

THE IDEA OF OPPOSITION IN JAPANESE CULTURE*

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Introduction

Earlier this century Werner Sombart, the German sociologist, published a book entitled *Why there is no Socialism in the United States* (Tübingen, 1906), a prophetic work, though misleadingly ahead of its time. In a similar vein I might call my lecture 'Why there is no opposition in Japan,' but this would give the wrong impression that Japan is a successful autocratic country, which she is not, or would revive the unsavoury image created by General De Gaulle of a nation led by a transistor salesman.

Yet social and political opposition at the moment appears so powerless as to justify such a title. Today the Socialist Party, still the second largest party, now under the new chairman Mrs. Doi Takako, the first woman party leader in Japan, is determined to alter its traditional links with the organised working class and aspires to be a party more attractive to the young voters and women. They have good reason to do so. For big company unions are being superseded by company-sponsored 'informal organisations,' educational, recreational and cultural, and themselves turned into real (yellow) company unions.¹

Indeed, business culture appears to dominate our society and takes its stand against all opposition and adverse criticism. Yet it is an ideology, i.e. traditional culture clothed in such a fashion as would serve business interests.

Now I must clarify what I mean by tradition and culture. Tradition is usually contrasted with modernisation, and the latter is almost invariably associated with westernisation which began in Meiji Japan. Modernisation also means industrialisation, or at least it has industrialisation as an important element. In this respect our recent past would give a wrong impression, for Japan remained predominantly agricultural until after the Second World War. In spite of her economic take-off which is said to have happened early in the 1890s, the agricultural population only gradually declined—from 83% in 1872 to 51% (1920), 42% (1940), 50.1% (1947); then it declined drastically from 44.6% in 1950 to 11% (1979) and 9.8% in 1980, while the number of industrial workers increased from 38.1% in 1950 to 66.5% in 1980.² These figures would suggest that the effects of modernisation of traditional society in the Meiji period were only modest in comparison with the changes introduced after the

* This is the text of the Second Jerwood Lecture delivered on 28 April 1987 at University of Sheffield.

¹ Nakabayashi Kenjiro *et al.*, *Nihon no Rodokumiai-Undo*, 1985, V. 150.

² *Ibid.*, 8; G.C. Allen, *A Short Economic History of Modern Japan*, 4th ed., 1987 repr., 250–51.

Second World War, especially in the years of cold war which gave great impetus to rapid economic growth of Japan. Now Japan is more or less fully incorporated in the world system of advanced capitalism as one of its leading sectors, and this has made peculiarities of our culture and institutions more conspicuous and problematic than before, thus reminding us that the problem of tradition and modernisation which baffled the Meiji people still remains with us now.

The term tradition is perhaps more comfortably attached to culture, another elusive word. H. Paul Varley in his book on *Japanese Culture* (1973, 3rd ed. 1984) deals mostly with forms and results of artistic creation, literature, architecture, sculpture, painting, pottery, drama, theatre and cinema. But culture is not only the results of creation but the expression of the creative spirit or creation itself. Not only arts and literature but also ideas, religious, political, social and economic, and the actions of man working upon nature in a broad sense are involved. To cut the road, to open the fields, to extract minerals from the earth, to build a shrine by the pure stream and a temple on a wooded hill, to place a simple stone image of some guardian deity outside the village—in all these acts there are characteristics which we may call 'Japanese.' Creation in a Japanese way in this sense has been called Japanese culture.³ Raymond Williams has traced the changes in the meaning of the word culture from the original usage of 'tending of natural growth' to 'a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual.' Even class culture, bourgeois or working-class, according to him should be viewed in this wider context, a living common culture.⁴

Opposition in Japan, then, if there was and there is any, is part of such culture, living Japanese culture. But there is one major difficulty. Weak opposition—such it is—has often been explained away by referring to peculiarities of Japanese culture such as paternalism, group solidarity, communal sentiment of sharing the same fate ('We are in the same boat—Don't rock the boat')—if I am allowed to use Nakane Chie's sociological jargon—there are characteristics of 'a homogeneous society built on a vertical organisational principle.'⁵ The jargon betrays not only a partial but also a static view of Japanese culture, and Kato Shuichi reinforces this view in his study of the *History of Japanese Literature*⁶ by emphasizing a cultural pattern, traditional and almost timeless: 1) absence of a logical mind or emotiveness, 2) continuity over centuries of the same literary tastes, 3) situational limitations, or perhaps narrowness of interest, 4) a grouping tendency. It is true, cultural changes were very slow even after the process of westernisation had begun, so slow that one might be tempted to take a static view of it. Again, preserved and accumulated objects of art and literary works would appear static and present a fixed cultural heritage. The quickened pace of change in the last 30 years or so, in socio-economic terms, however, may contribute something definite to alter the traditional pattern (from closed to open culture, for instance). But here is the difficulty I have just mentioned: the static cultural explanation of weak opposition can be, and in fact has been, turned into an ideological justification of cultural nationalism that is now emerging under the cloak of business culture.

