研究ノート

Social Changes in Japanese Society since 1970:
A Response to Five Reports delivered at the 40th Annual Convention of the Kansai Sociological Association
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Contents

01) Introduction

The objective of this paper is to give a theoretical formulation to explain social changes which occurred in different spheres, namely, social stratification, labor, community, politics, and women, in Japanese society since 1970. The theoretical tool to be used for this enterprise is a *Theory of Social Change* based on a functionalist interpretation. Although the changes observed in different social areas vary and initially may seem to be unrelated to each other, I'll argue that all these changes may be interpreted as the result of functional adaptation on the part of Japanese society to some of the changing and/or persistent surroundings, domestic as well as international.

In order to accomplish this task, the following steps are to be taken. First, I'll give a summary of the social changes discussed by five seminar participants in their respective areas in the historical context of Japanese society in the 1970s and 1980s. Second, I'll give an outline of the proposed theory of social change, defining three important surroundings of this society with three 'givens' which worked and work as conditions or limits to the alternatives Japanese society can choose in the process of its functional adaptation, i, e., natural environmental consideration, the diffusion of human rights ideology and the advent of an aging society. Finally, some of the interrelationships existing between these three surroundings and those among the outcomes of adaptation in different social spheres will be discussed. A brief personal evaluation of these changes is followed by suggestions of the possible course action which may be made from the top (government–administration) and from the bottom (civil movements), in order to lead Japanese society to become a more desirable social system not only for the Japanese themselves

but also for those non–Japanese who are concerned with Japan within and outside of this nation.

02) General Situation

In retrospect, one can say that the year 1970 saw the last day of the myth and reality of Japan's economic miracle, marking the end of her high-paced economic growth. In 1973 the first oil shock was experienced by Japan, which inevitably invited the slow–down of Japanese economic activity. Industries and firms were trying to cope with this difficulty by introducing the newly developed ME (Micro–Electronic) technology to attain a largescale rationalization, thus cutting their labor requirements. Though Japanese managers did not resort to such a drastic measure as immediate lay–off of their employees, many of them were transferred to subsidiaries or firms of the lower order, and part–timers were taken in to allow companies to adapt more flexibly to the changing situation of the business world. Government finances were also suffering from the sudden decline of tax revenue and in 1975 the Japanese government began to issue national bonds to meet both ends of the swelling budget for defense, social security, and regional development programs, which dramatically increased since then leading to the unprecedented sum of US $ *1.1 trillon (153.3 chou–yen)* in 1987, almost ten times higher than the figure for 1975. The rapid appreciation of the Japanese Yen against the US dollar (from about 250 yen in 1985 to 120 yen in 1987 to one US dollar) and the second oil shock also contributed much to the stagnation of the Japanese economy.

But it is true that Japanese business and industries managed to clear these barriers to continue a moderate but substantial growth in economic production. The growth of GNP became negative (minus) only in fiscal year 1974. Putting aside the real purchasing power of Japanese money due to the notoriously high Japanese commodity prices in the domestic market, the nominal income and savings of Japanese people have been increasing steadily in the period of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1977 an average Japanese earned 22,000 $ (308 man–yen) a year and held savings of 25,286 $ (354 man–yen) (1.15 times annual income), while in 1987 (ten years later) he earned 34,071 $ (477 man–yen) and held 58,643 $ (821 man–yen) as saving (1.72 times of

