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CLASS DIFFERENCES AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN JAPAN*

MASAO WATANABE

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to make clear the fact that there is a class structure in contemporary Japan under the facade of a classless society, and to highlight that this class structure has exerted a powerful influence on the distribution of educational opportunities. It is also our aim to defend the proposition that the class structure, one of the major source of inequality, could be reproduced through the selective mechanism in higher education in Japan.

Despite the widespread egalitarian popular value or belief among the ordinary Japanese people, inequality in their own society is not so difficult to recognize.

A short trip from the dreary slums (*Yoseba*) of *Kamagasaki* or *Sannya* to the classy residential areas of *Dennenchofu* or *Daikanyama* is a sort of interplanetary voyage measured in class differentials. Although it takes us, the travellers, through a lot of territory occupied by the self-esteemed middle class, whose class status is neither dreary nor classy, only a casual glimpse at the homeless people spotted around at the Shinjuku-JR station would be enough for us to realize that we are living in the society of harsh division which is now emerging, together with the awakening popular recognition of humdrum daily lives and social occlusion. That's the socio-economical reality which is widely recognized now at last after the bubbling economy in 80's.

However many academics still regard the Japanese society to be exceptionally equal, distinctively peaceful and uniquely integrated. This dominant view seems to be a particular kind of preoccupation shared by many social scientists in post-war Japan, and may deter the sociologists more from investigation into class differences.

Marxist approach, which originally tends to focus its attention on the causes, structure and dynamics of social class, has been politically marginalized under the cold-war regime of the post-war period and, because of that, many Marxist-inspired academics conceded the holistic view on Japanese society, which accordingly seeks to extract the negatively unique aspects of Japanese society.

Recent leftist discussions around the innovative notion of "the company-oriented society" (Kigyo-Shakai-Ron) would be a good example. It is obvious that now, even among many Marxists, the notion of class is thought to be dead at last and essentially useless for

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good. The fundamental assumption of this theory is that Japanese society should be portrayed as an integrated whole with everyone, including the manegerial class, suffering from the overwhelming power of big enterprises. This theory assumes that relative equalities in the distribution of wealth and power have been achieved among the people in Japan and also that the gap only still remains between the people and the big businesses. These theorists, together with many advocates of the theory of industrial society, accepted the idea of alleged historical uniqueness of Japanese society and people. However, these conclusions, as well as assumptions, are simply false, as we shall discuss below.

As a preliminary precaution it would be necessary to make clear what is meant by the term "class" in this paper. It is commonly and widely accepted in the sociological tradition outside Japan that the term signifies a set of social divisions which arise, among others, from a particular socio-economic organization (Westergaard, 1993). Of course there still is much dispute over the classical notion of class and use in the works of Karl Marx and Max Weber, the classical founders of class studies (Scott, 1996). Also despite the recently developed criticism in the field of class analysis targeting the orthodox consensus in sociology (Crompton, 1993), we can start our discussion from the common sense view of class as a fundamental and meaningful factor in a general description and analysis of structures of material or non-material inequality. Thus it is widely accepted in modern societies, that unequally rewarded groups are often described as "class". In this sense, classes may, among others, correspond descriptively and analytically to income and occupational groups.

1. *The Distribution of Income and Wealth*

One major element in the excessively optimistic view that in Japan there are less significant social or class divisions derives from the assumption that the distribution of income is more equitable.

It is obvious that the post-war reforms deconstructed the concentration of wealth held by absentee landlords and the *Zaibatsu*. Also the post-war economic recovery and the further development of Japanese capitalism succeeded, to some extent, in establishing the tendency of wage differentials by region, size of firm and to a lesser extent gender, to narrow them. These dramatic changes lead many to believe that they were living in the affluent society. It would, however, be misleading to infer from this that marked difference in life chances and incomes had disappeared.

Before assessing the general outline of the remaining class gap, it is necessary first to discuss the principal sources of information about the distribution of income in Japan. There are two main official sources, the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES: *Kakei-Chosa*) and the People's Living Condition Survey (PLCS: *Kokumin-Seikatsu-Jittai-Chosa*.)

The FIES data are frequently used in discussions on the income distribution in Japan. Although this survey encompassed a broad definition of income, including mostly non-cash income, it exclude all agricultural and single person households. On the other, the PLCS, now called the Comprehensive Survey of Living Condition of the People on Health and Welfare (*Kokumin-Seikatsu-Kiso-Chosa*) has been conducted since 1986, every three years as large scale survey and for interim years as small scale survey, by the Ministry of Health and

Welfare. The sampling of this survey includes agricultural and single person households. As to the classification of yearly income group of each household, it adopts quartile grouping in contrast to quintile and decile groups that are found in FIES.

Table 1-1 shows the estimates derived from the FIES. If we look, for example, at the most recent years, this table shows that the top 10 per cent of income units received more than 23 per cent of total income after tax, the top 20 per cent received nearly 40 per cent and the bottom 10 per cent received only 3 per cent of total income. If we move on and look at the development of the gap between the share of richest decile and poorest one, it is rather easy to identify the marked rise in inequality from 1980.

TABLE 1−1 DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME AFTER TAX IN JAPAN (1975-95)

% of income received by

		1975	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Top	10%	–	22.5	22.8	23.3	23.0	22.5	23.3	23.5	23.8	23.5	23.5	23.6	23.6
	20%	38.6	37.0	37.5	38.1	37.8	37.3	38.0	38.2	38.6	38.4	38.2	38.3	38.3
	30%	–	49.1	49.8	50.4	50.2	49.7	50.1	50.4	50.7	50.7	50.4	50.5	50.7
	40%	60.9	59.6	60.5	61.0	60.7	60.3	60.6	61.0	61.3	61.3	61.1	61.1	61.3
Bottom	50%	–	31.1	30.1	29.7	30.0	30.3	30.1	29.7	29.4	29.8	29.6	29.6	29.4
	30%	–	15.4	14.6	14.4	14.7	14.8	14.7	14.4	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.4	14.1
	20%	8.5	9.0	8.4	8.3	8.6	8.6	8.5	8.2	8.2	8.3	8.2	8.3	8.1
	10%	–	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3

Source: FIES

Although the gap appears to be striking, in fact this FIES data grossly *under*estimates the real effects of the gap between the rich and the poor. This can be seen particularly when we put the data in international comparison.

As we mentioned above, the FIES data excludes all agricultural and single person households. Then we need to complement it with some other supplementary data in order to make a fair international comparison. The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth tried this in 1979 (Royal Commission, 1979). The figures used in Table 1-2 were originally derived from the FIES, from equivalent source for agricultural households, and from the very large scale Employment Status Survey (ESS) as a sample of 1 per cent of all households. The aggregate coverage with respect to total population and total personal income was similar to that of US data. As the Royal Commission claimed, this estimated figures are the most complete, and probably the most reliable, distributions of income available for Japan in any international comparison.

