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Public Journalism and Journalism in Japan

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Introduction

This paper will examine how media people and critics in Japan's academic community understand public journalism movements in the United States and how the movements are accepted by journalists here. Through the examination, I will show some characteristics of Japanese journalism and challenges it faces. I will also mention the significance of "theorizing" journalistic activities to maintain the value of freedom of expression. Public journalism, also called civic journalism, has been drawing the attention of media people in Japan since several articles reviewing the topic were published. Public journalism, the definition of which I discuss more closely later, could be summarized as a series of journalistic practices to find and report on issues that readers or citizens view as problems to be solved, encouraging their active participation in the process to find solutions to the problems.

Public journalism is not only a way of reporting but also a way of thinking, a philosophy regarding democracy and the relationship between media and democracy. It says that journalism is an indispensable element in the process of democracy, and that journalism must help citizens participate in the process to solve problems facing their communities. From my point of view, the public journalism movement is most interesting in the sense that it causes us to reflect on the meaning of freedom of expression, because the movement suggests that freedom of expression is not a negative freedom, which means that no regulations are imposed on expression, but a positive freedom in which people are free to participate in the decision-making process of their communities.

Freedom of expression was brought to Japan with the U.S. occupation after World War Ⅱ. Journalism in the United States has always served as a model that practitioners of journalistic activities in Japan look up to.

Therefore, examining how practitioners of journalism as well as critics in the academic community interpret public journalism in the United States and try to adapt it to the Japanese environment will suggest characteristics of journalism in Japan and the challenges facing it from the perspective of freedom of expression.

This paper will also provide non-Japanese-speaking people with overviews of practices of Japanese journalism that could be comparable to public journalism in

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the United States.

A survey conducted by the World Association of Newspapers says that Japan's daily newspaper industry enjoys the second largest circulation (70,815,000 copies) after China (85,470,000 copies), according to figures for 2002. Regarding circulation per population, Japan is third after Iceland and Norway, while China is 47th among 80 countries. Considering that the total circulations of daily newspapers in Norway and Iceland are much smaller than in Japan, 745,000 copies and 152,000 copies respectively (in 2002), one could say that Japan's daily newspaper industry is the largest in the world (World Association of Newspapers, 2004: 12-13). At the same time, the television industry also flourishes in Japan. NHK (the Japan Broadcasting Corporation) covers the whole area of Japan with two TV channels for terrestrial broadcasting in addition to two satellite TV channels, while the first private TV broadcasting company started operations as early as 1953. Now five key networks of private TV stations cover the whole country. More TV channels are available for audiences through cable and satellite, at additional cost.

Although the mass media industry has greatly developed so far, journalism in Japan faces severe challenges like those in other countries, including pressure as commercial entities, tighter control of information by governmental news sources, and a decline of readership of newspapers, especially among young generations.

Public journalism has responded to these challenges, and it could be informative for non-Japanese-speaking readers to see how some Japanese media people are trying to cope with the situation by adapting the concept of public journalism to the Japanese environment.

My argument here is that media people in Japan accommodate an aspect of public journalism by producing articles from the viewpoint of readers through active communication between journalists and readers or viewers, ignoring the philosophical aspect of reflecting on the meanings of freedom of expression and the relationship between democracy and journalism. I suggest that Japanese journalism does not "theorize" journalistic practices in Japan, which I argue is necessary to cope with challenges facing journalism.

Three Aspects of Public Journalism in the United States

As there have been numerous articles published about what public journalism is, I will just briefly sum up the public journalism movement as having aspects of (1) the philosophy to reflect on democracy and its relationship with journalism, (2) innovative techniques of reporting to put that philosophy into practice, and (3) a social movement with the support of civil organizations to invigorate democracy.

The word "public journalism" has no specific definition. (Rosen 1999: 21-23) Arthur Charity, a major advocate of public journalism, clearly said, "There is no

official expression of public journalism", continuing as follows:

> Public journalism is nothing more than the conviction that journalism's business is about making citizenship work. In practice, there is only the pioneering, sometimes contradictory work of dozens of very loosely connected editors and reporters. (Charity, 1995: 9)

Public journalism movements are a series of practices for reinvigorating journalism. Although the word has no specific definition, what it is actually is commonly understood. It is defined by a background philosophy and some techniques of reporting.

