# GPJ

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## Scope

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FORUM
TAURI

# GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN
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FORUM TAURI

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## Yōkai as The Edge of The World

Kōda Retsu

Today in Japan, people continue to show considerable interest in *yōkai*. In the past, a *yōkai* craze centering on MIZUKI Shigeru's work *GeGeGe no kitarō*, had swept the country. However, more recently in 2014 the role-playing game *Yōkai Watch* (launched by Level-5 Inc. in 2013) was turned into a television anime and is boasting explosive popularity. In addition, while *kaidan* (*yōkai* stories) used to be transmitted orally, now they have appeared on the internet, and unique tales continue to be spun. In this way, by continuing to encounter *yōkai* in some form or another, fixed images of them have been formed amongst people today. In most cases, these images are of grotesque things with a specific appearance, for example, an 'umbrella-shaped ghost', a 'painted wall', or a 'haunting cat'. However, these popular images of *yōkai* are hindrances when engaging in academic research on the subject. Compared to those found at the popular level, researchers' definitions of *yōkai* are not uniform. The aim of this paper is, while referring to efforts to reconsider the concept of *yōkai* in contemporary folklore studies, to decipher INOUE Enryō's philosophically motivated *Yōkai* Studies (or, Mystery Studies), and above all, to inquire into its limits and possibilities through his late-year "Mutual Inclusion" theory. By taking as an unconscious ontological premise the non-existence of *yōkai*, *yōkai* research in contemporary folklore studies has come up against the ontologies of folklorists that speak of actual existence of *yōkai*. For this reason, we must newly inquire into the ontological premise of the *yōkai* concept. However, this requires not something that results in an 'anything goes' perceptual relativism, but rather a pluralistic methodology that allows the co-existence of diverse ontological viewpoints while unifying them on a meta-level. In this sense, the perspectival conception of the interrelated structure of matter, mind and principle in Enryō's *Yōkai* Studies and his late period philosophy of the Mutual Inclusion of the 'front' and 'back' offer considerable clues. A research approach that is not partial to a specific view of *yōkai* and makes use of folklorists' worldviews can provide a meta-theory for *yōkai* research. However, Enryō did not fully traverse this path. In his own Yōkai Studies, he did not choose to adopt the perspective of the superimposition of time, space, mind and matter within mutual inclusion, or approach *yōkai* phenomena as the edge of the cosmos that is formed within this perspective.

Drawing from Enryō's ideas, the paper proposes to newly define the concept of *yōkai* as the edge of the cosmos. *Yōkai* are things that continually threaten the concepts of the cosmos that researchers and folklorists hold. Having inquired to this point, our questions reverse themselves. Perhaps it is us humans who are interrogated by *yōkai*.

**Keywords:** Inoue Enryō, Yōkai, Mutual Inclusion, Folklore, Mystery Studies

# State, Political Parties, and the Nation: Triangular Political History without a Center of Gravity*

## Shimizu Yuichirō

### A Noisy Beginning: The Ideas and Reality of the Meiji Restoration

The Meiji Restoration marked the opening of an ideal. As part of the pledge made in the Meiji Charter Oath of Five Articles 1868, the restoration government called for all matters to be publicly discussed, for national cohesion, and realization of a self-fulfilling society, revealing the new nation's willingness to break with convention and learn from the world. Though they felt aversion towards excessive idealism, it was necessary to put forward justifications –which would resonate powerfully– for having brought to an abrupt end to the 260 years of relative peace sustained by the Tokugawa shogunate. However, the realization of ideals is not easy. More than anything, for a people who have lived in a stable and conservative society for so long, the Restoration was violent cataclysm, unparalleled in both the experience of men and the nation.

In the inaugural year of the Meiji monarchical era, the restoration government convoked the *Kōgisho*, 1869. A deliberative body, composed of representatives from 260 domains, was something which no one had assembled before. The orientations of members of the *Kōgisho* –retainers of the domains,

who had been educated and reared on classics of Chinese civilization– collided violently with government officials who had been educated in the Western mode. Gathering in tea houses, various factions conferred to build majorities in the new deliberative body and increase the number of their supporters. The confrontation between the two groups reached its apogee over the sword prohibition edicts (*Haitōrei*), leading the restoration government, increasingly worried about the future, to dramatically reduce the size of the deliberative body (Yamazaki 2005). As a result, the government was forced to abandon the idea of public deliberations as premature.

For people in the street, the reforms of the new government were vertiginous. When the old social order collapses, information becomes complicated. A raw silk farmer who borrowed to expand production in anticipation of higher prices could be hit by a deflationary national policy. And as a consequence, the land which served as collateral for the loans would be lost (Matsuzawa 2018). In the absurdity of a rapidly transforming nation, the people became more and more discontented. Where did the self-actualizing society go? What is one to believe, in order to go on living? The new nation, which began in ideals, was soon beset by frustrations at the distressing realities of the massive transformations instituted by the Meiji government.

