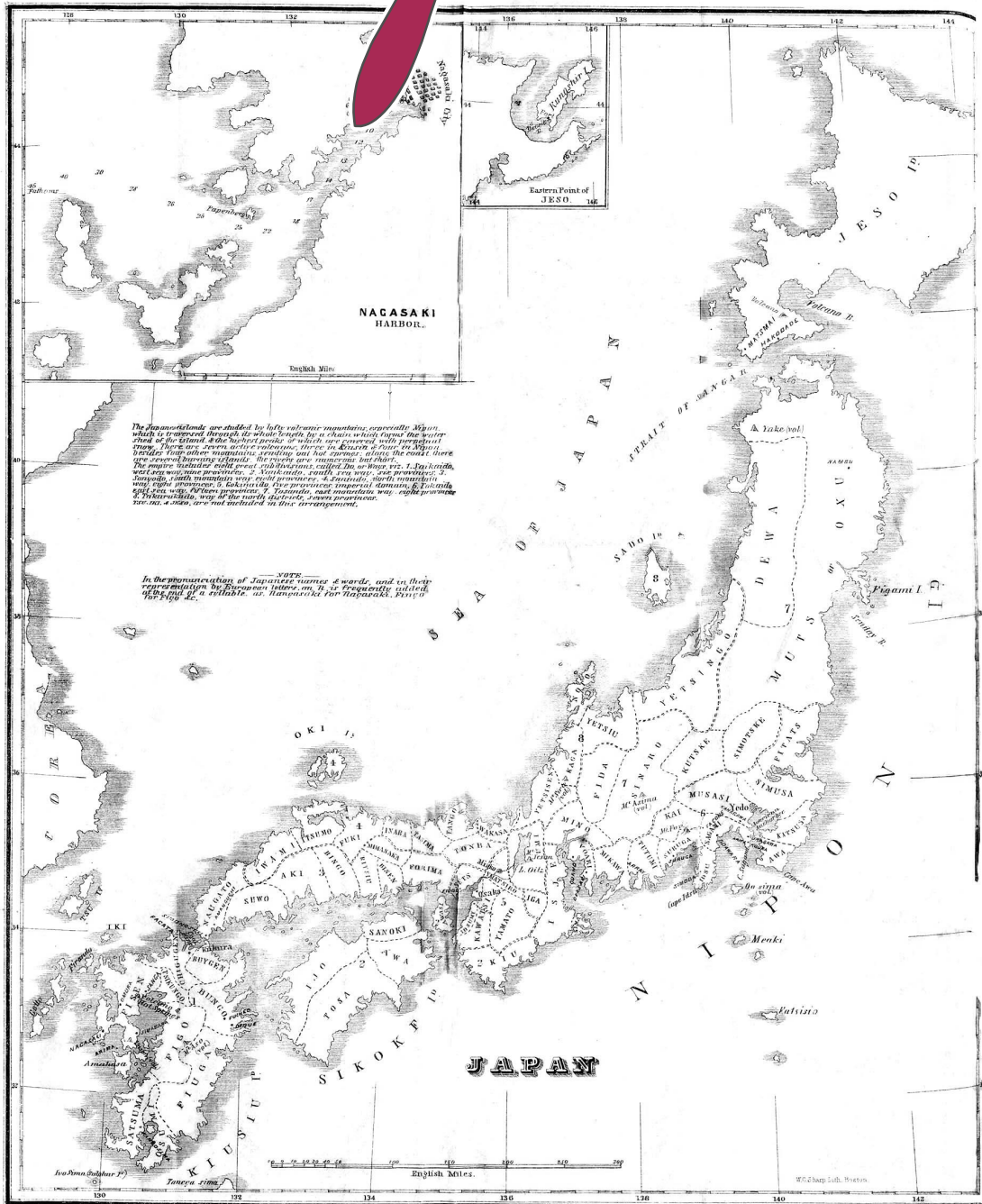


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Cover Photo

Japan in 1855

Editorial Notes*Personal Names*

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This issue of *Social Science Japan* brings several perspectives to bear on the increasingly important issue of fiscal and administrative decentralization. In the first of the articles, Professor Kanai examines Japan's 2006 Decentralization Reform Promotion Act for clues to the future evolution of policy in this area. According to his analysis, the key to future reform is whether control over fiscal revenues is dominated by the central government or by the local governments. In the following article, Professor Kohara argues that Japan's frenzied amalgamation of municipalities from 1999 through 2006 was largely driven by fiscal incentives. He also laments that this amalgamation has proceeded without coherent and credible objectives or standards, and has diminished the role played by the prefectural (or mid-tier) level of government. Next, Professor Tamura outlines Japan's prefectural system and recent prospects for *doshusei*, which seeks to combine prefectures into a regional structure of governance. His article explains the many obstacles confronting the introduction of *doshusei*, but convincingly points out the prolific faults of the present system of centralized governance. Lastly, Professor Wollmann's article shows that the trend towards decentralization is not limited to Japan, but is also evident in varying degrees in Western European countries.

In addition, the July 29 House of Councilor's election resulted in a historical defeat for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. For the first time since its inception in 1955, the LDP lost its leadership of the Upper House. There are many reasons for this LDP defeat, but salient among them are the ruling coalition's neglect of local conditions outside of the big urban centres. To the extent that this discontent with the central government continues to impinge on politics, it may well affect the future course of Japan's decentralization.

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Vectors of Change in Japan's Political and Fiscal Decentralization

Two decisive benchmarks: authority over administrative functions and responsibility for fiscal revenues

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This paper sketches vectors of change under Japan's Decentralization Reform Promotion Act. That act, enacted by the Diet in 2006, is an initiative for imparting renewed momentum to decentralization. Responsible for spearheading the intended decentralization is the Decentralization Reform Promotion Committee, a group of third-party experts launched in April 2007.

The Decentralization Reform Promotion Act, also known as the New Decentralization Promotion Act, is the successor to the Decentralization Promotion Act of 1995. Work by the Decentralization Promotion Committee under the earlier legislation culminated in the 1999 enactment of the Omnibus Decentralization Act. The accomplishments of the committee were substantive and earned regard as the initial phase of decentralization. Numerous issues remained, however, and the need for further decentralization was the core emphasis of the committee's final report, dated June 20, 2001.

Decentralization was part of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's "trinity reforms" for (1) reducing subsidies for specified public services from the national treasury to the local governments, (2) reducing general grants for unspecified purposes from the national treasury to the local governments, and (3) transferring some of the national government's tax-levying authority to the local governments. A ruling-party agreement dated November 30, 2005, characterized administrative reform for promoting decentralization as an "unending" quest.

I. Decentralization from the Perspective of the Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy

The New Decentralization Promotion Act is an extension of the Japanese government's ongoing program of "structural" reform, led by the Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy. It arose through debate in the council, whose members view decentralization as a means of reducing national and local fiscal expenditures. They were especially eager to address an issue that had impeded progress in that regard: the insistence by the local governments that fiscal assistance should accompany any administrative reforms that included assigned or devolved responsibility for functions or services. The council members reached a generally clear consensus in regard to the following items:

1. Local fiscal constraint is essential to shrinking national- and local-government expenditures.
2. Decentralization should avoid measures, such as requiring the local governments to perform functions or services formerly determined by the national government that would give the local governments a basis for demanding funding from the national government.
3. Close coordination between the national and the local governments is crucial in administrative reform likely to be perceived as disadvantageous to any local government.

- Legislators and government officials should devote careful consideration to the above criteria in evaluating fiscal results and in establishing fiscal targets.

II. Decentralization from the Perspective of the Local Governments

The local governments have an utterly different perspective from that of the national government's Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy. Articulating that perspective for the past decade have been six associations that represent the local governments' collective interests. Those associations—of prefectural governors, prefectural assembly chairpersons, city mayors, city council chairpersons, town headpersons, and town council chairpersons—have consistently stressed the following priorities in asserting local-government interests:

- Decentralization is essential to revitalizing Japan's rural regions.
- Decentralization should avoid measures, such as requiring the local governments to perform functions or services formerly performed by the national government, which would give the national government a basis for interfering in local-government affairs.
- Vigorous participation by the local governments in the national arena of political decision making is crucial in administrative reform likely to be perceived as disadvantageous to the national government.
- Legislators and government officials should

devote careful consideration to securing sufficient local sources of tax revenues in evaluating fiscal results and in establishing fiscal targets.

The sway of the national government over the local governments remained basically undiminished through the initial phase of decentralization. Reforms ended the national government's practice of assigning functions to the local governments by bureaucratic fiat. Still intact, however, was the power of the national government to impose functions on the local governments through legislation and administrative rule making.

Only by moderating the national government's legislative clout, argued the six local-government associations, could substantive progress in decentralization occur. They interpret the New Decentralization Promotion Act as reflecting their demands for curtailing the national government's legislative sway over the local governments. Their interpretation thus differs subtly but crucially from that of the Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy.

III. Four Possible Approaches

The New Decentralization Promotion Act, in permitting two crucially different interpretations, was a quintessentially fuzzy Japanese exercise in accommodating divergent interests. That fuzziness was and is tenuous. Unambiguous decisions about concrete issues will become necessary as decentralization progresses. Japan's national and

What and how much to decentralize

		National-government power to impose administrative responsibilities on local governments	
		<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>
National-government control over sources of fiscal funding	<i>Strong</i>	1. Highly centralized governance—a continuation of Japan's postwar model	2. Decentralized governance accompanied by continued national-government control over fiscal revenues—a new framework consistent with local-government demands
	<i>Weak</i>	3. Centralized governance accompanied by extensive devolution of authority over fiscal revenues—a reversion to the prewar model	4. Decentralized governance and smaller government overall—a new framework consistent with the vision of the Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy

local governments will need to choose straightforward courses of action and will need to acknowledge limits to their latitude for compromise.

Characterizing Japanese public administration since World War II have been national-government assertiveness in assigning functions and services to the local governments and strong national-government control over fiscal revenues. Developments in those two characteristics under the New Decentralization Promotion Act will define the course of decentralization. Outlined in the table are the four basic potential combinations of developments. The national government

1. remains assertive in delegating functions and services and retains tight control over fiscal revenues;
2. becomes less assertive in delegating functions and services but retains extensive control over fiscal revenues;
3. remains assertive in delegating functions and services but devolves substantial fiscal burdens; or
4. becomes less assertive in delegating functions and services and devolves substantial responsibility for and authority over fiscal revenues.

Responsibility for and authority over fiscal revenues are the chief subject of disagreement between the local governments and the Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy. Economic shrinkage—in light of Japan's shrinking and aging population—will unquestionably reduce Japanese governments' absolute capacity for raising revenues. What remains to be seen is how much the balance of revenue-raising capacities between the national and the local governments will shift.

An issue of greater concern is the geographical disparity in revenue-raising capabilities. The local governments in economically strong regions enjoy ample options in fortifying their revenue raising, but the fiscal viability of the local governments in economically weak regions is questionable. For the famously homologous Japanese, the prospect of broadening economic differentials among regions poses a daunting challenge. That challenge further complicates the impending competition for access to fiscal revenues.

IV. Summary

Control over fiscal revenues—regardless of who controls the allocation of government functions—has huge implications for Japanese public finance, as well as for the political map of the nation. If the national government retains overwhelming fiscal control and responsibility (scenarios 1 and 2 in the table), its fiscal management will become unsustainable. A fiscal collapse at the national level would undermine functions and services essential to the quality of life for all Japanese. It would decimate the national government's capacity for subsidizing the local governments and would therefore trigger a fiscal collapse at the local level, too.

On the other hand, a wholesale shift of fiscal authority and responsibility to the local governments (scenarios 3 and 4 in the table) would be equally disastrous. It would extend the fiscal viability of the national government, but it would bankrupt the local governments in urban and rural areas alike. That, too, would debilitate functions and services essential to regional vitality and to the quality of life.

The cessation of fiscal support from the national government would oblige Japan's local governments to fend for themselves. Each local government would presumably focus narrowly on its own fiscal well-being. Public services would suffer as the local governments curtailed expenditures to match revenues. The quality of life would deteriorate, and the local governments would become essentially dysfunctional. Even if the local governments tried to maintain public services, the resultant deficit spending would drive them to bankruptcy. That, too, would emasculate public services.

Different approaches to decentralizing fiscal responsibility thus threaten to have the same result—of pauperizing Japan's local governments and debasing the quality of life. Regional fiscal debacles would necessitate emergency outlays by the national government to maintain a minimum level of public services. Fiscal collapse at the local level would eventually prove fiscally devastating at the national level, too.