Japanese opposition, for better or for worse, has become the subject of a detached sociological study: J. Victor Koschmann examined its characteristics, pointing out four

³ Saegusa Hirooto, *Nihon no Shiso-Bunka*, 1942, 28.

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 1958, 1966 repr., 16, 307.

⁵ Nakane Chie, *Japanese Society*, 1970, 150, 154.

⁶ Kato Shuichi, *History of Japanese Literature*, I, 1979, 1981 ed., 4ff.

factors related to it: 1) 'given authority'—'unawareness of the potentially relative, fallible nature of all authority,' 2) 'soft rule' of paternalism, 3) 'ritualistic resistance,' and 4) 'expressive protest,' the obverse of the former, such as the army coup d'état of 1936 and the novelist Mishima's show harakiri.⁷ The author, however, believes that the above pattern of political ethos is not fixed and culture itself is changing, and that the Japanese concern about the environment and the spontaneous citizen's movement against pollution in various forms would herald a departure from traditional conformism and acquiescence. I hope, he is right. My task is that of a historian, which is to ransack the history of the idea of opposition to see whether and how far friction caused by new developments in socio-economic structure or the introduction of a new way of life would shake and alter the supposedly static cultural pattern or the well grooved course of protest or acquiescence.

Religious Beliefs and Aesthetic Tastes: Sublimation of the Idea of Negation

When Kato Shuichi mentioned continuity as one of the main characteristics of Japanese tradition, he explained it in terms of the co-existence of the old and the new. Our first concern naturally is the oldest: the indigenous belief of the early Japanese, which later came to be known as Shinto or the Way of the Gods. As Varley said, Shinto was 'a primitive religion of the sort that elsewhere in the world has been absorbed by universal faiths but . . . in remote and parochial Japan has been perpetuated into modern times.'⁸ Similarly Sansom, speaking of the indigenous cult of nature which centred around the concept of pollution and purification, emphasized that 'the whole complex of religious and social organisation in later times' grew out of this 'early conception' of social ethics which modified even the powerful influences of Chinese philosophy and Buddhist doctrine.⁹ It was for a similar reason that Kato paid special attention to 'a "Japanised" foreign world view.'¹⁰ Sansom perhaps was too generous when he described nature-worship in Japan as 'a religion of love and gratitude rather than fear.'¹¹ As the Japanese word God (*Kami*) simply meant the superior, divinity was ascribed to the powerful and awe-inspiring such as the sun, the moon and the tempest, but also to fertility, the good harvest, and to useful things, the well and the cooking pot, and also to the lovely and pleasant, the stream and the trees and flowers. The ancient Japanese knew no idea of a soul, much less of an immortal soul, but was concerned about growth and decay:¹² thus the pollution of sickness and death was shunned and to be avoided by means of ritualistic purification and abstention. Indeed, the impact of the indigenous belief has been and is still powerful, and even the high-technology society of today is not free from its spell.

The introduction of Buddhism in the 6th century was an event which marked the beginning of the idea of negation accepted in Japan. This novel spirit, however, was soon har-

⁷ Victor Koschmann, 'Soft Rule and Expressive Protest,' *Authority and the Individual in Japan*, 1976, passim.

⁸ H. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 3rd ed., 1984, 8.

⁹ G.B. Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, 1931, 1973 ed., 1985 repr., 52.

¹⁰ Kato, *op.cit.*, 21.

¹¹ Sansom, *op.cit.*, 46.

¹² *Ibid.*, 48.

moniously blended with the Shintoist tradition of acceptance and inclusion, so much so that there is even today a nice division of service between the two, Shintoism taking charge of marriage and birth and Buddhism looking after death and commemoration of the dead. 'The world is hollow and temporary; only Buddha is true,' said Prince Shotoku (574–622) who was much grieved at social disorder due to the collapse of the ancient clan politics. He founded Horyuji Temple (607), the finest Buddhist architecture we have now in Japan, and at the same time initiated political reform with a Constitution in which Buddhism and Confucianism, another great cultural influence introduced from the Continent, were well balanced, and group harmony was given prominence. The authority of a central government was established, and the title Tenno (Emperor) began to be used (it was first used in the 7th century) with the peculiarly Japanese content of its identification with deity and, in spite of its name, Prince of Heaven, devoid of the Chinese concept of Heaven or Virtuous Rule.

