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Trust and Institutional Dynamics in Japan: The Construction of Generalized Particularistic Trust

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I

Japan constitutes a very interesting and paradoxical case from the point of view of the place of trust in the processes of institution building and institutional dynamics. This problem has, of course, been the basic thrust of Durkheim's emphasis on the importance of precontractual elements for the fulfillment of contracts seemingly dealing with purely 'utilitarian' considerations. But this crucial insight – and problematic – has not been systematically followed up in the social science literature. Only lately it has been again taken up – initially, perhaps paradoxically – from within various rational choice approaches which have come to recognize that continuity of patterns of social interaction and of institutional frameworks cannot be explained by purely rational-utilitarian considerations (Braithwaite and Levi, 1998; Kramer and Tyler, 1993). At the same time the more recent analyses have also pointed to some of the complexities, paradoxes; and problems of the construction of trust in social interaction and institution building.

II

The most basic of these paradoxes is that while trust does indeed constitute a precondition for the continuity of any long-range social interactions, at the same time it is not naturally given but continually constructed and reconstructed – and hence also potentially fragile.

By trust I mean, following Claus Offe:

> Trust is the *belief* that others will do certain things or refrain from doing certain things. The truster knows that the action of the trusted others will have consequences for his own welfare, and that for this reason there is a *risk* involved in trusting. Trust is a reflectively fallible ex ante guess. It follows the logic: 'I know it *can* happen, yet I believe it *won't happen*,' with 'it' being some undesired event caused by the trusted.

> The dynamics of trust-building can be represented on the time axis. Trust, once its necessary and sufficient conditions are met, is a steady state capable of reproducing itself. What is associated with this steady state is a perception of predictability, consistency, robustness concerning the behavior of relevant others . . . He should always remain faithful to shared beliefs and values and performed competently will continue to do so in the future – at least in the absence of irritating events and perceptions that lead the actor to reconsider whom to trust, to what extent to trust, and in what respects. In the absence of such irritating events, a trust relation is self-enforcing. (Offe, 1996)

But trust is inherently fragile. It is fragile first of all because it entails a strong element of uncertainty, of risk. This risk results, to follow Margaret Levi:

> from the fact that the truster is *unable to make sure* or *know for certain* that the other person(s) will actually act in the way preferred by the truster. The means by which he might be able to make this sure – coercive *power*, economic resources to be employed as *incentives*, and certain *knowledge* derived from direct observation or tested causal theories – are not at the disposal of the truster. (Ibid.: 3)

III

The fragility of trust is exacerbated in any broader institutional setting by the fact that the conditions that make for maintenance of trust are seemingly best met in relatively limited ranges of social activities or interaction, such as in family, kinship, or small territorial groups in which social interaction is regulated according to primordial and/or particularistic criteria. Such limited ranges of interaction seem to constitute the necessary minimal conditions for the initial development of trust, and of mutual commitment between people engaged in continual interaction, and provide also some of the momentum necessary for the maintenance of such trust, even if not enough to guarantee its continuity in such settings. At the same time, however, these very conditions may be inimical to the development of resources and activities needed for the development and institutionalization of broader institutional complexes. The very processes that generate resources necessary for the construction of such broader, institutional settings – i.e. for the development of 'free reasons' and of concomitant uncertainty about their use – also tend to undermine the potential trust and mutual commitment as they tend to develop within the family, kinship groups or in small communities – but at the same time such construction cannot be effective without strong components of trust being built into it.

The institutionalization of such broader institutional complexes is on the one hand dependent on the availability of 'free' resources (Eisenstadt, 1993) which are not embedded in relatively closed and limited ascriptive settings. But unless the use of such resources is regulated in some way, their very development may create a situation of anarchy or of irregulated conflict – almost the original Hobbesian state of nature. Such regulation of course may be in principle effected by purely coercive means. But even if coercive elements constitute a crucial component in all such regulation, the effectiveness of purely coercive regulation for broader creative institution building is rather limited. Continual institution building, the crystallization and continuity and transformeability of broader institutional complexes is to no small extent dependent on the interweaving of purely utilitarian considerations and coercive components with the establishment of broader frameworks of trust – i.e., on the effective extension of the range of trust, its symbols and the normative obligations they imply beyond the narrow minimal scope of primordial units. Such extension is found, for example, in the depiction of rulers as 'fathers' of their countries . . . (Eisenstadt, 1995a).

Such extension of trust entails the *generalizability* of trust beyond different 'narrow', particularistic settings. But such generalizability, connected as it is with the interweaving of trust in broader institutional settings, with utilitarian considerations, and with coercive components of regulation, necessarily generates contradictions and tensions with regard to the criteria of social interaction and of allocation of resources. Such contradictions and tensions arise first between criteria rooted in relatively small and particularistic settings and those derived from broader ones, and second between different broader criteria – for instance religious or political collectivities – each of which is borne by different social actors, especially by different elites and influentials and coalitions thereof. Moreover given both the inherent vulnerability and uncertainly of such settings and the uncertainty in the problems of interaction which develop within them, the effectiveness of such generalizations of trust is greatly dependent on the development of distinct institutional mechanisms – such as different legal bureaucratic arrangements which provide some continual specifications of the ways in which to combine 'utilitarian' coercive orientations with considerations of commitment and trust.