This comparison indicates that there is nothing unique in the Japanese characteristics as to the equity of income distribution. Japan seems to be of the similar pattern, as US. Table 1-3 shows an interesting comparison between these two countries.

The changing pattern of inequality given in this table confirms our provisional remarks that Japan has *never* been exceptional in the general pattern of income distribution. There clearly was a trend toward greater inequality in US after 1967 and in Japan after 1965. This long run trend towards greater inequality was not confirmed by the less complete FIES data.

Comparative figures for various years during the 1970s can be seen in much more

TABLE 1-2 TRENDS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME HOUSEHOLDS ; GINI COEFFICIENTS FOR AVAILABLE YEARS 1950 TO 1970

	West Germany		UK	Japan	US		France
1950	39.6	—	—	—	—	33.0	—
1955	38.4	—	—	—	—	—	—
1956	—	—	—	31.3	—	—	47.3
1959	—	—	35.3	35.7	—	—	—
1960	38.0	—	—	—	—	33.8	—
1961	—	—	34.4	—	—	—	—
1962	—	33.6	—	38.2	—	—	51.0
1963	—	—	33.9	—	—	—	—
1964	38.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
1965	—	—	32.5	37.7	—	—	47.0
1967	—	—	32.2	—	39.5	—	—
1968	38.7	—	32.8	38.0	39.2	—	—
1969	—	33.5	33.8	—	39.6	—	—
1970	39.2	—	33.9	—	40.4	—	—
1971	39.0	—	34.7	40.7	40.5	—	41.6
1972	38.9	—	33.7	—	41.2	—	—
1973	38.5	33.5	35.0	—	41.2	—	—
1974	—	—	—	—	41.8	—	—
1975	38.8	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes:

Germany: G. Göseke and K. D. Bedau, Verteilung und Schichtung der Einkommen der privaten Haushälte in der Bundesrepublik Deutchland 1950 bis 1975', DIW Beiträge zur Strukturforschung, Heft 31, 1974, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin ; DIW, 'Das Einkommen sozialer Gruppen in der Bundesrepublik Deutchland im jahre 1973', Wochen

France: Sawyer M., Income Distribution in OECD Countries, OECD Economic Outlook, Occasional Studies, July 1972

U.K.: Royal Commission, Reports Nos 1 and 4.

Japan: Wada R. O. Changes in the Size Distribution of Income in Post-war Japan, World Employment Programme Research, ILO, October 1974.

U.S.: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, Household Money Income and Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of Households.

Source: Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, 'The International Comparison of Income Distributions', in A.B. Atkinson(ed.) *Wealth Income & Inequality*, 2nd.ed., 1980, p.95, Table 7.10

contrasted way in Table 1-4. It shows that, in either case of Japan or US, the share of the bottom 20 per cent of the population is considerably smaller than in all other countries and the share of the top 20 per cent is much larger. Japan and US appear to have had similar patterns of income inequality to those found in France, and all three countries showed a much greater degree of concentration of income than could be found in either Britain or Australia.

TABLE 1-3 DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TAX TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME OF HOUSEHOLDS : PERCENTAGE SHARES OF PRE-TAX PERSONAL INCOME RECEIVED BY GIVEN QUINTILES, DECILES AND PERCENTILES TOGETHER WITH GINI COEFFICIENTS

	Year	Top 1%	Top 5%	Top20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%	Gini coefficient
Japan	1965	–	–	44.2	22.8	16.4	11.4	5.4	37.7
	1971	–	–	46.2	22.8	16.3	10.9	3.8	40.7
U.S.	1967	5.2	16.6	43.7	24.1	17.5	11.0	3.7	39.5
	1970	5.5	17.0	44.6	24.2	17.0	10.3	3.9	40.4
	1973	6.7	18.7	45.5	24.2	16.4	10.1	3.8	41.2
	1974	7.5	19.9	46.4	23.7	16.1	10.0	3.8	41.2

Notes: Japan: Wada R. O., Changes in the Size Distribution of Income in Post-war Japan, World Employment Programme Research, ILO, October 1974.
U.S.: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, Household Money Income and Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of Households.

Source: Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth 'The International Comparison of Income Distributions', in A.B.Atkinson(ed.) *Wealth Income & Inequality*, 2nd.ed., 1980, p.92, Table 7.8 (part)

TABLE 1-4 SHARE IN TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME BEFORE TAX

% of income received by:

	Year	Top 20%	20-40	40-60	60-80	Bottom 20%
U.K.	1977	39.4	24.8	18.3	11.8	5.7
U.S.	1974	46.4	23.7	16.1	10.0	3.8
Australia	1966/7	38.9	23.3	17.9	13.6	6.3
France	1970	47.0	23.0	15.8	9.9	4.3
Japan	1971	46.2	22.8	16.3	10.9	3.8
Eire	1973	44.5	23.8	16.6	11.1	4.1

Note: originally compiled by the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, and published in *Report no.5. Third report on the standing reference*, HMSO, London, 1977.

Source: A.B.Atkinson(ed.), *The Economics of Inequality(2nd ed.)*, 1983, p.26, Table 2.4 (part)

If we look at this trend more closely, there emerged a clearer image of the gap between the rich and the poor in the Japanese case. Table 1-5 shows a set of estimated figure by Ishizaki (1983) over a 20 year of period.

The gap between the top and bottom 20 per cent of households has remained fairly constant and the poorest 20 per cent of households have continuously accounted for only less than 5 per cent of all incomes. A further analysis of the table suggests that the share of the lowest decile fell substantially between 1956 and 1959, and remained fairly constant between 1959 and 1965, while the share of the richest decile showed a continuing rise from 1956 to 1962, and from 1965 to 1971. This, together with the fact of the constant rise of Gini Coefficient during these years, outlines the growing gap of income distribution of all households.

Given this estimated outlook about Japanese case of income inequality, it is quite safe to

TABLE 1-5 DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TAX TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME OF HOUSEHOLDS IN JAPAN : PERCENTAGE SHARES OF PRE-TAX PERSONAL INCOME RECEIVED BY GIVEN DECILES GROUPS TOGETHER WITH GINI COEFFICIENTS

Decile Group	1956	1959	1962	1965	1968	1971	1974	1977
I (the richest)	27.3	29.5	30.7	29.0	28.8	30.7	27.4	26.3
II	16.3	16.1	16.1	15.8	14.9	15.5	15.5	16.2
III	13.3	12.7	12.5	12.4	12.6	12.2	12.7	13.0
IV	11.2	10.6	10.3	10.4	10.8	10.4	10.8	11.0
V	9.3	8.9	8.6	8.8	9.1	8.8	9.2	9.3
VI	7.5	7.2	7.2	7.5	7.7	7.3	7.9	8.0
VII	5.8	5.9	5.8	6.2	6.4	6.0	6.6	6.8
VIII	4.2	4.4	4.5	5.0	5.1	5.0	5.4	5.3
IX	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.0
X (the poorest)	2.2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.1
Top 20%	43.6	45.6	46.2	44.8	43.7	46.2	42.9	42.5
Bottom 20%	5.3	4.7	4.8	5.1	4.7	4.2	4.4	4.1
Gini Co.	0.38460	0.40624	0.40640	0.38864	0.38629	0.40432	0.38032	0.3780

Source: Ishizaki (1983, p.9)

assume that the general trend could have continued since 1970s. The second main source, PLCS clearly shows that nothing had happened to reverse this general trend of income inequality (Table 1-6). In fact, quite the contrary. It shows that the share of the bottom 25 per cent becomes smaller and the share of the top 25 per cent greater.