annual income). It is often pointed out that mainly due to the high price of land in Japan, which contributes in pushing up the prices of other consumer goods and services, the Japanese standard of living is not as high as that of many OECD countries. Particularly miserable is their housing, which an OECD report once described as rabbit hutche. Nevertheless it is an undeniable fact that the Japanese are now regarded as rich and generous and one can witness so many Japanese tourists all over the world purchasing Omiyage or gifts while travelling abroad. It is not irrelevant to hear from foreign media that police in America, Europe, and Southeast Asia are busy protecting these Japanese tourists against robbers and thieves as they are targeted simply because they have a lot of cash. Domestically it is also true that more people than ever are now busily engaged in various kinds of leisure activities ranging from cultural classes for women and elderly people and sports clubs for women and youth, to eating at comfortable restaurants with various dishes whose materials come from every corner of the world, and attending theatrical performances of internationally well–known artists and so on and so forth. Many who have some money are eager to increase their fortunes through the so–called money game (Zaiteku) such as buying and selling of stocks and bonds. It is also a noticeable fact that in 1985 the average life–expectancy reached 74.9 for men and 80.6 for women, one of the highest records among the developed nations, though this symbolizes both rosy and shadowy sides of Japanese society. Rosy because longevity is always welcome, but shadowy because it means that Japanese society is becoming more and more aged. In 1987, the percentage of older people (65 years and over) to the total population was 10.9% and the trend upward will continue at an unprecedented pace. This change in population–composition was not dealt with seriously in the seminar, although it cannot be overlooked when it comes to social changes in contemporary Japanese society. In regard to the relationship with foreign countries, we have at least two kinds of difficulty, namely, the trade friction with industrialized nations, especially with the United States, and the very existence of extremely poor and politically unstable neighboring Asian countries, particularly the People's Republic of China. The implications of the last impor-

tant fact will be discussed later in detail.

03) Social Changes in an Affluent Society

The social changes (in Japanese society since 1970) discussed by the five reporters occurred in the following five social spheres; 1) social stratification and education, 2) industry and labor, 3) community and social life, 4) politics and social consciousness, and 5) family and women. Although each presentation deals with each particular topic separately, changes in these five areas in society did not take place independently. Here I summarize them as partial elements of the greater social change which this nation experienced since 1970, by employing a general descriptive concept of social change, namely, "the coming of the post-industrial society."

In 1973, Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell published a book, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. This was a seminal work which stimulated various researches and discussions about the changing nature of highly industrialized societies such as the United States, parts of Europe, and Japan. The post-industrial society is characterized by affluence, which is possible on the basis of incessant technological innovations. In such a society, the economic structure, which shifted from material good-orientation to information-orientation, features the growth of the service sectors in which a majority of the work force is placed. With emphasis on knowledge and information, the so-called post-materialistic values catch the heart of the people and they are now striving for the realization of such goals as the quality of life or individual self-actualization, instead of merely looking for the fulfillment of materialistic need. In fact, one can easily recognize the coming of post-industrial society in Japan in the 1970s and 1980s, where some of the above mentioned characteristics of post-industrial society reveal themselves saliently. As early as the end of the 1960s, Japan witnessed the students revolts on university campuses all over the country, which can be interpreted as the burgeoning symptom of new values and consciousness on the part of the younger people who had been brought up in affluent social surroundings, which the previous generation had created from the ashe of the total destruction of the

country during the Pacific War. Generally speaking, Japanese people are now busy playing, consuming, and striving for self-realization, with the main interests focused on the spiritual and human, though material production is firmly maintained with the aid of robotics, and some are busier than ever being engaged in the money game even abroad. Business is always busy selling their new products in a minutely segmented market appealing to the excessively differentiated tastes of individual consumers.

Before going into the details of social changes in contemporary Japanese society, I'd like to point to two other features, which are also widely observed as being common to highly industrialized societies: the coming of the aging society and internationalization. Japan is not exceptional in these two aspects. Rather, if we look at her social changes in the last two decades, we can effortlessly notice that these two trends in social change have been extremely strong, particularly in the 1980s. The first trend is confirmed by the fact that in Japan the percentage of the aged population (65years and over) was 4.9 in 1950, 11.2 in 1988, and according to estimates, it will be 24.1 in the year 2040. This phenomenon is due: first, to the sharp decline in the birth rate (The population growth of Japan is caused mainly by the natural increase, for the net international migration is negligible), and second, to the remarkably improved life expectancy (It was 75.61 years for males and 81.39 years for females in 1987).