We thus find that each of the approaches in the figure would prove disastrous if applied in an extreme and arbitrary manner. Each approach would require some compromise and moderation in practice to achieve sustainability. Determining the degree of decentralization to undertake will be a pressing issue in adopting any of the four approaches. Nuance, in other words, is of the essence. The fate of regional governance in Japan will hinge on the discretion employed in fine-tuning any approach to fiscal decentralization.

Powerful forces are converging on either side of an epic confrontation. On one side are the forces aligned in the cause of smaller government under the banner of structural reform. Their flagship is the government's Cabinet Advisory Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy. On the other side are the forces of Japan's local governments. In their vanguard are the six main local-government associations.

The confrontation taking shape is the latest engagement in the continuing postwar skirmish-

ing between forces focused on national economic interests and those focused on regional interests. In that sense, Japan's political landscape has remained essentially unchanged for half a century. The good news is that a workable solution to the challenges described in this paper is possible on that landscape. It will be possible if the forces arrayed on either side of the national-local confrontation are prepared to compromise.

Maintaining a sound balance of power between the national economic interests and the regional interests will be crucial. A sharp waxing of either side accompanied by a correspondingly sharp waning of the other would be extremely disruptive for fiscal management and for the quality of life, as well as for the political landscape. Trends in decentralization will therefore shape Japan decisively in the 21st century. Their implications extend far beyond merely rationalizing local public administration. Japan's approach to decentralization will reshape the nation's political framework, its fiscal foundations, and the very fabric of life.

The Great Heisei Consolidation: A Critical Review

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1. The Great Heisei Consolidation: Facts and Findings

The Japanese central government pushed ahead

with the nationwide consolidation of municipalities from 1999 through 2006, in line with the Law for Exceptional Measures on Municipal Mergers (hereinafter referred to as the Municipal Merger Law). The move was accelerated under the administration of then-Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, who took office in April 2001.

Japan has undergone three major waves of municipal consolidation since the Meiji Restoration. The first wave, often referred to as the Great Meiji Restoration, came in 1888 and 1889, coinciding with the introduction to Japan of the modern local government system. The number of municipalities was reduced from 71,314 to 15,859 through this first round of mergers. The second one, known as the Great Showa Consolidation, took place between 1953 and 1961 as part of the nation's efforts to cope with the changes brought about by the so-called post-war reforms. The number of municipalities was slashed from 9,868 to 3,472 (Tokyo's 23 wards, created after World War II, are not included in these figures, which also applies to all relevant figures mentioned later in this essay).

Table 1. Numbers of Municipalities by Prefecture

		As of March 31, 1999				As of April 1, 2006				Ratio of reduction (b/a) bet. 1999 & 2006
Rankings In reduction rate	Prefecture	Total (a)	City	Town	Village	Total (b)	City	Town	Village	
1	Hiroshima	86	13	67	6	23	14	9	0	26.7%
2	Ehime	70	12	44	14	20	11	9	0	28.6%
3	Nagasaki	79	8	70	1	23	13	10	0	29.1%
4	Oita	58	11	36	11	18	14	3	1	31.0%
5	Niigata	112	20	57	35	35	20	9	6	31.3%
43	Nara	47	10	20	17	39	12	15	12	83.0%
44	Hokkaido	212	34	154	24	180	35	130	15	84.9%
45	Kanagawa	37	19	17	1	35	19	15	1	94.6%
46	Tokyo	40	27	5	8	39	26	5	8	97.5%
47	Osaka	44	33	10	1	43	33	9	1	97.7%
Nationwide		3,232	670	1,994	568	1,820	779	844	197	56.3%

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

How can the third and latest wave, often referred to as the Great Heisei Consolidation, be compared with the preceding two? In the latest round, the number of municipalities was nearly halved from 3,232 in 1999 to 1,820 in 2006. Some prefectures saw the numbers of municipalities drop to almost one-fourth while others witnessed little change. This shows that the latest consolidation did not proceed evenly across the nation. Rather, the consolidation affected western Japan and rural areas more than eastern Japan and urban areas.

Table 2. Numbers and Ratios of Municipalities by Population Size as of April 1, 2006

Population Sizes	Below 10,000	10,000-50,000	50,000-100,000	100,000-200,000	200,000-500,000	500,000-1,000,000	1,000,000 and above
Numbers (Ratios)	503 (27.6%)	779 (42.8%)	276 (15.2%)	150 (8.2%)	86 (4.7%)	15 (0.8%)	11 (0.6%)
Cumulative Numbers (Cumulative Ratios)	503 (27.6%)	1,282 (70.4%)	1,558 (85.6%)	1,708 (93.8%)	1,794 (98.6%)	1,809 (99.4%)	1,820 (100.0%)

1) Population data taken from the 2005 census.

2) The 10,000-50,000 bracket does not include 50,000; the same rule applies to other population size brackets.

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Let us look here at how population sizes of municipalities changed after the Great Heisei Consolidation. According to the 2005 national census, the average size of municipalities, as calculated by the total population (=119,270,000) divided by the number of municipalities (=1,820), stood at around 66,000. However, this average figure does not necessarily represent the realities accurately. A closer look at the figures seems to present a different picture. At the time of the census, 26 big cities with a population of 500,000 and above existed, accounting for 25 percent of the total population despite representing a mere 1.4 percent of the total number of municipalities. On the other hand, municipalities with a population of less than 50,000, which thus do not fulfill the legal requirement for city status, numbered 1,282 and accounted for 70.4 percent of the total number of municipalities. Yet smaller municipalities with a population of less than 10,000 numbered 503, representing 27.6 percent of the total number of municipalities.

It appears, therefore, that the Great Heisei Consolidation was characterized by significant disparities in terms of both geographical distribution and population size.

2. Why was the consolidation necessary?—Lack of Goals and Justification

The Great Meiji Consolidation was aimed at making municipalities large enough to carry out the compilation of family registers, tax collection, military conscription and compulsory education. By contrast, the Great Showa Consolidation was mainly intended to build administrative units that could manage secondary education, a new task assigned to municipalities through the post-war reforms. With these specific agendas, the central government laid out the conditions each new municipality had to meet in the first two rounds of consolidation. In the Meiji consolidation, a decree issued by the interior minister stated that a newly created administrative unit should in principle have 300 to 500 households. In the Showa consolidation, a law stipulated that the standard population size of a municipality should be more than 8,000.

However, the central government forcibly pushed through the Great Heisei Consolidation without presenting any specific and persuasive objectives or standards. As a result, financial incentives turned to be the only driving force. The most cru-

cial of these was the issuance of special local bonds. Under this scheme, newly merged municipalities are allowed to issue special bonds for 10 years after merger to cover up to 95 percent of the costs of public works projects to build a new administrative unit, with the central government pledging to finance 70 percent of the repayment of the bonds' principal and interest through tax allocations (*chihō kōfu zei*).

Only recently Yamasaki Shigetaka, a senior official of the Internal Affairs Ministry who had played a leading role in the government merger drive, revealed what he called his personal view on the purpose of the plan (Yamasaki 2004, 2005). According to Yamasaki, the purpose was, put simply, to recreate municipalities into "comprehensive administrative units" (*sōgō gyōsei shutai*) that were suited to an era of devolution.

In my opinion, there are two meanings of the expression "comprehensive administrative unit": one meaning indicates an entity that can provide administrative services efficiently with limited resources; the other an entity that can carry out a wide range of administrative services on its own, including such tasks as disposal of garbage and human waste, fire fighting and nursing care services, which are often undertaken by partial cooperatives (*ichibu jimu kumiai*) or wide-area unions (*kōiki rengō*) rather than individual municipalities.

A document released by the Internal Affairs Ministry (MIC 2003), which Yamasaki himself refers to, suggests that the per-capita cost for administrative services surges when the population of a municipality is below 10,000. It also suggests that the so-called wide area services mentioned above are most often handled by an entity with a population of around 100,000, be it a partial cooperative, a wide-area union or an individual municipality. This data indicates that in order for a municipality to be an effective administrative service provider, it should have more than 10,000 residents, while it should have more than 100,000 residents in order to be a comprehensive service provider.

As we see from Table 2, however, municipalities that do not meet the first condition number 503, or 27.6 percent of the total, while those that do not

fulfill the second condition number 1,558, or 85.6 percent.

The basic guidelines on municipal consolidation presented by the Internal Affairs Minister in May 2005, in accordance with Article 58 of the newly enforced Municipal Merger Law, cited as a goal of the merger initiative the dissolution of small municipalities with a population of less than 10,000 people. This was the first time in the recent merger drive that the central government officially defined any benchmark for population size. Some merger promotion plans drafted by prefectures have advocated creating cities populated by more than 100,000 people together with the abolishment of municipalities inhabited by less than 10,000 people (Nara Prefecture 2006).

3. Financial Effects of Municipal Mergers

Why is it imperative for the central government to dissolve smaller municipalities and merge them into more effective administrative units? One major motive is obviously to help restore the nation's fiscal health.

In recent years, the general account budget of the central government stands at around 80 trillion yen with 50 trillion yen covered by taxes and the remaining 30 trillion by the issuance of government bonds. On the spending side, 50 trillion yen is disbursed for policy implementation, 15 trillion for tax allocations to local governments, and the remaining 15 trillion for the redemption of government bonds. This means that every year fiscal deficits increase by 15 trillion yen.

If costs for administrative services by small municipalities can be reduced through mergers, this will allow the central government to make a drastic cut in local tax allocations, given that small municipalities receive relatively generous allocations. Among three major options for reducing fiscal deficits—tax hikes, reductions in policy implementation costs and cuts in local tax allocations—the central government apparently prioritized the latter, deeming it the easiest means to cut spending.

The Internal Affairs Ministry released its estimates for the cost-cutting effects of municipal

mergers after the Great Heisei Consolidation had peaked (MIC 2006b). The estimates indicate that with regard to 557 municipalities newly created between 1999 and 2006, the average annual amount to be saved after 2016 will be 1.8 trillion yen. The bulk of this amount, if the estimate proves true, will be deducted from local tax allocations.

The tax allocation is, however, expected to inflate as long as the central government has to help repay the special bonds issued by merged municipalities. Therefore, the question is whether a reduction in the tax allocation brought about by mergers will offset an increase in the tax allocation stemming from the repayment of the special local bonds. To put this differently, the question needs to be asked whether or not the government's merger initiative can be justified from the perspective of fiscal consolidation. The central government has not provided any satisfactory answer to this question. We can only assume that the government is of the view that the balance sheet will return to the black over the long term.

4. Unexpected Effects of Municipal Mergers

The Great Heisei Consolidation, on the other hand, had some side effects that the central government had never intended. First of all, amid the merger boom, information disclosure, particularly the disclosure of fiscal data, and residents' participation in municipal decision-making, were encouraged. For example, a total of 418 referendums were held on merger plans between 2001 and March 2005. In stark contrast, the number of referendums held between 1996 and 2000 was only ten, most of which concerned plans to construct nuclear power plants or industrial waste disposal facilities (Ueda 2003, 2005).

Secondly, a decline in the numbers of heads and assembly members of municipalities can have significant political implications. According to estimates compiled by the Internal Affairs Ministry, the number of municipal assembly members is likely to fall to 38,942 after 2006, down more than 30 percent from 56,533 in 2003 (MIC 2006a).

For political parties with relatively weak organizational bases, municipal assembly members are

the most reliable grassroots activists as well as the most significant vote-gathering machines for the national, prefectural and municipal elections. A decline in their numbers inevitably causes a decline in grassroots activists and vote-gathering machines for such parties.

In addition, the falling number of municipal assembly members is certain to push up the minimum number of votes required to get elected to a municipal assembly. It may be expected, as a result, that rural-style pork-barrel politics, which are heavily dependent on community bonds and blood ties, will be eliminated over time and be replaced by urban-style, issue-oriented politics.

Hitherto, the main governing Liberal Democratic Party has stayed in power by utilizing its local assembly members as vote-gathering machines and doling out favors to rural areas through the national and local governments. While former Prime Minister Koizumi pledged to destroy his own party and succeeded in his attempt to some extent, he fell short of establishing a new vote-gathering machine and a new election strategy to replace the old LDP politics. Therefore, it is quite likely that the LDP may face a structural crisis in the near future at the nationwide level as a result of the short-term effect of reduced vote-gathering machines and the long-term effect of the advent of urban-style, issue-oriented elections.

Viewed from another perspective, the LDP and its coalition partner New Komeito may further strengthen their alliance, as the LDP will need Komeito's help even more badly because of its powerful vote-gathering machine, i.e., the *Sōka Gakkai*.

