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Order in Japanese Society: Attachment, Authority, and Routine

The sources of social order in any society are numerous and any analysis must be a partial one, so complex are the foundations of regularity, constraint, and coordination. It is not surprising then that every discipline has its own perspective on the issue. Here the intention is to tie together observations of social control in early education with patterns found more generally in Japanese society and to attempt to draw out the implications of such underlying similarities for our understanding of political processes. The perspective adopted is that of pattern identification joined to an interest in how socialization and small-group processes relate to society-wide approaches to social control. That this kind of generalizing can create a misleading impression of uniformity and monocausality should not dissuade us from attempting to identify basic underlying processes that distinguish the way order is formed in Japanese society. Recent intensive observations in early education give reason to conclude that even in the earliest learning environments practices and understandings are found that echo distinctive features of Japanese law, government, and management.

Patterns that are broadly isomorphic or historically continuous within a particular society we have generally labeled cultural. In giving any such pattern this label, however, we imply a form of causality that is not only difficult to untangle and prove, but one that stimulates a conventional set of now all too familiar misunderstandings.1 In this instance, however, rather

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1. One need only notice the large number of very good, recent scholarly works on modern Japanese institutions that use cultural explanations as either a straw man or a residual consideration to realize that there is a major definitional problem surrounding the term within the Japan studies field at the present. Vexing is the use of the term “culture” without attention to recent scholarship in anthropology and the humanities which has revised most aspects of
than thinking of culture as an explanatory variable, I propose to simply explore the patterns of social control themselves. The fact that they are experienced as part of early socialization is testimony to their extensiveness and power. The procedure will be to list those characteristics of Japanese practice that are notable or paradoxical according to the expectations of the Anglo-American model, then to consider the creation of order in early education, and finally to attempt to define the elements of a meta pattern underlying the broad range of relevant Japanese practices and circumstances. This will entail ranging rather freely over the social and political landscape and attempting at the end to put larger governmental patterns in a context largely defined by micro-level practices, to embed politics and governance, that is, in social relations and social learning.

It is true that at virtually all social levels Japan in the postwar era has enjoyed comparatively high degrees of social order by such measures as are available—such things as crime rates, family stability, organizational efficiency, social unrest, political stability, and so forth—but it is not statistical measures that are of interest in this essay. We should note, however, that the postwar historical context has been a particularly benign one and that issues of cohesion, power, and authority might be very differently modeled under other historical circumstances.

The Individualist Paradigm and Cultural Relativism

Much of the social science theory that has been applied to the question of political order in Japan derives its assumptions from one cultural tradition (the Anglo-American) and its empirical foundations from one society (the American). A political science that is truly universal in its assumptions has yet to emerge. We should begin by making explicit these assumptions. More than anything else, this Western bias means a mode of analytic thought that pays extraordinary attention to two assumptions, namely that adult individuals should choose their own actions and that society is the

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2. See Sugimoto Yoshio, Popular Disturbance in Postwar Japan (Hong Kong: Asian Research Service, 1980) for the argument that the degree of conflict has been sufficient to deny any a priori assumption of "harmony" or group-based order. This misses the essential point, however, of relative and increasing social order evident in the comparative and historical data.

3. Indeed, the immediate postwar period when so much of what we now take for granted was reshaped was a very different epoch, albeit brief and essentially unusual.
sum of those individual choices.\textsuperscript{4} Society is contractualist in nature and utilitarian in its logic. Popular assumptions about the inherent goodness of rational choice, of individual freedom, and of equal opportunity are consistent with these basic premises. Individualism, one umbrella term for this conceptual paradigm, is not comfortable with social control for almost by definition the term implies a loss of freedom. And to the degree social control implies hierarchy, it is predictably on a collision course with the egalitarian ethic that is a key corollary of individualism.

Nor is individualism comfortable with some kinds of emotional attachments. Dependency in adulthood to the Western mind, for example, is unhealthy, if not abnormal, for like barriers to freely working markets, dependency limits choice. Only children should properly be dependent. Among adults, the right and emotional capability to break off attachments is crucial to the maintenance of freedom. Attachments should be capable of regular objective evaluation from the individual perspective. The frequent result, of course, is relational fragility and/or shallowness of affect. It is in the realm of attachments more than elsewhere that the Japanese case presents problems for the Anglo-American model.

Self-control, rather than social control, is compatible with the ideals of individualism. Abhorrent is the society that attempts to socialize or re-socialize adults ("brainwashing"). Fanatics, dupes, and true believers do not choose freely. Even in matters of teacher or parental authority the individualist approach has difficulty defining the balance between autonomy and subordination. Similarly constraining are such "things" as traditional culture and religious beliefs. Until recently at least, it was the faith of the individualist approach that progress and modernity were synonymous with the liberation of the individual from these constraints. Most intellectual distinctions between "traditional and modern," for example, commonly assume that with time and the rise of markets, the cultural or moral foundations for social order (e.g., formulations of social interdependence) give way to rationality and freedom. Seminal thinkers in this mold include Weber (rationalism), Durkheim (organic versus mechanical order), Polanyi (the rise of market society), and Parsons (pattern variables and modernity), to name but a few.

By postulating a human actor whose socialization has provided inde-

pendence and rationality as key ingredients, the individualist conception postulates a society that is highly atomistic. At issue, of course, is the relationship between culture and the conceptualization of “human nature.” In the sociological literature a significant debate has been conducted around this question with theoretical approaches being faulted for creating “undersocialized” or “oversocialized” versions. The foundations of social order (like the question of rationality) are made problematic for the Anglo-American model if it is acknowledged that socialization differs from society to society. In the Japanese case, the examination of early learning opens up serious questions about “human nature” and about the role of attachment in the ordering of society.

The individualist framework, furthermore, separates the social universe into different spheres of social reality. There is the family, a temporary and very private institution whose inherent character (strong emotional bonding and hierarchy) distinguishes it from the rest of adult secular society. Then there is the arena of private, secular affairs—the locale for the pursuit of self-interest; everything from friendships and work to voluntary activities belongs in this general vast arena. The third sphere commonly distinguished is government, meaning primarily law and democratic decision making. What is “public” and what is “private” is sorted out along these lines and separate forms of logic and value are applied. The family is frequently equated with the individual in terms of protection from public coercion in “private” matters such as belief and morality, for example, but in a different sense of the terms, private pursuits are contrasted with public “goods” and “duties.”

In the secular sphere, market mechanisms are a crucial source of order in this essentially utilitarian model. Primary among these is positive reinforcement, the complex array of individual incentives by which social order arises through differential reward structures. All societies have differential rewards, but what is quintessentially individualist is the notion that the daily or normal social order rests upon them. The rub here is the egalitarian impulse. Differential rewards challenge the ideal of equality and the assumption of self-interest makes authority and power inherently problematic. The result is a moral skepticism regarding all forms of social structure and yet a dependence on rewards and incentives that generate such structures.

The epitome of the individualist approach is neo-classical economics, of course, for it ignores socialization and assumes a highly atomized, fluid
society populated by rational utility maximizers. But much of American sociology and political science theory envisions a rather similar kind of actor and social landscape. The individualist construction makes authority, power, hierarchy, and social cohesion all problematic in a particular way. Whatever inhibits or reduces individual freedom is inherently dubious and in need of rational legitimation. Thus, in the laissez-faire model all kinds of practical “necessities” require that some degree of freedom be “traded off” for other “goods” (e.g., trading one’s time for money and giving up near-term individual gains for longer-term communal benefits). The legitimation of such trade-offs requires that they be freely or rationally made. Individuals come to be seen as continually contracting with one another.

Equally problematic is human nature (selfish and opportunistic, if educable) and individualism’s exuberance which together create the expectation that the limits of what is tolerable to the rest of society are perpetually open to challenge. This raises the problem of government. While libertarian purists argue that the market and free choice are so effective in ordering society that little or no government is required, most follow Hobbes in assuming that for protection and by reason of common interests people enter into a social contract, surrendering some of their freedom for security and other social benefits. In this formulation of the social order it is assumed that laws must be written and strictly enforced to maintain boundaries. The very enthusiasm for freedom puts a premium on developing acceptable means of legal control.

Ideally, both law and government should be protected from the corrupting influences of private interests. This means they should stand away from society and deal with its conflicts through a process of removal and objectification. Special rules and procedures, legal and democratic, are needed to maintain this separation of the public sphere from society and its usual processes. The ideal is a kind of public-spirited rationality. Legitimacy rests on this foundation even though in practice, of course, politics is hardly immune to the pressures of private power.

This thumbnail sketch of the Anglo-American conceptual approach is offered simply for the purpose of establishing a comparative context, not as a factual portrait of social order in the West. Its usefulness here is in highlighting distinctive features of the Japanese approach as contrasted with the individualist model.