The second trend, internationalization, is a logical consequence of Japanese business activities which expanded far beyond the Japanese national boundary. Accompanying these economic activities was the widening and deepening of international relationships in other fields such as politics and culture. Let us take Japanese foreign trade, for example. In 1988, the total value of exports was US$ 264.9 billion, which was 15.6% higher than in the previous year. The total value of imports increased in 1988 by 25.3% to $187.4 billion. The trade balance thus recorded a surplus of $77.6 billion, down 2.7%, 1988 being the second consecutive year of decrease. There are some other surprising facts about Japanese internationalization. The total number of international telephone calls, sent and received, was 188.3 million in fiscal 1987; this was a

40.4% increase over the previous fiscal year. Actually, during the period between 1970 and 1984 the number of international telephone calls increased by 31 times, which really surprised me when I first came across the figure. The flow of foreign information has remarkably increased as NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) officially inaugurated the satellite-transmitted broadcasting since this June, which made it possible for ordinary Japanese (with a simple converter and antenna) to watch news programs from various countries like Korea, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, America, France, England, Italy, Soviet Union, and others. Another surprising figure is the number of Japanese travelling abroad. In 1987 Japanese departures increased by 23.8% over the previous year, and for the sixth consecutive year reached a record high, 6,829,000. Under these circumstances, many problems hitherto regarded as domestic should be treated in an international perspective and many new problems arise such as trade frictions, cultural misunderstanding, and international crimes, to mention a few. Needless to say, the trend toward internationalization had a strong impact on the Japanese social structure as well as the people's way of thinking and their values. Some of the social changes discussed in the seminar are definitely the results of this trend. Now let me place the social changes discussed by the five specialists in the context of greater change, underlying trends in contemporary Japanese society.

03-1) Structure of Social Stratification

With the end of the high levels of economic growth in the 1970s, the factors facilitating equalization of Japanese society such as the wider opening of the higher education were losing their power. These factors, together with the almost total stopping of the outflow of the workers from the agriculture sector to other modern industrial and service sectors resulted in a less remarkable up-grading of the standard of living of the Japanese people. Nominally as well as substantially, the Japanese standard of living has been rising in terms of annual income and savings, but relative feelings of deprivation are prevailing among the people who once defined themselves "middle-class."

This is mainly due to the fact that the wealth gap has been increasing between those who have land and immobiles usually as inherited property and those who have none. It is a well-known fact that the accumulated profit gained by business firms is now haunting around here and there seeking more favorable investment opportunities, with the result that the price of land and other immovables has jumped up far beyond the reach of ordinary Japanese.

Another noticeable change is the decrease of the achievement principle in social mobility. In a rapidly changing (industrializing) society, the individual efforts of a capable youth was a strong leverage for climbing up the social ladder. It was in this sense that once the University of Tokyo was said to be an official channel through which the talented, but humbly born could attain a high level of social status. Today, statistics show that the family background of the students in this prestigeous national institution is higher in socio-economic terms than that of many students in prestigeous private institutions of higher education in this country, thus destroying the myth of "Todai" as a siphon to recruit the brightest students of humble origin.

In addition to these changes, I'd like to mention the effect of value-pluralism. As statistics indicate, the ratio of the youth who go to universities has been slightly decreasing, while some technical and professional schools have been attracting many young people. We cannot simply regard them as "Ochikobore" (or drop-outs) in a so-called credential society. There exists an underlying change in values, which may suggest that *Todai* is not the only aspired goal for the new generations. Pluralization of values is, in my opinion, another important feature of the post-industrial society.

03-2) Industry & Labor

The reporter of this topic argued that in the 1970s with the first and second oil shock and the high appreciation of the yen, the honeymoon of workers and companies came to an end. Being faced squarely by the severe business environment, Japanese companies began to make utmost efforts to rationalize their management. It is widely known as weight-controlled or slimmed management (Genryou-Keiei). Life-time employment system, once the most salient feature of Japanese manage-

ment, is about to abolished. These situational changes in work–settings have inevitably made workers reflect on their total commitment to the company in the past. The earlier symptom of this change had already revealed itself when some company's personnel section staff found that some newly recruited employees readily quit their jobs, which had never happened before. Being at a loss as to how to understand this phenomenon, they called them "The new human species" (Shin–Jinrui). Japanese workers have finally realized that their goal in life is not confined to company and work, but these are only the means of support for their own life, which should be lived with more autonomy and choice of their own. Thus, the *Company Society*, where one's destiny (as well as that of one's family's) is in the same boat as that of the company, is said to be disintegrating.