### The Light that Illuminates the Stage: Establishment of a Constitution

In the midst of this challenging environment, a ray of light beckoned with the establishment of the imperial constitution, promulgated in 1889. Twenty years after the Meiji restoration, the masses of people whose voice could not reach the national government found expression through the new Imperial Diet. This innovation raised expectations at the inauguration of new avenues for political participation, while the establishment of the basic or fundamental law of the nation provided a sense of certainty that the affairs of state operated on a fixed basis. Including the '*Itsukaichi* constitution' (*Itsukaichi kenpō*) –one of the constitutional drafts made at the beginning of the Meiji– the writing of a great number of private constitutional proposals can be interpreted as a broader manifestation of the desire for stability and participation in the new state.

In the original language, '*kenpō*,' i.e., 'constitution', carries the meaning of 'building up together', yet the constitution of the Greater Japanese Empire did not aim at 'building up together' with the masses. While a number of private bills were drafted, Itō Hirobumi and his fellow drafters of the imperial constitution were shut off from the outside world. Perhaps as a reaction to the experience of the *Kōgisho*, and as a desire to avoid the contention of the 'hundred schools of thought' (*hyakka sōmei*)[1] of the beginning of the Meiji period, constitutional framers placed much emphasis on what was realizable or practical as they sought to curb the excessive idealism of the early years of the restoration.

Under the imperial constitution, it was the emperor who sustained the consciousness of 'unity'. Having assumed the throne at a young age, the Meiji emperor came to be seen as a singular presence; however, the peoples adored the Tokugawa shogun much more than the young emperor. Indeed, in the twenty-years before the promulgation of the imperial constitution, the new Meiji government worked to establish a system for an emperor-centric government, ruled directly by the throne (Kasahara 1995). The Emperor, through his attendance at daily deliberations on constitutional drafts, used the process of drafting a new constitution to both confirm its centrality to the Meiji state, and simultaneously to affirm his own role as sovereign and patron of the peoples.

Although the constitution which came out of this process was limited to 76 articles, within this albeit circumscribed legal vision, freedom of speech, religious freedom, and the right of political participation were all granted. Supposedly, under the emperor's sovereign rights, a system of the separation of powers was created to ensure that no dictator could arise. In addition to the cabinet based on a committee structure, the constitution established the Imperial Diet as a cooperative body, thus the foundation for the theory of public discussions was established.

As a place where the people could come together in the name of the emperor and despite having the essence of a parliament, the early experiment in parliamentarianism did not always enjoy the support of the people. The

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1   *hyakka sōmei* 百家争鳴: A phrase used to refer to a place or period in which many scholars and thinkers share their ideas freely —*ed.n.*

suffrage in the Lower House was restricted to men over the age of 25 who were able to pay the national tax of 15 yen or more, meaning, in practice, most parliamentarians were drawn from landed men of influence. Institutional designers had in mind that the 1%, according to their assets, who were men of responsibility and fixed stance, could represent the interest of the 99% of the people. This kind of thinking drew from the Confucian ideal that "(w)here there is constant production, there is constant will." As an ideal, however, it was shallow.

Before the Meiji restoration, society in the Edo period worked under a rural self-governing system of taxation. Since the amount of taxation paid was set for each village, men of influence were required to take care of the village. With the abolition of the rural self-governing system following the Restoration, there was no institutional responsibility to look after the interests of the village, aside from that which flowed from morality. Thus, there was no responsibility to think of the interests of the 99% of the common people.

Eligibility for elections had similar requirements. There were of course the cases of Ozaki Yukio and Inukai Tsuyoshi who qualified due to their influential positions in the countryside, but for the most part, members of the Imperial Diet were drawn from the land-holding classes (Inada 2018). Disposed to the intentions of the landowning classes, the political parties and Diet clashed with the *hanbatsu* (han-clan) government and constantly clamoured for reductions in the public burden. In this way, the Diet operated not as a forum of the peoples, but as a vehicle of private interest, where political representatives of the landowners clashed with the government.

With Diet members not representing the whole body politic, what could the masses hope for? Here we can see the spirit of self-help inspired by the enlightenment reformers (*Keimōka*); that is the ideal that if one makes every effort, they will be rewarded. People gave their all to education. When the school system expanded across the country, various places competed to build schools and attract excellent teachers who would enthusiastically educate the youth. To students of surpassing abilities, they provided financial resources, and opened avenues for them to attend the higher school system and imperial universities.

How was one to succeed in life? Through the constitution? No, the state organized this quite splendidly. In the second title of the constitution,

immediately after stating the rights and obligations of imperial subjects, it is stipulated by law that subjects could be appointed bureaucrats or military men depending on their abilities and qualifications. In the pre-Restoration society, positions were doled out based on status, with only samurai enjoying the privilege of serving as military men or bureaucrats. It was thus a major reform, which garnered great attention and interest. Itō Hirobumi correctly proclaimed this "the principal fruit of constitutional government." (Shimizu 2019).