The following quotes from an essay by William F. Woo regarding the birth of public journalism show that public journalism is a way of reporting to crystallize the idea of journalism based on ordinary people, not politicians and officials.

> It is difficult to point to the moment and place of civic journalism's birth. In 1990-91, the *Wichita Eagle* experimented with new ways of covering elections, in which the paper focused on what citizens thought were the matters important to them rather than repeating what the candidates defined as the issues. In 1990, too, David Broder, the political columnist for the *Washington Post*, declared that journalists should distance themselves from politicians and candidates. (Woo, 2000: 23)

Don Corrigan, very critical of public journalism movements, listed expressions to show the nature of public journalism with reference to Arthur Charity's work. These are: Lethargic Public Climate, Public Listening, Public Agenda, Deliberative Dialogue, Community Conversation, and Framing (Corrigan, 1999: 146).

The expression "Lethargic Public Climate" shows public journalism's background recognition that citizens feel alienated from the political system and feel helpless to effect change in their communities, where they can find no public life. To restore public life in communities, journalists are encouraged to play an active role.

Arthur Charity states that journalists involved in the public journalism movement in its inception recognized that "the public they had intended to serve distrusted newspapers and increasingly didn't even read them" and that "they saw that the very problems they had come to journalism to help solve still weren't being solved, or even being very intelligently addressed (Charity, 1995: 1)". They came to think of resolving the deadlock in the following way:

> They decided that journalism ought to make it as easy as possible for citizens to make intelligent decisions about public affairs, and to get them carried out. (Charity, 1995: 2)

This indicates that the movement to reform journalistic practices comprises not only techniques of reporting but also the philosophy of democracy, that is, the belief that people should actively participate in the decision-making process of their communities and that journalists must help people participate in the process.

The other characteristic of the movement is its way of news gathering and reporting. The words "Public Listening, Public Agenda, Deliberative Dialogue, Community Conversation, and Framing" are all related to techniques of journalism. Journalists involved in public journalism use such techniques for posing open-ended questions to ordinary citizens and setting up discussion groups to make clear what the public agenda is, and they provide opportunities for citizens to talk to each other to find solutions to problems facing them. Journalists need to frame the story not to focus on the conflict but the possibilities for members of communities to find ways to cooperate with each other and solutions to problems.

Public journalism is a movement in which philosophy and reporting techniques are connected. In particular, one aspect of the movement can be clearly seen in the fact that media organizations involved in public journalism are supported by civil organizations with an aim to reinvigorate participatory democracy. This is one of the reasons that public journalism is distrusted by some of people in media or related organizations, while the support of such organizations makes the public journalism movement go beyond being a movement for better reporting to a movement to renovate democracy with the help of journalism.

After indicating "the restoration to health of American democracy" as a characteristic of public journalism, William F. Woo continues, "Two other factors crucial to its growth were soon to follow: money and the enthusiastic embrace of academics" (Woo, 2000: 24). After stating that the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, a creation of the Pew Charitable Trust charged with making strategic investments that encourage and support citizen participation in addressing critical issues and effecting social change, is one financial source to encourage public journalism, he argues as follows:

> Two aspects of these projects were notable for their departure from the practice and values of conventional journalism.
>
> First, they involved third-party financing for what ultimately would be content accumulated, shaped, and presented to readers and viewers. Without Pew and its money, it is unlikely that the news stories and broadcast programs would have taken place. Second, the projects involved what has come to be a Pew hallmark, namely, the collaboration of news organizations, each with its own interests but joined with Pew financing toward a common community objective. Both of these raise questions of independence, which is central to the credibility of new organizations. (Woo, 2000: 24)

As stated above, I summarize the public journalism movement as having three aspects of philosophy, techniques, and a social movement supported by civil organizations, all of which are closely and inseparably connected. I will explore how those aspects of public journalism are accepted and interpreted in Japan.

How Public Journalism Was Introduced to Japan

The concept of public journalism first drew the attention of working journalists, not critics in the academic community, in Japan.