03–3) Community and Social Life

Conventional sociology has divided the study of communities into two independent areas, namely rural sociology and urban sociology. This rural–urban dichotomy, of course, is a reflection of the social reality where the human social space consist of two relatively independent spheres, the traditional rural communities and the newly developing urban cities. According to the reporter of this section, this traditional dichotomous framework has become more and more unrealistic in Japanese society after the 1970s, since the *Mura* (village community) has been disintegrating (see the steadily decreasing agriculture labor force!) on the one hand, and the rapid diffusion of Urbanism (the way of urban life) has taken place in the rural communities thanks to the development of mass madia and transportation, on the other. Based on his field research, the reporter successfully demonstrated the nation–wide phenomenon of "Konjyu–ka" or the mixing of rural and urban communities. With the index of the ratio of farmer's households in a community, he showed the rapid expansion of these mixing communities, not only in the metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, and Aichi, but also in the outskirts of local cities such as Shizuoka, Saitama, Nara and others. The social and political implications of this phenomenon, though not deeply analyzed by the reporter, seem to be

very important, because if traditional Japanese village communities were the citadel of the conservative votes and the traditional way of life, this change implies that these social bases of Japanese society have been and are eroding.

03–4) Politics and Social Consciousness

In 1986 the average Japanese annual income per person ($17,000) surpassed that of the Americans ($16,000), which was four times bigger than the former just twenty years ago. ("Richer than you" *The Economist*, Oct. 25, 1986) Thanks to this affluence, the main political issues which would destabilize the political process of this nation, shifted from "ideology" to "interest," and after the 1970s Japanese have had no serious social cleavages, symbolized by the many civil protest movements in the 1950s and 1960s. So far the LDP seemed to be successful in allocating resources and profits of the nation to different segments of the population so that it could maintain stability and continuity in Japanese politics.

In a concrete way, thanks to the economic growth in the 1960s, the LDP government could enlarge the scale of governmental finance, almost all of which was spent as public investments and subsidaries to the local governments. Worth noticing here is that in 1974 the LDP government increased the social welfare budget by 36.7% compared to the previous fiscal year. We must remember that in this year the Japanese economy recorded, for the first time and last since the end of the War, the minus GNP growth rate due to the first oil–shock and that the government finance was very stringent. Thus, the LDP became a "catch–all-party". But Japanese politics was never free from problems.

The relative decline of LDP rule was seen in the early 1970s when the liberal governors dominated local politics, especially in big cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, and 39% of the Japanese population was said to be under their leadership (supported by Komei, JSP, and JCP). This was mainly due to the people's responses to the public nuisances, including environmental pollution, caused by the hasty economic growth in the previous decade. But the increase of the so–called no-party–supporters and the diffusion of life–centered

conservatism also helped the LDP maintain the substantial support of the electorate (always about 40% of the effective vote).

In the 1980s, the LDP government had to choose a new alternative, as the pressure came from abroad. Though it is true that the LDP had been in power simply so long as to be too arrogant to listen to the Vox Populi (see Recruit scandal for example), the newly emerging international surroundings compelled it to sacrifice some of the long–cherished conservative bases, including farmers and small–and–medium sized businesses. In the last Upper House election (July 1989) the farmers in Tohoku region elected a Socialist councillor, hoping that he would stop the LDP's rice policy which encouraged (and forced) farmers not to cultivate one third of their rich paddy–fields in this region, that had been known as the rice storehouse of the nation. In reality, the LDP's "Gentan–Seisaku" (to discourage rice–production in return for compensation) is right, because Japan today cannot afford to support these rice–producing farmers by funneling government money to them, though they comprise a very strong pressure group in the country's political scene. The reasons for the rightness of the LDP policy are; 1) due to the government support the price of rice in Japan is said to be almost 7 times higher than the price in the international market, 2) Japanese do not eat rice any more in such a quantity as they did in the past, and 3) there is strong pressure from abroad to open the Japanese rice market —— and the more foreign money Japanese manufacturing industries earn the stronger this kind of pressures become.