Interestingly, explanations for social order that do not fit the Anglo-American framework generally rest on one of two alternative models: the authoritarian or the cultural. Since Japan is clearly an advanced industrial society, a market-based one, and neither a police state nor a totalitarian

society, the subject of a distinctively Japanese social order becomes a question of culture almost by default.

In reaction to the unwarranted claims to universality of much of Western social science, the assertion of cultural relativism has proved to be a necessary corrective, but taken to its logical extreme culture as an explanatory device has muddied the waters by making exaggerated claims for a cultural dynamic that is virtually mystical in its capacity to explain divergence from Anglo-American practice. Unilateral cultural explanations, of the kind popular in the 1950s and early 1960s and still common in popular writing today (some of it, of course, focused on socialization and Japanese psychology), are properly open to the criticism that they mislead by stereotyping, by oversimplifying the complexity and variability involved, by denying change, by ignoring choice and economic rationality, and by being blind to the processes of cultural creation and manipulation that illustrate the role of power.

If the failing of the individualist perspective is to have created an undersocialized portrait of human nature and to have removed modern institutions from their basic socio-cultural foundations, the culture-as-monocausal approach fails because it rests on an oversocialized portrait and on an assumption of such exaggerated social embeddedness that institutional conduct loses all adaptiveness and dynamic. In the Japanese case, for example, attention to small groups, to vertically structured relationships, to dependency, to the ideal of harmony, and to the Confucian tradition frequently has led to what we now disparage as “nihonjinron-type” portraits of Japanese society as somehow “inherently” and fixedly harmonious. Social control in such accounts does not arise as an issue. The substitution of a simplistic cultural explanation for the choice/coercion model has in effect been a substitution of one inadequate paradigm for another. As might be expected, the two often come to complement one another in the realm of false dichotomizing.

What is the solution to this kind of dilemma? First, we should begin by assuming that social order is generated, not given. Second, in examining how it is generated we should not assume that it arises and is maintained in the same way in every society. It is also possible to substitute for an undifferentiated cultural approach one that examines the creation of order at various social levels and points in the life cycle. Finally, however tentative, it ought to be possible to state how Japanese practice differs from the Western expectations and thus begin to compile the principles that characterize a Japanese model. The starting point is to attempt to describe what appears anomalous about Japanese patterns from the Anglo-American perspective.
A sense of paradox is the result of certain unconscious expectations. The paradoxes one encounters trying to understand Japanese social order as a Western outsider are numerous. While most of what follows is well known to Japan specialists, it is useful in dealing with a matter as broad as social control to review those aspects of the Japanese pattern that obviously diverge from the individualist model.

We might begin with the commonplace irritation expressed by foreign visitors and cosmopolitan Japanese with the weak development of a sense of public ethics. Whether it be leaving trash in public places or offering bribes, there is a notable contrast not only with public behavior in Western societies where the ethical system is not situational, but also with “private” social contexts within Japan where behavior is scrupulously ordered. Families, companies, and religious, educational, and fraternal organizations apparently create their own distinct social worlds in which order is learned and maintained. There is a fit between this well known “in/out” (uchi/soto) distinction and other seemingly anomalous aspects of social ordering in Japan.

Many have observed that Japanese work organizations seem to be highly regimented and disciplined (even military-like) and yet it is also clear that they are capable of relatively high degrees of delegation and flexibility. How can order simultaneously be so strict and vertical and yet allow for such high degrees of lower-level autonomy? Urged to participate in some decisions, on the other hand, why are lower-level employees so accepting of arbitrary authority on occasion? Possessing such certain hierarchical authority, why are leaders so inclined to delegate and to encourage participation?

This issue is coupled with one centering on hierarchy, authority, and intimacy. Bluntly put, the Western expectation is that the maintenance of authority in organizations requires considerable separation or aloofness from those subordinated to it. The regular fraternization of managers and workers in Japanese companies seems to contradict this. It runs against the Western expectation that intimacy is part of the personal realm and part of status-equal affiliations (as in age, ethnic, residential, and class groupings). When emotional attachment occurs in vertical relationships, it should create
all kinds of problems including a loss of respect for authority, a loss of detached objectivity, and a weakening of executive resolve.8

Obviously, we are not here considering a system of fixed rights and duties. Nor are we dealing with a system based on the maintenance of rules and regulations that embody a single structure of authority. Rather, Japanese corporate organization seems characterized by its capability to smoothly move from one form of authority and communication to another in the face of changing circumstances.9 Nor are these forms set in a fixed pattern, for Japanese companies have demonstrated in the postwar period a capability to develop and perfect new forms, such as quality control circles and consultative industrial relations.10

Similarly, there remains much confusion as to whether decision making is bottom-up, top-down, circular, or what-have-you. The issue is made problematic by certain structural assumptions. That is, when we attempt to map decision making on an organizational chart we look for reporting lines or for matrix connections, always with the expectation that authority and power will be relatively synonymous and that power will be a constant. Finding considerable variety and apparent fluidity of pattern, we are not sure what to make of it. At one extreme we find ringi approval routings, low-level project teams with great responsibility, QC circles, assembly and supplier firms doing important design work, and a kamban system that requires highly developed daily coordination of a lateral nature. At the other extreme, we find rapid, sometimes quite arbitrary, decisions being made by top leadership, great deference paid to authority, “one-man companies,” managerial manipulation of voluntary activities, and very high degrees of compliance and organizational discipline. The Japanese company simultaneously looks like a tightly run military machine and a highly participative, flat (i.e., non-hierarchical) organization.

Turning to subcontracting relationships, the question regularly arises as to how these ties, at once very close and personalized and simultaneously part of business dealings that must maximize efficiency, maintain their equilibrium.11 The lack of contractual distance seems to imply that


10. See Cole, Work, Mobility, and Participation, Chapter VI.

one or the other party is likely to be exploited under circumstances that offer little leeway for arms-length market forces to operate.

In fact, while there is no surfeit of arms-length dealings and spot market transactions, there is a tendency for economic ties to either arise from intimate relations, as in the very common case of parent-child companies (oyagaisha-kogaisha), or for initially simple contractual relations to evolve over time in the direction of greater intimacy and thus toward greater complexity. Mutuality appears to be the preferred form of transaction. Western fears that intimacy will undermine the objective integrity of economic relations would here be typified by the application of pejorative terms such as collusion, monopoly, and captive client. If the Western expectation that only through full autonomy can asymmetries of power be free of exploitation, what explains the balance retained in the Japanese case?

One wonders what the limits are on authority and power and where the boundaries are between what is acceptable and unacceptable. This is the question of rules and law in the West. But in Japan, the role of codified rules and public law appears considerably less central and less decisive to the maintenance of order. Companies, for example, tend to avoid written codes of behavior. Nor are unions particularly insistent on explicit declarations of rights and duties. Public legislation tends to avoid the option of direct legal control in favor of authorizing administrative latitude to make case-by-case judgments. Consistent with this, Japanese police have relatively high degrees of autonomy to make on-the-scene judgments about what procedure to follow when apprehending law breakers. The simple act of apology, for example, is used by them as an effective way to restore order without formal proceedings. Mediation and conciliation have long

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of Parts Purchases in the Japanese Automotive Industry," *Japanese Economic Studies* (Summer 1985), pp. 33–53. Dore concludes that an ethic of mutuality or goodwill, which he attributes to the Confucian heritage, serves as a source of long-run balance that maximizes value for both parties. That is, each side keeps faith by recognizing the long-term mutual benefits at stake, by being cognizant of past favors and special services, and by adding extra-contractual value. Asanuma gives a more narrowly economic account that shows how rational choice operates within the system.

12. Rohlen, *For Harmony and Strength*.
been officially preferred means of settlement that reduce significantly the practice of formal litigation.17 Finally, high court rulings seem to avoid making broad precedent-setting rulings, as if not wishing to make authoritative statements contrary to the notion of circumstantial relativity.

All of this and more indicates that rather than seeking to use the law as a direct instrument of social control, the Japanese government has preferred administrative means, particularly ones that are "informal" and largely based on the integration of the bureaucratic institutions with the rest of society. Informality, of course, creates enormous potential for arbitrariness and the misuse of power, matters one would assume to lead to considerable confusion and injustice which in turn should weaken the social order and inspire opposition. Why is there as little abuse of power as there appears to be?

Nor has the lack of legal safeguards been the subject of wide-scale concern in Japan. Clearly, some important limits on power are at work in the realm of administrative process. Among the explanations for this are such things as the structural dispersion of power, the restraint effect of extensive informal obligations among the bureaucratic elite, and a conception of responsibility that is paternalistic.18 But the deeper issues of how these fit together, how they arose, and how power, authority, and legitimacy are related remain.