Young people of excellence were able to advance to middle school, study at higher schools, and upon graduating from imperial universities, the path to becoming a bureaucrat lay open. Thus, these young bureaucrats, acquired their 'samurai status' as a result of their efforts, and not as a consequence of their family backgrounds. Of course, it was an era when only a few select boys – around 10% – were even able to proceed to middle school.

In the villages, there was perhaps one every few years who proceeded to higher levels of education and then went on to study at university. Of the talented villagers who struggled and worked hard, there were among them youths of surpassing talent who would rise ever higher, becoming high-ranking bureaucrats. For this reason, bureaucrats came to be viewed as figures of trust, and of course, with yearning.

Even without school-expenses, there were a variety of avenues to become a military man. With a clear mind and sturdy body, one was able to proceed on a stipend to military schools. Without concern for living expenses, the road to becoming an officer was open. As in the backgammon style game of *Sugoroku*, one could rise and stand as either a minister or military general.

Five years after the promulgation of the constitution, the Sino-Japanese War (1894-05) was produced by the rising nation with the rising youth. The war was waged by young bureaucrats who had left the higher education to support the state administration, and young generals trained in the military schools who now led soldiers on the front lines of battle. Through fighting a common enemy in a full-scale foreign war, by volunteering to become soldiers, and working hard to raise money for the battle, the masses became a new nation (Makihara 1998). For his part, the emperor moved the imperial general headquarters to Hiroshima, and victory in the war ensured that his dignity as a national leader remained untarnished. With the emperor at its

core, each organ of state worked along their own will. The organic nation designed by the drafters of the Imperial constitution, was complete.

## Competition Among the Actors: Political Parties and Bureaucrats

As in any natural organism, evolution is inevitable. The change came first from the base, the masses. The citizenry, having played a major role in the Sino-Japanese War, gained a new sense of ownership, and consequently, voices demanding greater political participation rose. Throughout the country, the campaign for the right of universal manhood suffrage gathered momentum. There was also a crisis of the political parties. In this dawning era of massified politics, being a representative of the land-owning classes threatened the parties with irrelevance. Questions abounded: Should the party pull close to the government and become a ruling party uniting the masses directly with the state? Or should the parties adopt the stance of rigorously criticizing the government to establish a new government which drew its legitimacy from the masses? The response was, of course, divided. The former position was adopted by the Liberal Party led by Itagaki Taisuke and Hoshi Tōru; while the latter position came to be broadly adopted by the Progressive Party led by Ōkuma Shigenobu.

Even up to this moment, there are parliamentarians who expressed interested in a politics oriented towards the masses. However, the constraints implied by the equation 'voters = landowners' did not allow them to go any further. In single seat constituencies, the *ancien regime* maintained powerful influence, and unless one maintained their relationship with local men of influence, they could not hope to be elected. It was for this reason that parliamentarians urged the abolition of the single-seat district, and its replacement by a multimember district system (Shimizu 2016). Under this system, the entire prefecture would form one large electoral district, diluting the influence of local mean, and allowing parliamentarians to fight over policies.

In response to the people's desire to extend the suffrage, the state lowered the tax payment to 10 yen and adopted a multimember district system. From the *hanbatsu* government's side, the intention of adopting a favourable attitude towards the multimember district system was related to the difficulty of forging a mass party under such a system. Against the backdrop of a rising

public opinion, there was a growing recognition of the need to move from a confrontational to a coordinated parliament of national policy. To integrate the public will with state governance, it was the bureaucrats who studied constitutional politics at the imperial universities, who led the effort to scrutinize the experience of foreign countries.

In the face of these institutional changes, the Liberal Party made a major about face. Their choice was to present the Liberal Party as a 'ruling party' aligned with the government. Under the system of divided powers embodied by the Meiji constitutional order, it was the state and the military which wielded the strongest institutional power. In order to counter these institutional powers, the Liberals believed that they should be united into a majority party. For this reason, at the end of the nineteenth century, political parties consolidated to confront the government forming the short-lived coalition government of Ōkuma Shigenobu and Itagaki Taisuke, known colloquially as the '*Waihan-naikaku*' (Okuma-Itagaki Cabinet) in 1898. The experiment collapsed after just four months as a consequence of internal conflicts. Despite this, their intentions behind the coalition –to forge a political party which would extend its reach in to the administrative and parliamentary organs of state– came to dominate the political imagination.

The partners in the birth of constitutional politics were Itō Hirobumi together with the talented members of his staff. By calling on a wide spectrum of talent from the business and media worlds, in addition to imperial bureaucrats, politicians and industrialists, their aim was to promote the establishment of a comprehensive centralized party. It was from this idea that the most famous of the imperial conservative party, *Rikken Seiyūkai (Seiyūkai)*, was born in 1900.

