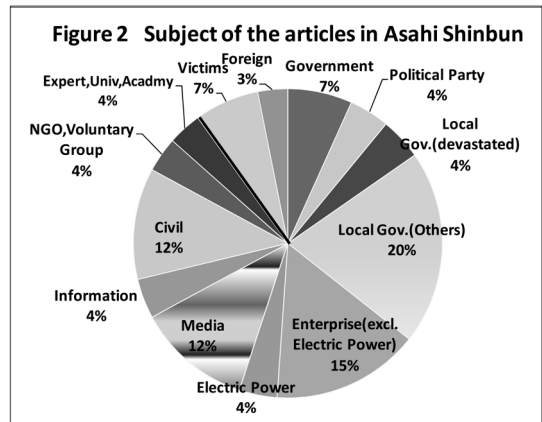

Figure 2. Subject of the articles Asahi Shimbun

increasingly displaced articles on emergency aid. The number of government-related articles peaked twice because, in May, two major debates on governmental policy took place: the first debate discussed whether nuclear power plants should be shut down and the second debate discussed a new law promoting renewable energy. Meanwhile, exchanges between the government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) regarding the safety policy of the Fukushima nuclear power plants remained consistently in focus.

Regarding market-related topics, articles were published on (1) damage to the production capacity of on-site factories and the broad impact of this damage on domestic and international markets through product chains; (2) financial damage to the agriculture industry caused by harmful rumors and misinformation (especially in May); (3) impacts on the macro-economy, employment, and specific industries such as tourism; (4) information about sports and cultural events and companies' opting to temporarily relocate their offices; (5) changes in business hours to cope with planned rolling blackouts; and so on. In particular, event-related information (classified as "Media" in Figure 2)

accounted for one-fourth of the market-related articles. Such articles disseminated information on the cancellation and postponement of events such as the season openings of the baseball and football leagues as well as on the suspension and postponement of a variety of concerts, entrance ceremonies, and so on. The number of market-related articles diminished in May, indicating that production in major industries had recovered relatively sharply.

The Great Tohoku Disaster also aroused broad concern in foreign countries. Some articles described the disaster's impact on nuclear policies in other countries, including on the decisions to abandon nuclear power in Germany and Switzerland and the nuclear moratorium in Italy. Other important articles concerned victims' calm attitudes and Japanese society's characteristic lack of major panic and confusion, which are further discussed in the next section. From all over the world, a large amount of money was donated. The largest amount of money came from Taiwan, followed by the United States.

Citizen's Activities and the Pro-social Movement

Articles on citizens' activities, including on the activities of NPOs expert and academic societies, and others, present an intensity curve that differs from those for other subjects. Moreover, compared with intensity curves for other subjects, this intensity curve diminished less over the period under study. [10] In fact, as shown in Figure 3, amounts of money contributed and numbers of on-site volunteers both peaked in early May, during the long national holiday, implying that people would be more able to participate in voluntary activities if they had more freedom from their workplaces.

Articles on citizens' activities accounted for only 4% of the total. [11] Some critics have explained this as resulting from the fact that the Japanese media remain distrustful of NPO activities and accordingly do not cover them often. However, according to NPO websites, many NPOs and volunteers played major roles in rescue activities in devastated areas at the early stage, at which point some local governments had entirely lost their capacity for administration. As can be seen in Figure 3, in total, almost 1,000,000 volunteers were active in the devastated areas.

Monetary contributions after the disaster were recorded as comprising the highest total in history. Fundraising activities took place throughout the country and across sectors. Contributions collected through the Red Cross Society, a massive fundraising organization, totaled more than 30 billion yen at the end of 2011. Though more than 10,000,000 households in eastern Japan suffered from rolling blackouts, blackout-related articles diminished and faded from view in the month after the disaster. Articles thereafter called people's attention to electricity cutbacks and the necessity of purchasing more efficient consumer appliances.

Beginning in April, as local governments in prefectures and municipalities with nuclear power plants began to focus on the safety of other operational nuclear power plants, protests became common not only in areas with nuclear power plants but also in areas where such electricity was consumed. In Tokyo, a citizens' group conducted a signature campaign demanding a referendum on the abolition of nuclear power. The group achieved a quorum in January 2012. Moreover, in several areas where plants had been sited or planned, protests against nuclear power became active as never before.

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[10]　The average number of the volunteers in the devastated areas in December was one-tenth of the number of volunteers at the peak.

[11]　It is said that Japanese journalists do not report on NPO activities positively.
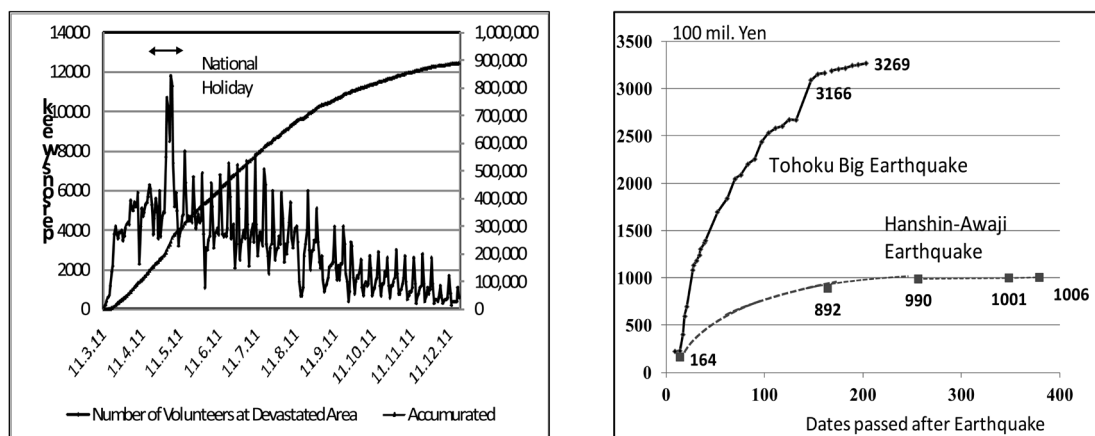
Council of Social Welfare and the Japanese Red Cross Society.

Source: Japan National

Figure 3. Contributions and Numbers of Volunteers in Devastated Areas (Limited to Three Prefectures)

These movements brought pressure to bear on prefectural governors, who had been tasked with deciding whether nuclear power plants would be restarted, and forced the electric power companies to suspend plant operations. Although the government additionally imposed a more severe regulation on plant safety called the "stress test" and set new earthquake resistance standards as conditions for restarting nuclear power plants, two nuclear plants were permitted to restart at the end of 2015 due to a change in political administrations.