A somewhat parallel situation exists for Japanese politics. The Liberal Democratic Party, for example, possesses in theory great electoral authority and yet its use of power is cautious and limited in most instances. Political decision making is rarely arbitrary; rather, extensive prior consultation is the norm. Again informality prevails. The opposition, excepting the Communist Party, is often included in deliberations and even the Communist Party is accommodated at times. We should note here that rules of inclusion/exclusion are important to social control practices in general and that they tend to underscore compatibility in consultation and arbitration processes. Opponents of those in power who play by the informal rules, for example, will be included and considerable effort may be expended to socialize outsiders so they can be included. There are, of course, times when the LDP has pushed legislation through against violent opposition, but far more often the party has avoided exercising its majority power, suggesting that the meaning of power in Japanese democracy is different, more a matter of relational management than rights or formal authority.


Notable, too, is the fact that no single, permanent structure, legal or otherwise, stands at the center of Japanese politics. Neither the law nor the bureaucracy nor the LDP-dominated Diet can be said to hold permanent centrality. The inclusive and informal aspects of decision making dominate over fixed structures and formal procedures whether they be available or not. As David Titus has pointed out for prewar Japan, the tendency has long been toward the informalization of conflict among various governmental elements.\(^1\) Nor are the outcomes allowed to seriously change the balance of power among the various parties. The crucial implication here is that the state is not run primarily as independent from and above society, but rather, as Okimoto has noted, the state is seen as exercising its influence primarily in ways that are normal to social process in general.\(^2\) Japan has never been a theocracy or a legalistic state.

The puzzle is how to characterize the center. Karel van Wolferen, for example, astutely notes that

The most significant aspect of the Japanese system of power is that it is polycentric. Power is diffused over a number of semi-self-contained, semimutually-dependent bodies which are neither responsible to an electorate, nor ultimately subservient to one another. . . . In the context of this multi-centered power structure, it is difficult to discuss the possible growth or diminution of the role of the state. It is perhaps not possible to extricate satisfactorily the Japanese state from the Japanese system for the purposes of analysis.

He continues:

The diffusion of power, in combination with the situation resulting from the absence of a tradition of appealing to universalistic principles, make possible the peaceful co-option by the System of every major and most minor social elements, thereby freeing Japanese society from the tensions and disruptions which in the Western world are commonly considered the inevitable consequence of industrialized living. . . . The obvious advantage Japan enjoys for the diffusion of social tension is the absence of an implacable urge to reconcile reality with theory.\(^2\)

The notion of an empty center has been put forward before.\(^2\) Maruyama Masao wrote of the prewar emperor as essentially a powerless “shrine,”

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2. Okimoto, “Political Power in Japan.”
4. I cannot resist quoting from Roland Barth’s generally cavalier essay *Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 30:
   [Western] cities are concentric; but also, in accord with the very movement of Western metaphysics, for which every center is the site of truth, the center of our cities is always
for example, with the implication that the center had legitimating functions only. Titus, in examining this idea, has shown the imperial institution serving at the time to generate coherence and balance among power-holding elements and policy initiators. In either interpretation the portrait of the center is as a locus of legitimacy and balance, but not one in which great authority and power are united. Nor is policy generation an activity with a clear center. We might also note the term omikoshi keiei used to refer to company managements where the president is a figurehead and the surrounding executives share power. Work groups also have been found to shift periodically from the hierarchical order of productive organization to a discussion-oriented circle form in which central authority is minimized. Yet the suitability of any portrait of the power structure as polycentric or empty at the center is limited by the fact that a structural perspective tells us little about the transactional nature of the ordering that takes place. What can be said is that no central institution can be identified today and this fact alone raises profound questions about the foundations of order.

The practice of voting in non-legislative entities is another interesting entry point to the question of power, authority, and cohesion. The Japanese certainly have adopted the institution of formal elections and dutifully the population turns out to vote in impressive proportions, but at the small-group level there is a definite reluctance to call a vote if the outcome might be divisive (which in most cases means not unanimous). Voting makes public the fact of dissensions and creates winners and losers. In small groups, fraternal organizations, and many other kinds of intermediate-scale entities, the Japanese preference is to avoid majority rule. One wonders, as a result, about the social foundations of democracy in Japan. Qualities of group maintenance take precedence over expeditious use of rules.

24. Titus, Palace and Politics.
25. Honda Motors today, for example, has all of its senior officers share a single large office (obeya) which symbolically and effectively makes them a group executive authority.
There are cases, of course, when force is actually applied, cases that are legally justified, but where the intent is not just to defend the law. Sheldon Garon describes, for example, an instance in prewar Japan of the government effectively destroying a new religion after a prolonged effort to get it to change (i.e., integrate) via persuasion and mild harassment. More recently, extraordinary force was applied to student radicals and protesters occupying campuses in the late 1960s, but again only after what appeared to be extraordinary patience and restraint. This raises interesting questions about the basis upon which force is applied in Japan. Certainly it is not easily predicted on the basis, say, of a simple legal enforcement model.

In summary, the above rather cursory survey indicates that there is much that does not fit Western expectations. Authority and power are not synonymous. There is no insistence that governmental institutions solve problems by removal from society and objectification. A structural approach that equates hierarchy with power is somewhat misleading. Normal, everyday order itself stems from sources of group involvement, rather than primarily from legal norms or individual market behavior. Rather than distancing being a key maintenance mechanism, attachment and interdependence are emphasized. Authority seems to depend in part on inclusiveness and patience in some fundamental way. Delegation within organizations does not seem to threaten authority because it does not undermine compliance or imply independence. Power is not basically assumed to and apparently does not generally lead to corruption and misuse. Social borders and informal processes of management appear much more important than public formal institutions or universal principles of reference.

Returning to the question of how to characterize the center introduced above by van Wolferen, we should note Robert J. Smith's intriguing summarization of the issue. He writes:

It is a social order of a decidedly curious kind. I have posited the existence of a unifying hierarchical system within which role definition is contingent. The principle of harmony that admits of no distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, is plainly an aspect of what is called situational morality, yet it is found to operate in a network of mutual obligation of a highly specific nature. In so diffuse a system, where could authority possibly lie?28

At all levels of society, in fact, while demarcated hierarchical structures are ubiquitous, they are not omnipotent and it is at least periodically possible to convert all participants to equal status for some purposes. In the final analysis structure seems mutable, periodically in flux, and frequently subordinated to rules of process that are more fundamental. The issue of diffuseness at the center is not entirely new to students of Japan, of course, but pulled together in this way, the possibility of a common pattern lurking in the background is intriguing. This to my mind is where the recent work on early education is so revealing.

Social Ordering in Preschools and Elementary Classrooms

Readers will recall the work of William Caudill and his associates comparing Japanese and American mothers' child-rearing practices. They found more physical contact and less verbalization among mothers and infants in Japan and made the suggestive general interpretation that whereas in the United States mothers generally regard the child as born dependent and therefore to be raised to greater independence, the Japanese mother is inclined to view the child as born asocial with the implied goal of child-rearing to be teaching the child to integrate with others, to become social. They did not intend this contrast to be absolute, yet the insight has proven to be an important one for the general comparison of child-rearing in the two societies.

This emphasis on social integration is also found in the work of a number of Japanese psychologists and psychiatrists who have focused on Japanese-Western differences. Doi Takeo has cogently argued that one cannot find the Western emphasis on personal independence in Japan, that the personality structure of the Japanese and many modes of interaction accept as normal and healthy the expression of adult dependency needs and their satisfaction. Mothering, according to Caudill and his associates, encourages rather than discourages such expression. Many familiar with Japanese


mothering attest to a great deal of pampering and "spoiling" of the child. Going a step further than Doi, Kimura Bin and Hamaguchi Esyun have argued that Japanese grow up with a conscious sense of interconnectedness that is quite distinct from the Western, more autonomous, sense of personhood. Their argument, that interdependence is a felt reality rather than an abstraction, is difficult to fine-tune, but it certainly carries rather profound implications for Western social science theory as applied to Japan. As already mentioned, the assumption of individual independence is central to such things as the expectation of rational choice and the instinct for freedom.