TABLE 1-6 DISTRIBUTION OF AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD YEARLY INCOME BY QUARTILE GROUPS IN JAPAN %

	1978	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
I (Top 25%)	48.7	47.8	48.0	48.7	48.4	48.7	48.2	49.2	48.7	49.1	50.2	50.3	49.9
II	25.6	25.7	25.7	26.0	26.2	25.9	26.2	26.1	26.3	26.4	26.0	26.0	26.1
III	17.3	17.6	17.5	17.0	17.2	17.2	17.3	16.9	17.0	16.7	16.4	16.4	16.6
IV (Bottom 25%)	8.4	8.8	8.7	8.3	8.2	8.2	8.3	7.8	8.0	7.8	7.4	7.3	7.4
total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: PLCS

The post-war growth of the Japanese economy has been outstanding even compared to any major industrial country. One result of this trend has been a rapid increase in personal income and an improvement in living standards. However, income distribution has shown a constant gap between, say, the top 20 per cent and the bottom 20 per cent. Also the point has been made repeatedly that much of Japanese income data is not included in the tax returns. This fact, plus the fact that certain forms of income, that is, capital gain and dividends, are subject to different tax treatment, makes it rather difficult to reach firm conclusions about the distribution of income in Japan.

However one thing is clear. The largest economic power is in the hands of the corporate business concerns, which dominate investment activities in the country. In Japan

most of savings flow from individuals to corporate enterprises through various financial institutions. Funds to support these institutions are obtained from a special counterpart fund in the governmental budget and from individual savings in the form of postal savings, postal annuities, and postal life insurance. What this means is that the composition and ownership of wealth in Japan tends to be concentrated in the hands of financial institutions. Also it means that particularly those who occupy the various kind of managerial positions of these institutes have a greater opportunity to accumulate wealth in land or financial assets (Table 1-7). On top of that, it appears that the preferential tax treatment of incomes from property in Japan has served to erode the progressive effect on the existing tax system. So there is a good reason why some critics claimed that the major cause for the widening gap since the 1980s between the rich households and the poor ones lies in the existence of differentials between incomes from employment and those from property (Tachibanaki, 1990). Certainly it is those who benefited from higher income who have larger income from property.

Despite all these possible grounds, neither solid evidence nor sufficient statistical data is available in Japan to reach the final confirmation. Unfortunately the immense difficulty in measuring the distribution of wealth in Japan has been used as a convenient excuse by Japanese sociologists to ignore this crucial issue.

TABLE 1-7 INCIDENCE OF YEARLY AVERAGE INCOME AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF PROPERTY ASSETS BY OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLDER (1973, all households)

in 1,000 yen

Occupation of Householders	Number of Household	Yearly Income	Valued Property
Regular labourers	24670	1525.6	2962.9(21.7)
Day labourers	418	1255.8	2246.6(16.4)
Non-official staffs	25306	2175.5	4391.1(32.1)
Official staffs	11120	2257.6	4903.4(35.9)
Merchants & artisans	19850	1858.3	6486.7(47.5)
Individual proprietors	2145	2962.8	9667.8(70.7)
Private administrators	2167	3776.6	13669.4(100.0)
Professionals	1732	2490.6	8779.1(64.2)
Others	290	1556.7	5843.0(42.7)
No-occupation	4136	1196.3	5636.9(41.2)
total/average	91924	1927.8	4998.2

Note: Index in brackets is calculated by setting the means for "Corporartive Administrator (managerial class in big enterprises)" at 100.

Source: Economic Planning Agency/Committee on Income Distribution, *Shotoku-Shisan-Bunpai-no-Jittai-to-Mondaiten*, 1975, Table 3-2, p.267

2. *Class Affiliations and Consumption Pattern*

It is curious that the pattern of social divisions in income and wealth distribution stands in stark contrast to the predominance of middle class consciousness which is said to be revealed in major opinion surveys.

The regular poll, conducted by the Japanese government, of public opinion about the standard of living assumes that the people's living may be described as "upper", "middle", and "lower". Respondents are asked where to locate themselves in one of these three categories. Around 1970, the classification went further as the middle stratum alone was divided into three levels: upper, middle, and lower. Then the percentage of people choosing the "middle" stratum was as high as 90 per cent. Even the "middle-middle" alone accounted for 60 per cent.

TABLE 2-1 CLASS AFFILIATIONS IN JAPAN (1958-95)

	1958	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
upper	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.9	1.2	0.7	0.8
upper middle	3.4	3.9	7.3	7.8	7.2	7.4	6.4	8.2	7.7	10.4	11.1	10.3	9.9
middle middle	37.0	40.8	50.0	56.8	59.4	54.4	53.7	53.1	54.4	53.6	54.6	54.7	57.4
lower middle	32.0	31.5	29.2	24.9	23.3	27.5	28.4	27.7	27.8	26.2	24.3	24.8	24.0
lower	17.0	13.6	8.4	6.6	5.4	6.7	8.1	7.2	6.3	5.1	5.6	6.4	4.8
unknown	10.4	9.8	4.5	3.3	4.0	3.3	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.8	3.2	3.1	3.2

Source: Prime Minister's Office, *Kokumin-Seikatsu-ni-kansuru-Yoron-Chosa*

Based on the simple interpretation of these figures several studies attempted to claim for the emergence of a "new middle mass society" (*Shin-Chukan-Taishu-Shakai*) in which, according to them, social class had lost relevance as sources of social dynamics (Murakami, 1984). Even some of these studies went further and said that Japanese society could be considered analogous to middle class society, in Western sense. Class was gone, they claimed, or was dissolving, at least.

However there is no validity in this kind of arguments as long as it is only based on the data derived from such a tricky method of polling. Practically everyone would say, if he/she were to be asked, "I am in the middle", because one could always point to someone above and someone below. The case of Japanese people is no exception. To substantiate this claim, let me quote the results of the extremely interesting international opinion poll which was conducted in 1979 by Gullup in thirteen countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, India, Italy, Philippines, Singapore, Korea, UK, US, West Germany and Japan, with the exact same questionnaire as Japanese governmental opinion poll. People are asked, "If people in the society can be divided into five classes as shown on this card, which class would you say you fall under? 1. High, 2. Upper Middle, 3. Middle, 4. Lower Middle, 5. Low". In Britain, though strangely enough, people were asked to choose "Working Class" instead of "Low" in their questionnaire. The results are as indicated in Table 2-2.