Let us summarize this topic in the following way; Japanese politics in general and the LDP's rule in particular are about to change, because people's behavior and consciousness are changing in this affluent society, and structural changes are also taking place in the domestic as well as international environments both in business and politics.

03–5) Family and Women

According to the reporter of this topic the most remarkable change about Japanese women in the past two decades is that more women have moved into the paid work force than ever before. In fact, in 1984, married women with jobs exceeded those without. This implies that the traditional women's life–course (to be a good house–wife after marriage) is not adopted any more by the majority of contemporary Japanese women. Today, women occupy 40% of the total labor force of this nation and of these 70% are married (including the widowed and the separated). Approximately 70% of the female employees are working in the tertiary industries, though 20% of the female labor force is composed of part–timers, whose employment pattern is quite differentiated and sometimes unstable.

In the final analysis, the main cause of this change is, according to the reporter, the economic motive (to help enlarge the family budget), not the social participation initiated by women themselves. But despite the motive, the work experience does contribute to enlighten them to be socially sensitive and well–informed. Some of these emancipated women, though their judgement on the issue may or may not be right, supported the JSP (under the leadership of Ms. Doi) in the last Upper House election, criticizing the LDP for the implementation of the 3% consumption tax (April, 1989).

The increase in the number of working women has caused some unanticipated side–effects on family life, one early sympton of which was symbolized by the appearance of *Kaggiko* (or key–kids), children who are left alone in a locked house as both father and mother are out working. As the nuclear family is a dominant pattern of the Japanese family structure today, new questions have arisen such as, who should take care of children, or what is the appropriate division of labor in the household between husband and wife, and the number of divorces is increasing because there is no consensus on these questions among them.

Recently, suffering from the ever–increasing welfare expenditures, the Ministry of Welfare proposed a new vision of the Japanese type of social welfare, which once more emphasizes the role of the family, particularly in the area of the care of the elderly. Some liberated women strongly oppose this idea, arguing that the government is trying to enclose women in the home again.

It goes without saying that after the 1970s the American feminist movements have invaded this island nation across the Pacific, which has surely provoked some of the Japanese counterparts to expand their activities. But how should we interpret the fact that the ratio of women without a job

(Sengyo–Shifu) is disproportionately high in the high income group (the average annual household income is seven million yen and over)?

To summarize these changes, we can find some underlying causes, though some of them conflict with each other. But all these changes are to be interpreted as the results of the functional adaptation of contemporary Japanese society to a certain number of functional imperatives. Now I'd like to present the basic framework for my interpretation of social changes in the Japanese society after 1970.

04) Functional Interpretative Framework of Social Changes

It seems to be completely legitimate to explain social changes in terms of the process (and results) of adaptation of a social system to its changing environments. Although some scholars argue that the logical pattern of scientific explanation should be cause–and–effect, the functional explanation is particularly effective when it comes to the living system. In the case of the social system, however, a special note should be made when the researcher defines the functional imperatives (or requisites), since these should be formulated according to their analytical purposes. There are no objectively given functional requisites except when the system is still on a preliminary survival stage. Usually, a highly adaptive system, with its sophisticated needs and goals, faces some culturally and socially formed (and, therefore very complicated) environments within and outside of itself. Thus, contemporary Japanese society has been and is changing its structure by adapting itself to persistent or changing environments. Three important technical notes are; 1) the process of adaptation should be interpreted in the widest sense of the word, including active intervention on the part of the system to the environments, 2) we presuppose some sort of inner conflicts among adaptation processes as they are directed to the different environments, 3) the environments are not objectively given, but are somehow the products of socio–cultural situations, related closely to the values and norms of the day.

We assume that there are three important environments to which contemporary Japanese society has to adapt itself effectively under the three given conditions (which I'll mention just below) that it

cannot change easily, thus the social changes after 1970 in this society are the direct or indirect of this adaptation process. The three important environments are; 1) industrialism, 2) internationalism, and 3) acquisitivism, and the three conditions are; 1) diffusion of the ideology of democracy and human rights, 2) consideration given to environmental conservation, and 3) the coming of an aging society (or a predominatly aged population in the society). In the following section, I'd like to elaborate on this idea in detail.

