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PREVIEW

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY
ON THE YAMATO SOCIAL MODEL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Abstract

The thesis of this study proposes that two fundamentally different social models are operative within Japanese society: one based on the Shinto archetype and historical Japanese social traditions, the other on Western philosophic and political principles introduced mainly by the occupation authorities following the end of World War II.

The traditional Yamato model merges Shinto beliefs, Confucian teachings and Buddhist religious practices to structure a harmonious society based on hierarchy. The model draws its power from individual and collective acceptance of the Emperor's hereditary and legitimate right to head the social hierarchy.

The newer, official social code is represented by the Japanese Constitution of 1946, which is based on the Western political idealism of democracy and individual rights. The current Constitution was implemented during the period of United States occupation and contains concepts which conflict with the historical pattern of Japanese social and political development.

To understand the direction of change within Japanese society it is important to know which of the two models is

dominant: the Yamato Constitution based on hierarchy or the Western and alien model based on individual rights.

A three phased approach was used to conduct the research. The first, a historical study, identified the beliefs associated with the Yamato social model and their influence on decisions made by Japanese rulers at critical points in Japanese history. Phase two involved field research in Japan needed to develop the data collection document. The final phase necessitated the selection of survey groups and distribution of questionnaires. It was the researcher's intent to test the strength of traditional beliefs held by individuals with a high likelihood of exposure to Western influences and technology.

The results indicate strong rejection of traditional beliefs associated with the power and influence of the Emperor. In addition, the findings reveal a trend toward individualism and personal rights and a rejection of hierarchy. The dissertation concludes with an assessment of the influence of changing attitudes on the social harmony that has been a positive feature of the Japanese social order.

Preface

I am especially grateful to Salve Regina University for providing the opportunity to explore a topic that was of personal interest. The diversity of the Salve Regina program in humanities provides a number of possible research approaches to examine the interaction between technology and the human condition. My research into evolution of the Yamato social model as an influence on the course of Japanese history recognizes the introduction of technology as a primary change agent that shapes the political, social and economic structures of nations.

My mentor, Dr. David Kim, was central to the overall project. His professional insight and quiet, patient guidance were instrumental in framing an appropriate approach to the research. Dr. Ann Nelson, RSM, and Dr. George Luzitano were both readers and cheerleaders, providing positive feedback, questions and suggestions on how to present the research findings. The three committee members provided the unique combination of academic disciplines and understanding of East Asia, philosophy, history, and political science that were essential for critical analysis of the theme of the dissertation. Together, they represented a superb committee for which I am sincerely grateful.

Brother Michael Reynolds was an original member of my committee. He was the source of encouragement during the early years of research and with his untimely death in March

of 1993, I lost a friend and advisor. This dissertation is dedicated to Brother Mike in recognition for his many years of patient, dedicated work throughout the world on behalf of mankind.

The most difficult problems associated with attempting to conduct research into Japanese social change were overcome through the kindness of Japanese friends. Mrs. Midori Ezoe, publisher of EPIC World Magazine, generously made the resources of her publication available for the collection of data. Mr. Hakubun Hirakawa, Vice Chairman of the Narashino City Council, offered his personal assistance to the research effort, "opening doors" of opportunity for me which led to productive visits, discussions and interviews in Narashino City, a suburb of Tokyo. Mrs. Fumiko Inoue was my "on scene" link into Japanese culture and history. Her circle of contacts within Japanese society provided rapid feedback and a fresh perspective on issues that arose during the research phase. I am grateful to these three Japanese friends for their kindness and support of my efforts.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This study has its origins in the personal experiences of the writer with the Japanese culture during a period of residence in Sasebo, from 1959 through 1961, and followed by numerous shorter visits in the years since. These years provide the basis for an outside perspective of the external changes that have altered the outward appearance of Japanese society as she embraced technology and many practices of the Western world. It is always interesting to return to Japan, for the Japanese culture is seemingly able to persist and retain its unique character and social norms despite the pressures of change associated with a technological world.

Technology and Social Change

The United States and Japan represent two of the most technologically advanced nations in the modern world, yet fundamental differences persist between their two social models. This writer's most enduring impression of the Japanese society and culture can be summarized in one word: *harmony*. The social harmony of the Japanese stands in marked contrast to the disharmony and insecurity created by the individualist and often anti-social behavior found in American society. The present Constitutions of the United States and Japan are both based on Western idealism that give primacy to individual rights. Despite the legal similarities found in

the two social systems, however, it is clear that differing social models influence the social norms and individual behavior within the two cultures. Based on simple observation, it appears that the Japanese place a high priority on conformity to social norms, and they are willing to subordinate individual desires and rights to achieve collective harmony. In this writer's view, Japanese social harmony is regulated by cultural acceptance of the norms that have evolved during the long evolution of Japanese society.