Until about the 12th century, the appeal of Buddhism had been limited largely to the educated upper class of Nara, and then Kyoto. As the supremacy of courtier society in Kyoto (Heian-kyo) was encroached upon by the rise of the warrior class in the provinces who set up the first Shogunate government at Kamakura (1192), Buddhism, too, had to adapt itself to the needs of the time; especially there was a need for a simpler faith for the ordinary people, victims of wars and social upheaval who sought consolation in religion. This was soon provided by new popular sects with the worship of the compassionate Buddha Amida and a belief in the second birth in Amida's Paradise, while the founder of another Kamakura sect, Nichiren, preached a Japan-based millenarianism, which in the crisis caused by Mongol attempts to invade Japan, made him a prototype of the dedicated nationalist of our more recent past. Zen, another Buddhist sect, which blended Buddhism and Confucianism with an emphasis on a practical code of social ethics, found favour among the warrior class.

The historian Ienaga Saburo has emphasized the role played by Buddhism in Japanese intellectual life by introducing an element of negation into the indigenous cultural climate. Especially, the New Buddhism of the Kamakura period, with its profoundly negative spirit, left a distinct mark on Japanese opposition thought. Buddhist negation, however, was transcendental and metaphysical: intense introspection led to dialectical speculation which transformed absolute negation into absolute affirmation. Harmonious attraction free from all obstacles thus achieved, wrote Ienaga, implied power to melt and reconcile: hence, deep, serious, harassed thinking tended to dissolve into sentiment and taste; sharp dialectical opposition was absorbed into the old affirmative sentiment and new fashionable taste.¹³

Apparently Buddhist negation failed to produce the idea of opposition. But it had a strong impact on the accepted or established values and attitudes, and these were now channeled into literary styles and tastes. Heian literature of the 9–12th century, while aspiring to elegance of courtier life (*miyabi*), was characterised by a common aesthetic value, *monono-aware* or sympathy with tragic nature, which has been explained as 'the romantic pathos . . . expressing a distinctively Japanese sense of the *lacrimae rerum*, the sadly ephemeral beauty of things.'¹⁴ *The Tale of Genji* (about 1007) was saturated with this sentiment. Kamakura literature is known for more delicate aesthetic values such as *yugen* or unfathomable, hidden

¹³ Ienaga Saburo, *Nihon-Shisoshi niokeru Hitei-no-Ronri-no-Hattatsu*, 1969 ed., 105.

¹⁴ Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, 1986, 65.

elegance and *sabi* or loneliness or appreciation of decaying beauty. The cult of *wabi*, a restrained pleasure in isolation and loneliness, of *wabi-cha*, tea-ceremony, was developed in the Muromachi era that followed, and at a later period we would come to *ukiyo*, a floating world, of the ukiyoe painting, the volatile world viewed by the townsmen of the Edo period. All these point to the prevalence in literary style and taste of the sense of *mujo* (impermanence) and *inton* (seclusion or escapism). This was not limited to literature alone, but affected general attitudes more widely.

The general inclination for resignation and acquiescence in a sad fate, which was in fact a sublimated state of Buddhist negation, was further encouraged by a revival of Confucianism under Tokugawa, which now helped to stabilise the feudal rule by giving a utilitarian justification to the division of society into four classes, the warrior, the peasant, the artisan and the merchant in descending order, a situation not auspicious for the rise of an idea of opposition.

Ando Shoeki (1703–1763), Agrarian Communism and Agrarian Revolt

Yet it is in this Tokugawa Japan, a tightly knit, status-ridden, autocratic society, that we encounter our first great thinker of opposition: Ando Shoeki. E.H. Norman compared him to Gerrard Winstanley of the 17th Century English Revolution and also to François Quesnay of the French Enlightenment. Shoeki, the author of two published books and more than 100 manuscript volumes on philosophy, literature and medicine, has been described by an uncritical Japanese admirer as ‘the Genroku Karl Marx,’ Genroku being the name of a middle Tokugawa period when urban culture showed a confident vigour with the rise of the prosperous merchant class. The peasants and farmers, for whom Shoeki wrote works of vindication, officially ranked next to the samurai, but their life was hard pressed. Famines were often accompanied by agrarian revolt on a scale involving tens or even hundreds of thousands of men, and Shoeki speculated under the full impact of such revolts.

The main thrust of his sharp criticism was directed against Confucianism, the ideology of Tokugawa feudalism, whose patron saints, he declared, deceived the people, the cultivators of the land, stole nature’s bounty, appropriated the heaven itself, and styled themselves kings.¹⁵ The Confucian sages created the four classes in society and discriminated among them, whereas originally all men were equal.¹⁶ Shoeki applied the derogatory term ‘Saints’ to the Buddhist monks as well. As for Shintoism, Shoeki believed, most of the objectionable embellishments and institutions surrounding it were borrowed from the Confucian teachings and Buddhist propaganda which distorted Nature’s Way. It was Shintoism in its original form that was the True Way of Nature. He thus distinguished between Shinto, the Way of the Gods or the True Way, and Shinto as a system of human law, legalised and institutionalised Shinto, and attacked the latter as savagely as he ridiculed and lampooned Confucianism and Buddhism.¹⁷

Shoeki built his whole theory upon a belief in the ancient, communal Japan where pre-

¹⁵ Ando Shoeki, ‘Kyu-Sei,’ quoted Terao Goro, *Ando Shoeki no Tatakai*, 1978, 152.