IV

Such problems of extension of trust exist in all societies. They become especially visible in more complex or differentiated societies, in all of which there develop special social mechanisms which attempt to cope – albeit with different degrees of success – with these problems. But the nature of these problems and mechanisms differs greatly between different societies or types thereof. Here a brief even if rather schematic compact comparison between Axial civilizations (Eisenstadt, ed., 1983, 1987) and Japan – a non-Axial civilization – is indeed of great interest.

In Axial civilizations or societies there emerged autonomous elites which were crucial in the crystallization of distinct types of institutional formations which were not embedded in various ascriptive – family, kinship, and narrow territorial – settings, such as distinct civilizational or religious collectivities, as well as different types of autonomous centers distinct from their peripheries which were constructed according to some broad universalistic principles. Accordingly in all Axial civilizations permeation by the center of the family units (and of the periphery in general) was to some extent at least legitimized in terms of universalistic principles. Accordingly there developed within them a break in the transition from the narrow particularistic settings and the broader ones, and potential confrontation between trust defined in various particularistic terms and the claims of universalistic principles. The problem of how to interweave the primordial–particularistic orientations with the universalistic constituted in all these civilizations a potential point of contention. The Confucian controversy over the relative priority of filial piety as against loyalty to one's lord is but one illustration of such potential confrontations which developed in all Axial civilizations. At the same time in all these societies there could also develop strong contestations between the bearers of different broader, especially universalistic principles – political, religious, and broader cultural ones. Such problematic of trust and tension involved in the extension of trust from the various particularistic to the broader settings has been exacerbated in modern societies characterized by their great structural differentiation, of autonomous differentiated institutional systems and the core characteristics of the political process in modern societies – above all their openness. In all these societies and indeed above all in the modern ones there developed different regulative frameworks – such as legal and bureaucratic ones, as well as voluntary associations and public sphere not embedded in closed particularistic settings, structured according to some formal and rational universalistic principles, which attempted, with different degrees of success, to regulate or mediate between such contesting claims and could uphold the continual extension of trust based on universalistic criteria. But the efficacy of such regulation is to no small extent dependent on these frameworks being legitimized not only in terms of these criteria but also of the broader symbols of collective identity and solidarity, and the core values of these societies.

It is only insofar as such legitimation is effected that trust rooted in various particularistic settings is successfully generalized and extended beyond them; and the rupture of the transition from particularistic trust embedded in various family, state, local, friendship settings to broader settings, organized according to universalistic principles, is unmitigated.

Such legitimation is not however assured but is greatly dependent on several conditions, such as among others the development of relatively strong but flexible centers, accessible to broader social sectors and multifaceted collective identities – i.e., identities in which primordial, civil, and sacred orientations are interwoven and not mutually exclusive (Eisenstadt, 1999).

V

It is from the point of view of the different ways in which the extension of trust is effected, especially in pre-Axial and Axial civilizations, that Japan, both historical and modern, constitutes a great puzzle (Eisenstadt, 1987). The crux of this paradox lies in the fact that while there developed in Japan some structural characteristics which were very similar to those of one of the institutionally most dynamic Axial civilizations – the Western European one – there did develop within most sectors of Japanese society radically different modes of structuration and extension of trust and of concomitant institutional dynamics.

The nature of this puzzle can be first illustrated by a brief comparative foray. Such a foray indicates that the institutional history and dynamics of Japan have been very similar to those of Western Europe, as Emile Durkheim already remarked at the beginning of this century (Durkheim, 1900–1901). In Japan and in Western Europe alike there has developed a generally very high predisposition to continuous institutional restructuring as manifest in the transition from semi-tribal monarchies through some type of feudalism to more centralized, seemingly absolutist states; continuous economic development; the growth of cities and commerce; multiple peasant rebellions; processes of modernization. Similarly, the 'causes' of many of the major changes or transformations in Japanese history – such as the disintegration of the feudal system and the transition to the semi-absolutist Tokugawa regime; the causes of peasant rebellions; or of the downfall of the Tokugawa regime and of the Meiji Restoration – could easily be compared with those of parallel processes and events in the West, as also the basic characteristics of the modern Japanese state up to the contemporary scene.

But just this very great structural similarity highlights even more the distinct paths of the respective developments of the Western and the Japanese historical experiences and the fact that the overall features and dynamics of the major institutional formations that have developed in historical and modern Japan alike, and their dynamics, have greatly differed from their 'structural parallels' in Europe. The crucial difference between the European and the Japanese institutional dynamics was that in the latter case the major arenas of social action have not been regulated above all by distinct formal 'rational' autonomous, legal, bureaucratic or 'voluntary' organizations which were legitimized in terms of different universalistic transcendental principles – even if such organizations have developed within them – but mostly through less formal arrangements and networks which have in their turn usually been embedded in various ascriptively continuously redefined, social contexts (Eisenstadt, 1995b).