Although the Liberal Party served as the base of the *Seiyūkai*, it had a very different character from political parties up to that point. The party's program reads, "We will defend the constitution… and perfect sovereign governance, as to national duties, we aim to preserve the rights and freedoms of each individual." The *Seiyūkai* was created as an instrument of constitutional government to perfect sovereign governance.

When compared to past political parties, its uniqueness and innovation immediately stands out. The Liberal Party, which composed the nucleus of the *Seiyūkai*, aimed at "expanding freedom, preserving rights, promoted the

advancement of well-being, as well as aimed to improving society"; Okuma's Progressive Party aimed at expanding rights and well-being of the masses. The *Kenseito*, which is the ruling party of the short-lived coalition government of Ōkuma and Itagaki, describe their political aim as, "Admiring the imperial family, championing the constitution, establishing the party cabinet and clarifying the political accountabilities."

Does the *Seiyūkai*'s manifesto mark the retrocession of constitutional politics? To be sure, from a present perspective it may well seem a democratic recession. But what we need to think about is its context as it existed at the time. Even though Japan had been victorious in the war against the Qing Empire in 1895, the revision of international treaties –which had been an issue since the end of the Edo period– remained incomplete, while tensions with Tsarist Russia, a powerful European empire, were gathering. Turning to the Pacific Ocean, the United States, which had emerged victorious from the Spanish-American War in 1898, annexed the kingdom of Hawaii and colonized the Philippines. There was, without question, a pressing need for an organization to bridge the structure of divided powers at the core of the Meiji state.

Until this point, it had been the *hanbatsu* leaders who were the force able to unify the Meiji state. The prime minister was the first among his peers, and rotations for positions of power were carried out between the two dominant powers, Satsuma and Chōshū, of Itō Hirobumi (Chōshū), Kuroda (Satsuma), Yamagata (Chōshū), Matsukata (Satsuma). It was not a real governmental change, but rather can be better understood as the administrative rotations in the *hanbatsu* government. By the third Itō government, the limits of this system were glaringly obvious, as the struggle with the political parties over their request for tax cuts began to threaten orderly operation of government. Establishing the *Seiyūkai* was the solution.

The role of the *Seiyūkai* was to cover the government, parliament, and the industrial worlds, and connect them to the masses. It is for that reason, that Itō Hirobumi accepted the leadership of the party (Itō 2000). The biggest difference at the time was adoption of the multimember district system. With the multimember district system, the prefecture became the unit of the constituency, and if one could not garner votes from across the prefecture, rather than just a specific area, they could not be elected. The voices of local

men of influence were weakened, and there was a need for cohesion and coordination between the party branches. The *Seiyūkai* responded flexibly to this new situation. A vertical party organization known as the central-prefectural-regional branches were thus established wherein branches sought direction from the party central headquarters over adjusting the candidates and votes to ensure cohesion.

The emergence of consecutively elected Diet men (i.e., professional politicians) symbolized their growing dominance over the party organization. Most of the members of the early parliamentary period were landowners who –other than pushing for tax cuts– had little interest in national affairs. Since they regarded the seats as an honorary position for which they would be awarded with honors, there were few winners within the "distribution of honor" from one local man of influence to another (Mitani 1995). No professionalized political party would be able to be forged in a situation where parliamentarians retired after just one term of office.

What the *Seiyūkai* hoped for were politicians who were regional business folk. For landowners who lived stable lives on the land, sweeping changes were viewed unfavorably, while business folk flourished in a rapidly changing environment and were more willing to reform. Despite an acrimonious break with the powerful financier Shibusawa Eiichi, which ruptured the *Seiyūkai*'s relationship with the business world, the party continued to attract a wide variety of business folk in the regions. Participating in politics and restoring the economy was, for these men, a matter of life or death. They were enthusiastic, motivated, and importantly, a proprietary class.

There were others, too, who harbored high-spirited motivation. There were the middle-ranked bureaucrats. They had proceeded into education carrying with them the hopes of the local community, going on to study at university, and, once in the ministries, stood at the core of operations as managers and counsellors. Many of them were the children of local notables, or those who, as an adopted child, went to school with direct or indirect support. These were men reared in an atmosphere surrounded by politics.

At universities they studied politics, law, and economics, and at the cutting edge of political ideas was the imperial British parliamentary cabinet system. Under this system, parliamentarians elected by the voters form the government, and there is debate and a degree of coordination over policies

and their implementation. Many saw this as the ideal which the nation should aspire. Their careers were enmeshed in national politics as chiefs and vice-ministers, before finally entering the political world. The principal beneficiary of this talent was the *Seiyūkai* (Shimizu 2007).