In 2007, the unified local elections and the Upper House election are held in the same year, a rarity that occurs only once in 12 years. It has been pointed out that in such double-election years, the LDP tends to lose in the Upper House polls as the party's local assembly members cut back on their activities immediately after their own elections (Ishikawa 1984). Attention is now focused on whether such a tendency will be aggravated by the party's loss of vote-gathering machines as a result of recent municipal mergers.

In the unified local elections in April, the LDP won 47.6 percent of all contested prefectural assembly seats, down from the 49.7 percent it held before the elections, while the largest opposition Democratic Party won 14.7 percent, doubling the previous proportion from 7.8 percent (Komeito is up from 6.8 to 7.1 percent; the Communist Party down from 4.1 to 3.9 percent; the Social Democrats down from 2.8 to 2.0 percent). It remains to be seen whether the LDP's setback in the latest unified elections signals its structural crisis or predicts its defeat in the Upper House election in July. We should watch carefully what will happen in the upcoming polls.¹

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¹ This article was written about one month before the July 29th election for the Upper House of Parliament. In the election, the main governing Liberal Democratic Party suffered a heavy defeat, winning only 37 seats—far below the level of the 64 of the contested seats it had held before the polls.

Japan's Federalist Prospects

Revamping regional governance

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Japan could be on the verge of a profound restructuring of its prefectural system. The national government's 28th Local Government System Research Council issued its final report on February 28, 2006. Now, the government will draw up a concrete design for a new framework of regional governments to replace the prefectural system. It calls that framework *doshusei*, a term that stresses an affinity with the U.S. federal model of state governments.

The Cabinet Office has set up a discussion group and a formal council to prepare a vision for the prospective framework within three years. That vision will provide for integrating Japan's 47 prefectures into a smaller number of regions equipped with increased self-governing authority. Meanwhile, the Liberal Democratic Party, Japan's present ruling party, has established a research group to debate different options for regional governance.

I. The *Doshusei* Version of Federalism

Doshusei's proponents argue that it would fortify Japan better to cope with the exigencies of globalization and demographic change. The ubiquitous regional offices of national government ministries and agencies, they note, are an albatross around the neck of the national government. Shifting public services and functions to the regional governments would leave the national government leaner and focused on diplomacy and other functions germane to national governance.

The *doshusei* proponents cite Japan's shrinking and aging population as a further reason for replacing Japan's prefectures with larger, more-autonomous governing units. Demographic change, they note, will help decentralize Japan's economy and reverse the long-standing concentration of resources on the nation's largest metropolises. Larger regional units and strengthened regional administration will be indispensable in capitalizing on the potential benefits of those trends.

Legislation enacted by the Diet in December 2006 lays a legal foundation for undertaking regional governance across broadened geographical units. That legislation designates Hokkaido as the testing ground for the new system. Hokkaido, however, is a single prefecture, and for that and other reasons the legislation falls far short of the remapping of Japan envisioned by the proponents of *doshusei*.

Japan's 47 prefectures have remained unchanged in number since Kagawa Prefecture split off from Ehime Prefecture in 1888. The 47 prefectures, known in Japanese as *todofuken*, comprise one *to*, the Tokyo capital region; one *do*, the "circuit" of Hokkai-*do*; two *fu*, the metropolitan prefectures of Kyoto and Osaka; and 43 *ken*, the other prefectures. The *to*, *do*, *fu*, and *ken* originally operated under differing legal and administrative frameworks, but they have been legally and administratively identical for all intents and purposes since 1947, and the *todofuken* nomenclature is

merely a historical vestige. To be sure, Tokyo differs slightly from the other prefectures in its administrative structure and terminology, but the differences are largely inconsequential.

Repeated mergers, meanwhile, have reduced the number of cities, towns, and villages to barely 1,800, from more than 70,000 in the late 1800s. The growing average size of Japan's municipalities has diminished the role of the prefectures. For example, the prefectural governments are responsible for public health centers in municipalities of fewer than 300,000 residents, but the municipal governments wield that responsibility in larger cities. Similarly, Japan's 17 ordinance-designated cities—municipalities designated by the national government as regional metropolitan centers—have replaced the governments of their prefectures as the administrators of children's guidance centers; ordinary national highways; prefectural roads; and, subject to mutual agreement, teacher employment in the mandatory education (up to age 16) system.

Proposals have arisen previously for replacing Japan's prefectures with fewer and stronger state-like units. One such proposal occasioned serious debate 80 years ago. A similar proposal, mooted in 1957, called for replacing the 47 prefectures with seven to nine regional governing units. Broad-based sentiment for merging prefectures later arose in the regions centered on Osaka and Nagoya. A government advisory council voiced support for those mergers in a 1965 report, and members of the Diet submitted a bill in the following year that would have made the mergers happen. Each of the proposals encountered predictable opposition and fell by the wayside.

Japan's business community has been consistently supportive of the idea of merging prefectures into larger and more-autonomous administrative units. The nation's business leaders have long favored reworking the balance of power between the national and regional governments on more-federalist lines, and they have floated repeated initiatives in that vein, largely in the spirit of raising governmental efficiency, reducing costs, and loosening regulations.

II. The Local Government System Research Council's Report

Regrouping Japan's regional governments into broader geographical units, argues the report by the 28th Local Government System Research Council, is important for several reasons. The report notes the jarring socioeconomic change under way in Japan and expresses doubts about the suitability of the nation's 120-year-old system of prefectural administration for addressing that change. It cites the trend toward the regional devolution of administrative and fiscal authority and questions the effectiveness of the prefectural system as a platform for that devolution. The report also emphasizes the need for accommodating the ongoing mergers of cities, towns, and villages throughout Japan and for addressing the growing range of issues that transcend prefectural boundaries.

At issue for Japan, insists the report, is the proper role of national government, as well as the optimal format for regional public administration. The report proposes a new balance of authority in national and local governance. It calls for refocusing national government on genuinely national responsibilities and for entrusting local administrative functions to regional public-sector organizations. The report offers concrete proposals for changes in the schematic positioning of local government, in the geographical scope of the regional government units, in the allocation of administrative responsibilities, in legislative assemblies and public-service administration, and in taxation and fiscal management.

Schematic positioning

Schematically, Japan would retain a two-tiered structure for regional governance. The geographically expanded and politically strengthened alternatives to the prefectures would be the upper tier; below them would be the cities, towns, and villages.

Geographical scope

Decisions about the borders of the new administrative units would depend on socioeconomic, geographical, historical, cultural, and other considerations. The Local Government System Research Council offers three examples for the possible remapping of Japan's regions into 9, 11, or 13 administrative units. It calls for the national

government to issue a remapping proposal, for the prefectures to respond with suggested modifications, and for the national government to incorporate the modifications suggested by the prefectures as much as possible in the final remapping.

The council assumes, for instance, that the government would propose merging Tokyo Prefecture with its surrounding prefectures, but Tokyoites might reasonably insist that their prefecture could function perfectly well as a stand-alone unit. Meanwhile, the transition to broadened administrative units would well occur in stages. Acceptance of the national government's remapping proposal might occur sooner in some prefectures than in others, and mergers could proceed in stages, in step with the pace of regional consensus building.

Administrative responsibilities

A great deal of responsibility for local administration would pass from the prefectural governments to their cities, towns, and villages, and the governments of the geographically expanded jurisdictions would focus on administering regionwide functions. The new jurisdictions would, wherever possible, inherit the responsibility for functions presently administered by local offices of the national government. That would include transferring responsibility for national highway maintenance, large river management, regional industrial promotion, environmental protection, and disaster preparedness.

Legislative assemblies and public-service administration

Each new jurisdiction would have a legislative assembly, the members of which the citizens would elect by direct balloting. The election process could supplement the present district representatives with at-large representatives. In addition, elected officials would replace appointees as the chief administrators of some public services, and their tenures would be subject to term limits.

Taxation and fiscal management

Transferring administrative authority from the national government to the regional governments would entail increased demand for regional fiscal funding, and tax revenues commensurate with that increase would shift from the national to the local governments. That would include building regional tax systems suitable to Japan's newly

decentralized framework of public administration. It would also include some sort of revenue sharing to compensate for regional differentials in economic vitality.

III. Issues to Address

Efforts to rework Japanese public administration on the *doshusei* model are bound to encounter stubborn resistance. Government ministries and agencies slated to lose authority will surely mobilize allied politicians and affiliated organizations to protect vested interests ferociously. The Cabinet Office will need to assert powerful leadership for the proposed changes to have a chance of succeeding. Japan consolidated several government ministries and agencies in 2001, and the struggle over the *doshusei* transformation of public administration could occasion further governmental realignment at the national level.

Winning the hearts and minds of the citizenry will be crucial. Ordinary people have been conspicuously absent from the debate about reforming regional government over the decades. Nearly all of the discourse has taken place among business leaders, politicians, national and regional government bureaucrats, and assorted academics.

Proponents of *doshusei* need to be especially sensitive to people's sense of regional identity. Most Japanese identify strongly with their home prefectures. That is more than evident during the biannual national tournaments for high school baseball teams. Countless Japanese passionately follow the exploits of teams from their home prefectures. Television sets are much in evidence in company cafeterias and even in offices while the tournaments are under way. People are understandably wary of anything that would diminish the vibrant regional diversity of their nation.

Doshusei advocates need to explain the value of transferring functions from the national to the regional governments and need to show how that will bring the national government closer to the people. They need to present the proposed changes as something more than merely a matter of amalgamating prefectures. Otherwise, people will get the opposite impression: that *doshusei* would distance government from the people.

Another issue is the widespread concern about

the power of the prefectural governors. Numerous Japanese regard the governors as wielding too much power already, and a lot of people will view *doshusei* as amplifying that power ominously. Their concern underlines the need for ensuring a robust framework of checks and balances between the prefectural governors and legislators.

As for the governors, a majority support *doshusei* in principle. That support is apparent in survey results published on March 5, 2006, by the *Asahi Shimbun*, a national daily newspaper. Nearly 60 percent of the governors reported that they were feeling pressure from the mergers of cities, towns, and villages and agreed that regional public administration would benefit from adopting administrative units larger than the present prefectures.

Among the governors opposed to *doshusei* were several who expressed concern that it might heighten the concentration of population and resources in large metropolises. Some argued that the prefectural governments possess sufficient experience and competence as presently constituted to take over functions from the national government.

The remapping possibilities for Japan's regions offered by the Local Government System Research Council are merely examples. They contain a great deal that will prove difficult to accept from any perspective. One grouping floated in the examples, for instance, would meld four prefectures that face the Japan Sea—Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui—as Hokuriku. Those prefectures, however, share little in the way of traditional culture or lifestyles. About the only common thread among the four is a lot of shared oversight by the regional arms of national government ministries and agencies.

Here is another instance of a highly improbable grouping. The research council tentatively investigated the possibility of a merger among 11 prefectures centered on Tokyo. That merger would produce a unit of a population of nearly 50 million people. The very consideration of such a merger promptly drew criticism for condoning an absurdly excessive concentration of population and economic might. Some critics even suggested splitting up, rather than merging, existing prefectures in the interest of economic equalitarianism.

Doshusei inevitably invites allusions to federalism. It would certainly oblige Japanese to rethink the division of legal authority between the regional and national governments. Rewriting the nation's constitution would become unavoidable. The size of the regional units envisaged by the *doshusei* proponents would overwhelm a conventional federal state. More than 35 million people would reside in the largest regional unit of the nine-unit remapping floated by the research council. That is bigger than the population of California, the largest of the 50 United States of America.

Any consideration of *doshusei* also needs to address the interests and concerns of prefecture-based companies, such as regional newspapers, financial institutions, and broadcasters, along with a diversity of special-interest organizations. A remapping of Japan's regions would force those companies and organizations to scramble to realign their geographical coverage and their very justification for being.

Doshusei, in other words, would be a vast and diversely disputed undertaking. It would encompass a wholesale transfer of governing and fiscal authority from the national government to the regional governments. Pitching the project simply in the name of reducing the cost of public administration would be wholly unconvincing. *Doshusei* will happen only if and to the extent that it evokes the principle of universal participation in government, that it brings about a genuine sharing of power between the national and regional governments, and that it empowers people in the regions to decide regional matters. The decision about whether or not to adopt the *doshusei* concept needs to emerge from a truly national debate. Interest in the future of Japanese public administration now focuses on the course of that debate.