The ordinary working class people or the majority of the population tend to hold

TABLE 2-2 CLASS AFFILIATION IN 13 COUNTRIES (1979)

	High	Upper Middle	Middle	Lower Middle	Low	Total of Middle
Australia	1.1	8.6	72.8	10.4	2.7	91.8
Brazil	4.4	13.1	57.4	17.2	5.5	87.7
Canada	1.2	14.2	68.8	11.8	2.2	94.8
France	0.4	10.9	57.7	25.2	5.3	93.8
India	1.2	12.0	57.5	21.7	7.5	91.2
Italy	0.7	7.0	56.9	22.2	8.0	86.1
Japan	1.1	12.5	56.0	24.4	5.0	92.9
Philippines	1.3	7.0	67.1	18.5	5.9	92.6
Singapore	1.0	3.9	74.2	16.2	3.0	94.3
Korea	1.1	14.7	51.0	23.7	9.0	89.4
UK	0.1	2.2	31.6	9.1	42.5	42.9
US	1.9	15.7	60.7	17.4	3.6	93.8
West Germany	1.8	11.2	62.5	20.0	3.6	93.7

Source: 1980-nen-Kokusai-Kachi-Kaigi-Jimukyoku, 13-ka-Koku-Kachikan-Chosa-data-book, Nihon-IBM, Aug. 1980, p.10

to an image of society as comprising a large central "class", separated from small, residual strata of the very rich and the very poor. It is quite understandable that they see themselves as belonging to a class of "ordinary" people whose living standard is middling. Scott is quite right when he says that this central class might, if respondents or interpreters were prompted, be termed either "middle class" or "middle mass", but no special significance was accorded to this particular term or even to the language of class itself (Scott, 1996, p. 241).

Another plausible explanation supporting this illusive Japanese "middle mass" theory places a large deal of weight on the homogeneous pattern of consumption as the ownership of durable items diffused rapidly among Japanese households. The ownership of car, air conditioner and colour television set were often said to symbolize the arrival of the mass consumer society where social class lost once again relevance as an analytical construct.

This assumption of uniform patterns of consumption in Japan, as in other countries, simply conceals the real effects of class inequality.

If we look at the realities of this remarkable diffusion of consumer goods, a rather different conclusion will emerge. Then, it is necessary, first of all, to disaggregate consumer goods by quality or genre by grouping them into those subject to the effects of income and those not. Out of 79 consumer items surveyed, according to the governmental National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure (*Zenkoku-Shohi-Jittai-Chosa-Hokoku*: 1989), 27 items showed less than 1.5 in the ratio of the highest yearly income group (V of quintile groups) to the lowest income group (I of quintile groups) in terms of the quantities possessed, and there were 38 items and 14 in which the differences between the group V and I were 1. 5−3.0 times and 3.0 or over respectively.

Differences of the quantities of the major durable goods possessed between group I (the lowest 25 per cent) and group V (the highest 25 per cent) of yearly income quintile groups are as indicated in Table 2-3.

As this survey conceded, there is close relation between the rate of popularization of

TABLE 2-3 DIFFERENCES OF THE QUANTITIES OF THE MAJOR DURABLE GOODS POSSESSED BETWEEN THE HIGHEST AND THE LOWEST INCOME GROUP (1989)

Value of differences (V/I)	Items
Less than 1.0	Gas heaters, Refrigerators (less than 300 lit.), Washing machines (others)
1.0-1.5	Motorcycles A, Light cars, Washing machines (average), Gas tables, Cupboards/Cabinets, Refrigerators (average), Solar water heaters, Oil stoves, Japanese electric foot warmers, Motorbicycles, Vacuum cleaners, Matorcycles/Scooters (average), Dishwashers, Light cars A, Drying machines for quilt and mat, Microwave ovens, Washing machines (full automatic type), Telephones, Dining sets, Electric sewing machines
1.5-2.0	Refrigerators (300 lit and over), Cameras (others), Sofas, Colour TV sets (average, under 20 inches, 20 inches and over), Motorcycles B, "Karaoke" sets, Light cars B, Sideboards/Living boards, Electric carpets, Electric organs, Cameras (average), Video tape recorders, Car (average)
2.0-2.5	Motorcycles D, Stereos, Water heater, Video cameras, Carpets, Room air conditioner (for air-cooling), Radio cassette recorders, Ovens, Drying machines for clothing, Fan heaters, Tables of Japanese style, Book shelves, Cameras (single lens reflex), Ordinary cars B, Drawing room suites, Chandeliers
2.5-3.0	Room air-conditioners (average), Sectional sheds, Automatic baking machines, Beds/Sofabeds, Desks, System kitchen, Motorcycle C
3.0-3.5	Ordinary car A, Light cars C, Room air-conditioners (for air-cooling and heating)
3.5-4.0	Word processors, Astronomical telescopes, Central heating, Personal computers
4.0-4.5	Pianos
4.5-5.0	—
5.0-5.5	Satellite broadcasting tuners, Golf club sets, Unit furniture
5.5 and over	Imported cars A (6.60), Imported cars B (14.00), Membership entitlements for golf and other sports or recreation clubs (15.96)

Note:

Imported cars A : less than 2,000 cc
B : 2,001-3,000 cc

Oridinary cars A : 2,001-3,000 cc
B : 3,001 cc and over

Light car A : 551-1,000 cc
B : 1,001-1,500 cc
C : 1,501-2,000 cc

Motorcycle A : 51-125 cc
B : 126-250 cc
C : 251-500 cc
D : 501 cc and over

Source: National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure (1989)

durable items and the differential income groups, such that the higher the former, the latter becomes smaller and the lower the former, the latter becomes larger. This means that differently valued goods are distributed unevenly according to income distribution.

The governmental survey also shows that there is a strong occupational effect on the diffusion of durable goods. Households of corporative administrators widely possess high grade durables, while those of agricultural, forestry and fishing workers do not. As far as the occupations of household heads are concerned, administrators (both private and corporative administrators) widely possess system kitchens, central heatings, water heaters, big size refrigerators, washing machines (full automatic type), room air-conditioners, drawing room suites, telephones (excluding rental), big size colour TV sets, and golf club sets, as well as membership entitlements for golf and other sports recreation clubs which are usually opened only for exclusive members with high social status.

These observations, strongly supported by official statistics, cast doubt on the assumption of universalistic nature of Japanese patterns of consumption. Although the popular view sometimes claims that personal taste and individual consumption style are distinct components of the structure of social differentiation, the continuing effects of income and occupation fully indicates that the class still has great effects on these consumption patterns. No one can deny the fact that consumer power, after all, is money power which is closely tied up with the power the particular social class commands.

3. *Education and Class*

The widespread publicity given to the role of education as an embodiment of meritocratic mechanisms in which the best brains in the nation are to be recruited, without regard to status, birth or wealth, is a further possible reason why many suggest that class divisions are less pronounced in Japan.