These distinct ways in which the mechanisms of dynamics developed in Japan were very closely related to the definitions of the major arenas of social life – political, economic, family, and cultural creativity, or individual, group, or organizations – that have been prevalent in most sectors of Japanese society. The most important characteristic of these definitions has been the relative weakness of fully formalized, abstract rules demarcating clearly between the different arenas of action, and defining them in abstract formal terms as separate entities, as was the case in many Axial civilizations – above all in the Western and European ones. As against this, in Japan different social actors, individuals or institutional arenas, have been defined in their relation to other such actors not as autonomous ontological entities, but in terms of their mutual interweaving in such common frameworks or contexts (Eisenstadt, 1995b). Such nexus was defined in some – continuously changing – combination of primordial, sacral, natural, and ascriptive terms, the distinctive characteristic of which was, in contrast with the situation in Axial civilizations, that they were not defined in relation to some principles transcending them.

VI

Such definition of social actors and areas of interaction and the weakness of formal regulative frameworks can be identified in different periods in Japanese history. Thus, for instance, Japanese feudalism was characterized by some type of semi-familial obligations, and not, in contrast to European feudalism, by the legal contractual rights of the vassals and their autonomous access to the center (Lewis, 1974; Mass, 1992). In parallel, some of the institutional arrangements and frameworks which were connected in Europe with such conceptions of rights – such as the principled possibility for vassals to have feudal relations with several lords – did not develop in Japan. Such relations in Japan were based above all on personal relations between lord and vassal and not on full legal rights in (possibly several plots of) land. Nor did there develop in Japan any fully autonomous and representative institutions – Assemblies of Estates and the like – as distinct from informal consultations between lords and vassals (Duus, 1976). Japanese cities of late medieval times – very prosperous, vigorous, and seemingly autonomous – did not, on the whole, develop a self-conception as distinct autonomous corporate units nor city-wide autonomous institutions and self-government (Gutschow, 1983; McClain, 1980).

Similarly, the Tokugawa state, the most centralized of pre-Meiji Japanese regimes, did not develop a conception of the state as distinct from the *bakufu* domain; it did not portray itself in terms of an abstract conception of the state and of a public domain entirely distinct from the various domainial, ‘private’ ones. The institutional arrangements of the Tokugawa state were based to a much smaller degree on centralized, bureaucratic arrangements than were those of the various European absolutist regimes. Extensive bureaucracy developed above all within the Tokugawa *bakufu* and within the different feudal domains, but not so much in the relations between the *bakufu* and the *daimyō*. The administrative powers of the *daimyō* were not abolished – they were only much more closely supervised and controlled. The relations between the Tokugawa rulers and the *daimyō* were structured, as Elizabeth M. Berry has shown, according to the familial presentations or exchanges of gifts and not in terms of abstract bureaucratic taxation (Berry, 1986).

In the modern period there developed in modern Japan a general tendency to the conflation of state and civil society under the broad canopy of the national community – the ‘Kokutai’ (Marandjian, 1993) Modern government in Japan could be compared to an ‘orchestra conductor’, and there has developed a marked tendency – to use a term proposed by Victor Koschmann – to 'soft rule'. There did not develop on the whole in Japan such a strong symbolic distinction of the center, of the state, or strong efforts by the center not only to control, but also to restructure and mobilize the periphery according to a new vision destructive of the values hitherto prevalent in the periphery. The rule of the given authority was not grounded in some transcendental vision, and hence did not confront society in terms of such visions. Closely related has been a very weak development of an autonomous civil society, although needless to say elements of the latter, especially the structural, organizational components thereof (such as different organizations) have not been missing. Concomitantly there did not develop in Japan a continual confrontation between 'state' and 'civil society'.

In close relation to these characteristics of the major institutional arenas of modern Japan there has also developed a rather distinct pattern of political dynamics, especially of the impact of movements of protest on the center. The most important characteristic of this impact was the relatively weak principled ideological confrontation with the center – above all the lack of success of leaders of such confrontational movements to mobilize wide support; the concomitant quite far-ranging success in influencing, if often indirectly, the policies of the authorities; and the creation of new segregated social spaces in which activities promulgated by such movements could be implemented (Koschmann, ed., 1978).

VII

These specific characteristics of the modes of interaction which developed in Japan do indeed indicate that trust and commitment in Japan were seemingly confined to closed particularistic groups or contexts, without going beyond them. Such indication is greatly reinforced by a series of experiments and surveys conducted by Yamagishi in which he and his collaborators have contrasted the construction of trust, or rather – in their terminology – of commitment to that of generalized trust, especially in the US.

The upshot of these very high instructive experiments and surveys is – in their own words:

> The results of the experiments provide support for the two major propositions in the 'emancipation' theory of trust. First, the proposition that social uncertainty promotes commitment formation was consistently supported in both experiments.
>
> The second proposition that received experimental support is that the level of general trust is negatively related to the individual's tendency to form a stable relationship with the particular partner.
>
> These results, taken together, provide further empirical support for the theory of trust proposed by Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994). The theory emphasizes the role of general trust (trust in others in general) as an emancipator of people from the confines of safe but closed relationships.