04–1) Industrialism

After the War, the Japanese people, under the leadership of Shigeru Yoshida, defined the economic growth as the instrument by which the recovery of the war–torn nation could be achieved. The Japanese society was so effectively organized as to attain this ultimate goal of the nation. In fact, all the institutions of the society were, more or less, devoted towards the achievement of this specific goal; the educational system, the government bureaucracy, the production system, the domestic market, the firm–industry groupings, the bonus system, the life–time employment, company unions, and so forth. This trading nation policy was so successful that an unprecedented economic recovery was attained by the end of the 1960s. But after 1970, the international trade environment, hitereto so favorable to Japan, began to change to the disadvantage of Japan. The first oil shock affected Japan in 1973, which was followed by the high appreciation of the yen, and then by the second oil shock. The rationalized slim management, which Japanese businessmen could not but employ, resulted in the steady decline of life–time–employment and of the seniority order, once regarded as the most salient features of the Japanese style of management, thus leading to the disorganization of the so–called 'company' society, emancipating many workers from the myth of 'Moretsu–Shain' (the workholic).

As Japan accumulated foreign money through its trade (successful selling of the products made in Japan) with the rest of the world, the pressure from abroad became tougher and stronger, demanding the opening of the Japanese domestic market to foreign products, some of which would inevitably compete with and beat down the Japanese products

with their better quality and cheaper price. In spite of these pressures the Japanese market is still notoriously closed (with many non-tariff barriers, for example, traditional business customs) to foreign goods and services, thus protecting some of the retarded industrial sectors, notably agriculture. Paradoxically, Japanese people today are compelled to work less and to consume more as the result of the excellent adaptation to the requisites of *industrialism*. Though the concerned industry areas have shifted from textile, steel and ship–building to more sophisticated high technology fields, this requisite of industrialism still holds a mandatory power, and an interesting question is whether Japanese society can continue to adapt itself to this requisite under the new conditions, namely, with the affluent workers inside and the protectionist trade climate outside.

04-2) Internationalism

Having benefited from the free world market and the American nuclear umbrella, Japan has been enjoying a relative peace and a tremendous economic prosperity. But this 'unbalanced' structure of internationalization should be modified sooner or later as criticism from abroad becomes too severe for Japan to ignore, do nothing to ameliorate the situation. The Free-Rider Theory is not only applicable to the defense endeavors of the Free World, but also to the international economy. In the latter field, however, Japanese efforts can be seen, for example, in the case of ODA (official development aids). But in the final analysis, Japan has received more than it has given in its relationship with the rest of the world. The functional requisite of internationalism obliges Japan to change its structure, including people's behavior and attitudes, and even some of its value systems.

As far as the goods and services are concerned, Japan has to open its domestic market more widely to foreign businesses. Specifically, the trade imbalance between Japan and the United States should be corrected as promptly as possible, as the majority of Americans today say that the Japanese economic threat is more serious to America than Soviet military threat. (*NEWSWEEK*, October 9, 1989) Many internal changes are to be expected in terms of industrial rearrangement, some of which are al-

ready occurring, such as the rapid decline of agriculture in this country, which results in the deterioration of the conservative political bases of LDP rule. But more serious is the Japanese labor market, the question of whether we should allow foreign workers to come into this country and work. So far, as far as this question is concerned, Japanese attitudes have been very conservative and idiocincratically naive; as we are homogeneous in racial composition and culture, we cannot afford to accept the heterogeneous elements into this society which would be the cause of social disturbances and possible disorder in politics. With this narrow-minded policy, Japan accepted a minimum of Indochinese boat-people, a number disproportionately small against Japan's economic strength. Surrounded by economically poorer nations of Asia, particularly China with its 100 million potential unemployed population in rural areas (incidentally, this size being almost comparable to the population of Japan itself), Japan is now a target country for those who want to work but have no jobs in their respective countries. Moreover, the wage gap between these countries and Japan gives a strong incentive to these people because simple arithmetic can show that they can earn an amount of money in a few days in Japan which would be equivalent to one-month renumeration back in their own country. The continuously booming economy in Japan causes a relative shortage of labor, together with the tendency for Japanese not to be willing to engage in the so-called dirty jobs any more. The introduction of robotics and automation will not be enough, especially in the service industries where women part-timers are heavily mobilized today. With the relative decline of the younger brackets of the population, welfare service sectors will suffer a severe labor shortage in the years to come as the number of the elderly who need to be taken care of are increasing at such a rate as never experienced by other industrialized countries in the world.