The word "public journalism" first appeared in an Aug. 4, 1994, article in the *Asahi Shimbun*, the second largest daily newspaper in Japan. Shinichi Yoshida, then an *Asahi Shimbun* correspondent in Washington, D.C., wrote the article as part of a series titled "Politics and Media: from the United States". Reviewing coverage of the 1992 presidential election by the *Charlotte Observer*, a regional newspaper in North Carolina, he wrote:

> The newspaper researched the interest of residents in an opinion poll of 1,000 residents in late 1991 and narrowed down the focus of its coverage to cover such issues as economy, crimes and taxes. And it organized a data base group composed of 500 volunteers from the surveyed 1,000 residents who had cooperated with the paper during the election campaign.... At a press conference by the candidates, journalists of the paper addressed questions from eligible voters in addition to their own questions, saying, "voters want to know about these", and carried the responses in the paper. (*Asahi Shimbun*, Aug. 4, 1994 (morning edition))

The *Asahi Shimbun* also reported on the public journalism movement, including experiments by the *Charlotte Observer* on Aug. 22, 1996, as a part of the series "One Hundred Years after the Birth of the New York Times and the U.S. Media"(*Asahi Shimbun*, Aug. 22, 1996, (morning edition)). Other articles appeared on Oct. 29 and 30, 1996, explaining the "Your Voice, Your Vote" project, the concerted actions of TV, radio stations, and newspapers in North Caroline for the gubernatorial and senate elections of 1996. (*Asahi Shimbun*: Oct. 29, 1996, (morning edition))

The *Asahi Shimbun*'s monthly magazine for journalism studies, *Asahi Soken Report*, carried an article by staff writer Hiroto Ohno in its December 1996 issue, giving an overview of journalistic activities called public journalism, including the background philosophy of "communitarianism", based on Ohno's research in the United States (Ohno, 1996).

While journalists of the *Asahi Shimbun* paid attention to public journalism,

public journalism became more and more popular among people in journalism's academic community and mass communication research.

Some articles and essays reviewing the public journalism movement as well as its philosophical background appeared in 1997. Among those were Takashige Otsuka's "Public Journalism in U.S." (Otsuka, 1997) and Takeaya Mizuno's "Searching for Solutions through Dialogue with Readers: America's Civic Journalism Movement" (Mizuno, 1997). The same year, journalist Yaeko Mitsumori wrote articles explaining the activities of supporting organizations of the public journalism movement, including the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF), and the National Radio Network, presenting several cases studies, including the People's Voice project by the *Boston Globe* and WBUR-FM, WABU-TV in Boston in 1996 (Mitsumori, 1997a & 1997b). Hiroshi Fujita, a professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, wrote several articles regarding public journalism since 1997. He also mentioned that public journalism is sustained with the support of nonprofit organizations and examined why such organizations cannot thrive in Japan (Fujita, 2000). Kaori Hayashi reported her field studies of the public journalism movement in the U.S. and examined its philosophical implications (Hayashi, 2002b).

Kei Kogure examined cases that he thinks can be called public journalism in Japan, in addition to reporting on his field research of public journalism in the United States (Kogure, 2000). I will call into question his understanding of public journalism later.

There have been quite a few opportunities for media people and critics in the academic community to learn about the public journalism movement going on in the United States. Those articles and essays commonly mentioned the 1988 presidential campaign as a starting point for public journalism, reviewing cases like the *Charlotte Observer*'s experiments as well as disputes between supporters and critics, mainly people from major newspapers like the *New York Times*.

Glancing over those articles and essays makes it clear that their authors are more or less favorable to the public journalism movement. It is true, as mentioned before, that most papers state that there are many criticisms of public journalism, especially from mainstream journalism. However, they just review the criticisms and they themselves evaluate the movement favorably or at least refrain from evaluation. For example, in one paper Fujita evaluates public journalism as follows:

> Journalists for major newspapers and broadcasting networks in metropolitan areas are mainly indifferent to the public journalism movement, and it cannot be foreseen that the movement will be a part of mainstream U.S. journalism. However, we should evaluate the movement highly in the sense that it questioned conventional journalistic activities and provided concrete proposals for reform. (Fujita, 2004: 203)

Hayashi did not make clear how she evaluates the public journalism movement, but she recognizes the high value of a movement critical of conventional journalism as symbolized by the question of Jay Rosen, "What are journalists for?" (Rosen, 1999a). Then, she severely criticizes conventional journalism by stating, "those in mainstream journalism are passive in exploring the answer to the question <what are journalists for?> in the modern context of protecting the 'freedom of speech' of modern liberalism" (Hayashi, 2002b: 375). (inside <> is added)

It may be natural that those who reviewed and presented the movement for Japanese readers are favorable to the movement. Otherwise, they would not take the trouble to do so. And it may be inevitable that major parts of their articles are devoted to an explanation of the movement and statements by its advocates explaining "what public journalism is", to present the movement to readers in Japan unfamiliar with the media situation in the United States. However, after more than 10 years since the first review of the movement in the *Asahi Shimbun* article and after quite a few papers have appeared, it is conspicuous that one can rarely find negative comments about public journalism in the Japanese media, including the academic community, at least as compared with the situation in the United States.