¹⁶ Ando Shoeki, ‘Shi-Min,’ *Shizen-Shineido*, quoted E.H. Norman, *Ando Shoeki*, 1979 repr., 70–71.

¹⁷ Ando Shoeki, ‘Sinpo no Moshitsu,’ *Todo-Shinden II, Works*, IX, 268ff.

vailed the oneness of man and nature and the reciprocity of man's labour and nature's bounty. His was a philosophy of productive labour, and he defended the labour of cultivation and of weaving as eloquently as John Ball. Indeed, his defence of the True Way of Nature was a theory comparable to the Norman Yoke in English history which appealed to all the under-privileged.¹⁸

Shoeki practiced medicine at Hachinohe, a provincial town in North-East Japan, and later moved to a village near Akita, where he appears to have held a sort of 'national conference' of his disciples who were scattered from Hokkaido to Edo, Kyoto and Osaka. Those who attended the meeting, obviously illegal under the Tokugawa regime, samurai, doctor, merchant and Shintoist priest, discussed the problems of poverty and productive labour, social peace and privileges, and even revolution and reform.¹⁹ From the debate was born Shoeki's article embodying a theory of transition.²⁰ He advocated land reform: all the land should belong to the highest ruler: this is perhaps the only form in which he could think of communal ownership of the land; the feudal lords under him should reduce the number of their retainers, cultivate land by themselves, and let those discharged from service cultivate land as well. The highest ruler also cultivates land for himself and his family. Thus upper and lower, all cultivate land. Then there is no need for tax and tribute which should be abolished.²¹ The circulation of gold and silver as money should be stopped. Letters and learning were the root cause of all the attempts to encourage the practice of eating greedily without working, and those engaged in such deceitful arts should also be ordered to cultivate land. These were indeed very radical measures, almost Maoist, but Shoeki failed to show how to introduce such measures. Under Tokugawa these were bound to remain Utopian. Yet the villagers around him became agnostic to such an extent that Buddhist temples in the area were threatened with closure due to the lack of support. Two years after his death, however, the villagers were prosecuted and were compelled to belong to a Buddhist temple; thus his influence was largely eliminated and remained so until after the Second World War.

Nevertheless, one of the last peasant uprisings, that of Chichibu, which took place in 1884, the 17th year of Meiji, was in some remote way curiously related to Shoeki's teachings. As part of the liberal popular rights movement in the early Meiji period it was not surprising that a diluted and utilitarian version of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* was circulated among the villagers of Chichibu, but a more powerful intellectual influence was that of the Misogikyo, a Shintoist sect, the founder of which had been a follower of Kamo Mabuchi, the National Learning Scholar, who like Shoeki rejected an artificial social system in favour of the ideal 'life of nature' of ancient Japan. Thus the idea of opposition in agrarian revolt and agrarian communism was largely retrospective, hankering after the golden age of independent cultivators living in communal security, practicing the Way of the Gods, true Shinto.

¹⁸ Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke,' *Puritanism and Revolution*, 1958, 67.

¹⁹ Terao, *op.cit.*, 231.

²⁰ Ando Shoeki, *MS Shizen Shineido*, vol. 25, *Works*, I, 267ff.

²¹ Ando Shoeki, *Works*, I, 275-77.

Christian Challenge

The first Christian century in Japan (1549–1639) which ended in a bloodbath of the martyrs and the closing of the country, left little impact on the character of the nation, nor did it change the way of life of the people, except for the hidden Christians who survived in western Kyushu and off-shore islands as isolated underground sects. A new Christian century began in 1873 when the anti-Christian edicts were finally removed. Christianity, unlike Buddhism, however, came to Japan ‘not to enrich but to displace.’²² In fact, Christianity itself meant an idea of opposition to traditional values, just as Marxism was soon to become. Yet the upholders of traditional culture remained active and vocal so that Christianity, too, began to adapt itself to the rising tide of cultural nationalism.