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The Devolution of Public Tasks between Political Decentralisation and Administrative Deconcentration—a Comparative European Perspective

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I. Concepts and Definitions

Devolution and Decentralisation and Deconcentration

Modern states are typically multilevel politico-administrative systems whose intergovernmental structure and setting are made up of central, meso or regional, and local government levels. The vertical distribution and devolution of powers and responsibilities are a crucial constitutional, political, and organisational challenge.

With regard to the devolution of powers and responsibilities, an analytically useful distinction can be made between decentralisation and deconcentration.

Decentralisation

Decentralisation has an intrinsically political implication in that powers and functions, as well

as resources, are assigned to subnational entities that, in the intergovernmental setting, possess some political autonomy in their own right. The decentralised powers and functions are typically exercised within constitutionally and legally defined limits by democratically elected decision-making bodies and politically accountable individuals.

Decentralisation may be either regional or municipal. The politically most advanced form of regionalisation is federalisation, which is premised on a vertical division of responsibilities laid down in a country's constitution. A weaker form of regionalisation relates to the vertical distribution of functions not entrenched in the constitution and that can be altered simply through national legislation.

The decentralisation of public functions to the local government level may be called municipalisation. In most countries, municipalisation takes the form of a general competence clause granting local authorities the power to act on all matters of local relevance—in other words, that fall under their responsibility.

The full municipalisation of public tasks can be spoken of insofar as the elected local council decides, without exception, on how to conduct those tasks. Furthermore, the supervision by state authorities of the exercise of full municipalisation by the local authorities is, as a rule, restricted to a legality review; that is, whether the local authorities have complied with the pertinent legal provisions. Under these conditions, the status of the local government vis-à-vis the central and regional governments may be labelled separationist in terms of a distinct institutional and functional line between the local and the state levels.

Deconcentration

By contrast with decentralisation and its essentially political implications, deconcentration is an

intrinsically administrative concept that captures the devolution of administrative functions from an upper to a lower administrative level or unit.

In its most blatant form, administrative deconcentration takes place through the transfer of administrative tasks from an upper to a lower layer or unit of state administration, typically through the establishment of regional or local field offices. The establishment, similarly, of central-level sectoral agencies that are independent but subordinate to the respective sectoral central ministry, as in the case of the executive agencies in Great Britain, is a variant of deconcentration rather than of decentralisation.

Another important type of deconcentration can be seen in what can be called limited municipalisation. Under the dual-task scheme of local government that is a peculiarity of the German-Austrian state tradition the local authorities can be mandated to discharge, in addition to their genuinely local self-government responsibilities, public, or state, tasks that are explicitly delegated to them by the state.

The implementation of such delegated tasks differs from that of genuinely local government tasks particularly on two scores. First, the elected local councils have no competence in the decision making concerning or control over the delegated tasks. The execution of those tasks is entirely assigned to the local administration and, specifically, to its chief executive. Second, the oversight of the execution of those tasks by the state authorities goes far beyond a legal review to comprise the supervision of expediency and appropriateness to the point of direct instruction and intervention. As such, the local administration and its chief executive come close to acting as local agents of state administration and to being virtually integrated into the state administration. That is why, in contrast with the separationist scheme, this form of deconcentration has been classified as integrationist.

Functional and Territorial Reforms

Brief mention also must be made of the distinction between functional and territorial reforms.

Functional reforms are characterised by the devolution of tasks, by way of decentralisation or deconcentration, to lower political and administrative levels. In the transfer of individual tasks, functional reforms are guided by the principles of “one administrative space” (*Einraeumigkeit*) and “comprehensive administration” (*Einheit der Verwaltung*). Toward achieving an all-purpose, multi-functional profile of the pertinent political or administrative units, functional reforms typically aim at extending the multi-functionality of the local government level.

Territorial reforms were undertaken in many western European countries particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. They entail merging, amalgamating, and redrawing local government units to arrive at a population, territorial size, and administrative capacity to cope with the multi-functional mandate of local government.

II. The Devolution of Public Tasks between Convergence and Divergence

The following overview looks at the vertical trajectories the devolution of public tasks on the local government level have taken in Great Britain, Sweden, France, and Germany—four countries representative of the main European state and local government traditions. Needless to say, such a “nutshell” overview is bound to be sketchy and oversimplified.

Great Britain

Historically made up of three nations (England, Scotland, and Wales), Great Britain has been long ruled as a unified country under a central government. A fundamental territorial and organisational local government reform at the end of the 19th century resulted in a two-tier local government structure of counties and districts. This made Great Britain what has been called a dual polity with a distinct vertical distribution of responsibilities. The central government (Parliament, or Whitehall) was responsible for “high politics,” such as foreign policy, “running the Empire,” general legislation, etc. Local authorities and their elected councils dealt with “low politics,” including providing public utilities and social and health and the like services to the local popula-

tion and local industry. Much admired and envied in contemporary 19th-century and early 20th-century Europe, Great Britain exemplified a remarkably decentralised country with a multi-functional profile and a separationist form of local government.

In the buildup of Great Britain's modern welfare state, particularly after 1945, the local government level lost important functions, such as health, energy, and water supply, to nationalised agencies. Its role, however, in the delivery of welfare state social services was enhanced and its separationist autonomy largely preserved.

In 1974, the country's two-tier local government structure underwent a massive territorial and organisational reform. This brought the average population of the country's districts to 130,000 inhabitants, a size unparalleled in any other country and criticised by many for being oversized.

Since the late 1980s, Great Britain's central government has experienced some deconcentration—not decentralisation, but deconcentration—through the establishment of so-called executive agencies meant to carry out executive tasks hitherto discharged by central government ministries. The country, moreover, also was decentralised, in 1998, by transforming Scotland and Wales into regions with elected regional assemblies, etc., putting them, it has been said, on the “road to quasi-federalism.”

Yet, in England itself, where 85 percent of Great Britain's citizens live, similar regionalisation has not progressed. On the contrary, subnationally and locally England has experienced massive re-centralisation, since 1979 under Conservative governments and since 1997 under New Labour.

The central government has shorn the local authorities of crucial functions and instead made increasing use of local organisations (so-called quangos: quasi non-governmental organisations). These organisations operate outside local government control and are financially largely dependent on and otherwise directed by the central government.

The financial autonomy of the local authorities

thus has been severely curbed. In many policy fields, the powers of the central government and its secretaries of state to directly intervene and call in local government decisions have been conspicuously widened. Under the Blair government, a so-called Best Value regime was introduced that, as an instrument of central government-guided performance management, put the local authorities under tight control.

In summary, England's central government-local government relations have undergone a sweeping re-centralisation.

Sweden

In Sweden, the buildup of the modern, Swedish-model welfare state, particularly since 1945, is characterised by a distinct distribution of functions between the central government and Sweden's two tiers of local government. The central government is largely concerned with policy making, which it undertakes through a strikingly small number of personnel and remarkably independent, central-level administrative agencies that date back, notably, to the 18th century. Only 17 percent of the country's public-sector workforce is employed by the central government and the central-level administrative agencies.

Most public tasks in Sweden are carried out by the municipalities (*kommuner*), with the counties focussed on the public health system. For this reason, fully 60 percent of the country's public-sector workers are municipal employees, while another 25 percent are county employees. Dating back to the introduction of Sweden's modern two-tier local government system in 1862, the municipalities and counties have the right and responsibility to finance their tasks predominantly through local taxes, which further buttresses their autonomy.

In 1952 and again in 1974, the Swedish parliament decided to carry through large-scale territorial reforms of the municipalities, bringing their average size, in 1974, to some 34,000 inhabitants. These territorial reforms strengthened the ability of the municipalities to discharge their multi-functional responsibilities as the country's “local welfare states.” Furthermore, the reforms paved the way for the central government to devolve

further public tasks upon the municipalities, particularly, since the early 1990s, in the fields of primary and secondary school education and the care of the elderly.

Highlighting what is, by international comparison, Sweden's unusually high degree of decentralisation are the following:

- All public tasks assigned to the local authorities are regarded and treated as genuine, fully municipalised local government tasks that fall, without exception, under the responsibility and control of the elected local councils.
- In carrying out their fully municipalised tasks, the local authorities are subject only to a legal review by the state authorities that does not comprise the expediency or appropriateness of local decisions and activities.
- The regulation, by national legislation, of the local authorities in the exercise of their responsibilities is, by international comparison, remarkably thin.

These factors combine with pronounced financial autonomy to grant the local authorities what can only be interpreted as exemplary separationist status within Sweden's intergovernmental setting.

France

Among western European countries, France has traditionally very nearly epitomized a unitary, centrally governed state. Regional administrative units of the some 100 départements under the direction of a centrally appointed civil servant (*préfet*) served as the regional backbone of centralist, Napoleonic rule. A two-tier system of local authorities (*collectivités locales*) with elected councils on the departmental level and in the municipalities, or communes, played an all but marginal role except in the big cities well into the mid-20th century.

In the early 1970s, France fell in line with other European countries and embarked upon a territorial reform of its myriad small municipalities. France, however, failed conspicuously in this effort in the face, mostly, of resistance from local mayors. The boundaries of its 35,000 municipali-

ties, each with an average of 1,700 inhabitants, thus remained unchanged.

That multitude of small municipalities and their lack of administrative capacity for local matters had caused legislation to be introduced as early as 1890 to provide institutional forms of intercommunal cooperation (*Etablissements publics de coopération intercommunale*). The creation of *communautés urbaines* in the 1960s added to that intercommunal cooperation. Hence, *intercommunalité* has become a specific and almost exceptionalist feature of France's subnational, local environment.

In 1982, France's then-socialist government moved toward a secular decentralisation of the country's centralist, Napoleonic organisation. It did so by devolving some crucial state functions, particularly social policy responsibilities, primarily to the self-governing bodies (*conseils généraux*) on the départements level. By contrast, the transfer of functions to the municipalities (*communes*) was, probably because of their limited administrative capacity, quite meagre. In 2003, in a new round of decentralisation (Acte II), a constitutional amendment explicitly recognised France as a "decentralised republic" and further decentralisation was undertaken, again benefitting principally the départements and regions.

Another significant legislative initiative, the Loi Chevènement, of 1999, aimed at reforming the complex subnational, local environment of France's *intercommunalité*. It induced the municipalities and the maze of intercommunal formations to reorganise on the basis of three types of *communautés*. Hailed by some as an intercommunal revolution, the new *communautés* are apparently becoming functionally important actors sub-regionally and locally, although still without having directly elected councils, and thus lack political legitimacy.

Compared with its centralist, Napoleonic legacy, France has made conspicuous strides toward decentralisation. Yet significant reservations need to be noted:

- For one, the municipalities (*communes*), as the ground level of local government, have so far

been largely ignored, with decentralisation measures focussed instead on the country's some 100 départements.

- Whether the reform drive under the Loi Chevènement will make the *intercommunalité* a functionally and politically viable structure at an inter- and supra-local level remains to be seen.

- Notwithstanding the country's ongoing decentralisation, France's central government continues to preserve its strong organisational and personnel presence on the regional and local levels. It is important to note that since 1982, when decentralisation began in France, the total number of central government employees, most of them placed regionally and locally, has increased not decreased. Hence, a large chunk of France's public administration has been, at best, deconcentrated rather than decentralised.

Germany

Germany is a two-layer federal state made up of the federation (*Bund*) and the regional states (*Länder*) whose respective powers and responsibilities are laid down in the nation's constitution. The federation is largely responsible for policy making and legislation but is constitutionally barred from having its own regional or local field offices. By contrast, the legislative powers of the *Länder*, although enlarged recently through a federalist reform, are scarce, whereas the *Länder* have extensive administrative responsibilities.

Local governments have constitutionally not been given federal status but are regarded to be part of the *Länder*. Functionally and administratively, they carry out most of the public tasks. In fact, some 70 percent to 80 percent of all federal and *Länder*, as well as EU, legislation is implemented by the local authorities.

The vertical distribution of administrative responsibilities is evidenced in that only some 6.5 percent of all public-sector employees are federal personnel. Contrast this with the nearly 50 percent of *Länder* personnel and the almost 40 percent of local government personnel.

As mentioned, the functional scheme in which the local authorities operate is traditionally characterised by a duality of tasks. According to that

model, besides carrying out their own genuine local government tasks the local authorities also are in charge of public tasks delegated to them nationally. Hence, local administration presents an ambivalent picture. On the one hand, insofar as the local authorities carry out genuine, fully municipalised tasks, decision making is up to the elected local council, and supervision by the state, or *Länder*, authorities, is restricted to a legal review (*Rechtsaufsicht*). On the other hand, the elected councils do not exercise any influence or control over delegated public tasks. The execution of delegated tasks falls solely to the local administration, that is, essentially to its chief executive, the mayor, while the supervision that state, or *Länder* administration, authorities wield over the local conduct of delegated functions pertains to expediency and appropriateness (*Zweckmäßigkeit: Fachaufsicht*).