It can also be noted that one can find very few words mentioning cases of Japanese media comparable with experiments of public journalism in the United States. I will discuss how this happens later.

Public Journalism in Japan

I reviewed how the public journalism movement was reviewed and presented in Japan. Now, I will look at media practices that could be comparable to the public journalism movement in the United States.

It can be said that only journalists of the *Asahi Shimbun* clearly declared that they try to incorporate the techniques of public journalism into their daily practice.

(1) The *Asahi Shimbun*'s Shizuoka Project

The second largest and, probably, the most prestigious newspaper in Japan conducted a series of opinion surveys of eligible voters in Shizuoka (a city of about 700,000 in the Kanto area) starting in spring 1995 to throw objective light onto the process by which voters swing between parties. It is known that the support rates of political parties in the city are changing in the quite same way as the average rate for all of Japan. A series based on the surveys was granted the NSK (The Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association) Award, the most prestigious award in journalism in Japan, in 1995, as "it broke fresh ground in political coverage of newspapers".

Shinichi Yoshida, a former correspondent in Washington, D.C., led the coverage, explaining that the idea came from public journalism in the United States.

> In the United States recently, one has been able to see the growing movement of "public journalism" purporting to report elections and politics from the point of view of voters, which is a response to a growing criticism of media that viewpoints of Washington, D.C., prevail in political reporting and those of voters are paid little attention, which has resulted in growing distrust of politics. Public journalism is a set of techniques to come to know the needs of voters and capitalize on the knowledge for coverage. A major local newspaper challenged large-scale political reporting in the 1992 presidential election, which was followed by local TV stations.
>
> The principal idea of the project in Shizuoka had been planned since the summer of 1994, taking the movement in the United States into consideration. (Yoshida, 1995: 37)

The serial surveys and coverage went as follows.

The project started with surveys of 2,000 voters in March 1995 in the city of Shizuoka. Those were followed by tracking surveys of 350 randomly selected persons from 1,082 persons who volunteered to cooperate with the tracking surveys from the original survey. The tracking surveys revealed that persons who recently stopped supporting a specific political party showed higher interest in politics than conventional non-party-supporting voters, so the former could be called a "new non-party-supporting group". The surveys also showed that the social structures of supporters of political parties had begun to float very much, as persons who responded as supporting a specific party changed their attitudes in a short time.

Journalists of the newspaper selected 69 non-party-supporting persons and conducted intensive face-to-face interviews in June, the results of which appeared in the paper (*Asahi Shimbun*, June 9 & 10, 1995, morning editions). Furthermore, they collected questions from cooperating persons regarding policies and carried in their pages answers to those questions from executives of the five major political parties, including the ruling party (*Asahi Shimbun*, June 19, 20, 21 and 22, 1995, morning editions).

(2) The *Asahi Shimbun*'s Creation of the Section for Civic Welfare (Kurashi Henshu-bu)

The *Asahi Shimbun* took other action for better reporting under the leadership of Shinichi Yoshida with public journalism in mind. That was the creation of the Section for Civic Welfare (Kurashi Henshu-bu)[1] in spring 2000, to cover comprehensively and multilaterally issues related to readers' daily lives and welfare.

The journalists attached to the section report issues like pensions, employment,

nursing, medical service and waste matter, mainly in the newly created "life" pages. Those pages cross over conventional beats of coverage divided into the sections like politics, the economy, and city pages, to totally cover life-related issues, which are inseparable in the lives of readers (Yoshida, 2000: 8).