In the countryside, there was reason to welcome the bureaucrats-turned-politicians, who enhanced their home regions, as their representatives. First, name recognition was indispensable to victory in large constituencies. As a high-ranking official in the central government, there was no one of importance that these bureaucrats did not know in the prefecture. Additionally, there was a strong regional network based on the middle school's alumni.

Of course, many had been away from their home regions for years at a time. Underpinning their intimate connections were fraternal bonds, and a view of the regional political economy as a cooperative body. At the time the eldest son, if he was seen as first-class, would not be permitted to advance to education in the imperial capital, Tokyo. Even if he was eventually permitted to go, it was considered as a matter of course that they would return to the regions and take over their house of birth without ever entering government service. In other words, most of the youth who became bureaucrats were the second and third sons, while the eldest son inherited and took over the running of the family business in the local region. It is clear that elder brothers in the regional cooperative economy, saw much profit in terms of "pork barrel" contracts through supporting their younger siblings move from the imperial bureaucracy to the Diet. Here, there are many complicated motives and ideas, but in the standing of men of influence in elections, we find a simple and harmonious structure operating.

The *Seiyūkai* established connections between government, parliament and business worlds, which allowed for the creation of an informal mechanism for the transfer of power. Even when the *Seiyūkai* was in opposition, the government explained in advance its budgetary policies, and worked to make it the ruling party (Fushimi 2013). In this manner state administration would operate smoothly and national governance would be able to enter a period of stability.

## A New Scenario: Taishō Democracy

Peace, according to the Seiyūkai… Even though constitutional politics proceeded gradually, in fits and stops, one would be hard pressed not to admit that democracy was advancing. Still, even if the tax requirements were further eased, voters would still account for only roughly 2% of the total population and only 5% of the adult population. Satisfying the request of the 5%, with the aim of stabilizing governance, was the mission of the Seiyūkai.

On the other hand, reformist politicians such as Inukai Tsuyoshi, who had been mentored by Ōkuma Shigenobu, began a movement to represent the voices of the masses. He broke with Ōkuma who was accused of abandoning the people, and together with reformist allies, launched a new political party, the *Rikken Kokumintō* (*Kokumintō*) (Iokibe 2003). They were devoted to constitutional politics, in contrast to the *Seiyūkai*, avowing that their patron is 'the people'. Their party declaration, read in part "As the mass movement accelerates and develops, the people seek to achieve the true meaning of constitutional government, they seek a more appropriate interpretation, one which is envisions national prosperity," as they appealed for a constitutional politics centered on the general interests of the masses.

The movement for universal manhood suffrage moved into full-swing after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). The dead and wounded were ten times the amount of the Sino-Japanese War, and a special tax to cover war costs increased the hardship in people's everyday lives. Even with victory, life was not richer, and the burdens only grew. Dissatisfaction with the government grew in every quarter across the country. Fortunately, or not, the *Seiyūkai* was not the focus of this criticism. They sometimes served as an opposition party, and when they took the reins of power, launched administrative reforms, which presented their image as flexible, and importantly, on the side of the peoples.

Factions within the *Kokumintō*, impatient to gain power, formed a breakaway party, the *Rikken dōshikai*, which united under the second-generation leader of the *hanbatsu*, Katsura Tarō. The new breakaway party raised its banners in a declaration "…articles of the imperial constitution must be vigorously adhered to… the responsibility of ministers of state must be made strict and clear, and rights of subjects should be preserved." As is

clear from the name of the new political association, it was envisioned by its founders as 'the second *Seiyūkai*'.

Yet the rump Kokumintō continued to fight under the leadership of Inukai Tsuyoshi. Katsura, who was from the *hanbatsu*, sounded the warning about the growing trend towards party government, and as a consequence he turned to the mass media, launching a large-scale government campaign. In response, the slogan "Protect constitutional government, abolish the *hanbatsu*," was raised by the first movement to protect constitutional government in 1913. Popular politicians such as Inukai and Ozaki Yukio were active in the movement which came to be regarded by historians as a major period in democracy, one which drove Katsura and the *hanbatsu* from government. By skillfully drawing on a public frustrated with the government, the new party forces succeeded in bringing about the collapse of the *hanbatsu* government.

The problems –as they invariably do– came afterwards. The new government was entrusted to Admiral Yamamoto Gonbei who assembled a *Satsuma-han* and *Seiyūkai* coalition government. The *Seiyūkai* role in the new government was criticized by Ozaki who left the party, something which was convenient from the perspective of the *Seiyūkai* who were ride of a troublesome and powerful rhetorical voice for party government. The movement for constitutional government brought down the *Chōshū-han*; yet, rather than ushering in a new era of constitutional government. Instead, it provided the conditions for the political ascendency of the rival *Satsuma-han*. As a result, only a year later, they gave up the reins of government due to hard criticism for corruption involved with the Navy.