Clearly, in Germany the delegation or limited municipalisation of public tasks can be equated with administrative deconcentration rather than with political decentralisation. The consequence is that in the execution of its delegated tasks the local administration, and its chief executive, comes close to being integrated into state administration.

In the recent round of territorial and functional reforms in some *Länder*, there has been a tendency to further devolve state functions to the local authorities. Baden-Württemberg has gone furthest in this direction, abolishing most of its local administrative field offices and transferring their functions to local authorities. Yet, these functional reforms continue to be effected largely by way of delegation, so that the trend of integrating local administration into state and firstly *Länder* administration is ongoing and may even gain momentum.

III. A Conclusion on Decentralisation and Deconcentration: Convergence or Divergence?

This comparative sketch points to a somewhat ambivalent picture and conclusion. Most of the countries cited have shown convergent trends toward decentralisation, Great Britain being the marked exception. The regionalisation of Scotland and Wales certainly has been an overture to politi-

cal decentralisation, if not to quasi-federalism, but England has remained a far cry from regionalisation. Instead, relations between the central and local government levels have seen massive recentralisation in England. On the whole, however, there has been significant divergence between the countries cited regarding the rate and the timing of decentralisation and the degree to which decentralisation has been accompanied, and possibly marred and counteracted, by administrative deconcentration.

- Among European countries, and not just those cited in this comparison, Sweden has gone furthest in decentralising public tasks to local government levels. Sweden has been particularly diligent in fully municipalising municipalities, making their elected councils responsible, without exception, for the conduct of public tasks and subject only to a legal review by the state. Thus, Sweden's local government system exemplifies the separationist model.

- France appears still to be amid the transition from a historically highly centralist state to a more decentralist organisation. Its 100 départements, as the upper level of local government (*collectivités locales*), are still the main beneficiaries of decentralisation, while the bulk of its 35,000 municipalities (*communes*) continue to be left out. Whether the new bodies of intercommunal cooperation (*communautés*), under the Loi Chevènement, of 1999, are viable remains to be seen. For the time being, decentralisation appears to be retarded, if not thwarted, by the continuing strong organisational and personnel presence of the central government at the subregional and local levels in the guise of deconcentrated state administration.

- Germany's federal tradition looks at first sight

typical of a decentralised system. This is true in the relations between the federation and the *Länder* and with regard to the politically and functionally strong position of the local authorities in the intergovernmental setting. Closer inspection, however, reveals that a good deal of the devolution and transfer of public tasks from the state levels to the local authorities has been and is being effected through the delegation and limited municipalisation that constitutes administrative deconcentration rather than political decentralisation, with the tendency to integrate local administration into state administration.

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Political Musings by the Waterside Examining linkage between politics and society

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Just outside the main entrance to the Institute of Social Science is a pond, *Sanshiroike*. That pond was much in mind when I took up my duties at the institute this April. I detested *Sanshiroike* when I was a student at the University of Tokyo. The trees around the water were overly lush, and the greenery evoked a daytime atmosphere oddly inappropriate to the campus. Once, I overcame my resistance and strolled down to the water's edge, only to find a stagnant pool, murky and unwelcoming. I learned to steer clear of the pond for the rest of my days as an undergraduate.

My thoughts returned to *Sanshiroike* when I began doing research, in 1996, on Okuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), who served as prime minister in 1898 and again from 1914 to 1916 and who founded Waseda University. Newly graduated, I had become a research assistant in the Faculty of Law.

Anti-intellectual currents in politics and society had begun to capture my interest in a vague sort of way, and Okuma—a veritable titan, richly appealing and replete in contradictions—furnished ample material.

Okuma possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of a vast scope of human activity, and he compiled a pair of sweeping volumes that remain valuable sources of insight into the forces that shaped modern Japan: *Kaikoku Gojunenshi* (*Fifty Years of New Japan*), 1909, and *Kaikoku Taiseishi* (*History of the Situation of Opening the Country*), 1913. Also of interest is the unfinished *Tozai Bummei no Chowa* (*The Harmonization of Eastern and Western Civilizations*), published posthumously in 1923. In that work, Okuma looks all the way back to Socrates and Plato and to Confucius and Lao-tzu in a comparative examination of developments in Eastern and Western thinking. The ever-pragmatic Okuma was disdainful, however, of anything he perceived to be purely academic and literary and therefore of little practical value, and the ambitious scope of his writing is prone to errors of oversimplification.

In the political sphere, Okuma strived to infuse party politics with policy proposals based on objective facts and concrete, quantifiable goals. His approach, however, rendered difficult the kind of compromise needed to secure power, and the party he led languished in opposition. Okuma embarked repeatedly on antigovernment initiatives based on unrealistic demands.

My first book devoted to Okuma dealt with the dilemmas that he personified in the political realm. That book, published in 2003 as *Okuma Shigenobu to Seitoseiji* (*Okuma Shigenobu and Party Politics*), outlined the issues that Japan's first political parties faced.

A Question of Connection

Studying Okuma was fascinating, but I began to have doubts about the linkage between the political parties and society. I had sought in my research to determine the extent of the rational grounding beneath party debate. My premises had included an awareness of a basic political principle: the more intellectual the tone of the political discourse, the less the discourse captures the imagination or even the interest of ordinary party members and of the people at large. The circumstances of the general populace became a diminishing consideration, though, in my research. I concentrated increasingly on the ways that parties frame their political arguments, irrespective of how they shape their organizations in society.

I became preoccupied with the challenge of establishing social relevance for my research agenda. Just as I had been loath to approach *Sanshiroike*, I had shied away from asserting a contemporary social linkage for my research. I was frustrated at my lack of theoretical tools for examining the linkage between politics and society. Nor did I have a great deal of confidence in my grasp of the politics.

My initial research in regard to Okuma had focused on economic policy, but economics alone is an insufficient framework for evaluating the interaction between politics and society. I developed an interest in nationalism as another medium for that interaction, and political activity oriented toward revising unequal treaties has since become the focus of my research. A recent paper of mine appeared as "Kaikoku to Fubyodo Joyaku Kaisei" (The Opening of the Country and the Revision of Unequal Treaties) in *Higashi Ajia Kokusai Seijishi* (The International Political History of East Asia), edited by Kawashima Shin and Hattori Ryuji and published this year, 2007.

After the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japan began seeking to renegotiate treaties that the shogunate had concluded on unequal and disadvantageous terms. That effort continued until around the end of the 19th century. A lot of the treaty provisions were unilateral and unfavorable to Japan from the perspective of a modern sovereign state. One obliged Japan to turn over foreign nationals apprehended for misconduct to the consuls of

their home nations for disposition under the laws of those nations. Another robbed Japan of the right to establish tariffs autonomously. The natural desire to redress that kind of inequality might seem to mesh perfectly with nationalistic sentiment. Yet the kinds of unequal provisions cited here had aroused little antipathy in pre-Meiji Japan. The resistance that arose toward the treaties focused not on their inequality but on the very fact that they institutionalized trade with the West.

Japan began to seek more-equitable treaty provisions in its diplomacy at the beginning of Meiji era. But nationalism was a faint presence, at best, in that effort. The government's endeavors to redress unequal treaties centered up to the 1880s less on jurisprudence and tariffs than on rudimentary administrative authority. The treaties encroached little on administrative authority in any formal way, but negotiations with foreign powers had become part and parcel of dealing with the foreign enclaves in Japan. Regional bureaucrats reacted indignantly to the de facto restrictions on their authority over the foreign settlements. Their expressed dissatisfaction at the constraints on the exercise of Japan's sovereignty was an eruption of nationalism, but the people—the objects of the exercise of state power—showed little interest.

Perceiving minimal prospect of recovering their lost administrative authority, Japan's leaders focused on reasserting trial rights over foreign nationals accused of misconduct. Those lost rights became symbolic of the unequal and unfair treaties, and they became the chief focus of Japan's demands for the revision of the treaties. Trial rights were a more-spectacular issue than mundane administrative issues, and they kindled a political mobilization under the banner of nationalism.

Nationalists sought to enlist the people in a cause—friction with the vested rights of foreign powers—that had no direct bearing on their daily lives. Nationalism thus addressed a conceptual issue, rather than a tangible dispute, and it therefore offered little room for compromise. Nationalistic sentiment fueled the criticism of the treaty-revision proposals prepared by Okuma as foreign minister and by Inoue Kaoru, who served earlier in that capacity.

The Radicalization of Nationalism

Japan's renewed nationalism took shape in radicalized forms. For example, lifting the geographical restrictions on foreign activity in Japan was a natural bargaining chip in seeking treaty revisions, but that concession was unacceptable to the growing ranks of radicals. They felt threatened by the power of Western capital and culture and by the diligence and forbearance of Chinese labor. Their fears echoed, to some extent, the antiforeign sentiment that had arisen in pre-Meiji Japan.

Another form of radicalism pertained to interpretations of the significance of the Meiji Restoration. The restoration had occurred after the shogunate collapsed amid dissatisfaction with the treaties it had concluded with foreign powers. In the eyes of numerous Japanese, the nation had a duty to persist in seeking treaty revisions. To fail to do so would mean that the sacrifices rendered in bringing about the restoration had been in vain. This was an extreme position that transcended objective calculations of practical gain. Satisfying its proponents would require more than treaty revisions that simply secured more benefits for Japan than they gave away; the revised treaties would need to furnish convincing compensation for the sacrifice paid in bringing about the Meiji Restoration. Even more passionate in espousing this position than the restoration leaders were some former shogunate figures, such as Katsu Kaishu.

A third form of radicalism called, ironically, for enforcing the existing treaties more rigorously. The foreign settlements enjoyed several benefits not expressly provided for in the treaties; so, narrower and more-rigorous enforcement of the treaties seemed an effective way to pressure Japan's counterparties to agree to renegotiation. That position had majority support in the lower house of parliament, and it vexed the government until Japan and the United Kingdom agreed in 1894 to revise their treaty.

Among the privileges granted to the foreign settlements outside the treaty frameworks were several exemptions from municipal rules and procedures. Ending those exemptions and applying the rules of public administration to the foreign settlements recalled, in concept and in the cast of proponents, the early-Meiji opposition to unequal treaties. That issue infused the concept of the

nation-state with the spirit of nationalism, and it gained the support of first-rate thinkers and polemicists, such as Kuga Katsunan and Tokutomi Soho. They contributed arguments that framed utterly unrealistic proposals in sophisticated, well-structured logic—a practice that would recur repeatedly in Japanese diplomacy.

My research has thus revealed important, though often subtle, differences among the angrily nationalistic responses to the unequal treaties. But it has not revealed any mechanism—economic or nationalistic—by which we can be certain the political message fully entered the public arena.

The task before me now is to venture beyond the confines of narrowly defined politics and diplomacy and explore a diversity of pertinent sources. I also need to secure a theoretical grounding that extends beyond analysis of the political process in the narrow sense. That is all the more reason to be excited about being in the Institute of Social Science. My distinguished colleagues here in the institute's disparate disciplines present a wealth of potential insight, and I look forward to the opportunities for sharing ideas. I am happy to note that people here undertake joint research in ways that build on their different interests and perspectives.

A Friendlier Vantage on the Pond

The building that houses the Institute of Social Science commands a view of the greenery of *San-shiroike*. One day recently, I encountered there a neighbor of mine whom I know to be an avid birdwatcher. I asked what was special about *San-shiroike* for a birdwatcher. My neighbor reported that no one tends the trees much around the pond, so the spot is a veritable treasure trove of birds not seen elsewhere in Tokyo.

Now, I enjoy strolling through the lush verdure and around the pond. The comfortable atmosphere of the Institute of Social Science allows me to let my mind wander happily over the water even when I am confined to the laboratory doing research or participating in seminars or meetings. In the spirit of gratitude for my new workplace, I pledge to tend more carefully to honing my research skills.

Greetings from Visiting Professor

Sun Ge



Researcher
Literature Research Institute
China Academy of Social Sciences (China)
(Visiting Shaken from February 16, 2007 to May 18, 2007)

Q. How did you first come to know about *Shaken*?

A. I had long heard about the Institute of Social Science or '*Shaken*.' But, aside from a few individual researchers, I did not believe there was any relation between me and *Shaken*. This is because I had come to think that the intellectual history I am aspiring for strays from more orthodox social science research. To put it another way, for a heretic like me *Shaken* somewhere along the way had gained the image of "orthodoxy" and seemed unrelated to my goals.