Unlike the first Christian century, which was Catholic, it was now the Protestants, especially the American missionaries from New England, Puritan Americans, who appealed to young Japanese intellectuals of early Meiji, mostly of samurai origins. Dr. William S. Clark, President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, who had been invited to set up a similar college at Sapporo, was responsible for converting to Christianity some of his students who formed the seminal Sapporo Band. ‘Be ambitious not for money (n)or for selfish aggrandizement, (nor) for . . . fame. Be ambitious for the attainment of all that a man ought to be,’ said Dr. Clark. The slogan ‘Boys be ambitious!’ (even for worldly success) became a catch-word for ambitious Japanese boys. The strict moral demands of Christianity and the emphasis placed on ‘Man’ appealed to the young students largely because of the concept of duty associated with ‘Man.’ Christianity seemed to some to be the fulfilment of Confucianism.²³ Ebina Danjo of the Kumamoto Band, another Christian group, felt that even a Confucian could pray if it were his duty. Uemura Masahisa of the Yokohama Band, yet another group, longed for a ‘baptised Bushido.’ Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930) was convinced that Japanese Christian should become independent from western tutelage. Even so he fell a victim to nationalist reaction that culminated in the Imperial Rescript on Education, declaring the Emperor to be sacred and inviolable. In 1891 Uchimura then teaching at the First High School was accused of treasonable contempt for the Emperor as he made a light, courtesy bow, instead of the deep bow of worship required at a special ceremony for the reading of the Imperial Rescript, and was dismissed from the school.

Uchimura’s Christian nationalism which took the form of an Independent and Non-Church movement, was as much an opposition to State nationalism as to Christian sectarianism. As a journalist and political commentator, he advocated reduction of armaments, abolition of social distinction and creation of equal citizenship, local self-government and expansion of education. He became a friend of the common people, the peasant, the fisherman, the small tradesman, and the rikisha-man, reported extensively the effects of pollution from the Ashio Copper Mine and wrote against war with Russia. In 1917, the four hundredth anniversary of Luther’s Reformation, Uchimura launched a movement for the

²² Carlo Caldarola, *Christianity: the Japanese Way*, 1979, 15.

²³ John F. Howes, ‘Japanese Christians and American Missionaries,’ *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, ed. by Marius B. Jansen, 1965, 1982 ed., 347.

Second Coming of Christ, a new Reformation, and preached millenarianism until his death in 1930.

After his death Christian opposition to the state began to crumble. Nitobe Inazo (1862–1933) formerly of the Sapporo Band was cutting a sorry figure by making speeches in America and Canada in his last years, defending Japan's military action in Manchuria and her withdrawal from the League of Nations. Earlier in his popular book, *Bushido, the Soul of Japan* (1900, rev. ed. 1905) he had sought to make the feudal ethics of Japan appear comparable to or at least compatible with Christianity by adopting a double standard, upholding western values so as to justify Japanese feudal ethics: thus Bushido was defined above all as 'fair play in fight' which was certainly not a Japanese virtue in her dealing with China. In 1936 Ebina Danjo urged Japanese Christians to pay homage to the Shintoist shrines and to treat State Shinto as the Old Testament. Only a small minority refused to compromise. Some of Uchimura's followers in the Non-Church movement (Yanaibara Tadao and Nanbara Shigeru among others) were counted among them. Christianity had accommodated itself too much to the exigencies of the state to remain in critical opposition to the Kokutai ideology, Kokutai being the mythical body of the nation under the Emperor, the ideology of ultra-nationalism. Socialists and Marxists perhaps fought better, to whom we shall now turn our attention.

Socialist Opposition

There have been objections to treating Kotoku Shusui (1871–1911) as a Socialist or even as an Anarchist. It may be more fruitful to see him in the context of the wider opposition of the frustrated lower samurai especially of non-Sattsucho origins, to whom the state, the Meiji autocratic government, became a mortal enemy. In this light Kotoku could be regarded as the left-wing culmination of radicalism in the Liberty and People's Rights Movement.

Kotoku was a faithful disciple of Nakae Chomin, the Oriental Rousseau or rather Orientalised Rousseau, aspiring for a joint rule of the prince and the people. The Meiji Constitution of 1890 shattered any such hope for joint rule, and Chomin who was elected to the Diet soon resigned, disgusted with corrupt Government and weak Opposition. Kotoku apparently shared Chomin's disillusionment with the Meiji state and also his master's increasingly patriotic sentiments. As he joined a small group of Socialists (mostly Christian Socialists), however, he became an outspoken critic of emerging Japanese Imperialism. He was opposed to war with Russia, and started an anti-war weekly paper the *Heimin-Shinbun* (People's Newspaper). In its pages appeared the first Japanese translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, for which the paper was suppressed and Kotoku was arrested. In Prison he turned to Anarchism, and his advocacy of direct action implicated him in a plot against the Emperor. When the plot was uncovered, the prosecution was determined to make the subsequent treason trial a campaign against all subversive elements mostly unconnected with the plot. Direct action has been called an act of revenge in keeping with the Samurai tradition,²⁴ but all but one of the indicted were of non-samurai origins.

²⁴ F.G. Notehelfer, *Kotoku Shusui*, 1971, 128.