Continuing into the second *Ōkuma Shigenobu* cabinet, the *Rikken Dōshikai*, which served as the ruling party, were deeply antagonistic towards Inukai and the *Kokumintō*; yet, Ōkuma brought together many of the representative figures of constitutional politics such as Ozaki and was met with high expectations amid liberal opinion. The Ōkuma cabinet was the first political party government widely supported by the masses.

The Ōkuma government, which began as a minority party, led Japan into the First World War, and it was this moment that led to dissolution and the national general election in 1915. In the election campaign, Prime Minister Ōkuma led the election campaign, giving speeches from the window of train to those who had assembled across the country. Conscious of the need for

new campaigning tactics to adapt to the new environment, a record of the prime minister's voices was made and broadcast at political meetings in many parts of the nation. It was the first time that a prime minister had taken part in electioneering (in the form of a stump speech tour) with the aim of supporting the election. In the election, the *Rikken Dōshikai* emerged as the largest party, and with the *Chūseikai* (Impartiality Society) and *Ōkuma-haku Kōenkai* (Supporters association for the Count Ōkuma) together formed the ruling party with the majority of seats in the Imperial Diet. It was a result which was interpreted as the true beginning of the Taishō democracy.

Can we call this populism? The Ōkuma government carried the hopes of the people, yet just two months after the national general election, the government presented Chinese leaders with the twenty-one demands (*21-kajyō no yōkyū*), marking a forceful intervention and departure from traditional policy. Accordance with Ōkuma's desire to institutionalize the principles of cabinet responsibility, led to this diplomatic initiative being launched without prior consultations with the senior statesmen (*genrō*) (Naraoka 2015). And it goes without saying, that the policy was a failure. As part of the idea of cabinet responsibility, ministers are forced to take responsibility.

The result might have been different, had public opinion truly guided policy. In the subsequent general election held by the Terauchi Masatake government, the people chose the Seiyūkai rather than the Kenseikai, the former ruling party which had united when the Ōkuma government resigned. As with the Ōkuma faction, the Kenseikai was kept at arm's length from the government. The Kenseikai carried with them the people, but lost the state power.

Two years later, in 1918, the "first full-fledged political party cabinet" led by Hara Takeshi-led *Seiyūkai* was established. Ministers were *Seiyūkai* members with a background as bureaucrats; and by making each vice-minister into a political appointment, the government strengthened the connections between the cabinet and state ministries to achieve a high degree of policy-making coordination. In the Diet, a large-scale ruling party was formed through the introduction of a single-member constituency, while stable parliamentary operations became possible through cooperation with powerful factions in the House of Peers (Shimizu 2007).

In terms of military affairs, Yamagata Aritomo and his successor Tanaka Giichi made compromises and cooperation. As a result, the withdrawal of

Japanese soldiers in Siberia was delayed, and they succeeded in skillfully promoting their conversion to the politics of disarmament after the First World War (Asada 2016).

The Hara government, which was supported by the *Seiyūkai* as the ruling party, ran the affairs of state not as a form of massified politics, but more along the lines of realistic administration. Despite appearing as the apogee of Taishō democracy, Hara viewed changes in government among the political parties as premature and instead called for power to shift between the biggest factions in the House of Peers (Tamai 1999). He also adopted a cautious stance towards the campaign for universal manhood suffrage, and instead favoured reduction of the tax payment requirement to 3 yen. For this reason, the Hara government is also described as 'undemocratic'.

How should we think about that? During the three years of the Hara government, industry was encouraged, education promoted, and domestic policies made great progress particularly in the field of labor relations. Japan became a founding member of the League of Nations Council and helped to forge the Washington system of international cooperation. National governance was carried out on the basis, not of the populism of the Ōkuma government, but rather on the principles of free delegation.

In the election system, the tax requirement which had been left unchanged for 19 years was reduced from 10 yen to 3 yen, and the number of voters doubled from 5.5% of the population to around 11% of the total adult male population. Around one in five male adults became voters. When the ratio increases to this point, the sentiment of those excluded intensifies. Hara was from the Tōhoku region, and every time he returned to his hometown, he emphasized that the people of Tōhoku should be independent rather than continue to rely on the government. This reason –and not only political cooperation with Prince Yamagata Aritomo– helps to explain why Hara did not proceed smoothly towards universal manhood suffrage. As Hara saw it the existence of an independent popular will –or its absence– can affect the fate not only of party politics, but also and eventually the nation itself.

Hara's time in government was supported by able bureaucrats. No, it may be more correct to say those who were raised as bureaucrats continued on as politicians. The Terauchi government –which ruled during the First World War– dispatched many young bureaucrats to wartime Europe under

the direction of Home Minister Gotō Shinpei. In this new world of total war, completely different from the one which came before, young bureaucrats undertook close observations of the massively changed societal conditions. For his part, Gotō advised the young bureaucrats embarking for Europe to get out of the libraries and onto the city streets to broaden their horizons, regardless of the purpose for which they were dispatched (Shimizu 2019).