04-3) Acquisitivism

The third important environment (functional imperative) to which Japanese society today has to adapt itself is acquisitivism. This implies a full-scale liberation of the individual human desires for

material goods as well as spiritual self–satisfaction. Today, Japanese people are busily committing themselves to enhance their personal satisfaction through different activities, ranging from Zaiteku (money game) to self–contemplation in Zen temples. The minutely segmented market of various goods and services is responding to the desire for all personal desires to be fulfilled. Gourmet restaurants are full of ordinary citizens, where you find them eating superb French cuisine or a Chinese Emperor's dinner, with wines from every corner of the world. Though they were severely criticized, some Japanese went to the Philippines to buy kidneys for medical transplants. Maybe they were indulged in the hedonistic ideology: money can buy everything!

The objective conditions also encourage this acquisitive style of life, because now they are strongly justified in working less and consuming more, both by the government and by business. Suddenly freed from the traditional work ethics, some Japanese are at a loss as to what to do, but leisure industries with their cunning strategy and tactics are targeting the money and desires of the people. The credit system has developed very quickly to facilitate this individual fulfillment of desires through consumption. With how many pairs of shoes are they really satisfied (and stop buying any more shoes), that is the question.

Though seemingly limitless, Japanese society has some limitations or constraints in the process of adaptation which are imposed by the following three conditions, namely 1) diffusion of democratic ideology, 2) consideration for the natural environment, and 3) the coming of an aging society.

04–4) Ideology of democracy and human rights

With the new constitution promulgated in 1947, the Japanese have been gradually democratized, and particularly the affluence brought about by the economic growth contributed greatly to the diffusion of the idea of human rights. Today, willingly or not, people of Japan have to pay due attention to minorities, the handicapped, and women in their decision to act, not to jeopardize the basic human rights of these traditionally less fortunate people. The slightly fastidious attitudes towards foreign workers seems to be based on an anxiety on the part of the Japanese people, since once brought to Japan these foreign workers should be treated equal to their Japanese counterparts. Both generosity in heart and money in pocket are needed in connection with this matter.

04–5) Consideration for the natural environments

The high speed of economic growth in the 1960s brought a variety of public nuisances, including pollution of air, water, and soil. The Japanese government lost no time in responding to these environmental damages and issued many acts to curb their effects so that in the 1970s the Japanese environment was much cleaner, though not perfectly free from pollution.

Today, preservation of the natural environment is considered to be one of the urgent tasks which should be tackled through concerted action by the international community. In this respect, the Japanese are not very well aware of the importance of this task. Though mountains and lakes in Japan are taken care of by the incessantly conscious people, they contribute to the destruction of, for instance, the tropical rain forest in Southeast Asia, importing a great quantity of timber to fill the need of this prosperous nation. We cannot say that the obligation of conservation of natural resources is deeply felt by ordinary Japanese as their responsibility. If they want to be a full fledged citizen of the global community, they have to take this responsibility. But as far as their own territory is concerned, they are very sensitive and conscious in preserving the natural environment. The so-called life–centered conservatism, the core ideology of which is rather egoistic individual interests in everyday life, contribute to expand the protest movements against the main sources of pollution in many local neighborhood communities. But the Japanese have to open their eyes to see the situation in a wider perspective and to realize the necessity of international collaboration. Maybe, we'll be suffering from the acid rain coming from the Chinese continent when industrialization develops there in the near future. Ironically enough, the highly sophisticated antipollution technology is now one of Japan's export items.