Sometime after the Treason Trial which had brought Kotoku and 11 others to the gallows, Katayama Sen (1860–1933), a Christian socialist, who had turned to Marxism of a Social-Democratic variety, left Japan for good and began a fateful journey which took him to Moscow and made him one of the Comintern leaders in the 1920's and early 30's. Katayama, 'warm, kind, and incapable of malice in either thought or behavior' according to his American biographer,²⁵ had gone through a period of frustrated hopes: his success in organising iron workers was short-lived, and attempts to form a Socialist party were all suppressed by the Government. In December 1914 he wrote from San Francisco to H.M. Hyndman, the British Marxist, ' . . . I am really driven out of my country because of Socialism . . . I was too well known to the authorities to work in disguise, I was utterly hopeless for the rest of my life in Japan'²⁶

The Comintern for which Katayama became a spokesman was to carry great prestige among the Japanese Marxists close to the illegal Communist Party of Japan but his personal influence was no longer felt in Japan. Japanese Marxists, though they were constantly engaged in highly abstract theoretical disputes among themselves, were in fact dealing with one major problem of our culture: whether Japan had sufficiently developed culturally as well as industrially to justify the adoption of the same tactic of transition to Socialism as in the advanced western countries. One school of thought (Ronoha) which was allied to groups that were to form the present Socialist Party in the post-war years, felt that she had well advanced; the other (Kozaha) which was linked with the Communist Party believed that she had not, and advocated elimination of the 'feudal absolutist' elements first. The debate, though useful in itself, was only to accentuate the division of opposition forces and made government suppression of them so much easier. The JCP intellectuals like Kawakami Hajime were the first to suffer and were soon involved in a wave of Tenko (Conversion to the Emperor ideology or at least disowning of the Communist party). Friends, teachers, families were mobilised so as to persuade the recalcitrants to cease resistance and to surrender. Tenko was an instance which illustrates the weakness of opposition vis-à-vis traditional culture backed by the coercive power of the state. The Socialist intellectuals who had no intention of attacking the Kokutai or the Emperor system soon suffered the same fate. The common weakness of Marxist opposition in the inter-war years was due largely to the lack of awareness of the strength of traditional culture and ideology which increasingly took the form of Shintoist 'fundamentalism,' an absolute ideology enforced by military power. The Socialists wrongly assumed that the Emperor ideology was historically obsolete. The Communists took it seriously, but did not know how to tackle the problem except to follow the vacillating, unreal tactics of the Comintern.

Post-war Opposition: The 2.1 (1947) General Strike Movement and After

The Post-war history of Japan under the allied occupation of 1945–51 deserve special attention, because foreign occupation itself was a challenge to traditional values. A pacific and democratic Japan, something quite new, was to be created from scratch, through various

²⁵ Hyman Kublin, *Asian Revolutionary: The Life of Sen Katayama*, 1964, 42.

²⁶ Katayama to Hyndman, 12 Dec. 1914, H.M. Hyndman, *The Awakening of Asia*, 1919, 190–21.

reforms introduced by the Occupation Authorities: the military police state crumbled together with the notorious security maintenance act and special higher police; criticism of the emperor system was permitted; five major reforms were carried out, namely emancipation of women, the right of combination for the workers (for the first time), liberalisation of education, democratisation of the political system, and also of the national economy (dividing up of *Zaibatsu* and land reform above all). A New Constitution, with its pacifist safeguard in the Article Nine, was adopted. With the elimination from public life of the people responsible for war-time militarism and with the public declaration by the emperor of his non-divinity, Japan, it appeared, had at last settled on a democratic course of national life. The delicate issue, itself an irony of history, however, is the fact that all these reforms that originated from the Occupation Authorities, from above, had been demanded at one time or another before the war by opposition, would-be power from below. In other words, the Occupation Authorities, i.e. the Americans, effectively played a role which the Communists and Socialists in the past aspired to play themselves. There is, therefore, nothing odd about the Communists welcoming the Occupation forces as the army of liberation, their own ally, although there is some element of a tragicomedy in this. Yet the real tragicomedy lies in the fact that post-war reforms carried into effect under occupation made opposition, as it was, unreal, and this may largely account for its relative ineffectiveness in post-war politics.

This happy state did not last long, however. The onset of the cold war made the recovery of the national economy all important, and the resulting change in occupation policy led to the restoration of old war-time elements in all the sphere of the nation's life. As a result post-war reform appeared sham and hollow to many observers, and post-war opposition, properly speaking, began to take shape against 'sham' post-war reforms and against a somewhat crippled parliamentary democracy as it came to operate.

It was, however, not the cold war alone that caused the receding of the reformist tide. It was the strength of the workers who bore the burden of the economic reconstruction of the devastated country that frightened the conservative government and alerted the Occupation Authorities to possible revolutionary outcomes. To the attempted general strike of 1st February 1947, which marked the culmination of such working-class strength, we now turn.