TABLE 3-1 PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL, HIGHER EDUCATION (INCL. JUNIOR COLLEGE) AND UNIVERSITY

	High School Entrants	Higher Education Participants			University Entrants		
		M.	F.	Total	M.	F.	Total
1955	51.5	15.0	5.0	10.1	13.1	2.4	7.9
60	57.7	14.9	5.5	10.3	13.7	2.5	8.2
65	70.7	22.4	11.3	17.0	20.7	4.6	12.8
70	82.1	29.2	17.7	23.6	27.3	6.5	17.1
75	91.9	43.0	32.4	37.8	40.4	12.5	26.7
80	94.2	41.3	33.3	37.4	39.3	12.3	26.1
85	94.1	40.6	34.5	37.6	38.6	13.7	26.5
90	95.1	35.2	37.4	36.3	33.4	15.2	24.6
91	95.4	36.3	39.2	37.7	34.5	16.1	25.5
92	95.9	37.0	40.8	38.9	35.2	17.3	26.4
93	96.2	38.5	43.4	40.9	36.6	19.0	28.0
94	96.5	40.9	45.9	43.3	38.9	21.0	30.1
95	96.7	42.9	47.6	45.2	40.7	22.9	32.1

Source : Ministry of Education, Gakko-Kihon-Chosa-Hokokusho, annually

The programme of educational reform since the end of the war produced a remarkable increase in the provision of schooling at all levels. Most dramatic changes took place in post-compulsory education. The numbers attending High Schools beyond the compulsory education rose from 7 per cent in 1940 to 50 per cent in 1955 to 96 per cent in 1995. Expansion of student numbers in Higher Education has been equally dramatic with 4 per cent in 1940, 10 per cent in 1955 and 45 per cent in 1995.

All these changes were used to present a very rosy picture of open access and equal opportunity to the higher education. However, despite these optimistic views, there are at least two variables, in addition to ability, that guide access to equality; gender and class.

The gender effect is relatively easy to recognize. A close look at the basic data according to the type of institution reveals that percentage of women who go to four-year university is half that of men. The sexual composition of university undergraduates has not so much changed since 1975. The high rate of women's higher education attendance has been achieved or explained only by the fact that many women go to two-year Junior Colleges. Over 90 per cent of the students in two-year Junior Colleges are women, and most of these are privately run women-only institutions.

They are still under heavy pressure to discourage them to go to universities. It is no surprise that women students are over-represented in home economics, humanities or teacher training, and under-reperesented in natural science, technology or law. This gendered curriculum, coupled with the marked imbalance of the attendance rate in the four-year university in Higher Education, is the common feature of the current educational system and the gendered inequality in it.

On the other hand, the class effect on the current Japanese educational system is not easy discernible. The major reason for this immense difficulty could be found in the meritocratic rule and ideology which seem to promise fair and equal access to everyone. The common experience of rapid expansion of educational provision in post-war Japan and its meritocratic interpretation are so convincing that everyone accepted the idea that their society is homogeneous and even classless. However, as is the case with any meritocratic system, the ideology of equal opportunities is always betrayed by the reality of unequal distribution of merits or individual talent. This inherent dilemma of meritocracy itself has haunted the whole discussion by Japanese educational sociologists particulary when they discuss post-war credentialism in Japan. This seems to be the main reason why it seems extremely difficult for Japanese educational sociologists to do any work correlating performance with social class characteristics. Does class matter? This question has never been posed by the educational sociologists in Japan. Of course, it does matter, particularly for further understanding of the social reality of education. The family's economic circumstances, for instance, are very important for the local people outside Tokyo because keeping a child in a university in Tokyo area can cost well over half of the average local family's income. The general aspiration to make a child enter an universities varies from white collar families to blue collar workers. The former are more likely to make every effort to push their own child into university while the latter are likely to think that their child should learn something useful and more practical. The families with small business tend to desire their son and daughter to enter their own family business. The class analysis was and still is useful and even necessary to understand these underlying facts and realities, which, I believe, remain distinct from their surface outlook.

However, the popular belief in Japan is that educational achievement is solely or mainly dependent on individual ability. Though plausible, it is so incomplete as to be misleading. Despite these perceived ideas, educational experience and performance are clearly related to each form of the class system. Japan is no exception. Much of the evidence demonstrate that the present Japanese system of schooling and education are better equipped to cater to certain social classes. The educational advantage or disadvantage is not distributed equally among the students of different class backgrounds. Of course, however, it is necessary to note that the inequality of distribution of educational chances or the growing segregation in further and higher education by class couldn't be explained merely from financial reason. The financial background of student, though one of many powerful factors relating education and class, exert its own social influence through distinctive cultural or academic performance. Through this meritocratic performance, class effects obtain their legitimacy within the class structure. Only through this class structure, an unequal distribution of life chances is achieved.

For example, it is a well-known fact in Japan that major companies and the civil service recruit their trainees for senior management almost exclusively from the elite universities, while middle-sized and small firms recruit their management trainees from midium-ranked or less prestigious universities. There could scarcely be a less promising chance of obtaining managerial posts than for those without a university background. The university background of the presidents of 2142 major big companies listed in the Tokyo Stock Exchange in 1994 is as follows,

TABLE 3-2 UNIVERSITY BACKGROUND OF THE PRESIDENT OF 2,142 LISTED COMPANIES (1994)

Tokyo University	(national)	393	
Keio	(private)	233	
Kyoto	(national)	153	
Waseda	(private)	148	
Hitotsubashi	(national)	67	46.4 per cent
Tohoku	(national)	64	
Osaka	(national)	49	
Kobe	(national)	47	
Nihon	(private)	46	
Doshisha	(private)	44	58.0 per cent
Total 2142			100.0 per cent

Source: Tokyo Keizai Data Book, Toyo-Keizai-Shinpo-Sha, Tokyo, 1995

This might seem to indicate the simple fact that education has become important for all executives. Paradoxically and contrary to this kind of the popular belief, those from the top universities were the heirs and sons of executives, and they ensured their entry to top business positions only through the acquisition of a higher education.

Mannari (1972) discovered that top executives in Japan have been highly educated but have often been drawn from families with business connections. One-third of the top

TABLE 3-3 CLASS BACKGROUND OF TOP EXECUTIVES IN 3 COUNTRIES

Occupation of father	Britain(1952)	USA(1952)	Japan(1960)
Professional and administrative	26	16	25
Executive, director, or owner of large business	32	31	28
Small businessman	19	18	21
Landloard or farmer	5	9	17
Other	18	26	9
Total	100	100	100

Source: Mannari(1972)

TABLE 3-4 CLASS BACKGROUND OF EXECUTIVES OF MITSUBISHI GROUP COMPANIES

number (per cent)

Occupation and class background of father	1934	1954	1984
The Iwasaki (mamber of founding family)	4(3.9)	3(1.0)	1(0.3)
Business leader i.e. managerial class			
(executive or directors in Mitsubishi)	3(2.9)	8(2.8)	34(9.5)
(in non-Mitsubishi)	1(1.0)	12(4.1)	35(9.8)
Owner of large business or wealthy family	2(1.9)	13(4.5)	35(9.8)
Other member of upper class (i.e. listed in "Who's Who")	7(6.9)	27(9.3)	54(15.1)
unknown	87(83.7)	227(78.3)	198(55.5)
Total	104(100.0)	290(100.0)	357(100.0)

Source: Kikuchi (1996)

executives in 1960 were the sons of entrepreneurial capitalists, just over 10 per cent were the sons of executives in large enterprises (mostly banking business), and a further 17 per cent were land owners.