The evidence of differences along these lines has slowly been piling up. Studies of infants indicate that Japanese mothers provide more physical contact and are relatively less inclined to stimulate their offspring, preferring them to be calm rather than active, in comparison to mothers in the United States. Earlier observations that Japanese mothers verbalize with their children much less than their American counterparts have been confirmed by the recent work as well. In fact, a review of the child-rearing literature from the Tokugawa period on by Kojima Hideo reveals a persistent emphasis on providing the child before age five or six with sleep and physical satisfaction, without particular concern for developing much in the way of independent self-control or verbal skills. Whereas American mothers of elementary school children rate verbal assertiveness and social skills very high among the goals of child-rearing, the Japanese mothers tend to focus more on emotional maturity, compliance to adult authority, and courtesy in social exchange. The Americans, for example, tended to focus more on talking with their children about the content of problems, whereas the Japanese tended to pay attention to the situation (i.e., social relations) surrounding a problem. A separate analysis of the Japanese image of the "good child" indicates an emphasis on openness and receptivity. The key term is sunao, meaning a natural positiveness and acceptance of things, especially adult guidance.

Other studies reveal the Japanese mother's approach to control to be


quite different from the American. She is inclined to regulate behavior through appeals to feelings and to the unwanted consequences of the act, while American mothers tend to assert their authority as parents. The Japanese mother seeks to avoid confrontation with the child's will and much less frequently expresses her anger directly. She seeks instead to create and then utilize a close emotional bond with her child as her central means of control. Anger and the assertion of authority are avoided because they will alienate the child from its bond with the mother. In this approach, patience and forbearing become parental means of regulation based on the assumption that the natural effects of the bonding involved are to sensitize the child to the parent's feelings and wishes. The goal patiently sought is the child's understanding of what is proper behavior. To this end the mother will often speak to the child in the guise of the injured third person or thing, as in saying "The table says 'ouch'" when the child pounds the table. Presumably, the sunao child is one who has not come to separate its will from its mother's, who has not been alienated from its initial identification with the mother, and who thus comes to understand quickly. Teaching the child to think and act independently is not mentioned as a parental goal.

But what if patience fails? Again recent studies of child-rearing offer some insight. Under experimental conditions when mothers are asked to express anger, the effects on Japanese children have been demonstrated to be much greater. That is, relatively unfamiliar with their mother's anger, Japanese children become well behaved much more quickly than their American counterparts. The point is that in the Japanese pattern, if force or authority must be exerted, its power is greater by virtue of its infrequency. The message has not been weakened by too much repetition. The symbolic threat of a loss of parental tolerance and love is particularly strong in other words.

A fascinating thing happens to this pattern in nursery school, kindergarten, and early elementary school. Let us first note that most mothers report the reason for sending children to nursery school is to teach them what cannot be learned at home, especially from pampering mothers, namely how to integrate with their peers. The crucial term in their explanations is not cognitive development, or play, or greater independence, but "group living" (shūdan seikatsu). It is this term that teachers also use most frequently to encapsulate the meaning of nursery school and kindergarten experiences. Shūdan seikatsu, furthermore, is regularly presented

38. I am grateful to Dr. Anne Fernald for this illustration.
39. Also summarized in Miyake et al., “Issues in Socioemotional Development.”
to the children as a happy time of playing and sharing together. Thus, although observations of the pampering-mother syndrome would lead us to predict a major discontinuity in the child’s life when he or she arrives at school, no severe discontinuity is experienced.

Observations of early education show the teacher continuing in the mother’s practice of seeking control without an emphasis on asserting direct authority or using criticism. The crucial tools applied by the teachers in their management of surprisingly large numbers of students involve, first of all, the thorough teaching of selected basic routines that punctuate the day. Second, as do mothers, teachers use indirection in settling problems and seeking to gradually shape the children’s understanding rather than trying to forcefully control their behavior. Order is shaped gradually by repeated practice of selected daily tasks (such as putting away shoes or cleaning the room) that socialize the children to high degrees of neatness and uniformity.

Throughout the progress of the child from earliest nursery school through elementary school, these routines are maintained and new ones added with the result that gradually more and more of the day is under the jurisdiction of what can only be termed an intensively routinized order. While patient repetition is crucial to achieving the goals of this approach, there is also much modeling of proper and improper conduct with the teacher praising those who perform well. Students are also given the task of inspecting their own and others’ performance, the beginnings of peer pressure. Such intense training in routines rests finally on the teacher asking the students if they are satisfied themselves that they have done a good job. It is interesting to note, furthermore, that most of these routines are cued not by the teacher’s voice but by a musical signal that precludes the teacher having to intervene or raise her voice. In much of this, the teacher skillfully stands to the side in managing the process. The unstated intent appears to be to create order without having to exercise much direct control.

As a consequence of this gradualist approach to the extension of learned order, much of each day at the preschool level is not regimented at all. Compared to American classrooms the noise level is high, many activities are unsupervised, and there is much movement of children. Shown videos of the largely unregulated portions of the Japanese preschool day, American and Chinese teachers typically refer to what they label as “chaos.”


42. According to Joe Tobin and his associates at the University of Hawaii.
Large classes make individual bonding to the teacher (the mothering option) impossible and teachers are intent on finding social means to the construction of order. The use of peers as agents of order and the application of small-group techniques thus become important mechanisms of control. Yet these are very underdeveloped possibilities at such an early age and the number of children involved is quite large. Furthermore, teachers do not see consistent orderliness as natural to children prior to elementary school. Because of these various factors, teachers are inclined to ignore (or tolerate) disruptions and problems under many circumstances that would prompt intervention in the case of an American teacher. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this situation is the observation that nearly half the time in the schools studied some children were out of sight of the teacher altogether.

Given their gradualist approach, Japanese teachers are required to endure a good deal of disorder at times. But to the surprise of foreign interviewers, they do not speak of this as a burden so much as they point out its value in letting the children express their normal exuberance and helping them to see the consequences of their own disruptive acts. Non-intervention, in other words, has the pedagogical value of clarifying the need for socially responsible behavior. Again, fostering “understanding” is more important than the fact of orderly behavior. The studies just summarized found nursery school teachers disinclined to intervene in student fights and consciously standing back from preventing problems from arising. Instead of direct intervention, the teacher might send other children over to inquire into the situation or let it run itself out despite crying or damage. She might also talk to the students herself, by asking what is going on and perhaps eventually deflecting attention, but not by forcefully intervening or by taking the child away from the situation. The inclination was to publicize problems so the lesson could be drawn by all and so that peer pressure could be developed. A favorite technique was to talk to the class as a whole, praising good behavior and pointing out the consequences of inconsiderate behavior. Small group discussions were also common in this regard.

The interpretation of causality is important to note here. Teachers tell investigators that they believe misbehavior is the result of a lack of understanding on the child’s part (rather than stemming from personality—a mischievous or aggressive nature, for example) and when a child regularly misbehaves the interpretation is likely to center on the child’s need for more love and affection (rather than discipline or control). This benign interpretation of human nature carries the assumption that progress in understanding will eventually mean that even the most disruptive child will gradually learn to conform and fit in of his/her own accord. The keys are patience not discipline, and persuasive illustration not rules.
Does this imply that teachers have adopted a laissez-faire approach? Not in the least. Teachers are remarkably strict (to the point of coercive) in dealing with parents about such things as the clothes the children wear to school. One detail may serve to exemplify this sort of control. I recently received a letter from a former student, a sansei woman who has lived in Japan for over ten years. She was reporting on her experiences placing her three-year-old son in nursery school. “We parents were given a 90-minute orientation on school rules, how to wrap your child’s bento, nursery school dress, etc. I ignorantly asked if the smocks they wear could be made of vinyl or some synthetic fiber since the kids will use them to paint, etc. and this triggered a 10-minute discussion on summer and winter smocks. They must be cotton, have three large buttons in the front and, believe it or not, the buttonholes should be vertical not horizontal.”

While children are experiencing a very gradual introduction into the routines of shūdan seikatsu, their parents are being directed in the minutia of conformity by very strict school officials. The mother's worries about her child are easily exploited to help assure compliance and peer pressure among parents is effectively cranked up on behalf of the teachers' long-term social ordering goals.

Indirectly, then, teachers are intently working toward greater order. In sending their children to school, Japanese mothers essentially relinquish their authority to the school which then has the responsibility to train the children to be members of society (shakaijin). This gives teachers very considerable power, something American parents generally withhold from the school. Teachers in the United States are not as firmly authorized to direct the child's development. The frequent observation that many American teachers try to exercise control by gaining the affection of the children, by gaining their voluntary compliance, is probably a result of this lack of full authorization.