One day, however, I received a sudden invitation asking if I would like to spend some time researching at *Shaken*. The invitation had come from a historian of political thought, whom I respect and would be delighted at the chance to research with. Without pausing, I accepted the offer and, then, arranged my schedule to make time for a prolonged visit to *Shaken*.

Q. What is the main purpose of this visit?

A. My primary aim in coming to *Shaken* was to experience the ethos of Tokyo University. For the research on Maruyama Masao that I was planning, I wanted this kind of corporal experience of the campus. Of course, the vestige of the Tokyo University of Maruyama's generation is nowhere

to be found on today's campus, but this is what I sought within the campus' invisible topology.

Now having spent three months at *Shaken*, I have achieved most of my goals. Moreover, in recognizing that *Shaken* is not representative of Tokyo University as a whole, I felt a tension lingering in *Shaken*'s quaint building (though it was built in the postwar period and is now receiving earthquake retrofitting) that is not present in the solid prewar building of the Department of Law where Maruyama once studied. This feeling was for me an unforeseen reward.

While proceeding with my own research plans, I also paid attention to the research situation at the *Shaken*. At present, there are two projects. The first is "*Kibōgaku*" (Hope Studies), and the second is "Research on the East Asian Region." And, it was while participating in the discussion seminars for both projects that my image of orthodoxy at *Shaken*'s collapsed.

For instance, when I first heard about the *Kibōgaku* project, I had a simple question: For a hard to gauge emotional subject like "hope" data, how does one make the approach scientific? Reading among other things the project's midterm report, this question only grew deeper. While making free use of sociology and economic methodology, exactly what relationship does *Kibōgaku* have with these traditional social sciences?

With this question in mind, I began to participate in the *Kibōgaku* seminars and at last understood its members' intent. Their aim is not to establish a new '—ology,' rather it is to pour new life into the increasingly sclerotic social sciences. Now, this is something I can agree with. More than agree with, the radical character of this thinking is something I admire. With their focus on the concrete location of the onetime steel-town of Kamaishi, what *Shaken* researchers may be creating is the "hope" of a new advancement in the social sciences in Japan.

What potential is there for the social sciences to be created anew is a question being asked the

world around. Amidst the acceleration of economic globalization, the question *Shaken* researchers are tossing about is what kind of “hope” should the social sciences hold for themselves? There is no easy answer to this question. And, for me, this is not a dispassionate concern. That is, I also am grappling with the social sciences from this kind of perspective.

As in Japan, the social sciences in China were also transplanted as a foreign derived discipline. In each country’s history, these disciplines changed as they took root. Within the structure of the Cold War, the Chinese intellectual community chose and used this thought born of the West in ways that differed from Japan but yet also held many of the same concerns. “Where exactly are the social sciences in China headed?” is already being asked by some in this young generation of scholars in China. With this situation in mind, my interest in the activities of *Shaken*’s researchers is related to my concern for the social sciences in China.

Q. What do you like about *Shaken*?

A. While my three month stay went by very quickly, I was blessed with excellent research conditions at *Shaken* and advanced my research and contacts with the academic community in Japan. And, just before returning home, I learned of and was able to collaborate for a short time on a new project being inaugurated by *Shaken*. Covering a number of disciplines, this is a China studies project. Even though academic exchange between China and Japan is prospering, it is rare to have interaction about the ‘concerns’ that are latent in *Kibōgaku*. Beyond connecting with the ‘concerns’ of *Shaken*, it is my sincere desire to continue this joint effort in China.

Q. What are your current research interests?

A. As for my own research, I emphasize the development of political thought since the postwar period in Japan. In a sense, the first ten years of the postwar were an important period that laid the course for not only Japan but all of East Asia. Within our political thinking, however, East Asia’s rich postwar history has been impoverished due to our excessive reliance on Anglo-American derived keywords such as the term “Cold War.” For example, the oppositional relationship that developed between China and the

Soviet Union is hard to incorporate within the structure of the Cold War, but nonetheless it cannot be denied that this conflict had a large influence on postwar East Asia. Indeed, because of the Sino-Soviet conflict, the Cold War came to have a different structure. While fixating on the Cold War structure as an important part of East Asia’s postwar history, elaborating on the even larger structure encompassing the Cold War has become an important issue for the field of political thought. Not limited to research on Japanese political theory, this is an issue common to the examination of all of Asia’s and East Asia’s postwar history.

During my stay at *Shaken*, I familiarized myself with the public opinion and debates of postwar Japan by using the comprehensive collection of magazines in Tokyo University’s library. What became clearly apparent was the effort of the intellectual community in Japan during the immediate postwar period to keep astride of international changes despite the worldwide blockade on the country. Though today there is often theoretical use of liberalism and Marxism, in the postwar period the two had a mutually tense relationship that also generated some commonalities in playing out their complex historical roles. While carefully concentrating on these kinds of historical movements during my stay at *Shaken*, I examined these movements’ relationship with the political theory of liberalism in the West, especially in Great Britain, during the Second World War. Hereafter, while keeping in mind China’s contemporary history, I hope to further investigate the circumstances of Japan’s postwar liberalism.

As with the social sciences in East Asia, political liberalism in East Asia is also a virulently foreign entity. That is, because it was cultivated in the historical landscape of East Asia, it has been comprised of different elements than those of Western liberalism and has thereby come to play a different historical role. The pursuit of these differences is one of my research themes. Interest in this kind of research theme is grounded in the identity of those of us living in East Asia. But, in elaborating on the unique context of East Asian history, we also enrich world history. While my stay at the *Shaken* was short, by providing further shape to my thought, it was also an important and rewarding time.

Greetings from Visiting Professor

Patricia Steinhoff



Department of Sociology
University of Hawaii (United States)
(Visiting Shaken from April 1, 2007 to July 14, 2007)

Q. How did you come to know of *Shaken*?

A. In 1966 when I was planning to come to Japan to do dissertation research on *tenkō* (“conversion” or “about-face”; in this context, renunciation of political activism) in the prewar Japanese communist movement, my Harvard advisor Robert Bellah arranged for his friend Ishida Takeshi to sponsor my affiliation with *Shaken*. Henry Smith was also at *Shaken* doing dissertation research on a somewhat related topic, the *Shinjinkai* (New Men’s Club). Both of us made heavy use of the *Shaken* library, guided by the librarian at the time, Oguro-san, who had amassed a wonderful collection of materials relevant to the Left in the 1920s and 1930s. On subsequent affiliations with *Shaken* I have studied radical New Left groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s (1982-1983), the anti-emperor movement during the transition from *Shōwa* to Heisei (1990-1991), and trial support groups and the long-term effects of the late-1960s protest cycle on the Japanese criminal justice system (1998-99).

Q. What is the main purpose of your current visit?

A. This time, I am writing a book manuscript with the working title *Japan’s Invisible Civil Society*, which is about contemporary groups, involved in

all sorts of social issues, whose origins can be traced to the New Left social movements of the 1960s. I call this the invisible civil society because the mainstream of society is not aware of it and, further, it cannot be captured using formal institutional traces such as organizational catalogs or official records. However, these groups form an alternative civil society with a lively public sphere within which people share information and ideas, form opinions, and act collectively to pursue common goals. The goals generally involve seeking social change through a range of organizational structures, social movement activities, and forms of information dissemination. Through participation in this alternative civil society, individuals also acquire skills and relationships, and build mutual trust.

I have been studying these groups for many years in various contexts, so I already know the general characteristics of the invisible civil society. When I arrived I had a detailed chapter outline and I thought I was ready to begin writing. However, I decided I should also make use of my time in Japan to do some additional fieldwork. I wanted to broaden the range of groups under study, to test my understanding of how these groups form an alternative public sphere by more careful observation of details, and to collect data specifically for some network analysis. Since I arrived at the beginning of April I have been doing a small snowball sample of public meetings, demonstrations, and related events, focusing on how multiple groups participate in such events and how they share information. In addition to my regular field notes about the events, I collect all the handouts plus the handbills and other materials that are available on the free “*chirashi*” (leaflet) table, and I photograph the room and the tables of materials that are offered for sale. At demonstrations I also try to photograph all of the participating groups so I can identify them from their banners.

The information about groups, events, issues, and print materials all goes into my Access database. Although my snowball sample is not complete, it

will support certain kinds of network analysis. I began the snowball with a meeting of a group I have been studying for a number of years, and then selected the next links from materials that were distributed at that event. I have continued the snowball through a combination of familiar and new groups, choosing new events primarily because they were issues of immediate concern or involved different types of activity. I have learned a great deal more about the invisible civil society by closely observing such events and documenting specific kinds of network relations, and I am sure I will write a better book as a result.

Q. What are your current research interests?

A. All of my previous research interests are intertwined, and I carry them all into my current work. Whenever I have the opportunity to come to Japan, I also catch up on fieldwork related to my earlier studies. Although I am no longer doing anything on prewar Japan, my doctoral work on how the Peace Preservation Law and the Japanese criminal justice system were used to pressure dissidents to renounce their political activities and ideas in the 1920s and 1930s led directly to my decision to study the most radical groups of the late-1960s protest cycle. My aim was to use the comparison to see how the post-war structural changes in Japanese society affected the ability of political activists to confront the state and whether pressures were still exerted to induce *tenkō*. I chose to study the Red Army (*Sekigun*), and then added another group with a contrasting style that later became intertwined with the Red Army, the East Asia Anti-Japanese Armed Front (*Higashi Asia Hannichi Busō Sensen*, nicknamed *Hannichi*).

Much of the fieldwork has involved following lengthy Japanese trials and interviewing persons who are in prison but still in the appeals process. These two organizations have produced four persons who are currently awaiting the death penalty for politically motivated acts, and they both had members in exile who have been arrested or deported back to Japan since the late 1980s to begin the trial process, long after the protest cycle of the late 1960s ended. This, in turn, brought me into the study of trial support groups as a means of continuing social movement activity and resis-

tance after arrest, and how that resistance in turn has affected the criminal justice system. I am still following appeal trials and interviewing people in prison on this visit, and the current trials and interviews are leading to new insights into both the Red Army's internal dynamics and the practices of the criminal justice system. Further, although I do not study death penalty issues *per se*, I follow the anti-death penalty movement through my involvement with death penalty prisoners and their support groups.

The *Hannichi* group was linked to the anti-emperor movement, and the rise in anti-emperor activity during the transition from *Shōwa* to *Heisei* offered me the opportunity to see for myself, albeit on a smaller scale, the confrontational demonstration style and heavy police control that had characterized the late-1960s protest cycle. During the early 1980s I had also begun doing some fieldwork on the Sunday youth music scene at Yoyogi Park, and watched it transform from costumed groups dancing to rock and punk boombox tapes into homegrown rock bands performing live, and then to be closed down as part of a crackdown on foreign workers in the early 1990s. This research fused into the anti-emperor study because one particular anti-emperor group that was attracting a high level of police attention had its origins in the Yoyogi Park counter-culture music scene. My previous experience studying the police management of anti-emperor demonstrations has also illuminated my current observations of demonstrations on less inflammatory issues. One of the events in my current snowball sample was sponsored by anti-emperor movement groups, and by a scheduling fluke, attracted a huge counter-protest of right wing sound trucks. To the astonishment of both the anti-emperor demonstrators and myself, this time the heavy police presence was deployed to protect the left from the right.

Through my work on the Red Army I came to know former student activist Takazawa Kōji, an editor and author of many of the major works on Japan's New Left, who is also the author of *Shukumei: Yodogō Bōmeishatachi no Himitsu* (Destiny: The Secret Operations of the Yodogō Exiles), which won the Kodansha prize for non-fiction in 1999. My students and I have prepared

an English translation of it that will shortly be submitted for publication. Takazawa later donated his vast collection of primary materials on the Japanese New Left to the University of Hawaii. With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, my students and I organized and catalogued the materials and developed a bilingual bibliographic website to make them available to scholars. Working with the Takazawa Collection deepened my knowledge of the kinds of print materials that Japanese social movements produce, and I am currently using these same kinds of materials to trace the networks among groups in the invisible civil society.

To sum up, I am still following the threads of all of my previous research interests, and asking many of the same questions in new contexts. My current goal of writing a general study analyzing the invisible civil society builds on my experience with a range of social movement organizations whose origins are in the New Left, the kinds of activities they undertake, and the materials they produce.