This research examines the origins and evolution of the Japanese social model as it combined beliefs contained in the Shinto tradition with externally introduced influences such as technology, religion, philosophy and political practices. The resultant Yamato social model was created by the ancient Japanese rulers to strengthen their political position during a time of change. Although the Yamato code is uniquely Japanese, it combines traditional Shinto beliefs with imported Confucian teachings and Buddhist practices. Technology was a key factor in the shaping and implementation of the Yamato principles, and it continued to influence decisions while interacting with changes during the course of Japanese history.

The Yamato social contract is found in the Nihon-shoki, one of the earliest Japanese classics, and this source was supplemented by a seventeen point Constitution attributed to Prince Shotoku Taishi in 604. In this writer's opinion,

understanding the evolution of the Yamato model and its influence on the structure and value system of Japanese society is essential to understanding the Japanese people today.

Statement of the Thesis

The thesis of this study proposes that two fundamentally different social models are operative within Japanese society: one based on the Shinto archetype and historical Japanese social traditions, the other on Western philosophic and political principles introduced mainly by the occupation authorities following the end of World War II.

The traditional Yamato model merges Shinto beliefs, Confucian teachings and Buddhist religious practices to structure a harmonious society based on hierarchy. The model draws its power from individual and collective acceptance of the Emperor's hereditary and legitimate right to head the social hierarchy. The acceptance and support of key beliefs, as they relate to the Emperor, are contained in the Shinto mythology. These beliefs, accepted by the upper class and the people, are indicators of Imperial power.

Historical research traces the development, influence and relevance of the Yamato code at key decision points in Japanese history. The research shows that the Yamato model provided a political and social anchor which allowed the Japanese elite to successfully resist undesirable forces of

social change introduced by technology and ideas from external sources. In fact, the major social, political and economic problems encountered by the Japanese elite have their origins in technology.

For purposes of this research I considered technology as "a self conscious organized means of affecting the physical or social environment, capable of being objectified and transmitted to others" (Ferkiss, 1969, 31). This broad definition encompasses all aspects of human creativity that carry the potential for change.

The Japanese Constitution of 1946, is based on Western philosophic and political idealism of democracy and individual rights. This model is an alien concept, containing ideas and techniques foreign to Japanese social development, imposed on the Japanese by the Allied Powers as a condition for normalizing relations following the end of the Pacific War in 1945.

The Japanese Constitution of 1946, which is based on Western philosophic and political idealism of democracy and individual rights. This model is an alien concept, containing concepts and techniques foreign to Japanese social development, imposed on the Japanese by the Allied Powers as a condition for ending the Pacific War in 1945. The Japanese endured punishing losses in human life, military defeat, and economic destruction during the final phases of the Pacific War largely because of their unwillingness to accept the

surrender terms that failed to guarantee the continuance of the Yamato concept of government. During the fifty years since the end of the Pacific War, Japanese society has been subject to further influence fostered by both technological and social changes emanating mainly from the West.

To understand the direction of movement within Japanese society today it is important to know which of the two models is dominant: the Yamato concepts based on hierarchy or the alien Western model based on individual rights. The research questionnaire contained in Exhibit I was designed to determine the strength of the Shinto archetype, the Yamato Constitution and acceptance of traditional beliefs concerning the Emperor.

The research findings and conclusions presented in Chapter Seven show that a fundamental shift has taken place within the survey groups that indicate the Yamato code is failing to survive its most recent and persistent challenge from external technology and Western political idealism. In particular, the strong support for individualism and personal rights and rejection of hierarchy noted among respondents will have profound influences should they prove to be representative of Japanese society.

The Evolution of the Japanese Social Model

Research in this study traces the origins and evolution of the ancient Japanese Yamato social code from the mythology of the Shinto archetype and through the consequent interaction

with the technology and ideas introduced from external sources. The research takes a historical approach to examine how the Japanese employed the beliefs contained in the Shinto archetype, along with the technology and new religious and social teachings introduced from the Chinese culture, to construct a uniquely Japanese social system that persisted until the end of the Pacific War in 1945.

The Yamato Constitution of 604, attributed to Prince Shotoku Taishi, represents a fundamental development in Japanese history and social organization. The use of the creation archetype by Prince Shotoku and members of the Japanese power elite to forge a powerful social model predates by some fifteen hundred years, the studies of the psychologist Jung into archetypes.

All creation archetypes attempt to explain primordial events that are beyond human comprehension in order to establish mankind's place in the natural order. Creation archetypes, such as Shinto mythology, have strong influences on the development and implementation of social orders, norms, and obligation by members of the society. Acceptance of the creation archetype and belief in supernatural creative forces are considered the glue that bonds social units together. This socializing force is described by Bergson, particularly in regard to closed societies as:

... a force of unvarying direction, which is to the soul what the force of gravity is to the body, it ensures the cohesion of the group by binding all

individual wills to the same end. That force is moral obligation (1986, 266).

Closed societies place extreme emphasis on obligation, and through the force of obligation the rulers are able to resist change in the social order. A combination of factors such as geographic isolation, common history and a singular language can reinforce the symbolic archetype to maintain tradition and to eliminate or at least modify potential sources of change. All of these factors are present in the history of Japanese social evolution.