1.2 Traditional Culture in People's Behavior and Events Suggestive of a Civil Society

In addition to the aforementioned, certain interesting social phenomena imply not only that traditional culture became a focus but also that something suggestive of civil society had germinated.

(1) Social Disorder

First, regarding social disorder, scores of criminal incidents such as fraud, theft, robbery, and several suicides were reported just after the disaster but serious incidents, like the tragic killing of many innocent Koreans triggered by a pernicious rumor during the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, did not occur. Among the disorder-related articles, the most frequent topics pertained to financial damage to the agricultural sector of the Tohoku area resulting from rumors and misinformation concerning radiation contamination. In this, two contrasting phenomena can be seen. One is the general tendency of the public to buy fewer products from areas with radiation contamination. At an early stage after the accident, there were a few cases in which products actually contained radiation in excess of safety standards; this, combined with harmful rumors, lengthened the amount of time people avoided buying products from the devastated areas. In contrast, another trend was to promote products from the devastated areas. Some civil funding was released to assist victims by promoting products from the devastated area and investment in the ventures of specific entrepreneurs who had suffered setbacks in the disaster.

Another major issue was the disposal of solid waste and rubble that had been contaminated with radiation. Tremendous amounts of waste and rubble

could not be disposed within the devastated areas; local governments in non-devastated areas were asked to take them in. Some local governors announced that they would accept, but have faced difficult situations due to very strong NIMBY protests.

(2) Manner and Behavior of the Victims

Second, regarding the victims' manner and behavior, not a few foreign media representatives praised, with surprise and favor, the calm and patient manner of the victims. Most were of the opinion that this derived from the particularly strong sense of community in the Tohoku region and the Japanese consciousness of "harmony first."[12] Some pointed out that, because earthquakes had frequently occurred in the past, people living in the devastated areas were well prepared for the earthquake. A few newspapers cited the mindset

and religion of the Japanese, insisting that Japanese have a different way of thinking about nature—namely, that for the Japanese, even earthquakes are part of the oneness of nature. One newspaper insisted that this manner originated in Shintoism, Japan's traditional religion. One extremist editor of a Japanese right-wing newspaper argued that this manner could be understood in the context of trust in the government and higher authority, specifically, the Emperor.[13] As is usual when the homogeneity of the Japanese society is discussed, somebody brought up the topic of the existence of the Emperor with favor. If the editor's opinion is true, all the volunteers' hard work for the victims in the devastated areas was of no consequence.

(3) Self-Restraint

Third, people who were not affected by the
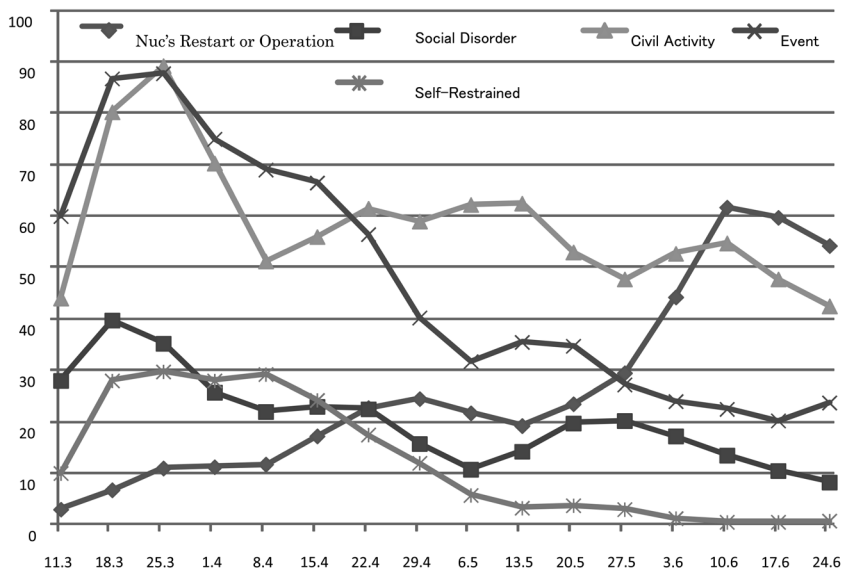

Figure 4. Time Series Changes in Policy and Social Issues

[12] Such phenomena were also observed during the Great Kobe Earthquake: community members could not easily run away from their communities.
[13] Ohno, T. (2011, July 2), "*Naze bodoha okoranainoka?*" ("Why didn't riots occur?"). *Sankei Shimbun*. Retrieved from: http://sankei.jp.msn.com/life/news/110702/trd11070207370004-n2.htm.

disaster engaged in self-restraint (*jishuku* in Japanese). *Jishuku* refers to refraining from behavior that looks splendid or flamboyant; people engaged in *jishuku*, for example, after the death of the previous emperor. Fireworks festivals and cherry-blossom viewing parties were canceled; moreover, karaoke halls had no business at all.[14] As Figure 4 shows, the intensity curve for event cancellation and suspension is consistent with trends in the keyword *jishuku*. In the *New York Times*, it was written that "it is as if much of a nation's people have simultaneously hunkered down, all with barely a rule being passed or a penalty being assessed."[15] Furthermore, it ventured that excessive self-restraint was "likely to have a corrosive effect on Japan's sagging economy."

(4) Change within Civil Movements

Having learned lessons from the Great Kobe Awaji Earthquake, some NPOs supported the activities of other NPOs, as well as the activities of many individual volunteers. A survey report on civic groups active in nuclear-related issues stressed that "the coexistence of different groups and organizations has linked the broad range of nuclear-related issues."[16] The report concluded that "these new linkages provide a more diverse background for activities, enabling the movement to continue to sustain itself." In addition to NPOs initiating their own activities, collaborative efforts between NPOs, private companies, and international NGOs were observed. For example, "civil funds" were created that called for investment in specific entrepreneurs who had lost all of their capital in the disaster but had the will to restart their businesses. Similar but unique funds were reported, such as a fund started by restaurants and shops with the purpose of promoting the products of companies that had suffered losses. SNS activities also initiated a new type of movement. Weekly anti-nuclear power demonstrations in front of the Diet, as a typical example, have continued to gather a considerable number of the participants even four years after they were initiated.

Although certain civil activities appear to suggest that Japanese society has attained the status of a civil society, at the same time, some behaviors continue to reflect traditional Japanese culture, a culture that is far different in form from what is required by civil society.

2 Brief History of Civil Society as Social Thought and Practice in Japan

Before presenting a consideration of the social phenomena overviewed in the previous chapter, this section explores the historical background of civil society to establish an understanding for the discussion that follows.