Turning to the use of small groups, it is remarkable how even among four- and five-year-olds, the Japanese inclination to emphasize this form of organization and control is practiced. First, the small group (han) is the basis of much classroom organization. Groups are arranged, not by ability, but according to considerations of what will make them effective in terms of their internal dynamics. Teachers report putting friends together, balancing talents and allocating leadership qualities. Many tasks are given to groups and most classroom discussions are conducted in small groups. As with most classroom responsibilities, leadership chores within the han are rotated. By first grade this approach is extended considerably with the addition of more academic and social responsibilities to small groups. By putting the group in charge of the behavior of its individual members

43. I am indebted to Nancy Ukai for this illustration.
44. As illustrated in the article by Fujita Mariko in this issue.
and having the group experience the consequences of its members’ mis-
behavior and by holding groups up to the rest of the class for their good
and bad qualities, the teacher can effectively shift much of the weight of order-
ing the class on to the shoulders of the student peer group. The result is the
essence of a system of collective responsibility. Small groups are the epit-
ome of the peer-based approach to management.

Letting the students themselves play a major role in problem-solving
involves a process that is quite time-consuming, one that precludes some
other educational goals and requires patience on the teachers’ part. It ap-
ppears that the de-emphasis on cognitive development in Japanese early
education is related to the need to allocate sufficient time to allow this
approach to be effective. A number of connected social developments,
namely, learning routines, forming groups that are effective, and gaining
understanding of the consequences of one’s individual anti-social acts, all
require a great deal of time and do not lend themselves to short-cut taking.
For example, the consequences of improper behavior must be allowed to
appear and then the children must be given the time and delegated the au-
thority to discuss and figure out how to correct the situation. The teacher’s
understanding of the processes involved is thus an important aspect of the
equation. What is particularly interesting here is the observation of early
education specialists that American preschool teachers do not seem to have
an inherent grasp of this process and that their efforts to promote group-
based activities are basically shallow. We could find no more apt illustra-
tion of a fundamental mechanism of intergenerational cultural transmission
via socialization than this.

Does the peer group replace the mother as a focus of primary bonding?
Certainly there is a natural inclination on the child’s part to transfer an
already-learned pattern of attachment from the mother to the teacher. In
deflecting the child’s attachment to some degree to the peer group, the
teacher is making an important distinction, one that in a sense deper-
sonalizes the basis of control and puts it in the realm of more inclusive
processes. The initial inclination to personal bonding learned in the family
is not undermined, but neither is the temptation followed to leave matters
there. The peer group—whether the whole class or the small group—can-
not provide unlimited succor as a mother might, but it is encouraged to be
sympathetic and supportive to unhappy members. We should also note the
egalitarian approach to small groups taken by teachers. Automatic rotation
of responsibilities and encouragement of participation by all members are
basic rules applied by teachers. Equality here is a means of keeping bal-
ance and enhancing attachment within the group.

Central to our discussion is the fact that in relying on routines, on
groups, and on the slow development of the child’s understanding, the
teacher is avoiding the direct application of her authority to many situations
that in American preschools call forth direct control responses from teachers. As in the case of mothering, the children are not gaining an immunity to the teachers’ commands and warnings. The ironic result is that authority is strengthened or preserved by its sparing application. When power is rarely manifest, alienation based on a clash of wills is minimized.

Such restraint and tolerance should not be taken as simple permissiveness any more than the Japanese mother’s conduct can be regarded as simply spoiling the child. The fact is that a great deal of orderly behavior is being learned, but made to apply to fixed time periods and activities during the day. In terms of compliance and regulated behavior, the Japanese young are conspicuously better behaved than their American counterparts during these particular segments.

The foundation of this approach in the case of mothers is a faith in the power of emotional bonding, whereas in the teachers’ case it seems to be confidence in the certainty of the social configuration that is slowly being learned, in the natural power of the routines, the peer pressure and the growing sense of social responsibility, and in her own society-granted authority to manage the process. There is an inevitability about the whole process of generating order that is not felt by American teachers. Japanese teachers rarely talk about control, whereas American teachers (who admittedly are achieving quieter classrooms more of the time) discuss the subject a great deal. With lower expectations, a different philosophy, and different techniques, the Japanese teacher appears secure in the direction she is taking her wards.

It is important to note that the teacher is the first agent of a society that agrees very broadly on the importance of fixed patterns of daily order. The routines and group processes learned at three and four will certainly be confirmed and reinforced in other structured situations throughout life. Participation is an issue, since inevitably there are some who do not or will not fit in, but instead of bringing into question the scheme itself, the issue of participation puts the focus on the individual. Will the child reunite with others within the fixed configuration or will he remain outside? Patience is possible because order is essentially given and not threatened by individual exception.

By way of contrast, American mothers and teachers feel time pressures to set in place self-discipline before the looming prospect of the early arrival of assertive individualism transforms the child into a legitimately autonomous being. This gives a very different agenda to early education. Add to this the American notion that in principle at least the child’s sense of choice should be cultivated whenever possible and the very basis for social order and teacher confidence is different.

It seems that the Japanese configuration rests on some fundamentally different assumptions about social attachment. At the beginning of each
stage of schooling a great deal is made of the closeness, friendships, and happy togetherness (note the skepticism with which Americans greet the connotations of this term) that children will experience. Much effort and ingenuity goes into establishing a strong identity between the child, the class as a whole, and the small group to which the child belongs. The routines give a sense of commonality, as do the uniforms and the teachers’ treatment of the group as a whole. The persistent focus on group processes has led visiting American teachers to criticize the Japanese approach because it offers too little in the way of individual attention. Essentially, the goals are different. The American teachers aim at encouraging individuality and the fact that there are many children in the room is at best incidental to this task and at worst a serious impediment to its fulfillment. The eternal American cry is for smaller classes and greater order so as to free the teacher for this, her most important work. In the Japanese case, the goal is to establish a working social order and numbers are not a serious hindrance. As we have seen, the task is to create attachment and cooperation among the children.

In sum, at the child’s entry point into society where patterns of order are first constructed and where responses to authority and management are first learned, recent research has illustrated significant differences with the United States and these differences echo issues and patterns discussed as anomalous or paradoxical in the previous section. First, highly regimented routines are interspersed between largely unsupervised periods within each day, giving order a fluctuating nature. Second, the teacher uses her considerable power very sparingly. Rather, indirect means are preferred and the costs in time and disruption are accepted. Third, group processes are relied upon much more than management by rules or assertive authority. Many tasks are delegated to groups. Fourth, patience on the part of the teacher (and the rest of the class) is coupled with the idea of drawing the misbehaving child back into the fold through the child’s own understanding. If this takes a very long time, so be it. Fifth, there is much emphasis on drilling routines until they are fixed and highly standardized and then relying upon them without variation. Sixth, as part of these routines teachers emphasize full participation on an equal footing. In using all of these means, the teacher is generating a pattern in which the structural center, the point where power and authority are directly applied, is left relatively open. That is, routines, group processes, parental pressures, and free play are interspersed with occasional direct teacher intervention.

Parallels in Adult Institutions

Taking cues from the ordering processes in early education, let us next note their regular recurrence in small groups and organizations in general.
Beginnings. Not only in preschools but throughout society we find entry points to new groups and institutions highly elaborated as markers of the expectation that attachment will develop and that fixed routines will be complied with. Ceremonies mark entry into new schools, new memberships, and the start of company employment. It is a time of formal dress, formal pledges of submission, and the expression of new relationships. There is no doubt about the attention given to socializing new members and to forging a sense of identification between them and the group. Graduations, retirements, and transfers, on the other hand, are given far less attention. In Japan the ceremonial focus is put on the creation of relationships, not the successful fulfillment of individual life stages.

Setting Routines. Compared to companies in the West, Japanese firms devote much greater time, money, and effort to setting firmly in place basic routines and attitudes. Managers do not begrudge the time devoted to this task but take a long-term perspective and emphasize precisely what preschool teachers emphasize: cooperative routines and the development of individual understanding of social necessities. The parallels with military boot camp or with initiations into religious orders are striking, of course, and this only underscores the individualist assumptions of secular Western organizations. In some forms of training, bonding is a stated goal. Shared hardships and shared pleasures, for example, are intentionally built into company training to serve this purpose.

If we look closely at the developmental cycle, we find at every stage from nursery school to early employment the same basic routines reiterated and the same social lessons repeated time and again. Shared housekeeping chores, dress codes, group discussions, patterns of group assembly and movement, and so forth are relearned at each new entry point. While there is some variation and change, the remarkable point is the fundamental consistency from initial social entry to final working order. Take, for example, the messy slipper (or shoe) lesson in which everyone is called back to inspect a jumble of slippers at the entrance in order to “see” the necessity of orderly behavior. This lesson can be found reiterated throughout the socialization process including company training. Emphasis is always on standardizing the basic practices and on understanding their moral implications in the context of shūdan seikatsu.

Organizations also regularly seek ways to improve efficiency by adding new elements to the routines and socializing everyone to the practice. An example of this might be the painting of footprints along a section of a

45. I have written elsewhere about the rich elaboration of a bank’s initial training and entrance ceremony. Rohlen, For Harmony and Strength.