With these figures, together with comparable data found as to US and Britain, Scott suggested that Japanese boardrooms is more socio-economically closed than those in the US and Britain, if recruitment from land and industry are combined (Scott, 1985). This finding was confirmed by Kikuchi (1996). He discovered that top executives of the Mitsubishi Group in 1934, 1954 and 1984 were drawn from rather limited class background as indicated in Table 3-4.

Direct inheritance of positions is low but the recruitment shown by business leaders clearly indicates the social cohesion of upper class integration.

This is one of the main feature which characterizes the well-established credentialism in post-war Japan where the major handful of universities dominate the top business scene. The same can be said of any other ruling elites such as bureaucrats, politicians, and academics. Also noticeable is that, as in any countries where the meritocratic rule is of prime importance, the ruling elite can retain their dominant posts only through the legitimacy of credentialism or by way of making full use of higher education. Contrary to the popular discourse, academic credentialism is a part of the mechanism through which the class structure is reproduced.

TABLE 3-5 YEARLY INCOME PROFILE OF ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN FULL-TIME COURSE (1968)

Yearly Income Quintile Groups*	% **	to Higher Education	to Employment	Total
I (poorest 10%)	9.4	10.7	89.3	100.0
II	8.7	13.0	87.0	100.0
III	18.4	16.8	83.2	100.0
IV	23.3	26.4	73.6	100.0
V (richest 10%)	35.0	45.8	54.2	100.0
unknown	5.2	51.2	48.8	100.0
	100.0			

* of all population
** of all full-time course gaduates

Source: T. Ebara, Gendai-Koto-Kyoiku-no-Kozo (Structure of Contemporary Higher Education), Tokyo-Daigaku-Shuppan-Kai (Tokyo University Press), 1984, p.51, Table 1-1

TABLE 3-6 SOCIAL CLASS PROFILE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATED: CLASS INEQUALITY OF OPPOTUNITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (1968)

Father's Occupation	to Higher Education	to Employment	to part-time student	rejectee	unemployed	unknown	total
Farming, Forestry, Fishing	13.3	79.6	0.2	3.9	3.0	0.0	100.0
Labourer	7.6	86.2	0.2	3.8	2.1	0.1	100.0
Private office worker and official worker	31.5	52.3	0.2	13.3	2.6	0.1	100.0
Merchant, Artisan and Small business holder	30.6	56.1	0.2	9.8	3.2	0.1	100.0
Manager, Administrator and Professional	49.6	34.0	0.0	13.9	2.3	0.2	100.0
unemployed, others	20.3	69.7	0.3	8.3	1.3	0.1	100.0
unknown	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0

Source: Ebara, op.cit, p.283, Table A • 1

The class impact on higher education can be confirmed in much broader sense. Tables 3-5, 3-6, and 3-7 are based on a data derived from the nation-wide survey, though now dated, conducted in 1968 by the Ministry of Education. Firstly, quite marked is how very sharply divided were the social classes, based on fathers' occupation, in terms of entry to higher education. The managerial class is more than 7 times more likely to enter college than the labouring class. Secondly, all high-school graduates of full-time course, including non-comprehensive type schools, were regrouped and put in order according to quintile group of yearly income of the whole population. The lowest 20 per cent sent only 10 per cent of their children to higher education, while children in the top 20 per cent of households by income are at least five times as likely to attend university as children from the bottom 20 per cent.

It is no surprise, then, that, as for the family background of students who attend higher educational institutes, 84 per cent of them are from white-collar class and 13 per cent come from blue-collar background. White-collar students are overwhelmingly overrepresented in the national universities, such as ex-Imperial Universities, and a few renowned private universities, which occupy the upper part of the university hierarchy. On the other hand, blue-collar students go to local national universities and junior colleges, which stand on the lower part of the hierarchy. In terms of family income, people from the lower strata

TABLE 3-7 SOCIAL CLASS PROFILE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY STATUS GROUP OF UNIVERSITY

	non-manual working class	manual working class	unemployed and others	% of total number of students
Prime National Univ.	88.4	8.8	2.8	3.5
Major National Univ.	87.0	6.5	6.5	0.6
Other National Univ.	76.4	20.7	2.9	8.7
Public Univ.	87.0	12.0	1.0	1.9
Large Private Univ. I	89.3	9.0	1.7	12.7
Large Private Univ. II	84.5	12.4	3.1	12.5
Small Private Univ.	86.1	11.2	2.7	29.3
Junior college (national, local)	76.8	20.4	2.8	2.1
Private Junior College	81.4	15.3	3.3	28.7
average	84.0	13.2	2.8	100.0

Source: Ebara, op.cit., p.68, Table 1

TABLE 3-8 YEARLY INCOME QUINTILE PROFILE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY STATUS GROUPS OF UNIVERSITIES

Type of Institution	I	II	III	IV	V	unknown	total
Prime National Univ.	3.9	6.6	10.5	26.5	47.5	5.0	3.5
Major National Univ.	0.0	3.2	6.5	12.9	70.9	6.5	0.6
Other National Univ.	10.8	7.3	17.8	28.5	33.0	2.6	8.7
Public Univ.	11.0	3.0	18.0	14.0	46.0	8.0	1.9
Large Private Univ. I	3.8	2.4	6.2	18.6	52.8	16.2	12.7
Large Private Univ. II	2.3	3.7	10.4	21.9	53.3	8.4	12.5
Small Private Univ.	2.2	3.5	9.2	19.6	55.4	10.1	29.3
Junior college (national, local)	3.7	7.4	19.4	24.1	45.4	0.0	2.1
Private Junior College	2.1	3.3	9.7	19.1	58.1	7.7	28.7
	3.4	3.8	10.3	20.6	53.0	8.9	100.0

Source: Ebara, op.cit., p.69, Table 1-5

tend to go to local national universities and junior colleges (Table 3-7, 3-8 and 3-9).