2.1 Civil Society in Social Thought in the Prewar Period

In Japan, the term *shimin* (civil) *shakai* (society) is not new; it has been familiar, especially among political scientists and historians, since it appeared for the first time in the 1920s. Uemura[17] (2010) discusses the peculiar changes in this concept in Japan from the perspective of historical theory.

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[14] Belson, K., & Onishi, N. (2011, March 27). "In Deference to Crisis, a New Obsession Sweeps Japan: Self-Restraint." *New York Times*. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/28/world/asia/28tokyo.html.

[15] Belson, K., & Onishi, N. (2011, March 27). ibid.

[16] Machimura, T., et al. (2015). "Diversified Background of the 'Anti-nuclear Movement' after the Fukushima Accident: Results of a Nationwide Survey of Civic Groups in Japan." Tokyo: Hitotsubashi University. Retrieved from: http://hdl.handle.net/10086/27134.

[17] Uemura K. (2010). *Shiminshakai toha nanika? (What is Civil Society?)*. Tokyo: Heibonsha.

According to Uemura, early on, the term *shimin shakai* was seen as equivalent to the German term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* in translations of early Hegel and Marx due to a peculiar circumstance resulting from the military's censorship of publishing. During the 1930s, Marxian intellectuals argued for a Japanese way to socialism by characterizing Japanese capitalism. Intellectual debates took place between two Marxian schools; one school characterized Japanese society as a prematurely capitalist society accompanied by semi-feudal remnants (i.e., Japanese society as a "family" headed by the Emperor) that had not passed the stage of "civil society" (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) as "Western" society had. This school insisted on the necessity of democratic revolution prior to socialist revolution. The concept of a Japanese capitalism unaccompanied by civil society led to subsequent discourse on civil society in a different form after the war among (Marxist) social scientists, historians of social thought (who studied Adam Smith), and post-Marxists.

Between 1945 and the 1970s, "civil society" was one of the catchwords of the so-called "postwar enlightenment" in Japan. Regarding this discourse, Barshay (2004) states that "civil society was the product of the attempt by public intellectuals to look critically at the imperial system and its failure through the frame of Marxism."[18] Moreover, Carvel et al. (2000)[19] argued not only that civil society discourses in various "Western" countries have implied different conceptualizations of individualism and democratization but also that such conceptualizations have been very unevenly instituted in political practice.

2.2 Postwar History of Civil Practices
(1) Postwar Period Before the Mid-1970s

It is unclear how these discourses affected the civil movement and political practices. However, grassroots campaigns for democracy became synchronized with these discourses and peaked during the conflict over the Japan–US Security Treaty in 1960. This political movement was originally organized by the largest opposition party, the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP), for purely political purposes. The movement grew and gained momentum as a social movement advocating for democracy and other issues, such as against nuclear weapons. After its defeat in political battle, the SDP changed its policy, denying revisionism and becoming increasingly centralized, which resulted in the social movement becoming more dogmatic, causing its estrangement. A typical example that was tossed about between political parties was the split over the anti-nuclear movement.

A range of unaffiliated civil groups, from anti-pollution residents' groups to Beheiren (the Citizens' League for Peace in Vietnam), were products of this estrangement. Free from the control of political parties, the decade-long period that began in the mid-1960s was the most active era for civil movements in Japanese history, corresponding with the emergence of such new public movements worldwide. Shinohara (2004) mentions that the so-called new social movements in "Western" society took the stage in the same period as did the civil movements that emerged under the auspices of the "citizens' movement" (*shimin-undo*) and "residents' movement" (*jumin-undo*) in Japan. In this era, a variety of social and political movements gathered momentum from the social contradictions that had

[18] Barshay A. E. (2004). The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions. Berkeley: University of California Press.
[19] Carver T., et al. (2000), "'Civil Society' in Japanese Politics': Implications for Contemporary Political Research." *European Journal of Political Research*, 37, 541–555.

emerged as a result of rapid economic growth. One of the most crucial of these movements was the Mishima-Numazu anti-development movement, which broke out in opposition to a local government that was in collusion with the central government. At the end, the movement successfully changed the local government's attitude to opposition; arguably, this movement was the first case of a civil movement successfully agitating for a central authority to abort a development plan.

Among those who participated in the discourses mentioned above, some tried to back such movements from a theoretical perspective. The political scientist Keiichi Matsushita, who emphasized the importance of the emergence of the mass state as a system that could transform "classes" into "masses," insisted on the need for "local democracy" to inoculate grassroots democracy. In a decade-long period beginning in the mid-1960s, proponents of this view among the leftwing parties waged successful election campaigns in large urban cities and some reformist local governments of prefectures and core cities. Under these local governors and mayors, some policies that prioritized the civil polity activated civil participation.[20] Thus, local governments and local politics became the major arena in this era. Matsushita referred to this phenomenon as "policy change without regime change."

However, after a short 10 years, local politics that prioritized the civil polity came to face difficulties as a backlash in the governing party and bureaucratic system facilitated the emergence of political will within the establishment to relax social contradictions. Regarding environmental issues, the central government, supplanting local governments and civil

movements, established a new basic law regarding pollution and organized pollution prevention measures to cope with serious environmental problems. Moreover, critical environmental conditions pushed the government to implement stringent regulatory environmental policies, suppressing the opinions of conservatives and industry stakeholders who prioritized economic growth over environmental protection. Sure enough, the enactment of a series of stringent regulatory policies successfully yielded results in a short period of time; an OECD policy review report evaluated these policies as having been highly successful (1977).[21] At the end of the 1970s, despite having been extremely active over the preceding 10 years, anti-pollution movements rapidly diminished as the environment began to show sharp improvements.

(2) From the Mid-1970s to the Collapse of the Bubble Economy

Contravening previous concerns that they would cause a drop in Japan's international competitiveness, stringent environmental policies successfully induced the Japanese economy to transition to an emphasis on resource efficiency. The introduction of environmental abatement technologies facilitated a kind of dynamism that enhanced the business sectors and conserved energy and resources. With the help of skyrocketing oil prices in 1979, from the mid-1970s until 1992, the year the bubble economy collapsed, the international profile of the Japanese economy was continually raised. At the beginning of the 1990s, Japan became the world's richest country in terms of per capita GDP. Given these economic conditions, discourses on civil society were displaced by discourses on Japan's

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[20] For example, the "civil minimum" policy of the Tokyo Metropolitan Administration and the "meeting of 10,000 people" in Yokohama City.

[21] OECD. (1977). "*Nihon no keiken–Kankyo seisaku ha seiko shitaka?*" ("The Japanese Experience –Was Environmental Policy Successful?"). Tokyo: Japan Environment Association.