46. A widely quoted figure is that one day a week is spent in training by new employees during the first five years of company membership.
Toshiba factory walkway with signs stating the time it should take employees to walk from one end to the other if they were traveling at the proper rate (neither too fast or slow). The same construction of a base of routines is found in the teaching of virtually every kind of Japanese hobby, art (michi), apprenticeships, manual training program, and even in the way Japanese seek to socialize foreigners in their midst. While this kind of training represents a form of organizational coercion, it is not very onerous if it has consistently been part of group existence from the beginning. The group, not the instructing authority figure, is the agent, and when the routine is established there is no need for intrusive authority at all.

**Emotional Attachment.** Small groups are rarely just instrumental. Through informal socializing a bonding process occurs. Nowhere is this more notable than in company work groups and in the fact that weekend trips, after-work meals, and drinking parties are a regular aspect of the overall pattern, one encouraged by management. Eating, bathing, drinking, and sleeping together imitate in a limited way those most intimate of family activities. Patently, work groups are not families and these efforts should not be misunderstood as making them alike, yet the degree of attachment that does occur is the foundation of much social control. In secondary schools, too, despite the greater preoccupation with entrance exams and impersonal competition, teachers use small groups in ways originating in early education. And in universities, student clubs follow an even more intensive approach. Group social activities, while pro forma, provide considerable emotional catharsis and open members up to the influence of this intimate context.

**Participation and Inclusion.** Compliance with these basic routines defines one as a social being and a member of a group. To become part of a group does not require affirmation of a faith or the acceptance of a set of rules, but only compliance in the routines and a willingness to acknowledge their inherent necessity as part of shūdan seikatsu. The term sunao is used by teachers and employers alike. What is definitely not being called for is independence of approach or individualistic resistance to the conformity being established.

Notable here is that “society” is no abstraction, but a very tangible, distinctive, largely face-to-face entity with clear boundaries, norms, and customs. The ceremonies, training, and initiations aim to mark this reality off as special in its expectations of the new member. If membership is so strongly marked, it is participation in the quasi-voluntary activities of the group that serves as the thermometer of morale and the measure of cohesiveness.

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47. I am grateful to Christena Turner for this illustration.
Through participation in the group’s expressive activities, such as discussions or drinking parties, bonding and openness are maintained. On the other hand, withholding and withdrawal in intimate relations are universal techniques for signaling a problem, and groups in Japan have a marked sensitivity to this matter. Full participation in the voluntary and informal events of the group is thus a major goal in itself, since participation is the measure of acceptance, openness, and satisfaction. It is part of a reciprocal arrangement, the individual’s contribution to the whole. Not joining in, on the other hand, is a rejection, an act of defiance, and a sign of alienation. Compliance and order are at issue and the group formation process is incomplete. This in turn means that the social ordering process must be intensified. In contrast to the notion that the center is periodically “empty” of power and authority is the fact that it is filled by “participation.” The two are related as alternative means of holding a group together.

What is noteworthy about the Japanese case is that this process applies not just to families, but to all kinds of secular organizational circumstances. The very powerful emotional pressures for participation normally associated in the West with the family are at work throughout the society. Failure to follow directions, careless variance from group norms and standards in such matters as uniforms, etiquette, and practice, for example, create surprising levels of consternation centering on issues of the offending individual’s connectedness to the group. The result of such pressure is very high levels of orderly conduct in the organized spheres of society that do not depend on authoritative action.

Participation, thus, not only signifies attachment, but represents a form of discipline. It covers conformity to a multitude of details that lie in the area of overlap between group necessities and individual choice. That this area is so dominated by the group side of the balance in Japan is a sign of the way this mechanism indirectly controls a large amount of what elsewhere is viewed as private behavior. Nor is it surprising given the power of this mechanism that many Japanese express a wish to escape its influence and dread going back to it after living abroad. Of particular interest here is something that might be labeled repressed alienation. Periodically one reads of a “loyal” employee who after years of quiet compliance commits an outrageous act of sabotage against his own organization. Adult runaways (jōhatsu) are another example. These individuals apparently can neither express their resentment or unhappiness directly nor exit the confines of membership.

Delegation and Indirect Rule. Within organizations highly dependent on socialization and routine, a particular relationship develops between delegation and regimentation. In a system based on the assumption of individual autonomy, delegation may be useful or necessary, but it is made
risky by the presumed loss of central control and order. Why the risk? Because individualist perspectives assume that personal and communal goals and interests are not the same. Delegation then becomes a power issue. This starting point establishes an expectation of a highly ordered and coherent center and a rather anarchistic periphery. In Japanese work organizations, delegation can mean something rather different. First, with highly socialized participants order is much less threatened. The common routines and goals are more secure. Second, a group-based system of collective responsibility means that delegation is not to individuals or to an anarchistic periphery, but to a solidly developed arena of standardized group control mechanisms. Third, delegation is never absolute or one way. Rather, its main purpose is to invigorate the periphery by overcoming the entropic aspects of heavy socialization and routinization. Delegation may not imply a relinquishing of authority or decision-making power, but rather it can be an inclusive act of sharing responsibility. Political trust in the periphery is the pivotal issue. In sum, the highly socialized regimentation found in Japanese organizations makes delegation typically a matter of mobilization rather than one of power.

**Boundaries.** The explicit and very detailed specification of the expected norms for the group do more than serve to help create the sense of unity desired. They serve as markers for the context in which behavior has been socialized and they define the realm of participation. A context-specific symbol system is created that invests seemingly trivial matters with importance. Within this context a social persona has been defined that does not center on the assumption of choice and rational self-interest. Rather, the assumption is, as the preschool teachers say, that attaching to the group is pleasant and desirable. To not attach or to refuse to accept group influence is to place oneself outside, and to eventually justify a different, potentially very coercive, kind of treatment. Interpretations of order-threatening events take place in a boundary-oriented evaluative context. That is, in the administration of problems, a major aim is to restore people and groups to their proper affiliations, to get them back in their “villages,” so to speak.

**Order, Authority, and Legitimacy.** It is important to note what an assumption of attachment does to the notion of social order. It gives it many of the qualities that we know or look upon positively in the family. The basic unit of analysis is not the autonomous individual but patterns of connectedness. Emotional and instrumental issues are intertwined. Sensitivity to others is high. Intimacy and authority are not separated. Give and take among the members is the usual method of conflict resolution. Development of self-centered perspectives is inhibited to a degree, and yet there are dependency and indulgence aspects to the pattern. Misbehavior is the
group's problem, not the problem of an objective external system or the responsibility of the misbehaving individual alone. The favored resolution draws the offender back into attachment to the group, followed by resocialization. Should resocialization fail, groups may choose to get rid of the unattaching (offending) person in a manner reminiscent of mura-hachibu.48 “If the stake sticks out, hammer it back in” carries an implicit corollary that says if it cannot be hammered back in, it may eventually have to be pulled out. The forcefulness of the notion that the group or organization must defend itself from ultimate disruption is very strong, but its application as a last resort is rare, so powerful are the restorative mechanisms we have been considering.

Crucial to the overall pattern in early education is the fact that the teacher periodically steps back from the exercise of authority and either delegates problem-solving to groups or allows a disruptive event to take its course. The teacher has not relinquished authority in the slightest, however, only avoided applying it. The same pattern is readily observable in organizations where authority holders frequently step back from a direct leadership role in order to draw in others, to have their interaction fill the center. It would be a mistake to interpret such reserve as a lack of power or authority. Rather, it is a sign of confidence. It works because authority is not weak or uncertain of its ultimate power to mobilize social forces. This reserve has the further consequence of protecting authority from appearing coercive and it helps maintain the legitimacy of the office. In Japan, alienation from authority is not as common a phenomenon as one might expect, yet alienation from the peer pressure aspects of shūdan seikatsu is frequently encountered.

**Governance**

If normal social control in groups is predicated on the assumption of attachment, it is also true that among adults attachment is rarely as certain or as complete as it is between parents and children. The issue of what happens when attachment does not develop is a problem for every society. The amount of time and money and emotional effort devoted to establishing and maintaining primary attachments is monumental in Japan.