Yoshida states that his team in the Section for Civic Welfare has intentionally pursued making full use of the techniques of public journalism (Yoshida, 2001: 31). Responding to readers' concerns and questions, his reporters research topics and question authorities on behalf of readers and sometimes visit interviewees with readers. Yoshida explained the reporting method, purported to enhance interactivities between reporters and readers, in a magazine article looking back at the first year as follows:

> The essence of public journalism done by the team one year after its start was a new way of reporting based on the exchange of information and dialogue with readers, which could be called "interactive journalism", in such fields as medical service and pensions.
>
> Our team found news in readers' experiences, utilizing their letters, faxes, and e-mails. We looked for the same kind of experiences as those found in correspondence from readers through publication of serial articles and accumulated the information. We found out the problems to be solved lying at the bottom of the system and ran major articles on such issues on the front pages from time to time. This grew from a collection of minor news pieces born out of thinking "with readers". Our team worked in that way, and it is an ambitious way of reporting in the public journalism style. (Yoshida, 2001: 31)

The section uncovered the fact that housewives with temporary part-time jobs are at a disadvantage in the amount of pension money they receive. After a report on illegal detention and careless treatment in a mental hospital in Saitama Prefecture, more than 100 letters came from readers, including patients, regarding treatment in mental hospitals. Using those information, the paper explored the real situation of such mental institutions.

(3) Regional Newspapers

The *Asahi Shimbun* took some steps to incorporate techniques of public journalism into practice. No other newspapers in Japan have reported participation in the public journalism movement. However, one can find that some regional newspapers have used techniques like those of the public journalism movement, techniques such as organizing discussion sessions with readers to clarify what the real issues are and demanding that authorities solve problems they find.

I list some of these below.

The *Tokyo Shimbun*[2], a regional daily newspaper sold in the metropolitan area, collected readers' requests and questions through the Internet and faxes, then obtained answers to those questions from candidates during the general election of July 2001. Fujita called the *Tokyo Shimbun*'s practice "the very techniques of public journalism" (Fujita, 2004: 215-216).

The *Kahoku Shimpo*[3], a regional daily in Miyagi Prefecture, ran a series in 1997 reporting on rice farming throughout the world to inquire about the possibility of rice production lessening food shortages worldwide. In parallel with the articles, the regional newspaper organized forums at 11 different sites where journalists discussed the future of rice farming with farmers and consumers. The series was awarded the NSK Award that year.

The newspaper ran a series on the topic of pediatrics in the first half of 2002 to reveal the critical situation facing pediatrics in the Tohoku area (the northern part of the main island of Japan) and explore ways to solve problems, in collaboration with residents, pediatricians, and authorities. The paper carried articles collecting the uneasy voices of parents and doctors suffering from hard work and organized three forums for parents and pediatricians to talk to each other.

In 2002, another leading regional daily newspaper, the *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*[4], based in Nagano Prefecture, held forums where parents having trouble raising children talked to each other and discussed their problems with journalists. The forums ran in parallel with a series of articles on raising children, including the topic of child abuse, to explore new perspectives of child raising and ways to support parents. The regional newspaper organized the forums in three cities while the stories ran from December 2001 to June 2002. After the series ended, the forums have continued with the support of local governments and boards of education. The 12th meeting was held in Nagano in November 2004. In the first event, the participants were divided into four groups of 30 to 70 members according to different topics. Psychotherapists and pediatricians joined the discussion, so participants know whom to contact for further information.

The newspaper also organized the same kind of forum with a series about nursing care in 1999.

The desk editor in charge of the above-mentioned stories from 2001 to 2002 commented in the weekly organ paper of NSK (The Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association), "A way to connect the readers' discussion forum and the series is being established" and "a series filled with personal stories is becoming more appealing if readers are provided with opportunities to find hints of solutions for themselves" (*Shinbun Kyokai Ho*, Jan. 1, 2003: 5).

The *Nishi-nippon Shimbun*[5], a regional daily paper in Fukuoka and the surrounding prefectures, has inserted reports of discussion meetings between residents and reporters in a series that started in October 2003 covering the issues of self-autonomy and mergers of municipalities, which are being promoted by the national

government to facilitate the efficiency of local municipalities.

The stories proceed in the following way: (1) Raising issues with serial articles and editorials, (2) Running more detailed articles in the local pages, (3) Holding intensive discussions between reporters and representatives of the area covered, and (4) Reporting how the session goes (Hirayama, 2004: 25-26).

Twelve leading regional newspapers in Japan, including the *Kahoku Shimpo* and the *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*, invited a professor of the University of Missouri and a journalist of the Saint Paul Pioneer Press in Minnesota to a symposium on the theme of public journalism on Sept. 19, 2003, to celebrate Newspaper Day in Japan.