> When a society as a whole is characterized by closed relations (as typically observed in collectivist societies), the one who is 'emancipated' from the closed relation cannot find a better interaction partner since all the other relations are closed to 'outsiders'. The Japanese employment system among major companies for the past few decades is one of the best examples of such a 'collectivist' society, although the situation is rapidly changing. Employment opportunities were almost completely closed in those making midlife career changes, and thus opportunity costs for the employees of major companies were minimal. In such an environment developing a high level of general trust and becoming 'emancipated' from the confines of established relations brings virtually no positive outcomes. Being highly trustful, expecting benign treatment from 'strangers', in such an environment makes a person unrealistically optimistic. In contrast to this, we can think of a society in which better opportunities are abundant outside of the established relations. The American employment scene is closer to this ideal type than to the previously presented collectivist ideal type. Having a high level of general trust and not staying in the established relations despite better outside opportunities can have positive consequences in such an environment. Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994) derived the hypothesis that Americans would have a higher level of general trust than the Japanese based on this reasoning and confirmed this hypothesis with survey data from a cross-societal questionnaire. The findings reported here provided support of a different kind – based on experimental methodology rather than survey research – and thus add to the validity of the theory. (Yamagishi, Cook, and Watabe, 1998)

These specific characteristics of the modes of interaction and the differences between the construction of trust in Japan and the US and the weakness in Japanese society of generalized trust which developed in Japan do indeed posit the central puzzle from the point of view of the construction of trust in complex societies. On the one hand, these characteristics indicate that trust and commitment in Japan were seemingly confined to closed particularistic centers or contexts, without going beyond them – rather similar to the situation in many non-literate or even pre-Axial societies within which the range of construction of broad institutional complexes, while certainly not absent, was relatively limited. Yet at the same time the history of Japan is one of continual very dynamic institutional changes, very similar indeed, as we have seen, to one of the structurally most complex Axial civilizations – the European one. It is rather difficult to envisage the development of such dynamic institutional change without the existence of some social frameworks or mechanisms through which the trust that is seemingly enclosed in limited particularistic settings is also extended beyond them and becomes in some ways generalized.

The crux of the solution to this puzzle lies in the fact that in most sectors of Japanese society, trust was indeed generalized – or rather continually extended – but in particularistic terms. Or, in other words, the extension of trust between different settings has been effected in Japan through the construction of *generalized particularistic trust*. Such generalized particularistic trust, which is close to but not identical with R.N. Bellah's generalized particularism (Bellah, 1957), is not confined to narrow settings but is generalized over many different settings or situations. But such generalization is effected not in universalistic but in particularistic terms, in broader, generalized kinship terms and symbols with strong expressive components, and not in terms of criteria beyond such kinship symbols (Hsu, 1975).

The core process or mechanism of such extension of trust has been the structuration of the transition from one *relatively* closed particularistic unit or context to other usually broader ones. In modern Japan such transition starts from the indulgent familial setting to the school, then from the school to some occupational setting – a company, enterprise or the like. Such transition does not entail, in contrast to the situation in most Axial civilizations, and especially in modern societies, a rupture with the solidarity and trust generated within the family, but a continual extension and transformation thereof, in broader and continually changing particularistic terms. Or to use Yamagishi's terminology, such extension entails the continual extension of commitments from one particular setting to another or others and usually broader ones – without however generating a generalized trust formulated in universalistic terms transcending all such settings (Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994).

The crucial institutional mechanisms of such continual extension of particularistic commitments is the construction of pivotal connecting points between the different particularistic settings, which facilitate the extension of solidary commitments from one such setting to another and the continual flow of trust between such settings. Such extension is monitored and directed by the gate keepers of such connecting points, without necessarily creating generalized trust which transcends such settings, and which are accordingly not necessarily very effective beyond such settings. It is this fact that explains the very well-known fact that, when Japanese people are taken out of any such settings, as for instance in visiting abroad, they tend often to behave in highly aggressive and exploitative ways.

Such transference makes the extension of trust seem to flow naturally from one context to another; trust is conceived as embedded in such settings, not as conditional on adherence to principles that are beyond these settings. It is self-referential. This reconstruction of trust entails the strong emphasis on finding transcendence in the rules of form – an emphasis that at the same time allows considerable scope for innovation in contents.

The result of this emphasis on the continuous extension of trust from one solidary setting to another is, as Raymond Grew put it:

> a universal expectation that the behavior of others will be predictable, which reinforces the emphasis upon social form and also what has often been described as a pressure for conformity and an anti-individualistic

> quality. You can only trust what you know and expect. Recognizing that, the Japanese tend to present innovations in terms of continuity, individual contributions as expressions of the group. (personal communication)

Such construction of generalized particularistic trust which is not legitimated by transcendental criteria, has been in Japan closely connected with a very strong emphasis on achievement set within expressive and solidary particularistic settings; with the continual creation of new contexts and spaces; with the continuous construction of self-referential reflexivity; and with openness towards messages and claims coming from the broader sectors of the society and above all from the center or centers thereof – all of them defined in continually changing particularistic terms (Eisenstadt, 1995b, 1995c).