"super-modern" organizational pattern and ways of thinking, which were taken to have made possible the "miracle" of Japan's unprecedented economic growth.[9] The focus on Japan as having a form of immature capitalism or a non-corporate civil society based on individualism shifted to a focus on the non-"Western" socioeconomic mechanisms based on Japan's traditional collectivism that had putatively enabled the realization of the economic miracle.[22]

In contrast with "Western" societies, in which newly founded NGOs and consumer protest organizations laid the foundation for the emergence of civil society, in Japan, regulation-oriented policies ironically precluded opportunities to construct a new regime (Fujii, 2007).[23] The new civil movements that emerged in the late '60s were short-lived; this can be explained by the fact that civil movements in the era were denied a continual basis for existence and had no further goals. Moreover, in the legislative view and as historians and political scientists have unanimously pointed out, it should be noted that until the promulgation of the NPO Promotion Law in 1998, the establishment had dominated the public realm by legally banning (Civil Code, Article 34), for as long as 110 years, the founding of organizations with a public purpose or mission.[24,25,26]

Consequently, since the 1980s, regarding the germination of something suggestive of civil society, surprisingly few matters of particular note bear mentioning. At most, the matters worth mentioning would be civil activities during the Indochinese refugee crisis in 1979, citizens' activities related to international aid programs around 1980, and the participation of members of citizens' groups at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.[27]

(3) After the Bubble Economy

After a short period of prosperity, which ended in the early 1990s, Japan entered a long, financially troubled era that came about as the result of political turmoil within the governing party and collapse of the so-called "bubble economy." The worsening of economic conditions was accompanied by an expanding budget deficit, which rendered the central government unable to produce solutions to social problems. Criticism and a feeling of despair were connected to the "iron triangle," the top-down decision-making structure with mutually supportive relationships between the longstanding political party in power, business interest groups, and the Japanese bureaucratic system that had been the driving force in postwar economic prosperity. Furthermore, the US Government intensified pressure on the Japanese government to improve the bilateral trade imbalance and demanded structural adjustments to remake various protective institutions and stifling elements in the economic and democratic system. Worse still, a series of scandals relevant to bureaucratic corruption surfaced.

In this way, the Japanese government has, since the 1990s, been obliged to reform its

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[22] *Bunmei toshite no ie-shakai* ("*Ie*" Society as a Pattern of Civilization) by Murakami., Y., et al. (1979) is probably the most famous text. It concludes that in industrial modernization following World War II, a collectivist rather than individualist manner based on traditional household organization principles effectively predominated.

[23] Fujii, Y. (2007). "Historical Dynamic Interaction between Regulatory Policy and Pipe-end Technology Development in Japan." In Terao, T. and Otsuka, K. (Eds.), *Development of Environmental Policy in Japan and Asian Countries.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

[24] Schwartz, F. (2002), "Civil Society in Japan Reconsidered." *Japan Journal of Political Science*, 3(2), 195–215. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[25] Neary, I. (2003), "State and Civil Society in Japan." *Asian Affairs*, XXXIV, 1.

[26] Nagasaka, T. (2007a). "*Kokyo-Tetsugaku to Nihon-no Shimin-shakai (NPO) Sekutaa*" ("Public Philosophy and NPOs in Japan"). Kikan Kokusai Boueki to Toshi, 68, Summer.

[27] Nagasaka, ibid.

longstanding administrative, financial, and judicial system. These reforms have had the same orientation as US neo-liberalism, which has placed substantial importance not only on privatizing what is public but also on shifting responsibility from the public to people as individuals due to anticipated budget constraints. As is discussed in 3.1, this series of reforms facilitated the emergence of a "spectator democracy" in Japan, in which society relinquishes all claims to what comprises democracy. However, these transformations have meant not only that people have finally acquired civil rights that are standard throughout the world but that they have been further impelled to act with self-responsibility and self-determination without any preparation or education. These changes in political and social regime have been quietly taking place without any special announcements from the government; nearly all people appear to be ignorant that such changes have occurred.

In the midst of this ongoing reform, the Great Kobe Earthquake occurred. More than 1.3 million people participated in voluntary disaster relief activities, which dramatically raised public awareness of the importance of volunteerism. According to Iokibe, one influential government advisor asserted that "volunteerism is part of a humanistic global trend characterized by an economic and social rationalism that by no means excludes Japan" [6] and that this was a driving force in the enactment of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (1998).

After an extended, 20-year-long period of stagnation, governmental reforms and a growing concern with volunteerism unexpectedly awakened a civil movement in Japan (see 3.1 for further details). Notably, yet again, this civil movement originated from governmental policy changes when it should fundamentally have originated in people's autonomy.

(4)　Present State of Civil Society and NPOs

Looking back over the civil movement in Japan, the assertion that democracy in Japan, especially people's awareness of democracy, remains immature compared to other developed countries due to longstanding institutional and social peculiarities appears even now to be salient, despite the preamble to the Constitution, which loudly proclaims the sovereignty of the people, and the opportunities that civil movements had to take off. In my opinion, there remains a substantial gap between what the series of reforms resulted in and citizens' feeling of the reality of changes in political circumstances. At the very least, based on my experience, nearly all people appear to have no idea that their position has changed and no idea about what is expected of them as individuals. [28] Even now, almost all people believe that public issues remain matters for the government or local governments and that people's political obligations are limited to cooperating with governmental policies. In other words, civil participation is seen to refer to nothing but a kind of passive, administrative cooperation among citizens without autonomy. It can be said that top-down reforms opened a door to civil society, as per usual, but that public sphere remains not yet in the hands of citizens.

After the NPO Promotion Law came into force in 1998, the number of newly founded NPOs skyrocketed and saturation was reached in 2012; as of the end of 2015, approximately 50,000 NPOs had

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[28]　The public comment system was introduced in tandem with the enactment of the Administrative Procedures Law. However, even though 15 years have passed since it came into force, more than 80% of people have never heard of tis system.

been certified (see Figure 5). [29] The number of NPOs related to disaster relief roughly number 2,500. A survey report by the Cabinet Office [30] published three years after the Great Tohoku Disaster showed that the percentage of people who answered that they were "willing to participate in voluntary activities" was about 62%, but the percentage of those who had "actually participated in the past three years" was 27% at best. The largest proportion of respondents, 53%, gave "no spare time" as their reason for non-participation; 16% of respondents indicated that they had not participated because they "carry feelings of distrust toward organizations such as NPOs." This shows there remains a gap between awareness and action in participation in voluntary activities and implies that working hours obstruct engagement in voluntary work. Furthermore, as a reason for non-participation, 13% of respondents indicated that they had "no appropriate companion to participate with." This shows that Japanese continue to place importance on peer relationships (bonding) rather than on having a well-defined mission (bridging).