04-6) The coming of the aging society

The rapid increase of the aged population gives some constraints to social change alternatives in this society, inducing the relative shortage of the young labor force on the one hand and ever-increasing expenditures for medical care and other welfare services for the aged on the other. In connection with this problem, some do not conceal their fear that population growth will stop and society may lose its energy and creativity. Here is a strong incentive, though still lying below the people's consciousness, to welcome the young foreign workers into this country. Recently, a remote village located in a mountainous region in Shikoku, which had been suffering from a shortage of girls (Yome-Busoku = shortage of brides), recruited wives from the Philippines. The eldery are now happy to have grandchildren from such interracial marriages.

05) Some concluding remarks

To explain the total social changes taking place in different spheres in a society in a systematic way, the functionalist interpretation seems to be the most effective, because this approach can avoid at least two pit-falls that the conventionnal cause-and effect model would inevitably encounter: 1) fragmentation and 2) ambiguity.

Generally speaking, a typical scientific model is based on analysis, literally implying the division of the relatively complicated subject-matter into pieces and specifying the precise research objects. This approach though quite effective in the case of some kinds of analysis, is not suitable for describing and interpreting the subject-matter which we are dealing with in this paper. The unavoidable fragmentation of the phenomenon could not give us a whole picture of the social reality. Furthermore, it would also lose the causal chain in the process of researching it as the social entity is extremely complicated in terms of cause and effect. Probably, computers are mobilized to define the causal chain through some kind of multi-factor analysis, but remember that the findings thus derived can only suggest the possible affinity (not necessarily the cause and the effect) between the selected variables.

As the *SSM* survey (a very systematic, highly sophisticated and mathematics-based survey of the social structure) shows, a number of operational definitions should be given to identify social units and categories before the data is quantified and analyzed through computation. After a voluminous work, you can tell what kind of independent variables, with what weight, are related to the phenomenon you want to understand (the dependent variable). It is clear that such a digital way of analysis is definitely unsuitable for our puroposes.

Maybe our analysis is less precise since we are dealing with a highly complicated total social phenomena. The functionalist interpretation is simply a principal, nevertheless a powerful explanatory tool. This is the basic guideline along which we can extend our imagination to trace back the ramified network of cause-and-effect reality. The three *environments* (surroundings) are somehow the product of history and culture. Maybe we can change them. Again, it should be noticed that the adaptive process to these three envrionments could be harmonious (compatible) and/or conflictual (incompatible) to each other. To clarify this point, let's take women's participation in the labor force, for example.

The conventional scientific analysis tries to find some causes which make, necessarily and sufficiently, a specific social phenomenon possible. Often times it divides the possible causes into two categories of different nature, subjective and objective, or push factors and pull factors. But, sooner or later, it comes to realize that the causal chain is stretching in the past and ramifying in the social space limitlessly. Unlike this digital and mechanical logic, our interpretative model can give us a matrix of the phenomenon. The various cause-and-effect chains, sometimes quite different in nature (for example, individual psychological variables and macro-econmic structural variables, or economic motivation and social participation motivation, to mention a few), are displayed, in a sense, on a visual screen where both harmonious and conflictual relationships of the different imperatives and conditions can be seen in an analogous way.

Thus, our interpretation is that Japanese married women today were initially motivated by economic interests and began to work as part-timers, which is harmonious with the need of the business

world as they are looking for more flexible labor forces, in order to cope with ups and downs of the economic climate, particularly in the ever-increasing and labor-intensive tertiary industry. At the same time, work participation changed women's sensitivity and consciousness to social affairs including politics, hitherto rarely mentioned in the female social gatherings (Listen to the Linguaphone text of any language!), which would, in turn, lead to change of the established structure of party support in the country's politics. But again we cannot overlook the factors which would be the deterring barriers to this female social participation, the care of the elderly, which is the combination of government policy and a hard objective reality, the advent of the aging society.

To predict the future is not within the scope of this paper and it is not necessarily regarded as the main scientific endeavor. But as we are well aware today, social changes are not something we can observe from outside, rather they are controlled and directed by human planning, based on the desirable or ideal image of our society.

Being away at some distance from contemporary Japanese society and taking a wider and more global perspective, we probably recognize in what direction social changes of today's Japan should take place, particularly in connection with the two imperatives, industrialism and acquisitivism. It is entirely up to the wisdom and decisions of contemporary Japanese people.

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