Of crucial importance in the construction and reproduction of such generalized trust are the various networks characteristic of Japanese society and the continual transmission of information within them. It is these networks, constructed in flexible but always particularistic terms, that constitute the major mechanisms of transmission of trust or commitments from one particularistic setting to another with the gate-keepers of these networks constructing the monitors and controllers of such transmissions.

VIII

The construction and reproduction of such generalized particularistic trust has been greatly facilitated by basic features of social organization that developed in most sectors of Japanese society, namely the prevalence of particularistic groups with openness to broader settings and by a relative openness, dissociation of the relations between power, authority, and wealth. These are features which can be first of all identified in Kamakura period. The most important aspects of the Japanese family and kinship system from the point of view of our discussion have been, as first analyzed by Marion Levy and John Pelzel, and later on by Francis K. Hsu, and as reaffirmed in later researches (Levy, 1955; Pelzel, 1970; Hsu, 1975), the following: (a) the combination, at least from the time of the medieval Middle Ages, of fairly open unigeniture; the relatively wide practice of adoption and of incorporation of people from outside the family into it; (b) the strong emphasis on functional adequacy and achievement, performance, within the framework of family solidarity; (c) the strong emphasis, at least from the medieval period, on the basic nuclear and *ie* unit; (d) the weakness of broader kinship units as manifest in the absence of specific broader kinship terminology as against such general connotations as 'uncle' or 'cousin'; (e) the vagueness of the broader kinship terminology and the consequent lack of specification of obligations to such wider kin categories – very similar, as Robert Smith has pointed out, to the English and American cases (Smith, 1984). Of crucial importance is that the *ie*, 'the basic family unit,' as it probably developed from the Middle Ages, has been conceived, not as a kinship unit based on ties of descent, but as a corporate group that holds property, land, a reputation, works of art, or 'cultural capital' in perpetuity. *Ie* are perhaps best understood as corporate groups which can serve a primary religious function, to provide social welfare and the like. Pelzel succinctly describes the *ie* as 'task performance' (Murakami, 1984; Kumon, 1982; Kondo, 1990; Bachnik, forthcoming). The fact that throughout most of Japanese history rights (especially, but not only, in land) were vested in the family, was of course of crucial importance. One of the most important outcomes of all these characteristics of the *ie* has been the relatively high degree of availability of free resources within the family; the relative ease with which such resources have been mobilized within the family and used in directions which seemed appropriate to its leaders – and have often been redirected into other non-kinship yet kinship-like groups or settings.

These basic characteristics of family and kinship settings have limited their 'self-closure' and made them open to permeation by 'outside', more 'central' forces, by the center or centers. But at the same time the broader society or collectivity and its center or centers have been defined in kinship symbols and legitimized in 'internal' terms, in terms of their own existence, and not in some terms beyond them. Hence the family and kinship units have been open to such permeation by almost any power which was ultimately legitimated by the 'familistic' social order ultimately symbolized by the figure or trope of the Emperor, or of the collectivity. This means that any victorious leader has been able to occupy this position without reference to any criteria beyond the given social nexus – and especially without reference to any transcendental criteria. One manifestation of this loyalty to any occupant of the respective center, is the specification in Japanese – as distinct from Chinese – neo-Confucianism of the primacy of the loyalty to one's lord as against one's father, to which we have already referred above.

Closely related to these aspects of the Japanese family and kinship system has been the relative – obviously only relative – flexibility or looseness of the relation between power, authority, and wealth. The specific structural manifestations of this pattern of status incongruence have differed, of course, in different periods of Japanese history. It probably first appeared in a fully crystallized form in the Kamakura age, when the great bifurcation between power, vested in the Shogun, and authority, vested in the Emperor, crystallized, and has probably been of crucial importance in generating the strong predisposition to change to be found in large sectors of Japanese society, and in shaping the process of change within it. The flexibility built into this pattern and its close relations to the family and kinship structure have created very wide institutional 'empty spaces', i.e. spaces the concrete contents of which are not predetermined, which can be filled in different directions. It has provided also very strong incentives and created many structural opportunities for change. The combination of such relatively strong disassociations between status, power, authority, and wealth, and of a relatively decentralized pattern of political rule, has generated continuous processes of ecological, economic, and social mobility, and a wide range of possible combinations between them – thus creating continuous possibilities of institutional innovation (Murakami, 1984; Kumon, 1982; Kondo, 1990; Bachnik, forthcoming).

It is the relative openness of the relations between power, authority and wealth in the family and kinship structure, that has facilitated and reinforced generalized extension of particularistic trust between different particularistic settings, transforming such trust into generalized particularistic one.

IX

The concretization of such tendencies to continual institution-building continually interwoven with the construction of generalized particularistic trust, has been effected through rather specific patterns of interaction or of social exchange between the different sectors of Japanese society, and is closely related to the structure of coalitions that developed within them – and for the crystallization of which the major networks that developed in most sectors of Japanese society have been of crucial importance.

The special characteristics of such processes of interaction and exchange which have tended to develop in large sectors of Japanese society lie in the modes in which the resources that are exchanged through them – power, trust, prestige, information, and instrumental resources – are combined in these processes (Befu, 1990; Murakami and Rohlen, 1993).