In 2007, Nagasaka (2007) [31] characterized contemporary NPO activities in Japan as follows.

① According to "Comparative Nonprofit Sector," published in 1996 by Johns Hopkins University, [32] "when considered in the context of the entire national economy, Japan's nonprofit sector is among the smallest of the developed countries, and attracts relatively low levels of private giving and volunteering." [33]

② The willingness to participate in NPO activities, as shown in survey data from the Cabinet Office from 1995, is also surprisingly low.

③ Japan's NPOs are small in scale and vulnerable in terms of management. [34] They have smaller memberships and are not as oriented toward attracting donations.

④ More than 30% of NPOs have no permanent staff.

⑤ In general, the activities of Japan's NPOs may be characterized not as "advocacy-oriented" but as "field-oriented."

⑥ Governmental subsidies and contracts given to NPOs are very small, especially in regard to Official Development Assistance.

⑦ Local governments have contracted out business to NPOs; however, their major purpose for doing so has been to save costs. Relationships between local governments and NPOs have not been based on equal partnerships.

Nagasaka concludes that NPO activities in Japan continue to develop and remain immature. Osugi (2007) [35] shed light on remnants of Japanese traditional culture in NPOs. She mentions that it may be observed that the Japanese are very keen on mutual aid but that, at the same time, mutual aid is implicated in the invisible social bonds that are key social capital in the construction of civil society. Osugi continues that there is a Japanese pattern of behavior that can manifest, toward non-

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[29] As of November 30, 2011.

[30] Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government. "*Shimin no shakai koken ni kansuru jittai chosa*" ("Survey on the Social Contributions of Citizens"). Retrieved from: https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/uploads/h26_shimin_chousa_point.pdf.

[31] Nagasaka, T. (2007b). "*Nihon no NPO sekuta no hatten to genjo*" ("The Japanese NPO Sector: Advancement and Status Quo"). *Kokusai Boueki to Toshi*, 67, Spring, 91–101.

[32] Johns Hopkins University, "*Comparative Nonprofit Sector.*" Retrieved from: http://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/comparative-nonprofit-sector.

[33] The data have not been renewed since 1996.

[34] According to Nagasaka, the largest NPO in Japan, Yacho no Kai, has 50,000 members at most and has existed for 50 years.

[35] Osugi, Y. (2007). "*Nihon ni okeru NPO no genkyo to mondaiten*" ("Present Condition and the Points at Issue of NPOs in Japan.") Paper prepared for a panel discussion of the Political Economy and Economic History Society, Autumn.

stakeholders, in an underlying exclusion; this phenomenon can be seen even in NPO activities. Hence, Japanese NPOs have yet to overcome the *mura-shakai* (village society)[36] way of thinking.

Certain reports have corroborated these results. In Johns Hopkins University's latest (2004) Global Civil Society Index, Japanese civil society is ranked 15th out of 18 developed countries.[37] Moreover, the World Values Survey (2004)[38] compares voluntary activities among people pertaining to churches and religion; sport and recreation; art, music, education; labor unions; political parties; the environment; professional associations; charities and humanitarian associations; consumer associations;

and other groups. Japanese respondents ranked lowest for almost all categories of voluntary activity. The outlook is the same for the political situation. Figure 6 compares democracy in selected countries according to the Democracy Index[39] of the Economist.

The index ranks Japanese democracy at nearly the bottom among the 32 countries with "full democracy" (see Table 1).[40] In particular, the scores for political participation and political culture are quite low, despite the higher score for civil liberties.

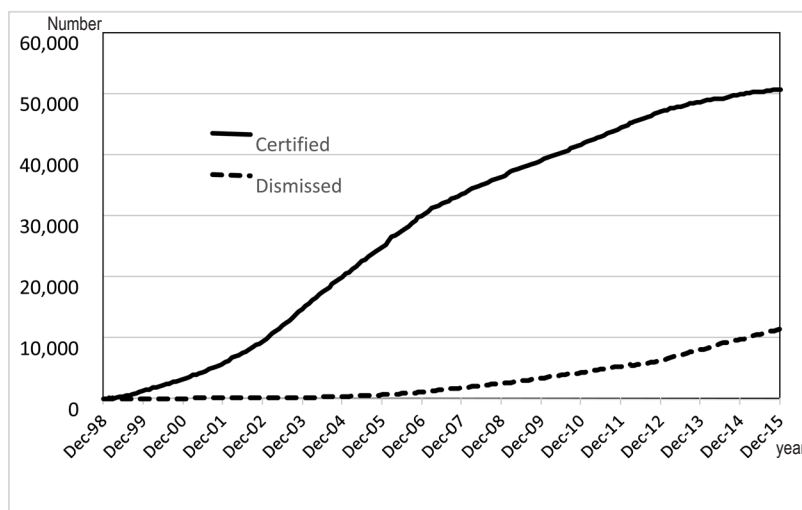Thus, the public sphere may be understood to

Figure 5. Number of NPOs Founded

36 *Mura-shakai* refers to Japanese collective behavior based on blood relations and territorial connections.
37 The Johns Hopkins Global Civil Society Index (2004) surveyed 34 countries. The data were selected by the author based on the list of "Advanced Economies" of the World Economic Outlook in 2011. Retrieved from: http://ccss.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/12/Civil-Society-Index_FINAL_11.15.2011.pdf.
38 World Values Survey. (2010).
39 According to Democracy Index 2011, the methodology was as follows: "The Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy, on a 0 to 10 scale, is based on the ratings for 60 indicators grouped in five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall index of democracy is the simple average of the five category indexes."
40 As the table indicates, countries that ranked higher in terms of pro-social index, namely Anglo-Saxon countries, did not necessarily rank at the top for political participation. By contrast, countries that ranked higher for political participation, namely Nordic countries, ranked lower in terms of pro-social index. As Giddens explains in "The Third Way" (1999), Nordic people are accustomed to the government providing them almost all of their public services; accordingly, they are suspicious of NPO activities but are enthusiastic about political participation.
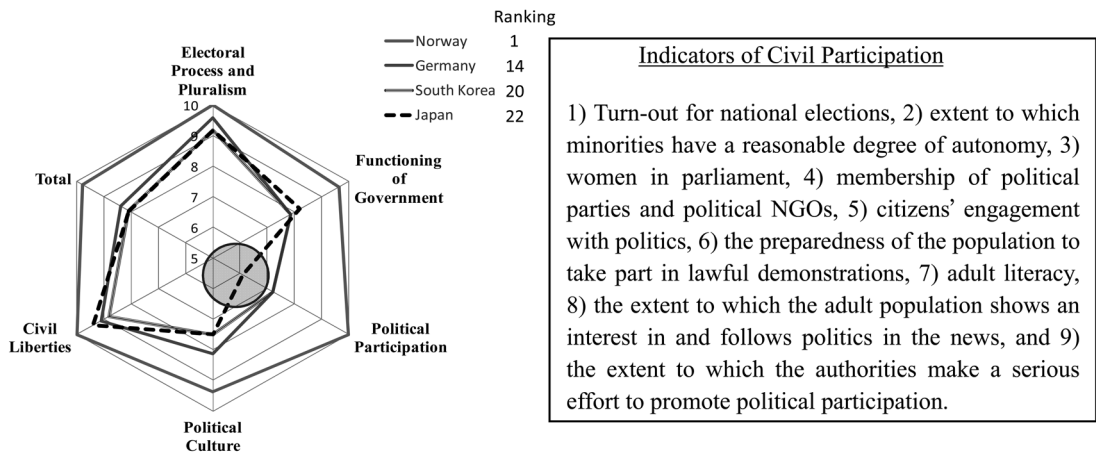
Figure 6. Democracy Index, 2000 (Economist)
Countries shown have been selected by the author.