The case of Tokyo University is even more striking. It shows us quite evidently the particular class profile of elitist higher education in Japan (Table 3-10). Those whose fathers' occupations are professional and managerial constitute well over half of those admitted to Tokyo University. None of the parents are engaged in casual labour. Only 1.4 per cent are engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing. This make-up shows that only a small particular occupational group of the population holds two-thirds of the places in this most prestigious university in Japan. That is, students whose parents are in professional and managerial posts dominate the top of the hierarchy. The fact that the hierarchical order of the universities favours the managerial occupations is a strong indication of the particular class impact on

TABLE 3-9 THE RATIO OF THOSE STUDENTS FROM UPPER NON-MANUAL CLASS, i.e. ADMINISTRATIVE, PROFESSIONAL CLASS IN "MOST PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES"

Cohort	Upper Non-Manual as Father's Occupation		Higher Education Diploma as Father's Qualification	
1926-1935	56.2	%	37.5	%
1936-1945	64.6		39.3	
1946-1955	75.0		65.0	
1956-1965	75.0		88.9	

Source: Ojima Fumiaki, "Kyoiku-kikai-eno-access-ni-kansuru-Susei-Bunseki (Trend Analysis of Access to Eucational Opportunities)", *1985-nen-Shakai-kaiso-to-Shakai-ido-Zenkoku-Chosa-Hokokusho* (1985 Report of Nation-wide Survey on the Social Stratification and Social Mobility), p.72, Table 12

TABLE 3-10 SOCIAL CLASS PROFILE OF STUDENTS OF TOKYO UNIVERSITY %

MALES Only	1965	1972	1976	1980	1984	1986	1987
Public officer in administrative post	21.0	13.8	16.7	17.8	16.2	14.0	13.2
Public officer in non-administrative post		12.7	10.6	9.0	9.4	8.1	7.6
Managerial post of large and medium sized company	5.5	6.8	4.1	6.4	4.4	3.6	4.9
Private company in administrative post	19.0	24.4	27.4	30.0	34.6	36.5	38.7
Private company in non-administrative post	14.0	14.3	15.2	13.3	13.2	18.2	14.6
Small business holder	17.7	15.6	14.2	13.1	13.7	10.5	11.5
Farmer, Forestry worker, Fisherman	3.3	2.0	3.0	2.0	1.7	1.1	1.4
Professional	10.0	7.2	5.6	5.0	3.1	4.3	3.9
Rentier, Pensioner	5.7	3.2	3.2	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.4
others, No answer	3.8	–	–	0.8	1.2	1.4	1.8

Source: Tokyo University Students Survey, annually

TABLE 3-11 YEARLY INCOME OF THE FAMILY OF TOKYO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

unit: 10,000 yen

	Average Yearly Income of TOKYO University Students' Family	Average Yearly Income of Decile Groups of the Whole Population in Japan		
		X (top 10%)	IX (next 10%)	VIII (following 10%)
1987	872	1163	842	
88	911	1340	879	
89	916	1448	911	
90	1016	1530	962	
91	1073	1655	1023	
93	1049	1728	1088	
94	1092	1768	1103	919
95	1095	1757	1101	921

Sources: Tokyo University Students Survey, and FIES

higher education and the particular pattern of its selective mechanism in social mobility. It is also interesting to know the fact that their family income ranks as one of the highest group in Japan (Table 3-11).

The table indicates that the average yearly income of students' family fall within the middle of marginal range between the top 10 per cent and the next 10 per cent. From this finding, it can be safely claimed that the majority of Tokyo University students comes from the wealthiest family background whose yearly income ranks as high as the top 10 per cent of the whole population.

So far we have picked up some evidence of the broadly recognized connection between class and education, and particularly the class effect on the selective mechanism of the post-compulsory education. Now we must turn to the driving force behind these, the fierce competition in the educational scene. It will then become clear that the class effect, supported by the ideology of meritocracy, are structured under the competitive circumstances that reflect the way in which the whole society is becoming excessively competitive.

The Japanese case is remarkable in that the selection of the elite is centred upon so few educational institutions, and so extensively based upon the idea of meritocracy. The objective examinations for selection of university students can easily create an illusion of fairness, which, in reality, brings about unequal advantages to those of the upper class background. The selective mechanism started long before the entrance examination for universities. Until compulsory education ends at age 15, non-selective and mixed-ability teaching practice is universal and unitary in almost all of (non-private) Japanese middle schools. The selective mechanism begins to work when pupils are allocated to their own high schools of various types and prestiges. Most pupils, to make their first choice successful, have to endure painstaking and elaborate diagnostic tests and sometimes humiliating counseling with their middle school teacher, in addition to the many mock entrance tests they must take. All test marks are standardized within a rather limited range of standard deviation scores (*Hensachi*). Based on these results, all 14 year old are slotted into their own exact position in the hierarchy of academic prestige for high school entrance. Their teachers advice them whether they should apply for a top or a middle or a bottom high school.

The proceeding rates to universities are clearly indicative of this hierarchical order of high schools and the type of high school (Iwai and Mimizuka, 1986). There is a sharp

TABLE 3-12 THE RATIO OF THOSE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO TOOK FULL-TIME HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES AND THOSE WHO LEFT FOR JOB AND VARIOUS VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOLS : by type of high school (1990)

	to Higher Education	employed	unemployed	to Techincal, Vocational Schools	% of total students of High School
full-time course					
comprehensive	38.1	21.0	5.6	35.2	73.3
commercial	8.2	73.3	3.6	14.8	10.4
technology	6.4	78.5	2.2	12.8	8.1
agricultural	6.0	75.7	2.3	16.0	2.7
part-time course	3.6	73.2	14.3	8.5	1.6

Source: Ministry of Education, *Gakko-Kihon-Chosa-Hokokusho(1990)*, Table 236

difference of the entrance rates to college or university between the general course high school and the vocational course high school. Furthermore, the general high school can be divided into several types.

The high-achiever schools from which more than 80 per cent proceeded to a college or university account for 15 per cent of the total. Those from which 60-80 per cent proceeded to a university rank next. At the bottom of this pecking order stand the low morale schools from which less than 20 per cent entered a university. All the high schools in Japan can be ranked in this universal and monolithic way (Table 3-12).

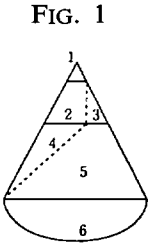
This pecking order can be seen a mirror image of the social stratification where the whole 14 year-old population have to identify their own exact position in its hierarchical order for the first time in their ongoing school life, and at the same time they are trained to accept and to be habituated to the harsh realities for their social life in the future.

In order to pass the rigorous entrance examinations to the best universities, students must gain entrance to the better high schools and then stay in the highest tracks and posts within those schools. Also it becomes necessary to incur substantial expenses through extra-curricula tuition for private cram school (*Juku*) to increase chances of success. In such a society like Japan where universities absorb a much higher proportion of the age group, the aspiration to go to a university is widespread and those who decide not to go to a university are therefore prejudiced by their getting on the wrong track. The high pressure of competitive nature of the post compulsory education is overshadowing the whole school life of the age group.

Having finished the high school course, the students have to face the next stage of the hierarchical order. Japan has more than 500 universities which vary in their reputation and prestige. The more prestigious institutions are, the more ferocious the competition for entry becomes.