The major characteristics of these patterns of exchange, coined by Murakami and Rohlen, following Peter Blau's nomenclature, as 'social exchange' (Murakami and Rohlen, 1993), is the continuous combination of various packages of resources under the canopy of long-range trust. The special characteristic of this combination is the prevalence, in most patterns of exchange or social interaction, in many sectors of Japanese society, of a certain type of package deals in which solidarity, power, and instrumental resources are continuously interwoven and organized in relatively enduring contexts, oriented to long-term interaction. Unlike in many other, especially modern, societies, these different types of resources are not organized in separate *ad hoc* discreet activities and within distinct organizational frameworks which are then connected through such formal frameworks as legal agencies, bureaucracies, or the impersonal market (Dore, 1980, 1987; Berry, 1986). Such packages of resources are channelled through the numerous networks characteristic of Japanese society, and through the continual transmission of information within them. It is these networks, constructed in flexible but always particularistic terms, that constitute the major mechanisms of transmission of trust or commitments from one particularistic setting to another. The gate-keepers of these networks serve as monitors and controllers of such transmission, and it is they that are of central importance in the construction of the major coalitions that develop in different sectors of Japanese society.

X

These specific characteristics of control, regulation, and interaction between the participants in different, often newly constructed or reconstructed contexts, have been, in their turn, closely related to some of these major elites and influentials, and to the major coalitions – and counter-coalitions – that have been predominant, even if often intermittently, in different sectors of Japanese society throughout its history, at least from the Kamakura period (Eisenstadt, 1995c).

Such coalitions have been composed of many and varying actors, various 'functional' elites – political, military, economic, and cultural-religious – as well as representatives of the family, village, feudal, or regional sectors, or in modern times different economic and bureaucratic actors, and their exact composition has naturally varied from place to place and from period to period. Yet some common characteristics of these coalitions can be identified in most periods of Japanese history and most sectors of Japanese society, the most important of which have been their embedment in groups and settings defined mainly in primordial, ascriptive, sacral, natural, and often hierarchical terms, rather than in terms of specialized functional or of strong universalistic criteria of social attributes. At the same time such coalitions have evinced a great openness, a strong tendency to coopt new members and to extend their membership and arenas of activities. Such alliances have usually been constructed and effected through vertical rather than horizontal ties and loyalties, and effected through the very numerous networks, even if this fact has not necessarily negated the existence and consciousness of such horizontal divisions within many sectors of Japanese society. Moreover the concrete coalitions have often been shifting and changing in the concrete composition of their membership between different contexts.

At the same time, the members of different subgroups or networks within any such coalition have not been granted autonomous access to the centers of power within them, just as the members of different sectors of Japanese society have not generally possessed independent access to the collectivities in which they have participated. In most sectors of Japanese society, social control has been vested in the leaders of the respective communities, which have usually been organized vertically. Although these numerous, often connecting vertical lines converged on the center, access to the center has not been based on such autonomous rights, but rather on the strong commitment to the groups and the broader settings, a commitment that the elites or authorities have attempted to regulate and mobilize.

Closely related to the characteristics of these coalitions has been the relative weakness, especially in comparison with the Axial civilizations, within each such setting and in the relations between them of autonomous cultural elites. Many cultural actors – priests, monks, scholars, and the like, and, in the modern age, specialists and scientists – have participated in such coalitions. But with very few exceptions their participation has been defined in primordial sacral-liturgical or natural terms; in terms of achievement set within such settings and of the social obligations according to which these coalitions have been structured. Only secondarily has such participation been structured according to any distinct, autonomous criteria rooted in or related to the arenas of cultural specialization in which they were active. Or in other words, while many special social spaces and frameworks in which the specialized cultural activities have been undertaken, have been continuously constituted and reconstructed, the overall cultural arenas have not been defined as distinct ones, autonomous from the broader social sectors (Hamaguchi, 1992; Kazulis, 1987; Masao, 1988; Sonoda, 1987).

Accordingly, the cultural religious and intellectual elites, while often engaged in very sophisticated cultural activities and discourse, have evinced little autonomy in the social and political realm, i.e., as actors upholding values and orientations not embedded in existing social frameworks, but enunciated and articulated by them, and according to which they are recruited. Unlike in many Axial civilizations, the cultural and intellectual elites did not constitute important monitory or controlling agents. It is above all those political elites, who were able to capture power and the pivotal connecting points between different sectors of Japanese society, who were crucial in the restructuring of such coalitions and effected far-reaching changes in the direction of the extensions of trust and commitments and hence also generated far-reaching institutional changes.

Such restructuring of the major coalitions through the newly emerging power elites was indeed of crucial importance in those periods of Japanese history in which indeed very drastic institutional changes took place. One such crucial period of recreation was the crystallization of the Tokugawa regime in the seventeenth century – which has created, as we have mentioned already above, the hitherto most centralized regime in Japan (Hall and Jansen, 1963; Webb, 1968; Jansen, ed., 1989; Nagita, 1987; Norman, 1940; Osamu, 1982; Duus, 1976; Anderson, 1974; Sansom, 1958; Tadao, 1984; Totman, 1967; Toby, 1984; Eisenstadt, 1995c).