Research in this study provides the background information necessary to appreciate the actions of Japanese decision makers during periods of critical interaction with technologically advanced cultures. The flow of Japanese history and social evolution was shaped by the response of the Japanese ruling class to these technological challenges. The Japanese leadership has consistently faced recurring questions and challenges that are rooted in technology. For instance, should new ideas and technologies be rejected as dangerous and threatening to society? Which new ideas can be accepted and assimilated without change? Are any ideas so desirable that the risk of social change is acceptable? Can such ideas be modified to achieve compatibility without causing social disharmony?

For centuries, the responses of the Japanese establishment to these questions have shaped both the Japanese social model and her interaction with Asian and Western

cultures. In 1873, for example, the Meiji restoration incorporated key elements of the ancient Yamato social model with the decision to embrace Western technology as a means of resisting foreign political beliefs and socio-economic penetration. The twentieth century emergence of Meiji Japan as the first modern Asian technological power initiated a chain of events that led to misunderstanding culminating in World War II between Japan and the Western powers.

The Yamato social code and the Shinto mythology were central elements in the clash between the Japanese cultural values and the United States leaders, who considered the Japanese social order a violation of fundamental human rights. The extremes of the disagreement were represented by the conflicting views on the source of legitimate power, individual rights, and social obligations within the divergent social models of the United States and Japan. The conflicting views, which resulted in the Pacific War, were finally brought to confrontation by the 1945 military defeat of Japan by the United States and the Allied Powers.

During the Pacific War, the single most important objective of the Allied Powers was the destruction of the authoritarian Japanese social model in order to replace it with a model based on Western idealism. The old Yamato model, based on acceptance of the authority of hierarchy, with subordination of individual rights to achieve harmony, was replaced by a

model that demanded equality and a respect for individual rights and freedom.

The research findings reveal a unique composite in Japan today: the persistent beliefs contained in the ancient Yamato norm co-existing with recent Western idealism expressed in the Constitution of 1946. These dual findings provide valuable insight into how human beings view their rights and obligations in a highly developed culture that is also a technologically advanced nation.

This research provides, first, an appreciation of the influence of archetypes in shaping the political philosophy and social relations between the Japan's ruling class and her people. By examining the broad span of Japanese history and social evolution, the research identifies, second, the emerging influence of technology on Japanese society today. This impact, however, is not readily apparent when segments of Japanese history are viewed in isolation.

This study builds on the research and social theories advanced by many authors in the humanities to examine in detail the development of the Japanese social system. The focus of the research is centered on the original Shinto creation archetype and the foreign influences affecting the implementation of the Yamato social model.

As noted above, the Yamato Constitution, attributed to Prince Shotoku, represents a fundamental development in Japanese history and social organization. The consequent

Yamato social model combines traditional Japanese beliefs contained in the earlier Shinto archetype with foreign concepts and technology. The influence of the Yamato code remained a dominate factor in the shaping of Japanese society until the end of the Pacific War in 1945. How an emergent technology influenced the destiny of a unique people and way of life is the underlying theme of this study.

The research findings and conclusions presented in Chapter Seven, indicate strong rejection of key ideas associated with the Yamato model by survey participants in both the EPIC and Narashino City groups. The findings are consistent with the researcher's thesis that persistent exposure to Western technological and political influences will weaken the Yamato social model.

It is the writer's assumption that the trends identified within the EPIC and Narashino City groups are indicators of social changes which will over time spread throughout Japanese society. The changes will give rise to individualistic behavior that will in time threaten the harmony of the Japanese social system that achieves harmony through acceptance of hierarchy.

Review of the Literature

Research in this study builds on the scholarly efforts of others who have examined the role of archetypes, mythology, beliefs and other influences on the formation of societies.

The work is particularly indebted to pioneering studies that opened Japanese history and culture to the West.

The efforts of Dr. W. G. Aston, particularly made this research feasible. His painstaking English translation of the Nihon-shoki from an archaic form of Japanese based on Chinese was a major contribution to those seeking to understand the Shinto archetype and its influence on Japanese social development.

Aston's translation of the Nihon-shoki was sponsored by the Japan Society and was first published in 1896. The translation is from the original work compiled during the seventh century and written in classical Chinese and Japanese adaptations of Chinese characters. Aston's translation into English is considered the most authoritative source for scholarly research.

The Nihon-shoki, one of the earliest Japanese classics, combines the Shinto archetype and the history of the dominate Yamato clan in one book. The accounts contained in the Nihon-shoki link the creation story to the foundation of the Japanese nation. The Nihon-shoki was a powerful influence on Japanese social development and the structure of the Japanese hierarchy and social system. The historical events provided by the Nihon-shoki, which conclude in 697, record the critical experiences of the Japanese in their initial encounters with the ideas and technology introduced from the more advanced Chinese culture.