The result is an overall social structure that is in many respects cen-

48. Expressions of remorse (symbolized often by confession) can initiate this process. Forgiveness and acceptance are offered in exchange. In the event this reattachment effort is insufficient, a resocialization effort follows. The use of special techniques such as self-reflection through diary writing or character-building through discipline (and even physical punishment) can be applied. The induced recollection of past favors and benefits is another favored resocialization technique. Both self-reflection and induced recollection serve as reminders of the social nature of one’s existence.
trifugal in terms of affiliation and the capacity to order events. Social contexts and organizations are built up from the bottom (or the outside), so to speak, in a way that invests the peripheral entities with great stability. The locus of socialized order is in the lower-level, subordinate groupings. We are not dealing with an atomistic social world dependent on legal or other ordering mechanisms emanating from a center, but a world of highly organized satellite entities that connect to one another in sometimes tenuous and fluid ways. These entities gain a degree of autonomy from the fact that internally they are strengthened by the pattern of attachment we are considering.

The government arbitrates, maintains balance, and provides direction at times. Keeping numerous, largely self-contained entities in relationship to one another (i.e., participating) is a crucial role of government in the maintenance of order. While there is no question that at times the government asserts itself as a central authority, it also acts informally to keep the center “open” of or free from authority so that the satellite entities interact as participants.

Powerful administrative organs such as the national police, the Ministry of Finance, and MITI retain the authority to intervene forcefully, but we also cannot identify a single central entity to which all of these are fully subordinate. There is no electoral legitimation of the Liberal Democratic Party or the prime minister, for example, that fixes their positions as superordinate in an executive sense. Factions, for example, are stronger than political parties and local support bases (jiban) are stronger than factions, and in a similar way large companies have grown stronger than the business “groups” (keibatsu) to which they belong. The center’s major problem in terms of social ordering is holding together the constituent elements. Policing the mass of individuals is a matter largely accomplished by the satellite institutions themselves. It is in the art of compromise, consensus building, and lateral linkage that the government plays an indispensable role. The key term is always balance. In modern Japan, if chaos is likely to arise, it is at the center rather than the periphery and for reasons of a loss of balance and a withdrawal from participation by key satellite constituencies.

Consider next how this balance is typically pursued. The practice is generally not to publicly acknowledge a divisive problem or conflict and then remove it to an objective, formal environment, as would be typical of a legal resolution in the Anglo-American scheme, but rather to sidestep publicity if possible, to avoid direct intervention, to patiently seek compromise, and to ultimately knit the social fabric back together. The goal is to restore normal relationships with as little commotion as possible. The style in which this goal is pursued frequently has much in common with the way teachers in early education manage their wards. Patience, an emphasis on
inclusiveness, the use of intimate relations, a reluctance to use power, peer pressure, and so forth are all aspects of both.

Examples abound. Police control of gangs, outcaste communities, and Koreans is a mixture of close supervision, occasional intimidation, but primarily the development of extensive personal contacts and the use of community ties to limit and control activities. The tendency of judges to settle cases by reconciliation rather than by ordinary trial needs to be seen as a commitment to restoring relations rather than providing decisions that do not speak to reconciliation.

There are particular reasons also why courts, the police, and higher authorities prefer to use informal administrative means to practice a kind of U-turn device in dealing with disorderly elements. First, very close police supervision of the population exists as evidenced by the fact that Japan among industrial nations has the highest per capita number of police. Second, as we have seen, the degree of order maintained by private groups over their own constituencies is very high. Third, Japanese have great difficulty denying others and therefore refusing to be reintegrated socially. Reintegration brings with it strengthened control. Witness, in this regard, the fact that the police obtain a 95 per cent confession rate from those they arrest which as Walter Ames explains is primarily because criminals cannot resist the kindness of the detectives who befriend them after their arrest. It is notable that Communists, Koreans, and student radicals, the most frequently mentioned by police as unlikely to confess, are the groups regarded as most outside the system and thus dealt with most harshly if they step out of line.

No settlement is adequate if the social fabric is not sewn back together. John O. Haley has recently described the Japanese state as showing a “chronic dependence upon what might be called consensual governance: the reliance upon consensual mechanisms for the effective implementation of public policy.” And Frank Upham has described how difficult social con-

50. Ibid., pp. 135–37. In this regard, see also Patricia G. Steinhoff’s discussion of tenkō in the case of pre- and postwar radicals. “Student Conflict,” in Krauss et al., eds., Conflict in Japan, pp. 174–213.
51. The interest among intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s in strengthening within the individual the independence of spirit and will to resist social pressures that was considered under the rubric of shutaisetsu is worth noting here for the light it throws on the relationship of personality structure and Japanese concepts of the person to this discussion of social control.
52. Hanami, “Conflict in Industrial Relations and Labor Law,” in Krauss et al., eds., Conflict in Japan.
flicts (e.g., women's rights, buraku discrimination, environmental damage, and industrial policy arbitrariness) pushed into public view through the legal efforts of outsider groups (namely, those that are excluded from or refuse to participate in the informal system) have been deflected legislatively to move them under administrative supervision in an effort to reassert the dominance of informal processes.\textsuperscript{54} Both legal scholars are noting the same tendency to abstain from the exercise of formal authority and to seek compromise in a manner that draws the dissenters into a single framework, one firmly in the control of the government. Consider, also, the way citrus and beef interests in Japan were rolled into solutions for the trade imbalance by being given rights over the import of these products. In all of these instances the pattern is for prolonged private working of the problem using face-to-face intermediation as a primary means to the goal of inclusive reintegration of the conflicting elements.

There are a number of important points to note here. First, informal processes rest on the closeness (attachments) of the bureaucracy and other central players to at least the powerful elements of society. Public and private domains are thus inherently blurred.\textsuperscript{55} Public resources (including money, favors, punishments, and appeals to the common good) are applied through informal dealings and, in turn, private resources mix with these and with political needs in ways that make many undertakings or activities of an ostensibly public kind in fact only partially so. Second, that bringing problems under the jurisdiction of informal mechanisms allows many subtleties in the reintegration process to work, especially social pressure. Pragmatism takes over and face-to-face persuasion becomes more effective. Most importantly, the goal of reintegration brings to bear the conservative and limiting pressures of social connectedness. Fourth, the application of coercive force is fully legitimate only when other means have been exhausted and the implacable resistance of the offending entity or individual is patently clear. Finally, the preference of the government in instances like those Upham describes has been for prolonged, almost silent resistance to divisive pressures and public challenge followed by an ingenious mix of responses that not only speak to the many facets of reintegration and the reassertion of informal control but also avoid any clear-cut winners or losers or statements of differential virtue. Face-saving is, of course, a device for restoring the social order.

Some implicit understandings are invoked by the style of inclusion just described and these understandings explain not only the restraint, but the basis of political legitimacy. The unwritten rule seems to be that those

\textsuperscript{54} Upham, \textit{Law and Social Change}.

\textsuperscript{55} See also Okimoto, “Political Power in Japan.”
in authority use less power to force behavior than their formal offices and perogatives provide; that by consulting with others, including the opposition, and by compromising in the process of partially getting their own way, authorities maintain existing power balances and thus legitimate their leadership position. Incrementalism prevails. This works only if the opposition is willing ultimately to compromise and be reintegrated. This approach obviously cannot work with elements unwilling to compromise and participate. If there is a center to Japanese politics it is defined by this process itself and in the implied value of mutuality in maintaining an inclusive balance. The psychology of political opposition is also clarified in that it is measured by the degree of emotional resistance to inclusive approaches, social pressures, and offers of compromise; measured, in other words, in terms of resistance to social attachment.

The implicit rule of participation and consensus carries with it the eternal problem that participants have considerable veto power. While they are constrained within the overall system, they gain influence over outcomes by playing a game of reluctance. It is not that central authorities lack adequate legal authority or are short of coercive power; the issue is one of not wanting to exercise that power because, unless fully justified, coercive actions ultimately undermine the entire system of affiliation and compliance. The legitimacy and eventually the power of those in authority would be diminished. The gloved fist is very real, but it is rarely put to use. Parallel with the exercise of authority by preschool and elementary school teachers, the reluctance to enter public conflicts and especially the extreme caution about the application of power stems from the fact that these actions generate alienation in a system that is sensitized to mutuality as a relational matter. Re-attachment must be at least somewhat a voluntary act.

If we think of the center's representatives as occupying a parental role in relation to a family of satellite entities, then, except in cases of stubborn resistance, coercive force denies the paternalistic base upon which their authority rests. The legitimacy of authority maintained in this way is itself an important quality of the center, one manifested not by demonstrations of power, but by demonstrations of reintegrating skills and effort. Of note here is the value of threatening outside forces in helping to preserve the integrating processes at the center.

To summarize, authority, skillfully wielded, seeks 1) to shift responsibility for control downward to lower level groups where compliance is generated and where control is greater, 2) to maintain a balance among such groups so that they continue to participate in the general political framework, 3) to warn about consequences and seek to publicize potential dangers in efforts to gain general understanding and participation, 4) to avoid public conflict (including legal entanglements and ideological debates),
and 5) to the degree possible, to avoid the application of coercive force so that legitimacy is preserved. Informality, in other words, makes a great deal of sense from both the perspective of the way order is constructed and from the cultural framework of meaning that surrounds power and authority.