Although the Socialists and the Communists competed with each other in organising the workers, the former allied with *Sodomei* (GFL similar to AFL) and the latter with *Sanbetsu* (CIO), they were more or less in agreement on the need for swift economic recovery without 'rationalisation,' that is without mass dismissals of workers. Railway workers and Seamen took the lead in this struggle, and the Communist-led *Sanbetsu* organised a series of successful strikes in October 1946 which secured an increase in wages for workers in the private sector of industry. Then the workers in the public sector, teachers, postal workers, national railway workers, central and local government employees, followed this lead, and formed a Joint Struggle Committee which represented 2.6 million public employees. During the 'October Offensive' 'the labour movement took on an increasingly political hue, combining economic demands with political slogans.'²⁷ Then the workers in the private sector were roused again, and the Communists and Socialists, *Sanbetsu* and *Sodomei*, jointly set up

²⁷ Paul Henriques, 'The Political Development of Japanese Labor and the February 1, 1947, General Strike Movement,' Claremont, Ph. D. Thesis, 1975, 185.

an action committee to overthrow the conservative government led by Yoshida. Now 4 million workers were ready to cease work on 1 February 1947.²⁸ The Occupation Authorities did not interfere until the very last moment. The immediate issue was a wage increase demanded for the low-paid government employees, and the Americans hesitated to take any action that might impair their reputation as an army of liberation.²⁹ The Communist party which practically took over the leadership of the Joint Action Committee believed that the Americans would not suppress a strike for legitimate purposes, even a general strike, and the party headquarters as late as the morning of 31st January remained excited over the question of who would be the members of a new democratic government of the people to be formed after a successful strike.³⁰ On the evening of the same day the chairman of the Joint Action Committee, Ii Yashiro, was summoned to the Occupation Authorities and ordered to make a radio broadcast to announce the cancellation of the impending general strike. 'I was reluctant till the last,' Ii later recalled: 'as I was sent by jeep to the broadcasting station. In the corridor to the studio, I met Tokuda Kyuichi, chairman of the Communist party, who said to me: "You should broadcast to cancel the strike" . . . This helped me make up my mind, but tears poured down my cheeks as it suddenly came to me that the American pretence that they would help promote trade unionism in Japan and defend workers against oppression was false. What a terrible pressure . . . They deceived us with empty promises of democracy. Overwhelmed with shock and agitation, I started broadcasting.'³¹

The massive mobilisation of the workers for a general strike, though it misfired in the end, had its effects: the government employees won an increase in wages, and the first and only government led by a Socialist prime minister was formed after the General Election later in the same year. But February 1947 marked the decisive shift of the American policy towards Japan from that of democratisation of the defeated nation to economic rehabilitation of a future ally in the cold war.³²

The Communist party and the Sanbetsu lost prestige after the debacle of the attempted General Strike. The CP received further heavy blows from the Occupation Authorities on the eve of the Korean war. The *Sohyo*, a new model trade union federation sponsored by the Americans in its formation, however, soon developed into a citadel of left-wing opinion, and along with radical students took a leading part in the struggle against the Security Treaty with America in 1960. The 15 years from 1945 to 1960 constitute perhaps the only period in our history when opposition developed in a fashion similar to those in Europe and America because American-sponsored reforms had helped create a new culture of enlightenment and democracy while the impact of traditional culture was heavily restrained.

Yet the same year of the anti-Security Treaty struggle, 1960, saw the great strike of miners at the Miike Colliery, the first victims of the change in government energy policy from domestic coal to imported oil. A company-sponsored second union was formed; the police and violent thugs were brought in to crush the heroically fighting first union which, isolated, finally capitulated, accepting the discharge of 1200 miners, including 400 union activists. Thus the Miike Miners' Strike marked the beginning of the end of the 'classical'

²⁸ Shioda Shobei, *Nihon Rodoundo no Rekishi*, 1964, 152.

²⁹ Saito Ichiro, *2.1 Strike Zengo*, 1956, 171.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 232, 234.

³¹ Quoted Saito, *op.cit.*, 241.

³² Henriques, *loc.cit.*, 8-9.

period of the labour movement in the post-war Japan.

There was, however, a temporary lull after the storm. 'Doubling of income' and 'high economic growth,' the promises of the Ikeda government, soon became realities, and the economic prosperity that marked the years after the 1960 struggles seemed to assure the unbroken rule of the LDP. Meanwhile, the Japanese Left was increasingly fragmented under the impact of international events (Hungary, the Sino-Soviet dispute, the Vietnam War) as much as by its own failure to make sufficient impact on national life. The Student Power movement of 1968–70 was permeated by the ideology of 'self-negation' or 'negation of the university which produces men to serve capital' by its students and possibly staff. As Ruth Benedict observed on a different occasion, there soon developed a typical swing of Japanese mood 'from intense dedication to intense boredom.' The intense boredom of the Left was now taken advantage of in the revival of cultural nationalism.