The above-mentioned practices are a part of public-journalism-like projects held in Japan. However, media people, including those in the academic community, who reviewed the public journalism movement in the United States, rarely mention these Japanese cases.

For example, Kaori Hayashi reviewed the public journalism movement in the United States and examined its meanings and philosophical background in an essay in her book (Hayashi, 2002b). At the same time, she argued that journalism's reform movement is going on in pages covering household issues in Japan, which have been considered "marginal" in Japanese newspapers, in a different essay in the same book. She mentioned the *Asahi Shimbun*'s Section for Civic Welfare, quoting a comment by Shinichi Yoshida, in that context, but did not mention public journalism in the essay. (Hayashi, 2002a)

She also neglected to mention the *Asahi Shimbun*'s Shizuoka project in the book. Fujita also ignored the Shizuoka project, although he mentioned the creation of the Section for Civic Welfare at the *Asahi Shimbun* as a kind of public journalism (Fujita, 2004: 213-215).

Only one author who has discussed public journalism, Kei Kogure, mentioned the *Asahi Shimbun*'s Shizuoka project, while the journalist in charge of that project himself had declared it was inspired by public journalism.

The *Asahi Shimbun*'s Section for Civic Welfare has had more opportunities to be mentioned in the discussion of public journalism. The former section manager was invited to a session for the October 2003 issue of the monthly magazine *Aura*, which is published by a major TV station for people interested in media issues, to discuss public journalism and explain how they were inspired by the public journalism movement in the United States.

Kogure's paper titled "Experiment for Public Journalism and Challenges: The New Potential Seen in the 'Locality Building' Project of the *Shimotsuke Shimbun*" was the only essay focusing on a public-journalism-like project conducted by a Japanese newspaper (Kogure, 2002). Kogure takes up the case of a "Locality Building Meeting along Nikko Road", conducted by the *Shimotsuke Shimbun*[6], a regional daily paper in Tochigi Prefecture, on Feb. 24, 2002. At the meeting, 38 residents discussed with employees of the newspaper company their hopes regarding a road

running through the prefecture over the next five years. However, that was just a one-day event following a series of articles regarding the Nikko Road, part of a project conducted by authorities of the national and local governments. The employees participating in the meeting were not journalists but members of an advertisement department. Although Kogure values the event as "an epoch-making experiment for public journalism in Japan" (Kogure, 2002: 67), it would be more correct to say it was not a journalistic event, but a promotional event for the newspaper publisher as a business entity.

Kogure also devotes some pages to reviewing public-journalism-like practices in Japan after reviewing his field research of the public journalism movement in the United States in another essay (Kogure, 2000). He mentions the *Tokyo Shimbun*'s "Moving Editorial Office, a Day for Dialogue with Readers" project, among other things, as an example of public journalism. The *Tokyo Shimbun* has held the discussion sessions regularly since June 1990 as opportunities in which executive editors and readers directly communicate with each other. Dialogues at the session were summarized to appear on the paper. The session held October 2004 marked the 243rd meeting. However, executive editors and readers talk to each other in any issue, including a general evaluation of coverage in the paper. It can be categorized as public journalism only if public journalism is defined as just "direct communication between media people and readers or audiences". Fujita also mentions the *Tokyo Shimbun*'s project in the context of explaining public journalism but commented rather vaguely that "I am not sure if or how the opinions of citizens pronounced at the session are influential on reporting. If readers' opinions have a function in setting a paper's agenda, we may say the *Tokyo Shimbun* practices public journalism unconsciously" (Fujita, 2004: 216).

Kogure also mentions some other projects, including the following (Kogure, 2000):

- The "Internet Citizen Parliament" project of the *Chunichi Shimbun*[7], a regional daily paper in Aichi and the surrounding prefectures, and the *Tokyo Shimbun* for 10 days from February to March 1999. The newspapers gathered readers' opinions on political opinions over the Internet and presented some of them in their pages.
- The Tohoku Roundtable, a joint event by eight newspaper publishing companies in the Tohoku area. The three-day event was held once a year from 1995 to 2001 to provide opportunities to nurture human resources for the future of Tohoku and explore ways for local communities to cooperate.
- The Kyushu Hakken Juku, a joint event by seven newspaper companies in the Kyushu area, a southern part of Japan, started as "Kyushu Heisei Gijuku" in 1993. The three-day event was held once every year, most recently in the city of Miyazaki in July 2004. The schedule included speeches, panel discussions, and lectures by celebrities like a well-known marketing consultant.