In Europe these young bureaucrats witnessed the masses were suffering from the drastically changes of society, and caught in a moment of swelling reformist ambitions; they learned much about social, labor, economic and electoral policies and systems, which they brought back with them on their return to Japan. It was comparable to the Iwakura Mission in Meiji restoration. After returning to Japan, they set about the establishment of the Social Bureau of the Home Ministry, and it appeared as if there would be a renovation or renewal of traditional policy structures unseen since the Meiji.

It is not inconsequential that many of these young bureaucrats hailed from rural regions. While many of the pressing problems, such as poverty, were centered in the city, these bureaucrats incorporated the city and the countryside, Japan and the world, together into a rich comprehensive vision. After returning to their various ministries from their time abroad, these young bureaucrats discussed and debated with their colleagues at the local level, and it is no wonder they grasped the need for policies which answered the needs of the masses. In an important sense, the Taishō democracy was realized not only by politicians through legislation, but by bureaucrats through rationalized administration.

## Whimsical Audience: Party Politics and Political Awareness

Unfortunately, Hara was murdered in 1921. Three year later, the second 'movement for protection of constitutional government' was launched in 1924. This movement was not like the first. The governing party, nearing the end of its parliamentary term, and faced with intensified criticism and uproar in the Diet, sought to win an election under the banner of "protect constitutional government, oust the *hanbatsu*." In other words, it was not the realization of democracy but the competition for political power which drove the movement.

The *Seiyūkai* was divided over its support for the government, and the group which traditionally supports state administration withdrew from the party forming the so-called *Seiyū Hontō* (True *Seiyūkai*). The remnant Seiyūkai now cooperated with the *Kenseikai* and formed the *Goken Sanpa* (Three Parties Coalition for Protecting Constitutional Government) alliance which expanded to include Inukai's *Kakushin Kurabu* (The Lawmaker Group for Political Innovation). The three factions of the *Goken-sanpa* meant that for the first time in the history of Japan, as a result of the national general elections, the largest party formed the government. It was the opening of the period of 'normal constitutional government' (*kensei no jōdō*).

Contrary to the beauty of the name of *Goken* ('protect the constitution'), the reality of the election was unseemly. Even if each party's central headquarters had forged partnerships between the three parties at the leadership level, at the regional level, it was difficult to overcome long-standing antagonistic relations over the competition for seats; this along with insufficient coordination over where to stand candidates led to fierce divisions among the members of the *Goken-sanpa* (Shimizu 2013). The fact that the *Kenseikai* became the largest party was due to their ability to profit while *Seiyūkai* and *Seiyū Hontō* were fighting. For the first time a government had been established which directly reflected the will of the people; however, in reality, the will of the people was distorted.

Regardless, the *Goken-sanpa* coalition cabinet did not collapse. Rather, they introduced laws on universal manhood suffrage and set out to reform the House of Peers. Until this had been realized, that coalition remained united and could not be driven from power. The major reforms of the coalition were driven by the enthusiasm of party leaders, and most prominently, Baron Katō Takaaki (Naraoka 2006).

The distance between the state and the people rapidly shortened. The electorate was now 21% of the entire population, meaning one out of every two adults had the right to vote. Political parties themselves had undergone major reforms and were now reorganized and proceeded towards an era of two major parties. The *Kakushin Kurabu*, which had advocated for national politics, with the realization of universal manhood suffrage, lost its *raison d'etre* and was absorbed by the *Seiyūkai*, the party which best incarnated the poke-barrel politics of the era. Many of the politicians who broke away from

the *Seiyūkai* to form the *Seiyū Hontō* were ex-bureaucrats, and they turned to the *Kenseikai*, which had a similar structure and merged to form the *Rikken Minseitō* (*Minseitō*). The *Seiyūkai* promoted policies based on positive finances through local development, while the *Minseitō* insisted on a policy of austerity with an emphasis on centralization. It was envisioned that the era had come when politics would be based on a choice over policies.

There were still two problems to overcome. The first was the selection of the head of government. The Imperial constitution did not stipulate a parliamentary cabinet system, and traditionally leaders were appointed by the emperor on recommendation of the senior statesmen (*genrō*), not the result of the national general election (Murai 2005). As a result, the incentive was for opposition parties to launch negative campaigns to force the ruling party from power. If the government should reach an impasse or deadlock, then in accordance with the ideal of 'normal constitutional government', the senior statesmen would entrust the government to the opposition party.

When a party which did not control a plurality of seats in the Diet were appointed as caretaker governments, their rule was inherently unstable and chaotic. To form a new majority, policies which appealed to the people were devised, parliament was dissolved, and elections were called. As a consequence of the constitutional government and the parliamentary cabinet system, the order of elections and forming government were reversed (Machidori 2018). Parliamentary politics is where the opinion of the public should find expression; however, the institutional relationship with the government allowed corrupt practices to taint politics.