Q. What do you like about *Shaken*?

A. As you can see from the foregoing, I have studied a series of unorthodox and sometimes unset-

ling topics—topics that would have been too sensitive to pursue at many Japanese academic institutions. After giving a guest lecture at one university about the student protests of the late 1960s, my host told me that I had just broken a twenty year taboo on the subject at that institution. Yet *Shaken* has always welcomed me and its members have never seemed to have any qualms about what I was studying. My affiliation with *Shaken* provides important protection when my research involves associating with groups that are under police surveillance. My presence at political trials and meetings and following demonstrations has surely been noted thousands of times in the notebooks of plainclothes police, but they know that I am a legitimate scholar affiliated with *Shaken* and they leave me alone.

My work is primarily out in the field doing interviews and participant observation or writing at home, so I do not spend much time in my office. Everyone at *Shaken* is very busy with their own work, so perhaps my presence is simply not missed, but I experience it as a benign tolerance of my absence. Yet when I do have occasion to talk with *Shaken* colleagues, the interchanges are always stimulating and enlightening. It really is a quite perfect environment, for which I am deeply grateful.

Pepper D. Culpepper

Associate Professor of Public Policy
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

For the past several years, I have been studying the political dynamics of change and stability in European systems of corporate governance. During the postwar period, the continental economies had systems of ownership that provided managers with “patient capital”—that is, a set of owners whose time horizons were relatively long, and whose monitoring of managerial performance did not focus pre-eminently on quarterly financial reports and share prices. These systems have come under pressure during the 1990s, including from Anglo-American investment funds that are increasing players in these markets, as well as from domestic reformers seeking greater regulatory emphasis on protecting minority shareholders and shareholder value. My empirical research on France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands has shown that change in these systems is not typically driven not by the “high politics” of international financial bargaining nor by diffusion of international “best practice,” but by the interests and political efforts of major domestic companies. I am currently extending this work to Japan in an effort to understand the dynamics of political change in Japanese corporate governance since the mid-1990s. The sharp decline in company cross-shareholdings in the late 1990s, and the consequent rise of investment funds provoked some managers to seek alternative forms of protection. In my research, I am trying to understand how managers of Japan’s leading enterprises thought about the increase of merger and acquisition activity and the increasing potential for hostile takeovers during this time, and what solutions they pursued to deal with this situation, both individually (in terms of company strategy) and collectively (by pushing for regulatory or normative change through the Keidanren or other organizations).

Steffen Heinrich

Doctoral Candidate
Institute of Political Science
University of Heidelberg

Globalisation and the future of national social policy: a comparative study of recent labour market reforms and changing policy-making processes in Japan and Germany

In Japan and Germany the impact of globalisation has been widely discussed as being closely linked to the need for comprehensive reform of economic and social institutions. The prevailing view for well over a decade has held that reforms are essential for overcoming the long period of economic stagnation (which by now may or may not have already come to an end) and for adapting the national economy to the challenges of globalisation. Even though neither Germany nor Japan are unique in this respect, what sets the two countries apart from others is the popular notion that many pillars of the once admirable and successful post-war economic model are challenged and, as a consequence, traditional and well-regarded concepts such as life-long employment in Japan and the “*Normalarbeitsverhältnis*” in Germany are under threat.

Although the need for reform seems to be widely accepted and similarly perceived in both countries, it appears that both countries have been rather reluctant reformers – regardless of the fact that major institutional features vary distinctively between the respective countries (e.g., the role and influence of unions, the number of veto-players, and power resources, to name but a few). Furthermore, major reforms concerning the flexibility of the labour market and the introduction of new forms of employment have been formulated and implemented with very different actor involvement and partly contrary to what one might expect from traditional policy-making processes. For instance, unions in Japan have actively attempted to increase their influence with respect to social policy issues (with mixed results), especially so in the field of employment policy, while the absence of German unions and employers in key debates, e.g., concerning the liberalisation of part-time work, has been conspicuous.

My research project seeks to evaluate the underlying reasons for these developments by looking at policy output and outcomes in the field of labour policy and, more importantly, by analysing changing actor interests and their involvement in the related policy processes. Conventionally, studies in the field of comparative welfare research focus on either of the two – although there are far fewer studies in the latter category. The combination of perspectives should allow for an improved understanding of the actual impact of the much discussed, but perhaps still inadequately understood, pressure to reform known as “globalisation”.

I thus intend to address a theoretical problem that has existed in the field of comparative welfare research for some time, that is, the lack of explanatory power of the existing theories in cases where ‘unlikely coalitions’ of actors emerge that actively push or hinder policy changes, and instances where reforms do or do not take place despite the institutional and socioeconomic environment suggesting the opposite outcome. I will focus on selected cases that are usefully comparable, i.e., the liberalisation of part-time work and strategies for employment adjustment (e.g., via dispatching, lay-offs, or early retirement) and analyse the changing interests of the social partners (the key actors in this policy field in the respective countries) and, since globalisation is commonly believed to strengthen the influence of employers, changes in the balance of power. In order to reveal the full extent of recent changes I also intend, in a separate case study, to contrast the findings with an analysis of policy reactions to the first oil crisis in 1973, when similar issues dominated the policy process. Ideally, the results will offer some valuable clues regarding the question of whether one can expect convergence of national policies and policy-making processes in the long run.

My research in Japan is supported by a stipend from the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo which is hereby acknowledged, and I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Hiwatari for acting as my advisor at *Shaken*.

Kim, Sung-won

Research Associate
Institute of Social Science
University of Tokyo

My research topic is a comparative study of the welfare state in East Asia. Mainly focusing on Japan, South Korea, China, and Taiwan, I analyze the historical process of the development of the welfare state in these countries. Welfare states in Western countries have successively experienced the early formation, expansionary, and restructuring phases over the course of their development since the early 20th century, whereas East Asian welfare states have generally experienced these phases concurrently. This means that the “timing” and “tempo” of welfare state development processes reveal significant differences between the respective regions. Focusing on this point, I have recently been conducting a comparative analysis of Western welfare states and East Asian welfare states, and also between East Asian countries, under the theme of “Welfare States in Time”.

Since the 1990s there have been an increasing number of comparative studies on East Asian welfare states. Many of these are directly or indirectly based on Esping-Andersen's welfare-state regime framework. While some studies characterize East Asian welfare states as “fourth model” (for example “Confucian” or “Developmental/Productivist” welfare states) distinct from the three established types of Western welfare state (liberal, conservative and social democratic), others identify East Asian welfare states as one or a hybrid of the three types. Despite the significant contribution of these studies, they are not satisfactory as comparative analyses. This is mainly because the time lag between welfare state development processes in Western welfare states and East Asian welfare states is largely disregarded. In other words, these studies have focused only on the question, “What type of welfare state is the East Asian welfare state?” However, it is important to ask “when?” in addition to “what?”.

Against this background, my research on “Welfare States in Time” puts the focus on the issue of time in welfare state development processes. The time issue consists of the following three elements. The first is the “timing” of welfare state formation, the second is the “tempo” of welfare state development, and the third is the influence of these two elements on “long-term processes” of development. As mentioned above, East Asian welfare states have experienced the formation phase of development at a time when Western countries have experienced restructuring of welfare state in response to globalization (i.e., revealing a difference in the “timing” of welfare state formation). However, globalization has had a major influence not only on Western countries but also on East Asian countries' politics and economics, which has meant that East Asian countries have faced a situation in which they have had to restructure the welfare state simultaneously with the formation thereof (i.e., revealing a difference in the “tempo” of welfare state development). Further, because of differences in these two elements, welfare states in East Asia will follow a different developmental path from the Western countries (due to differing influences on the “long-term process”). Needless to say, these three “time” issues can also be used to explain differences among the countries in East Asia. My research based on time frames as discussed above aims to establish a new theoretical tool that may enable researchers to conduct historical/systematic comparisons between East Asian welfare states and Western welfare states, and also among East Asian welfare states.

Kim, Young

Research Assistant Professor
Center for Culture and Information Studies
Sungkonghoe University (Korea)

My research expertise lies in Gender studies, Labor Sociology, and Japanese studies. The focus of my research interest is on the labor market in relation to three elements of the gender system: labor market, state, and family. In East Asia the labor market has a particularly broad and deep impact on social lives of individuals, since economic development is often used to compensate for the inadequacies of the welfare system.

Over the past 10 years, I have conducted research on Japan's part-time labor market, using case studies on the operations of 10 large supermarket chains. My studies have revealed that the supermarket industry in Japan reflects some key characteristics of Japan's part-time labor market, that is, the contradiction between a widening job-based wage differential and increasing skill requirements. These studies also indicated that the Japanese gender system – that of the strong, male breadwinner model – forces married women into part-time work via a series of institutions, which I describe collectively as the ‘housewife institution’. Under this housewife institution, the major agents in the part-time labor market – companies, trade unions, and part-time workers – interact with each other to maximize their own interests, according to principles of behavior which I term ‘the housewife agreement’.

In addition, I have also conducted comparative analyses of non-standard labor and women's labor in Korea and Japan, as well as the institutional structure of women's social rights in Japan. While these research areas showed the gender system of male breadwinner model to be strong in both Korea and Japan, the degree of institutionalization of the gender system in Korea appears to be relatively lower than in Japan, where the gender system depends mainly upon ideology. Although there are trends towards a transition to a work-life balanced model in both countries, the transition is moving at a faster speed in Korea than in Japan, owing to strong women's movements and weak institutionalization of the gender system in Korea.

I am currently conducting a comparative analysis of some important trends in Korea and Japan that have emerged recently: the transfer of nonstandard workers to regular employment, and the social response to low fertility and aging. I aim to provide deeper explanations for the possibility of gender system transition, as well as the social factors and agents that are bringing about such a change. My future plans are to broaden my research scope to include the analyses of the characteristics of gender systems as organizing principles of society in East Asia.

Nathaniel Smith

Doctoral Candidate
Department of Anthropology
Yale University

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Yale University and an advisee of Dr. William Kelly. I am very fortunate to be affiliated with *Shaken* for the duration of my dissertation fieldwork. In eighteen months of ethnographic field research under the auspices of a Fulbright-Hays fellowship and a grant from the Yale Council on East Asian Studies, my dissertation project will explore the everyday practice, social structures, and moral visions of right-wing political activist groups in contemporary Japan. My research will address how these groups interact with the state and its agents of contact, explore patterns and structures of group socialization, and analyze how individual members of these groups negotiate perceived or actual social and political marginalization from mainstream Japan in the context of the family, workplace, and community.

My project is constructed between the two concepts, “right wing” and “civil society.” I am investigating how contestations over the definitions of these concepts channel the experiences of members of groups on the activist right, their interactions within society, and their relationship to the nation-state. The Japanese term *uyoku* is used popularly to refer to both rightist groups and the political ideologies they support. More specifically, it refers to a range of ideological tenets, styles of political activism, and social characteristics that mark these groups in relation to one another, to the Japanese public, to the media, and to agents of the state. The paradigm of right-wing activism rests upon a particular constellation of these characteristics. Groups’ notions of their divergence from that model are based on how they evaluate the constantly shifting areas of overlap between the archetypal forms of right-wing political activism and changing standards of political engagement in contemporary Japan.

Conventionally, the notion of “civil society” refers to voluntary political associations that are neither associated with the state, nor based in industry or kinship. Drawing on the Comaroffs’ work on civil society in Africa (2000), my project, however, locates civil society ideologically, as it is deployed as a concept in multiple registers (and sometimes at cross-purposes) to regulate and assess both social activism and the state. Standards of “proper” political engagement are central to how right-wing groups fashion their activism, are evaluated by other groups and citizens, and are subjected to surveillance. These expectations frame how these groups and outsiders judge their activism. My project will examine how local political and cultural histories inform the social landscape of civil society, and will pursue a political anthropology of the state situated in this marginalized sector of voluntary, non-state political activism. In other words, I will investigate how right-wing activists negotiate the perceived standards of civil society and the received styles of right-wing political action.

Despite the coherence suggested by warnings of a nationalist resurgence, the right wing in Japan is not unitary. Conservative political groups in Japan include organized crime-affiliated, ethnic nationalist, religious and traditionalist, and issue-based groups. While organized-crime affiliated groups have become the unmarked representational form of right-wing activism in Japan, ethnic nationalist groups (*minzoku-ha*) and the “new” right (*shin-uyoku*) take a more intellectual and philosophical approach to their activism. This distinction can be lost on the average citizen. It is difficult to separate economically oriented actions committed under the guise of politics from political violence motivated by ideological zeal. Although many right-wing groups assert their democratic intent as public advocacy and pressure groups, the threat of political violence is never absent. This contradictory nature is most apparent for new-right groups, which at once invoke and distance themselves from the historical legacies of right-wing violence and criminality. They are thus doubly marginalized—perceived by the police and citizenry as similar enough to be classified with the organized crime-affiliated groups, but presented by themselves in group publications and public oratory as different from other rightists.