The policies undertaken by the Tokugawa regime resulted in a degree of centralization of power unprecedented in the history of Japan. As Mary Elizabeth Berry has put it:

> The governing elite of the Tokugawa period (1615–1868) could fully assemble, with some crowding and rumpling of robes, in a suite of expansive reception rooms within Edo castle. Neither the composition nor the encompassing authority of this elite – a group embracing the shogun himself and roughly 250 daimyō – was a matter of question . . .
>
> . . . The shogun and the daimyō of the Tokugawa period collectively monopolized a previously dispersed authority over land and its resources, military force law and judicature, cities and commerce.
>
> . . . Japan's passage from the medieval to the early modern eras appears to mimic, in respect to the contradiction in size and significantly expanded prerogatives of the elite, the passage of western Europe countries.

Of special importance in this context were:

> the 'meta-texts' of the time: the cadastral registries which accounted in detail for the nation's resources and the agrarian population; the administrative and commercial maps which portrayed cities, domains, and the country itself as integral units with clear centers of authority; the bukan, or registries of military households, which – with their lists of the daimyō, their heirs and major retainers, their revenues and castles – served, too, as maps of power. The explosion and control of knowledge, the objectification and textual representation of political relations – these were the hallmarks of an apparent revolution. (Berry, 1986)

The Tokugawa regime, with its unique combination of 'feudal' and 'absolutist' characteristics, crystallized out of these efforts at unification, intensive processes of centralization that evince similarities to the formation of the absolutist states of early modern Europe. Indeed, in some respects, these measures – the efficiency of the control over the daimyō, the possibility of confiscating the holdings of samurai – were probably more far-reaching than those employed by many of the absolutist states of Europe.

Yet other features of the Tokugawa regime distinguish it, as we have alluded to above, from these regimes. Significantly enough, this centralizing regime did not do away with most of the hitherto ruling groups, especially with the daimyōs. The reach of the new bureaucracy was, in contrast to most of the European absolutist states, mainly limited to the Tokugawa *bakufu* and did not on the whole extend to the daimyō – although bureaucratic organizations, manned by impoverished samurai, also developed within many of their domains. The daimyō were not deprived of political power in their domains, as were, for instance, most of the French nobles under Louis XIV – if anything their power was reinforced and assured by centralization under the Tokugawa. They continued (when they were not deposed) not only to own their domains but also to administer them – but at the same time they were very closely supervised and controlled by the Tokugawa rulers, and at the same time the Tokugawa shoguns put all of them in a new and centralized framework created by them, and monitored them from the center. Moreover, to repeat Elizabeth M. Berry's statement, the relations between the Tokugawa rulers and the daimyōs was structured according to the familial presentations or exchanges of gifts and not in terms of abstract bureaucratic taxation (Berry, 1986).

It is the prevalence of this type of familial relations between the Tokugawa rulers and the daimyōs that is most indicative of the mode of extension of trust in the Tokugawa regime. The Tokugawa regime did not break down the hitherto particularistic setting but rather took over the pivots of control through which commitments from these particularistic settings were extended especially to the center, and were monitored and controlled. It directed the activities of the participants in these settings into new broader central ones without creating entirely new principles or criteria of trust beyond such settings. These processes resulted in the transformation of the samurai from relatively independent warriors into subsidized – and often also bureaucratized – retainers without however changing their basic ethos or the bases of their legitimation, thus generating the contradictions which ultimately brought about the downfall of the Tokugawa regime and the takeover by a new political elite which ushered in the Meiji regime and transformed Japan into a modern industrial society (Tohata, ed., 1966; Jansen, 1989; Blacker, 1964; Scheiner, 1966; Eisenstadt, 1995c). The central transformation here was, as Eiko Ikagani has put it, the taming of the 'Samurai' – their transformation from 'warriors' into bureaucratic or economic entrepreneurs (Eiko, 1995; Scheiner, 1966). But such transformation was based, as Sonoda Hidehiro has put it, on the functional contribution of achievements to the needs of the community or the nation rather than on any universalistic or individualistic conceptions (Hidehiro, 1990).

Such transformation was reflected for instance by the educational arena, first, in the centralization of the school system and curriculum; second, in the emphasis on 'moral' guidance and supervision, that is, a strong custodial orientation; third, in a high degree of competitiveness based on a combination of egalitarian starting points and a distinctive meritocratic selective system that gave rise to a highly complex, regulated system of differential status and occupational selection; and, fourth, in the formation of relatively cohesive yet often overlapping status groups or sectors on all levels of the social ladder, especially at the elite level.