Indicators of Civil Participation

1) Turn-out for national elections, 2) extent to which minorities have a reasonable degree of autonomy, 3) women in parliament, 4) membership of political parties and political NGOs, 5) citizens' engagement with politics, 6) the preparedness of the population to take part in lawful demonstrations, 7) adult literacy, 8) the extent to which the adult population shows an interest in and follows politics in the news, and 9) the extent to which the authorities make a serious effort to promote political participation.

Table 1. Country Rankings for Pro-Social and Democratic Participation

Country [1]	Pro-social Participation [2]	Political Participation [3]
United States	60.3	8.1
Ireland	59.7	8.1
Australia	58.6	7.8
New Zealand	57.1	8.9
United Kingdom	56.9	8.1
Netherlands	54.7	8.9
Denmark	46.1	8.9
Germany	43.6	8.1
Norway	42.3	10.0
Sweden	39.1	8.9
Belgium	35.6	7.5
South Korea	35.5	7.5
France	31.0	7.5
Spain	30.5	7.5
Japan	25.8	7.5
Greece	12.9	6.9

1 Country was selected based on per capita GDP.
2 Source: OECD, "Society at a Glance," 2011
3 Source: The *Economist*, "Democracy Index," 2011

have recently opened up for citizens in Japan. It may be concluded that civil society is at an early stage.

3 Institutional and Cultural Biases in Japanese Society

Despite the opening of this sphere, in Japanese society, there persist remnants and distortion resulting from institutional and cultural biases perpetuated by a governmental regime that sought to suppress civil voluntary activities. To discuss the future potential for civil society in Japan, greater insight into the institutional and cultural aspects of Japanese society is necessary.

3.1 Institutional Bias

In the context of civil society, the following institutional reforms appear to have been important. First, civil rights reforms were crucial. It is well known that Japan is a bureaucracy-centered society. Since the start of the Meiji period in 1868, the Japanese government has become continually centralized. As has already been described, this regime was maintained even in the postwar period by a decision of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Douglas MacArthur, "based on its view that Japan urgently needed to reconstruct its war-torn economy and that the economic bureaucracy was the only viable institution to carry out the task."[41] In general, the bureaucratic system tends to keep every social issue in its grasp or under its control by acting as if it is tasked with guardianship; accordingly, the system sometimes attaches little importance to citizens' capacity to solve social issues, a privilege of citizenship, despite the fact that the postwar Constitution comprehensively guarantees fundamental human rights in full.[42] The existence of a strong bureaucratic system has had the effect of clouding out civil power in the public sphere. Recent studies on the philosophy of the public have pointed out the peculiarities of Japanese society's conception of the "public." Nagasaka (2007)[43] states that bureaucrats have constructed a society consisting only of the governmental and private (family, people, and market) spheres, without a public sphere between the two. Based on this dualistic idea, the government has monopolized the public sphere and compelled the private sphere to hew to government-legislated rules governing the public. As the Civil Code prohibited the foundation of associations for public purposes for more than 100 years, this "denied legitimacy to public interest groups, forcing many to remain as informal groups, unable, for example, to run their own bank accounts."[44] Under the prewar *fukoku kyouhei* policy, by which, in order to cope with the "West," the establishment of a capitalist state was sought by encouraging the strengthening of military force, and economic and industrial policy in the postwar state was formulated with the goal of catching up with the "West," Japanese bureaucrats paid little attention to civil rights despite allowing for excessive private property rights that occasionally came into conflict with public matters.

Second, in the 1990s, a series of administrative and financial reforms to break the stagnation following the bursting of the bubble economy were

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[41] Hirata, K. (2002), *Civil Society in Japan: The Growing Role of NGOs in Tokyo's Aid and Development Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

[42] For example, consumer rights had not been codified until recent years, but the role of consumers had been specified. In Japan, the government was responsible for the settlement of conflicts between consumers and producers for a long time, depriving citizens of the opportunity and capacity to settle conflicts by themselves. In fact, it was not until quite recently (2009) that a comprehensive organization for consumer protection, the Consumer Affairs Agency, was founded.

[43] Nagasaka, ibid.

[44] Neary, I. (2003), ibid.

implemented as a result of pressure from foreign countries. These foreign countries requested that Japan harmonize its legislation with international and US standards. In addition to the enactment of the NPO Promotion Law (1998) and the amendment of the Civic Code (2006), a range of laws related to civil society were enacted or amended: the Administrative Procedures Law (1993), the Product Liability Law (1994), the National Environmental Impact Assessment Law (1997), the Information Disclosure Law (1999), and the Lay Judge System (2004). Among these laws, the Administrative Procedures Law was extremely important to limit the frequent use of non-transparent administrative guidance by bureaucrats and to ensure citizens' political participation. In the US, the legal system was transformed from being based on substantive law to being based on procedural law in 1946; this became a global trend, triggered by the adoption of procedural law by West Germany in 1978. These laws had been difficult to implement; as one typical example, it had been difficult to enact an environmental impact assessment law at the national level. Such a law was originally prepared in the early 1970s, yet it took as long as a quarter-century for the Administrative Procedures Law to be enacted as part of the Basic Law.