The goal of my study is to produce a fine-grained ethnographic study of the lived experience and mundane forms of collective practice of right-wing political activism in contemporary Japan. Using sustained participant observation, interviews, and institutional and individual histories, I will chart the trajectory of individuals as they become politically active, detail processes of socialization into and out of groups, and consider the way their political activities pervade other spheres of life. To what extent are these activities “long engagements” (Plath 1980) or shorter affairs, and how do connections forged via membership in a political group compare to social relationships based in the community, family, or workplace? I hope to untangle the nexus of political ideology, confrontational politics, and underworld criminality characteristic of right-wing groups in order to understand the distinctive qualities of their activism publicly and internally and contribute to our understanding of the nature of social experience within this sector of the political landscape that is at once so marginal and so powerful.

Tuukka Toivonen

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Since arriving in Tokyo and at *Shaken* in May just in time for the new academic year, the following rather straightforward question has been put to me numerous times: Why on earth would a student of social policy from a Nordic country – with a welfare system far more advanced than that of this nation – wish to come all the way to Japan to conduct research on social policies? Is there anything that North European societies could possibly learn from the modest and struggling social programs implemented in Japan? After briefly commenting on the risks of viewing welfare systems as ‘advanced’ (*susundeiru*) or ‘not-so-advanced’, my usual answer is that, for a student of comparative social policy at least, present-day Japan is in many ways the ideal country to investigate. With a fast-changing demographic landscape, rising levels of economic inequality and new social problems seemingly coming off the assembly line, there is currently an overabundance of social policy-related research topics to choose from in this country. The focus of my Ph.D. research project – Japan’s emerging youth activation policy – is one promising issue area within this dynamic set of public concerns and related responses.

While back in the United Kingdom, I started with this simple puzzle: Why was it that, out of a plethora of possible policy options, the government chose to enact a scheme known as the Youth Independence Camp (*wakamono jiritsu juku*) following the vigorous publicizing of the so-called NEET-problem (which referred to the proliferation of young people ‘not in employment, education or training’). The stated purpose of this program – which is now being carried out at 25 locations across Japan by NGOs and other private organizations – is to accommodate a group of 10-20 young people aged between 15 and 34 for three months at a time, first providing basic ‘life skills’ and communication training and then hands-on job experience at local companies or farms. The key goal is to help the participants to attach themselves to gainful work upon completion as opposed to having them enroll in further education or training (which seems slightly peculiar if the state of not being in ‘employment, education or training’ is considered the main problem to start with).

After beginning my actual field research, I soon discovered that while the discourse on NEETs was indeed a powerful factor in bringing about this new ‘independence policy’ for youth, the underlying reality was significantly more subtle and the cast of relevant actors highly diverse. Apparent dilemmas have also come to light: If there are indeed 600,000-800,000 youth currently not in education or employment in Japan, how can they possibly be assisted via independence camps that only have a combined capacity of around 1,500 participants per year? Further, why are the participants charged up to 300,000 yen for a three-month program when it is known that a large portion of NEETs come from low-income families?

My research will first focus on tracing the policy-making process that eventually led to the emergence of the Youth Independence Camp scheme against the backdrop of the vigorous youth debates raging at the time. I will also map the outstanding characteristics of this program and aim to situate it in a social policy framework to enable cross-national comparisons at a later stage. Next, through conducting participant observation at some of the camp locations over a period of several months, I will strive to grasp how the participants themselves experience the independence camp program they are attending, and how perceptions at this level may differ from the dominant paradigms among policy-makers and media (this stage calls for an anthropological approach to the study of social policy). Finally, while devoting most of my field research to this relatively minor scheme, I will strive to gauge the extent to which a more comprehensive youth support system may be coming into existence in Japan. The so-called *Wakamono* Support Stations now appearing across Japan are designed to play precisely the role of constructing such a system, and thus they constitute another important initiative to consider when scrutinizing Japanese youth activation policy.

I aim to make various contributions through my current research project. Besides the more obvious goal of shedding light on recent Japanese youth activation and support policies, I will eventually strive to utilize this case study to analyze the relationship between the social construction of a *target population for social policy* (in this case, primarily NEETs), the policy-making process, and actual policy practice. Furthermore, I will place both NEETs and the new Japanese activation policies into a comparative social policy context. I feel this is an absolutely crucial task as very few studies on Japanese social policy take a genuinely comparative approach, all too often failing to step outside the ‘Japan box’ (to borrow John Campbell’s phrase) for a broader view and novel ideas. Indeed, comparisons are indispensable when gauging the extent to which specific Japanese social policies and issues can be said to be ‘unique’ as opposed to mere variations of policies and issues currently shared by all post-industrial societies.

ISS Contemporary Japan Group at the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo

The ISS Contemporary Japan Group serves as a forum for researchers on Japan to receive critical feedback on their work. Researchers visiting Tokyo are invited to contact Professor Ishida Hiroshi (ishida@iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp) for more information if they would like to make a presentation. Meetings are open to everyone.

**Assistant Professor,
Department of Government,
Smith College**

Jacques Hymans

*Non-Nuclear Weapons States and Nuclear Proliferation
March 20, 2007*



Abstract

This presentation relies on Social Identity Theory to argue that the robustness of the norm of nuclear non-proliferation depends in part on whether states view the status of "non-nuclear weapons state" (NNWS) as a badge of honor or of shame. I further argue that states' self-identification into the NNWS club does not necessarily imply a knuckling under to American wishes, but rather can be experienced as a liberation from them. These points are highlighted through a case study of West Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which simultaneously adopted the Non-Proliferation Treaty and went on a major nuclear export spree. Whereas the standard American interpretation sees tension between those two policy lines, my interpretation sees them as running in parallel—as two sides of the same NNWS identity coin. These findings tentatively suggest the need for a more general rethink of our expectations and prescriptions about the stability and leadership of the non-proliferation regime.



**Assistant Professor,
Department of Economics,
Northwestern University**

Moriguchi Chiaki

*Income Inequality in Japan from Historical and Comparative Perspectives
May 8, 2007*

Abstract

This talk presents findings on the evolution of income concentration in Japan from 1886 to 2002 by constructing long-run series of top income shares and top wage income shares, using income tax statistics. This presentation also provides comparison with the evolution of income concentration in other OECD countries, including the United Kingdom, France, and the United States.

**Associate Professor of Public Policy,
Harvard University**

Pepper Culpepper

*The Politics of Change in Japan's Market
for Corporate Control
June 27, 2007*

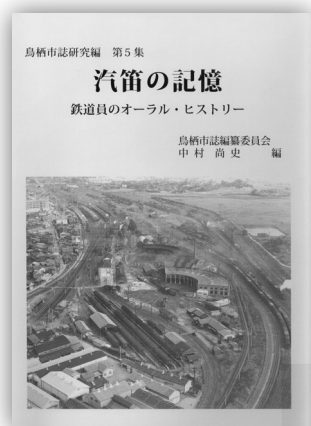


Abstract

During the postwar period, Japan and many of the continental European economies had systems of ownership that provided managers with "patient capital"—that is, a set of owners whose time horizons were relatively long, and whose monitoring of managerial performance did not focus pre-eminently on quarterly financial reports and share prices. These systems have come under pressure during the 1990s, including from Anglo-American investment funds that are increasing players in these markets, as well as from domestic reformers seeking greater regulatory emphasis on protecting minority shareholders and shareholder value. Previous research in this project has discovered that in major European economies—France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands—change in these systems is not typically driven not by the "high politics" of international financial bargaining nor by diffusion of international "best practice," but by the interests and political efforts of major domestic companies. This presentation presents first results from the extension of this research to the dynamics of political change in Japanese corporate governance since the mid-1990s.

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『汽笛の記憶 鉄道員のオーラル・ヒストリー』
鳥栖市(2006年12月)

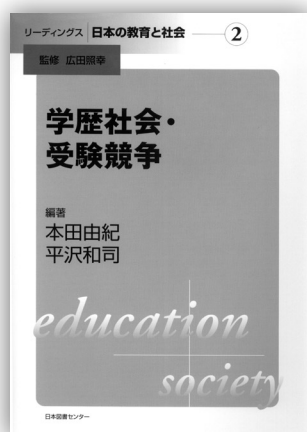


中澤 渉
『入試改革の社会学』
東洋館出版社（2007年2月）

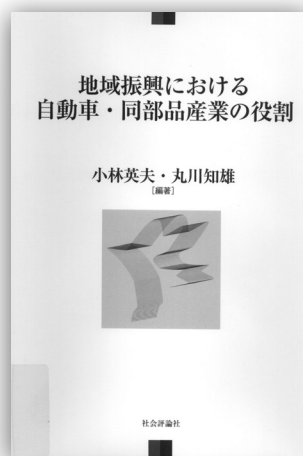


佐藤博樹・藤村博之・八代充史
『マテリアル人事労務管理[新版]』
日本評論社(2006年12月)

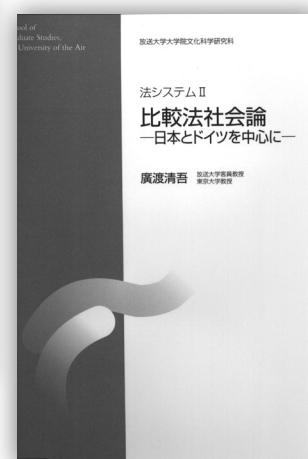
本田由紀・平沢和司（編著）
『学歴社会・受験競争 日本の教育と社会—②』
日本図書センター（2007年2月）



小林英夫・丸川知雄（編著）
『地域振興における自動車・同部品産業の役割』
社会評論社（2007年3月）



大沢真理
『現代日本の生活保障システム 座標とゆくえ』
岩波書店（2007年3月）



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放送大学教育振興会（2007年4月）

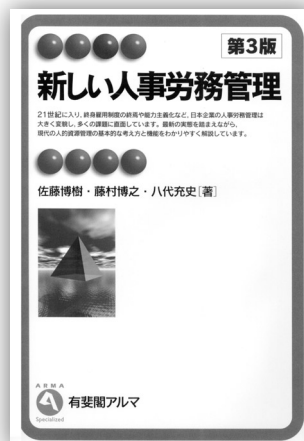
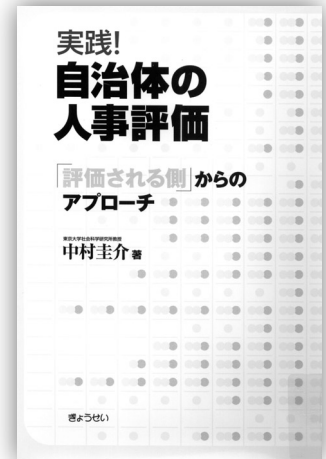
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日本評論社（2007年4月）

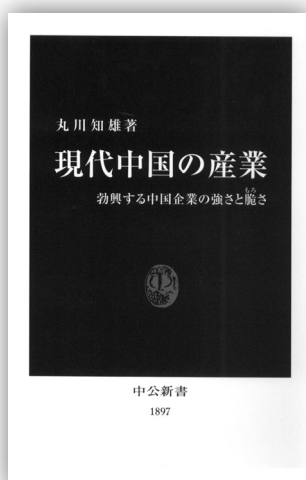


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「評価される側からのアプローチ」』
ぎょうせい（2007年4月）

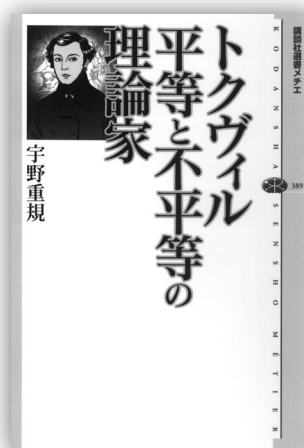
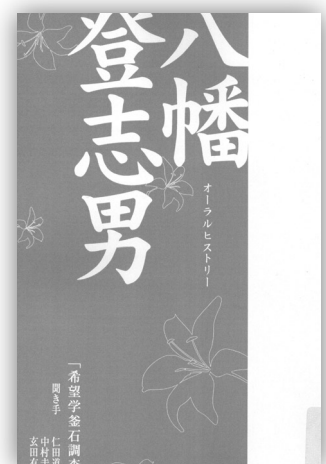


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