In some accounts of Japanese society, compliance, cooperation, and the benign qualities of power have been explained as deriving from a different cultural tradition than that of the West, one shaped primarily by Confucian norms and world view. Harumi Befu, for example, has discussed how Japanese values have established a paternalistic kind of bureaucratic leadership that uses its "personal fund of resources for attaining organizational goals." His point is that, rather than power corrupting, the typical Japanese case has those in authority identifying with the organization and using their social exchange credits with their subordinates (such things as past favors and personal kindness) to mobilize them to the same organizational goals. Control here rests on personalized vertical ties imbued with a paternalistic ethic. Ronald Dore has recently underscored this perspective in contrasting the economic organization of the Japanese and the British. He emphasizes the Confucian tradition's encouragement of an accepting attitude toward authority as benign and the reciprocal ethical norm that authority be paternalistic.

While not wishing to deny the influence of the Confucian heritage, it is well to note the difficulty with this approach. While Confucianism encourages a certain fundamental attitude (namely, mutual trust and respect among status unequals), it focuses on dyadic relations and hardly recognizes the group. It envisions hierarchy as stable and persuasive. Confucianism sets the stage, so to speak, but it is not directly responsible for the mechanisms identified here as characteristic of the Japanese pattern of social control. Such things as participation, emotional attachment, restraint in applying power, delegation, and the formation of participation and balance by emptying the center (temporarily separating authority from power to preserve legitimacy) are not inherently Confucian. Rather, in the Confucian tradition, authority and power and legitimacy are pretty much congruent and fixed. Hierarchy is reinforced by deference (as in Japan under formal conditions), but it is also central and continuous. The pattern we are seeking to define contains too many qualities not explained by the Confucian tradition to be adequately dealt with by reference to it alone.

A structural account like Nakane Chie's has some of the same prob-

57. Dore, Taking Japan Seriously, chapter 5.
lemms.\textsuperscript{58} It is interesting to note that initially, she pays attention to the human nexus (or \textit{ba}), but then shifts focus from the group to hierarchical structures of all kinds. Socialization and diffuse attachments are not emphasized. The final picture that emerges is one of a hierarchical order tempered and made palatable by personalized vertical ties and by identification with primary affiliations.\textsuperscript{59} In both the Confucian and Nakane models, one might say, hierarchy is over-emphasized at the expense of group-based ordering practices that establish a loose relationship between authority, power, and legitimacy and which, in turn, cause the question of the center to become problematic. There is also the matter of variability and flexibility to be explicated.

Evidence of this can be found in situations of failure where open schisms arise (e.g., the creation of second unions in financially troubled companies). Typically in these cases one finds surprisingly high levels of violence and stubborn animosity appearing. The shift from compliance to entrenched resistance is a matter of the collapse of legitimating restraint and "paternalistic" responsibility on the part of the authorities. Once the expectation of attachment and mutuality is broken, it can be as if a flood gate of rage is released. One might argue that the hostility is a product of the frustrated expectations combined with anger that the past repression of self (individual and collective) for the sake of participation has been ignored, wasted, and deprecated. As in marriage and divorce, the degree of initial attachment is directly related to the potential for angry detachment. This is a far cry from the utilitarian notion of easy mobility from one rationally chosen affiliation to another.

The Occupation left Japan with a set of public institutions and democratic ideals that have remained undisturbed, but which are used very differently than originally intended. A fundamental problem, obviously, has been that the nature of social order as learned in the socialization process and as reiterated in organizations large and small does not fit the Anglo-American model. Many have noted this disjuncture in one form or another, but have confused the issue by exaggerating the contrast as one between Japanese hierarchical tradition and Western democracy. The problem is most certainly cultural, but the cultural connections can only be grasped fully if the entire matter of social order is considered. Without considering the intensely socialized basic pattern, the paradoxical aspects of governance appear either conspiratorial and exploitative or simply mysterious.

\textsuperscript{58} Nakane Chie, \textit{Tate shakai no ningen kankei}, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1967).
Upham, for example, in discussing the preference for “informal” administrative processes over formal legal ones, explains that it serves “elite” ends. In other words, informal processes are in essence mechanisms of power foisted on a society that does not desire them. On the other hand, the argument of older legal scholars that the Japanese are “traditionally” non-litigious is an example of the use of “tradition” without any specification of how it is learned or maintained, undermined or excepted. It seems that a more complex starting point that acknowledges hierarchical elements, Occupation-supplied institutions, and small-group social control frameworks as interactive in Japanese politics offers to produce more comprehensive insights. The interesting point is that the first two have explicit ideological (and academic) foundations, but not the third.

Clearly, government of 120 million is not a small-group matter, but just as clearly Japanese society is not one founded on the same learned systems of microlevel ordering or cultural assumptions about governance as prevail in the United States, Britain, or Confucian China.

The processes of adult attachment we have observed work best in the primary groupings of the society—families, work groups, classrooms, the nuclear groups within religious organizations, and so forth. The organizations built upon these groupings (companies, schools, villages, governmental offices, specific religions, etc.) have a lower order capacity for social control that is not coercive, but compared to government they still have great power to generate order within their separate spheres. The reliance by higher, central authority on these more peripheral and lower social elements, utilizing the many techniques discussed, is thus a statement that the whole system ultimately rests on an assumption of human nature as embedded in social ties. The relative strength of social attachment in the primary and secondary groups gives the center a very different role than the individualist conception with its assumptions of an undersocialized individual, atomistic society, and removed governmental processes. It is the particular paradox of the Anglo-American model that central authority is at once more necessary, more burdensome, and more suspect than in the Japanese model.

In Japan the problems of order that derive from the perspective being highlighted here focus on 1) the fact that attachment cannot be taken for granted, 2) that balance is an inherently unstable approach that requires constant adjustment, 3) that reluctance and withholding by participants can be very coercive, 4) that there is no native explanation for the arrangement that satisfies the skeptical mind, and 5) that once seriously out of balance, recovery is extremely difficult. Nor can we ignore the fact that

60. Upham, Law and Social Change.
efforts to create and maintain attachment can become unduly oppressive in themselves.

In conclusion, however, we should also take note of the variability of means to social ordering possible in Japan possessing such a complex of differing approaches and the potential for contradiction among them. Most apparent, of course, are those between the postwar, Occupation-induced system of governance based on individualist and utilitarian assumptions and those we have been discussing. Neither the formal system nor the ideology of postwar governance fit the integrative techniques commonly practiced. Between the formal and informal systems lies a very large area of administrative judgment and what might be labeled art. The more subtle issues are those between an approach that would invoke the vertical order (legal or Confucian) espousing an “earlier-rather-than-later” application of power and an approach that adheres more patiently to an integrative orientation of compromise. Administratively, the two can be quite different. Disagreements, for example, about what groups and individuals are corrigible and capable of reintegration, about how long to wait before applying force, about the propriety of delegation, about the limits of consensus-building, and about how much force to eventually apply are likely to be persistent aspects of all administrative situations.

What is clear, however, is that during the last thirty years or so neither Confucianism nor Western liberalism nor personalized vertical ties have changed much in their separate roles in the story. What has shifted then? While in the higher realms of governance, efforts at integration and ordering have largely had to bypass the formal institutional mechanisms left by the Occupation, the lower/peripheral institutions of the society—schools, companies, political jiban, townships, farmers’ cooperatives, and so forth—have been increasing their integration on essentially group principles. This has not threatened the governing framework so much as permitted it to rely more and more on informal and indirect means. Compared to prewar practices of governance, furthermore, the postwar system is less assertive of central authority and prerogatives. This would be a reflection of two basic considerations: the discrediting of autocratic style by defeat and the Occupation, and the increasing social integration permitted by economic success. In thus leaving the center more open, so to speak, the opportunity for dynamic interchange among the participating entities has been very great. Considered as a space, the center’s openness is a source of creative potential, just as it is in a preschool classroom, as long as routines are well laid down and the level of attachment is high.

We do not know much about prewar nursery schools and kindergartens nor about early socialization in general, but they too were probably rather different and more hierarchically oriented and regimented than they are to-
day. An overall shift of this kind has not been induced by changes in socialization but rather has arisen in the culture as a whole as the construction of a workable social order progressed, stimulated by the cultural fluidity of the early postwar era. As yet this aspect of social history has no name, but it has a style and a large range of identifiable techniques that are both new (in that they have been regenerated since the war) and old (in that they seem to hark back to the persistent comparative issue of diffuseness at the center of Japanese ideology and polity).