Third, regarding the political system, it cannot be overlooked that while the postwar political system is a modern parliamentary democracy in which popular sovereignty and a respect for basic human rights are guaranteed, the system is indirect in nature. Japan is not only an indirect democracy in the electoral sense, due to its parliamentary system and medium-size constituency system. It is also indirect as it lacks direct democracy on a national basis, such as in the form of referendums, initiatives, and recalls. This has had the effect of making people less politically aware. Furthermore, the autonomy of

local governments has typically been weak, as symbolically expressed in the catchphrase, "30% autonomy," that is used to describe local governments. In 1994, the medium-size constituency system was reformed into a single-seat system; moreover, political funding was transformed. The latter was implemented with the intention of eliminating so-called pork-barrel politics and contributed to weakening the close relationships between the governing party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and bureaucrats that had arisen in the process of allocating the central budget to local governments. In political reform, decentralization must take precedence: the more local governments gain power, the more citizens' political participation can be promoted. After relevant laws to promote decentralization came into force, en masse, in 1999, many local governments began to redefine their own local autonomy through new ordinances. These new ordinances commonly held "citizens' self-governance" to be a basic concept in local autonomy.

With the help of these legislative reforms, the social phenomenon of volunteerism emerged, as evidenced by the creation of numerous NPOs. However, in contrast to "Western" society, with its long history of development toward civil society, these changes brought Japanese society into a kind of democratic vacuum or blank. As both the break with a society of "spectator democracy" and the implementation of the procedural law system to promote civil autonomy had been imperfect, people unfamiliar with participatory democracy were thrust into a situation in which the procedural process required them to assume self-responsibility and participate in the formal decision-making process. A good example of this is the Public Comment System. It was originally introduced for complimenting the procedural system; however, it has become entirely nominal and now functions as something like an

indulgence, to rationalize drafts proposed by the administrative side.

In this way, before understanding the change in political circumstances, residents immediately became "citizens," instantly required to have the capacities for self-determination and self-responsibility.

3.2 Cultural Bias

The geographical character of the Japanese islands, located in the Far East and surrounded by the sea, has exerted an immeasurable effect on its history and culture. Among the tremendous volume of books and papers on Japanese history and culture, Shuichi Kato's writing may be the most thought provoking in regard to cultural bias in the context of civil society. Kato (2010),[45] a prominent critic of Japanese culture, lists four archetypal characteristics[46] that define Japanese society and culture as a whole: (1) competitive collectivism, (2) this-worldliness and the absence of universal values, (3) an orientation toward the present as distinguished from an orientation toward the past or future, and (4) extreme ritualism and extreme emphasis upon intra-group communication.

Competitive collectivism may be closely related to exclusivity. Collectivism facilitates the forging of intimate relationships between people spontaneously devoted to the same group, but can sometimes lead to poorer relationships with group outsiders who have different values. Kato revealed that the primitive religious belief system, in which gods dwell everywhere in daily life, persists in the Japanese character. In the Weltanschauung of this belief system, the world of the gods is identified with that of

human beings; in this sense, everyday worldliness—that is, the community (*mura*)—is the final reality. With the subsequent introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism into Japanese society, these belief systems were made worldly. Kato (2009)[47] says, in the Japanese belief system, gods neither define nor order anything, in contrast to in Christianity and Judaism. According to Kato, a universal existence was denied even to the Meiji Emperor; rather, he was a group leader. It is from this that the Japanese nature, of tolerance toward religion and without universal values in the immanent world, derives.

Competitive collectivism, the lack of universal values, and the orientation to the present described in Kato's third characteristic have cohered into conformism.

As for extreme within-group ritualism, the group order can be sustained as long as members understand and retain the sophistication of rituals. In addition to this, peculiar within-group communication styles, characterized by subjective respect for the feelings of others, are employed. In these communication styles, greater emphasis is placed on understanding others' motivations by reading their minds than on understanding others' motivations by what they have actually said or done. Kato mentions that this peculiar communication style was suitable for the management style defined by command hierarchy that predominated in the era of high economic growth.

Japanese people are considered to have a strong sense of public order and morals. As long as people's extreme politeness, manners in waiting in orderly lines, cooperative attitudes regarding garbage recycling programs, close relationships between

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[45] Kato, S. (2010). "*Nihon Shakai Bunka no Kihonteki Tokucho*" (Basic Characteristics of Japanese Socioculture). In: Washizu, T. (Ed.), *Kato Shuichi's Own Selection* 1984–1986, No. 7. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. This essay was rewritten based on a lecture given in 1981.

[46] Sugimoto, Y. (1999), "Making Sense of *Nihonjinron*." *Thesis Eleven*, 57, 81–96.

[47] Kato, S. (2009), "*Nihon*" ("Japan"). *Gendai Shiso (Contemporary Thought)*, 37-9, 29–41.

neighbors, and so on, are considered, this disposition makes sense. However, in point of fact, these behaviors derive not from individual beliefs or from religion, but from a uniquely collectivistic feeling or motivation that standing out in *seken* (society) would be undesirable (Bellah 1967). [48] For the Japanese, who lack universal values, caring about what others (*seken*) think is very important. It follows that, as a behavioral criterion, people absolutely avoid engaging in behavior that would incite others to talk about them behind their backs. Accordingly, civil religion for the Japanese exists in *seken* or is *seken* itself.

Thus, the characteristics of traditional Japanese culture entail behaviors and a social form that is far from those required by civil society: (1) individuals cannot talk or act in public view beyond the interest of themselves or the group they belong to, (2) communities and society consider the opinions of the minority to be alien and there is a lack of opportunities for mutual understanding through critical democracy and dialogue, and (3) people engage in conformist or expedient behavior in order to get along with the people around them. Of course, the traditional culture has been fading, especially among the young, but remnants firmly persist in society.

4 New Civil Society: Awaiting a Resolution Following the Great Tohoku Disaster

In closing, this section presents a summary of the foregoing and outlines a path to maturity for civil society in Japan.

First, the history of civil movements in Japan may be summarized as follows. Japanese society unfortunately seems to lack experience with civil movements. As was described in the brief history presented in 2.1 and in the discussion of institutional biases in 3.1, for an extensive period of time, strong, centralized institutions dominated the public sphere and promulgated laws to stringently regulate the founding of organizations for public purposes or missions. Moreover, as described in 3.2, Japanese traditional culture has characteristics that are not only distinct from "Western" characteristics but are also largely incompatible with the mindset oriented toward citizens' autonomy and the spirit of creation that civil society demands.

However, as described in 2.2, in the decade-long period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, there was an upsurge in civil and student movements. Synchronic with new social movements emerging worldwide, these movements gathered momentum from the range of social contradictions that had resulted from rapid economic growth. Furthermore, prior to this upsurge, a significant political battle had occurred that divided public opinion and had aftereffects. Most crucially, anti-pollution movements spread nationwide and some of these actually succeeded in getting the government to change its development plans, which had never before happened.