Another more serious problem had to do with the people. With the introduction of universal male suffrage, experts wondered whether the people would judge and vote for themselves. In response, Gotō Shinpei and former Home Ministry social bureaucrats launched a "political ethics" movement which included lectures and screenings nationwide to instil political education. Serving Home Ministry bureaucrats also accelerated efforts to raise the level of political education of the role of elections through pamphlet and poster campaigns (Tamai 2013).

There were other issues which affected the masses. There was, of course, the justice of the village, as their living community. This meant that the village would decide which politicians to support. If someone did not support the

candidate who was delivering money to the village, then it was seen as a revolt against the village order (Sugimoto 2007). As part of the politics ethics movement, crude animated films to enlighten the masses were produced. One such film showed a figure handing over a gold bag and asking for the right to carry the *mikoshi* (portable shrine), a politician with one foot in the grave; in the next scene a young craftsman piling up bricks says, "politics is power," and then knocks them down saying, "I did one good thing."[2] This animate campaign allows us to understand how widespread and deep-rooted money politics were at the height of the Taishō democracy.

On the other hand, one could profit greatly from cooperation with the ruling party. Votes could be exchanged for profit. The ruling party almost invariably won the election, with the opposition party forced to furiously attempt to bring down the ruling party through muckraking and scandal. The reality was that the dream of choosing government through elections was a dream and dream again.

In the pre-war period, the political parties served as vehicles for coordination and unification in a system of divided powers. There have been five extrinsic factors which have been pointed out as realistic causes for this situation. One was that, it was inherent in party politics itself, or in other words it was the people and the parties (Mitani 1983).

### The end? Or the Beginning? Post-war and the New Constitution

Consumed by internecine political conflict and weakening policy expertise, the parties were in no position to cope with the massive crisis unleashed by the Great Depression, and rapidly lost the support of the masses. In seeking support from the voters, the mainstream conservative parties could not escape from the paradox that party politics itself was losing support. It was the armed services –supported by reformist bureaucrats– which were responsible for the breakthrough in the situation. The Diet also followed suit. And, of course, the masses supported the war.

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2  Film Address "Ethicization of Politics" by Shinpei Goto, 1926. https://animation.filmarchives.jp/works/view/43609

When the defeat came in 1945, soldiers and politicians were purged, yet the bureaucrats remained. To establish a new constitution, a constitutional council was required. Home Ministry bureaucrats sought to wipe the slate clean, abolishing mid-sized constituencies which were adopted with the right of universal manhood suffrage in 1925, and introducing multimember districts. The age of voting rights was lowered to twenty and the suffrage expanded to include women. Under this new system, 81% of representatives were replaced with freshman faces, including 39 female members. The new Japanese constitution, enacted through the reconstituted parliament, a parliamentary cabinet system was enshrined in law, and the people were finally made sovereign. No more were the Japanese citizenry treated as the invitees at the ball.

Little over a year later, the electoral system reverted to the mid-sized constituency. With the rise of minority parties, stable functioning of the government became a problem, and public will within the Diet was fickle and lacked guiding principles. One after another, in the large constituency, newly elected members, especially the communist party member, lost their seats.

When the Occupation ended and the purges of wartime elites lifted, pre-war parliamentarians rapidly returned to the national scene. Their *jiban* (local bases) had remained intact, protected by their wives and children. Not long after the right and left of the Socialist Party united, the conservative parties soon followed suit and consolidated at the end of 1955, with parliamentary politics pivoting on the Liberal Democratic Party and the Japan Socialist Party, a state of affairs which came to be known as the 1955 system.

The Liberal Democratic Party is often compared to the pre-war *Rikken Seiyūkai*. In terms of the role the party played in the transfer of power, the similarities are obvious. These connections are also visible in the connections with state bureaucrats, and in the use of their administrative expertise to devise national policy. On the other hand, the LDP ability to incorporate various policies –amoeba like– means that it was no simple post-1945 *Seiyūkai*. To meet the ever-expanding demands of the people, the politics in Japan expanded unstoppably in all directions.

There is no doubt that the main vehicle for uniting the nation and the people has been the political party. In many ways the structure of political parties has the characteristic of each nation, in the case of Japan, this is deeply

connected with administration, and in terms of the ever-changing distance between rational administration and the will of the people. The fact that political parties are not based on clear legal provisions, is in some sense reminiscent of the versatile and adaptable thought of the senior statesmen in modern Japan.

We are rarely aware of the state. Does the historical memory of the pre-war *kyakubun* still remain in some forms? Amoeba-like, we watch the unconscious transformations in the connections between the state and the people made by the parties. From another perspective, however, this is little more than a reflection of what 130 years of constitutional politics has taught us, as if it were an apothegm.

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