Cram schools (*Yobikou*) rank each university and its faculty by the standard deviation scores which should guarantee an 80 (maximum) per cent chance of success in its entrance examination. Based on these figures, a map of the hierarchical order of universities in their prestige may be drawn in the shape of a pear,

FIG. 1



The space at the apex of the pyramid with the number 1 denotes what will be called the top university. It has been occupied by Tokyo University. Number 2 and 3 on the pyramid denote the major prestigious universities, which recruit their students from all over the country. The broken line which separates 2 and 4 from 3 and 5 is intended to mark an important distinction between national and private universities. In countries such as Japan, where, as Dore put it, "late-development effects" are dominant (Dore, 1976), and the

modernization or institutionalisation of higher education was started on the initiative of the government, the gap between old established national universities and relatively new private ones has been wide and the prestige of the former is relatively higher than that of the latter. National universities take about 25 per cent of total student places. The major elite na-

TABLE 3-13 HIGHEST QUALIFICATION, OR UNIVERSITY PROFILE OF MANAGERIAL CLASS

nunmer and per cent in bracket

	Respondant	his wife	eldest son	second son	eldest daughter
Tokyo University	227(20.3)	1	95(8.5)	18(1.6)	3(0.3)
other 6 ex-imperial univ. and Hitotsubashi	251(22.4)	5	91(8.1)	36(3.2)	9(0.8)
Waseda, Keio	120(10.7)	1	265(23.7)	66(5.9)	33(2.9)
3 renowned women's colleges; Ochanomizu, Nara, Tsudajuku	—	5	—	—	11(1.0)
other national univ.	263(23.5)	36	118(10.5)	33(3.0)	26(2.3)
other private univ.	131(11.7)	159(14.2)	468(41.8)	183(16.3)	314(28.0)
univ. abroad	1	0	2	1	6
junior college	1	44	1	0	127(11.3)
high school, compulsory edu.	123(11.0)	700(62.5)	52(4.6)	21(1.9)	47(4.2)
unknown*	3	169	28	762(68.0)	544(48.6)
total	1120	1120	1120	1120(100)	1120

Note: *currently at the cource of high-school
Source: Takeuchi (1982), p.79, Table 4

TABLE 3-14 HIGHEST QUALIFICATION AND UNIVERSITY PROFILE OF MANAGERIAL CLASS AND INTER-GENERATIONAL MOBILITY

	University profile of eldest son					
Father's univ. profile	Tokyo univ	other ex-imperial univ. and Hitotsubashi	other national univ. Waseda and Keio	other private univ.	High School	Total
Tokyo Univ.	43	16	82	71	9	221
Ex-imperial univ. and Hitotsubashi	24	39	93	79	8	243
Other national univ., Waseda and Keio	22	23	144	165	18	372
Other private univ.	5	6	31	83	5	130
High school, Compulsory	1	7	32	72	11	123
Total	95	91	382	470	51	1089

Source: Takeuchi (1982), p.84, Table 8

tional universities comprise number 2 and only two of old private universities, Waseda and Keio, occupy the position designated number 3. The rest of private universities and other national, mainly local universities established after the second world war, make up number 4, 5 and 6.

What can be suggested here is once again the mirror image of the society. It is exactly the same as the class map where many social classes constitute the population of a country; the power elite as a part of the dominant class occupies the top of the society, then comes a large body of professional class occupying the intermediate position, and beneath them, the vast aggregate of people constituting the working class. Lastly there lies the under-class or the lowest-low at the bottom of the society.

This ascriptive argument to the existing class structure can be, once more again, confirmed by the solid evidence showing apparently that the managerial class enjoyed the privileged access to higher education. Takeuchi who conducted his detailed survey in 1982 gave us the powerful evidence (Takeuchi, 1982). Based on the date from *Directory 1982*, he checked the highest qualification and university profile of maximum number of executives of each listed companies. Also, by tracing the academic background of other family members, he showed the overall picture of inter-generational mobility of the managerial class (Table 3-13 and 3-14). Quite obvious here is not only the fact that senior executives command the highest profile of the most prestigious universities, but also the even more striking fact that, as is shown in another prestigious university background of eldest son of each family, the managerial class has quite successfully passed their academic qualification to the next generation. This is another source of class cohesiveness in the managerial class, the most active strata of class society.

4. *Conclusion*

I have tried to detail some of the main features of the contemporary Japanese class structure. Basically Japan is still a class society, and in particular the divisions generated within the society are of central importance in its overall structure. However, it is not possible to demonstrate that all aspects of the anatomy of Japan are the direct and simple product of her class structure. Even if we concentrate on social divisions which are economically generated, there are many other aspects of social divisions which a thorough investigation must include. Of particular importance is the maintenance of high rates of inequality between men and women, and between majority Japanese and segregated ethnic minority. Also the persistence of discrimination against outcasted people is another evidence of non-class social divisions. However, in practice, the gender, religious and ethnic divisions come together to reinforce the effects of class, rather than to go against them. That's the main reason why we have to put our priority on the full exploration of class differences in contemporary Japanese society. There is, of course, a lot of difficulties attached to this particular task. The most vexing problem is that behind the ornate facade of a classless society, there are many class-related forms of inequality that are nevertheless ignored or obscured by the strongly held common feeling among Japanese people that they are all middle class. Such a common feeling is the historical reflect of the collective memory of pre-war time where class

divisions, in their pre-modern or semi-feudalistic style, were so obvious and poverty were so overwhelming. Also the collective experience of post-war austerity and of the immediately following rapid recovery of the capitalist economy led Japanese people to contrast and measure their standard of living with contemporary poverty in neighbouring Asian societies. Amid such a general mood, there took place a popular negligence towards social inequality and relative deprivation which are still present in Japanese society.

Since the end of the bubbling economy in 80s, the popular awareness has repeatedly expressed its serious concern about the unfairness of social structure where the wealthiest elites in society can rest easy in their occupation of high-status positions in larger firms or the governmental office, knowing that privileged access to higher education allows them to pass on their prosperity to the next generation. However, in rather odd contrast to this growing popular sense of occulusion, the academic main stream still cling tenuously to their preoccupation that Japanese society has nothing to do with class, and to their old but familiar assumption that this Japanese classlessness is the main source of its uniqueness.

Of course, a lot of historical, cultural and even phsychological factors play a part in forming the particular shape of political divisions and political culture of countries which may otherwise show broadly similar features in the basic economic class structure. As in many countries, it is no wonder that there was a serious gap, as to the class divisions between the political, cultural awareness and the economic, structural formation. The fact about class in Japan and a number of other developed countries since about 80s show that the social inequality is still a big issue for the social scientists or sociologists at least. Although Japanese academics wouldn't free their gaze of the ideological pretext of classlessness in their own society, Japan's real claims to uniqueness could be based on, and start from, our willingness to examine this academic blindness.

HITOTSUBASHI UNIVERSITY

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