In contrast with in the "West," where newly founded NGOs and consumer protest organizations laid the foundation for a coming civil society, in Japan, the driving force of the civil movements rapidly faded out, as described in 2.2, as regulation-oriented environmental policies unexpectedly enabled high economic growth with the help of skyrocketing energy prices. The brevity of the period in which civil movements were active can be explained by the fact that civil movements in those days did not have a continual basis to appeal to a wide range of people; the realization of sustainability remains the next goal.

Voluntary activities after the Great Kobe

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[48] Bellah, R. N. (1967). "Civil Religion in America." *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 96(1), 1–21.

Earthquake reawakened the civil movement and spurred the enactment of a new law to promote NPO activities, opening the public realm to citizens after an interval of more than 100 years. Although more than 50,000 NPOs have been founded in the last 15 years, every comparative study report on NPO/NGO activity in Japan has indicated that both NPO activities and civil awareness of the public realm remain at low levels and that people, especially the elderly, are not yet familiar with such organizations and their style.

Second, subsequent to the Great Kobe Earthquake, is the Great Tohoku Disaster of 2011 triggering a new social direction in Japanese society? The first chapter overviewed several social phenomena suggestive of the emergence of something like civil society: 300 billion yen in donations, the highest total ever; a total of 1,000,000 volunteers active in the devastated areas; the creation of a range of civil funds to support victims; new links among NPOs that provide a more diversified background for future sustainability; anti-nuclear protests at an unprecedented scale; and so on. Contravening the well-known assertion that Japanese society lacks a pro-social tradition and that Japanese are unkind to strangers in general, people have demonstrated a capacity to engage in civil action. Moreover, the creativity of the activities that have emerged—as seen in the creation of civil funds and anti-nuclear protests that are not mere protests but have seen involvement by a wide range of people—have also served as evidence of civil society.

On the other hand, the victims' calm and patient manner and many non-victims' adoption of self-restraint (*jishuku*) in the aftermath of the disaster would seem to reflect traditional culture. In section 3.2, traditional Japanese culture was described as having a traditional communication style in the context of civil society was described: (1) individuals cannot talk and act in public view beyond the interest of themselves or the group they belong to, (2) communities and society considers the opinions of the minority to be alien and there is a lack of opportunities for mutual understanding through dialogue, and (3) people engage in conformist or expedient behavior in order to get along with the people around them.

Regarding people's calm and patient manner, a book[49] written by a famous foreigner in Japan more than 100 years ago describes the Japanese as engaging in the same calm, polite, and orderly behavior even in the midst of major events such as war victories and famines. As for self-restraint, it may be ritualistic or a kind of conformist behavior that people engage in to get along with the people around them. In an interview with the *New York Times*, one Japanese professor stated, "*Jishuku* (self-restraint) is the easiest way to feel like you're doing something."[50]

Though voluntary activities in the devastated areas took place at an unprecedented scale, it is most likely that cultural biases will persist and people will continue to do nothing in regard to relationships with higher degrees of anonymity. This could be ascribed to the lower levels of trust Japanese have in strangers and outsiders. Yamagishi (1998),[51] a socio-psychologist, insists that the collectivist Japanese nature renders people able to trust only within-group others and prevents them from risking opportunities

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[49] Tsukishima, K. (2000). "*Nihonjin-ron no nakano nihonjin*" ("The Japanese amidst the Concept of Japaneseness"). Tokyo: *Kodansha Gakujutsu Bunko*.
[50] Belson, K., & Onishi, N., ibid.
[51] Yamagishi T., & Komiyama H. (1998). "Significance and the Structure of Trust: Theoretical and Empirical Research on Trust and Commitment Relations." Retrieved from: http://inss.co.jp/seika/pdf/2/001.pdf.

to construct relationships of commitment with others outside of the group, though such relationships might result in greater benefits. Based on game theory, his studies imply that Japanese society will continue to shrink unless people are willing to take the risk of constructing relationships of commitment with outsiders and branching out from their trustful, comfortable, and homogenous society. For Japanese, this task and the task of constructing bridging social capital would seem to be interconnected.

In addition to the aforementioned, the fact that business activities impede civil activities cannot be overlooked. [52] International statistics have shown that Japanese working hours are far in excess of the global average. In Japan, "I've been busy with work" is a plausible excuse people can use when turning down their responsibilities as citizens. However, the tight relationships between corporations and employees are beginning to unravel, as the adoption of neoliberal policies has led to an increase in non-regular employees. Recently, the number of non-regular employees has come to comprise more than 40% of all employees and the issue of the "working-poor" has emerged; thus, people's loyalty to their workplaces appears to be fraying.

According to the results of a survey conducted by Yamaguchi et al. (2008), [53] Japanese have faced strong budgetary constraints and economic stagnation since the "Lehman shock" in 2008. The birth rate is decreasing and the population is aging; hence, Japanese people are uneasy about their futures and are longing for a social security system—

a safety net. At the same time, people do not think that they can go back to the past good days when Japanese-style harmony and equity predominated under the lifetime employment system. Yamaguchi indicated that a new possibility for civil society could emerge from people's ambivalent struggle between requiring a safety net, for which the government has so far been responsible, and rejecting the bureaucracy's lack of transparency. Furthermore, he argues that the "Third Way" (Giddens) in Japan is a real, possible political alternative that Japanese society must seek.

Thus, regarding changes in civil society, the Great Tohoku Disaster has set some social changes in motion, while in other aspects, Japanese society continues to reflect traditional patterns of behavior that lies deep. Maruyama [54] mentions that the Japanese tradition with no clear shape of thought throughout the history and with no special evaluation criteria to the new historical evolution, always results in easily accepting the evolution, accordingly which looses opportunities to accumulate the historical value of the evolution. Facing an unstable and uneasy state, having lost their social safety net and trust in the groups they had belonged to, people should learn to become autonomous, develop the capacities for self-determination and self-responsibility, and take risks by getting out from comfortable relationships and constructing new, equal relations of commitment.

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[52]   Inoue, T., ibid.
[53]   Yamaguchi, J. & Miyamoto, T. (2008). *"Seron Chosa: Nihonjin ha donoyouna shakai-keizai wo nozonde iruka?"* ("An Opinion Survey: What kind of Socio-economic Society Do the Japanese Desire?") Sekai, 3.
[54]   Maruyama, M. (1961) *"Nihon no shisou"* (Japanese Thought), *Iwanami Shinsho*, p25.