Business Culture

I remember a profound shock I felt when I read in a leading article in the special New Year issue of the *Asahi* in the middle of the 70s that we had come to the stage where we had nothing more to learn from the West. Before that we had gone through a period of intense inferiority-complex as students of western civilization: we felt everything Japanese was shoddy, inferior, awkward and ugly; company unions were something we should be ashamed of, as they were the signs of a low stage of development of the working-class consciousness; the lack of individual responsibility we deplored. All these things changed overnight: company unions became something we should be proud of. We came to admire group solidarity rather than individual responsibility. A Japanese ambassador to one of the Latin American countries who wrote a book on the ugly Japanese was dismissed. Bright spot-lights were now trained on various aspects of national, traditional culture and on the imperial family in modern dress. There is some parallel between the nationalist reaction late in the 1880s when Japanese capitalism was about to take off and the new nationalism in the 1970s when Japan's economic growth began to attract wide attention. The former culminated, as we have seen, in the Imperial Rescript on Education and emperor worship, and smoothed the road to Fascism. The latter has produced a nationalistic business culture with the slogan of 'internationalisation' as one of its conspicuous elements, reflecting the complexities of a Japanese economy now integrated into the world system of capitalism.

Nihonjinron (views on the unique Japanese) as well as *Nihonshiki-Keieiho* (Japanese style of management) began to flourish. These are the two main ideological pillars of the nationalistic business culture of today. Peter N. Dale, the author of an interesting recent study, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (1986) refers to employer-employee relationships presented as 'the quasi-feudal, patriarchal idiom of *oyabun* (parent-role) and *kobun* (child-role),' which 'not only suggested a rhetorical infantilisation of the working class image, but also transformed the reality of class conflict and business-labour antagonism into a collusive struggle against foreign trading nations as the real agents of exploitation.'³³ This collusion, though inherently nationalistic, also provided useful means for social control of the worker.

³³ Dale, *op.cit.*, 107.

Furthermore, it has become a sort of intellectual commodity to be exported to the west. Dale added that the westerners who worshiped 'Japan as Number One' were simply seeking to recapture their lost past, 'the idealised world of nineteenth-century capitalism.'³⁴

Conclusion

I have traced the long history of cultural development in connection with the idea of opposition in Japan. There are three features I should like to emphasize by way of conclusion. One is the strength of indigenous Shinto culture: Ando Shoeki and the Chichibu peasants looked back to it as a source of inspiration. But this easily leads to the myth of xenophobia, especially when it is tied to the institution of emperor-worship which has little to do with the Way of the Gods as the True Way. The second is the Buddhist idea of negation which profoundly influenced our literature and fine arts, style and taste. *Monono-Aware* was a major concern both of Lady Murasaki in the 11th century and Tanizaki Junichiro in the twentieth. Even today our popular culture exhibits same peculiarities. Take the *Enka*, popular love songs, for instance. The eternal themes in such songs are tears, rain, parting, loneliness, broken love and lost lovers. Replace love with hope. Our popular culture of negation prepares us for hopes frustrated and love lost.

The third point, however, is more hopeful. Looking back to our recent history, we can say that it was under democracy that the working-class opposition flourished and succeeded to any extent. The great Kawasaki Dockyard Strike (Kobe) of 1921, though suppressed in the end, took place at the time of Taisho Democracy, when, encouraged by Wilsonian democracy and the Russian revolution, the idea of democracy and socialism inspired a considerable section of the population. We could even say that the progress of the 2.1 General Strike movement was possible only under the reformist Occupation Authorities.

Culture, as I said at the beginning, is the act of creating life as well as the way of life that is created. Japan's position in the world system of advanced capitalism is still in the making, unsettled and delicate: her business culture would be welcome to those who hope to build a new world order out of the materials that once existed in pre-industrial or early industrial days. But Japan's business culture is also under attack, largely because of its dehumanising tendencies. Japan's 'internationalisation' drive is a necessity imposed by her new economic role in the world economy, but the nationalistic business culture stands in its way. What is really needed is to create a counter culture. The idea of opposition has not entirely disappeared: it has lived on among certain sections of the working class, professionals and students, and changes now taking effect in our industrial structure will, it is to be hoped, revive and even strengthen and develop it into something of a really international scale and dimensions. But to create new culture is the proper field of education. International links, or Anglo-Japanese links of higher education, for the promotion of which our Jerwood Fellowship has been founded, I believe, will become the means for creating a more humane and sane, and really international culture for future generations. With my heart-felt thanks to Mr. Jerwood, the founder and benefactor, I would like to bring my lecture to a close.

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³⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.