All these processes were indeed legitimated in terms both of a center that emphasized a combination of the primordial sacral components of the Japanese collectivity as a whole – embodied in the semi-mythical figure of the emperor – and the alleged virtues of communal harmony at the periphery. It promoted the total identity of center and periphery in these terms, and not in terms of some new vision which would stand in contrast to that upheld by the preceding regime or by the periphery. The image of the village community promulgated in these ideologies was a new construct reflecting non-existent entities. It imposed, in W. Davis's words (Davis, 1992), an ideological unity on an hitherto diversified world. But it found considerable resonance in many of the basic tenets of folk attitudes and created a strong bond between village and nation. This bond was based on the extension of primordial family and kinship themes – the tradition of the *ie* group – up to the emperor as the symbol of the nation. Indeed, the civil religion promulgated by the Meiji ideology extolled and emphasized what it defined as the traditional virtues of the folk religion, the village community, and the common man, defined without reference to any social or cultural division – class, religion, or ethnicity.

It is these processes that have indeed generated some of the specific characteristics of the Meiji regime briefly mentioned above, the most important of which was the conflation of state and civil society within the broader national community. This could be seen in the *Kokken* (constitution); in the almost total elimination, institutionalized in the civil code of the 'social' as an autonomous arena; the almost total absence of an autonomous public arena independent from the state; a distrust of politics; and the concomitant development of a relatively weak conception of the state as a distinct ontological unit, and of an even weaker conception of civil society.

The distrust of politics as manifested in 'the general will', and in the nitty gritty political game – along with the conflation of state and civil society with the national community it entailed – explains the special place of bureaucracy in the Japanese political scene, as well as its specific characteristics. Given the distrust of politics the bureaucracy could relatively easily appropriate for itself, with the legitimization of the emperor, the representation of *kokutai*: 'the general will' – unsullied by the consideration of *seitai*. The bureaucracy legitimized this appropriation, first, by portraying itself as exhibiting the combined samurai and Confucian virtues of the true rulers. As these could no longer be based on hereditary status, the bureaucracy cast its modern knowledge and education as a new basis. But such knowledge and education, distilled through the emerging elite universities, were also considered to be of dynamic moral quality, by virtue of the fact that they represented and served the general will – but a general will connected and legitimated in terms of the primordial and natural symbols. These processes attest yet again to the specific mode of construction of generalized particularistic trust that was prevalent in most sectors of Japanese society.

To quote B. Silberman:

> The central problem for them was how to transform the role from one that was characterized by domain and personal loyalty to one that appeared to be dominated by transcendent public interest. They pursued, with extraordinary single-mindedness, strategies which would make the bureaucracy the primary structure of political leadership.
>
> By imposing the qualifications of higher education, the Meiji leaders maintained exclusiveness, rejected the elective principle, while at the same time maintaining the ideal of equality before the emperor. Anyone who was qualified could enter the ranks of the emperor's servants (Silberman, 1966, 1993), but as indicated above an Emperor who was constructed as a symbol of a primordial community.

XI

In all these situations of dramatic historical changes as well as in the less dramatic periods, the continual reconstruction of generalized particularistic trust within continually reconstructed settings was effected by the linkages and the interaction between elites, influentials, and broader sectors of society and by the continually changing coalitions engaged in the distinct patterns of 'social' exchange analyzed above. It was the combination of these patterns of change and of the structure of coalitions that generated the continuous restructuring – and often as a matter of deliberate policies – of markets and of status hierarchies, together with a certain mode of responsiveness to the demands made by different groups (Eisenstadt, 1995c).

It is indeed such extension of the range of trust – grounded in the combination of the modes of regulation and control and modes of interaction and exchange; in the continuous kinship-family symbolism, and in hermeneutical reflexivity – that provides the crucial key for understanding the dynamics of social interaction in Japanese society. It is this process that explains the relatively successful channeling in a 'contextual' direction of the predispositions to change that have developed in Japanese society, that is, the specific patterns of change and continuity.

The prevalence of such modes of interaction or exchange does not mean of course that no competition or conflicts develop between different groups in Japanese society. What it means is that competitions and conflicts are regulated in a distinct way. Moreover, even when confrontational situations develop, it is the re-establishment of trust, of a certain level of predictability within the prevalent basic premises of interaction – even if some of its terms are changed – that often constitutes a major objective of the contestants. In most such situations there develops an intensive search for, or responsiveness to, the reconstruction or extension of trust from the concrete settings in which the crisis occurs to some broader societal context, rather than attempts to institutionalize entirely new, for instance formal, universalistic norms of regulation. In many of these situations, the groups acting in a disharmonious manner emphasize the loss of such broader trust – possibly its betrayal by leaders or would-be leaders. It is the ability to restructure the networks and trust under conditions of intensive change that constitutes the major challenge for the elites and influentials.

But the success of such efforts to reestablish such linkages is not automatic. Such linkages may indeed break down – especially in cases of intensive conflict. It may break down precisely because of this weakness of some autonomous frameworks not embedded in the particularistic settings and networks. When this happens – for instance, during the student outbreaks in the 1960s or in some of the cases of status conflict – an unregulated anomic situation, often with great potential for aggression, may arise. In other cases the breakdown of the ability to move between different contexts and to construct new contexts may give rise to the dissolution of groups or organizations. Such linkages may also break down when the overall environment in which any concrete institutional patterns which had crystallized at a certain moment changes drastically. The possibility of such breakdown in such situations may be also intensified because of the seeming lack of access to symbolic resources beyond the given social nexus. This is probably one of the most important challenges facing contemporary Japan.

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