The projects Kogure mentions are rather temporary events that do not seem to contain any implication for renovating conventional journalism in the way the U.S. public journalism movement does. It seems to me that the way Kogure's view of "public journalism" does not represent the usual understanding.

One can also see some critics, including Kogure, taking "public journalism" as the local media's reporting of local issues from the media's or readers' viewpoint, which I believe constitutes a major deviation from the normal understanding of public journalism. When Kogure mentions campaign reporting by two regional newspapers, he seems to view public journalism as a form of campaign reporting by regional or local newspapers of issues local residents consider problems to be solved (Kogure, 2000: 278). However, it is a matter of course that regional and local papers report local issues from their viewpoint or that of their readers, even if it is rare for regional or local papers to uncover local issues that drawing much attention nationwide. It just causes confusion to put the new title "public journalism" on such conventional journalistic activities.

The *Chugoku Shimbun*[8] , a regional daily in Hiroshima Prefecture, ran stories to rid the city of Hiroshima of hot-rod groups. The reporting was highly evaluated and granted the NSK Award in 2002, encouraging people in the city to act together. Although Mitsuyasu Oda mentioned the coverage as the Japanese version of public journalism in the sense that the newspaper consciously set the agenda in cooperation with citizens and authorities (Oda, 2004: 243-244), it seems to me that it is just conventional journalism. The paper never organized events or circulated questionnaires to learn the residents' interests. Instead, they interviewed hot-rodders and their families to learn what they do and think, besides covering the suffering the hot-rodders' noise caused every night and actions taken by the police and local municipalities in tackling the problem. They just collected facts and comments, which eventually encouraged people to act on their own and police and officials to take decisive steps to get the hot-rodders out of the city. But the newspaper did not take the initiatives in bringing about certain measures[9] (*Chugoku Shimbun*, 2003).

The monthly magazine *Aura* featured several articles and a round-table talk in its October 2003 issue. Those articles covered cases like a movie festival collecting fine documentaries done by local TV stations, a drama series produced by local TV stations and performed by local residents on problems facing them, and a regular weekly documentary program produced by a local TV station in Nagano (Murakami, 2003: Muraki, 2003: Yamagushi, 2003). The title of the feature "Japanese-Style Public Journalism: Dispatch of Information from Local Areas" shows public journalism is understood to mean coverage of local issues by local stations from their own or their audience's viewpoints.

Considering Journalism in Japan through Public Journalism Arguments

I indicated earlier that the public journalism movement has three phases: (1) a philosophy that reflects on democracy and its relationship with journalism, (2) innovative techniques to put that philosophy into practice, and (3) a social movement with the support of civil organizations for invigorating democracy. To close this essay, I will put my arguments in order along with the above three aspects.

I did not mention the aspect of a social movement, as Fujita has examined it already. He argued that there is no organization like the Pew Center that provides adequate funds to invigorate democracy and journalism in Japan, a view I totally accept (Fujita, 2000: 73). Therefore, although we can find cases in the Japanese mass media that could be called examples of public journalism, they lack the aspect of a social movement.

Under the leadership of Shinichi Yoshida, the *Asahi Shimbun* consciously incorporates the aspect of techniques. One can also see cases of regional newspapers using the same kind of reporting techniques.

However, some understand public journalism as "local media's reporting of local issues from their own viewpoint or the viewpoint of their readers (audiences)", neglecting the aspect of techniques. It is hard to find any implication of public journalism understood that way because it is just matter-of-course journalism. That idea may just confuse the argument.

That recognition of working journalists is represented by the definition of public journalism of Hideya Terashima, who resided in the United States for seven months from 2002 to 2003 to study public journalism. He defines public journalism as "newspaper reporting with the consciousness and emotions of ordinary citizens, mainly based on the voices of ordinary citizens". He also stated, "it may sound matter of course" (Terashima, 2004: 26). And it does.

Shinichi Hakoshima, chairperson of the Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association (NSK) and president/CEO of *Asahi Shimbun*, stated in the opening speech of NSK's annual convention in the city of Toyama on Oct. 19, 2004, "The most important thing is to stick to the position of readers in reporting. Needless to say, that is the root of journalism, but it is also true that the quality and the raison d'etre of journalism have been severely called into question in connection with the war reporting since last year" (*Shinbun Kyokai Ho*, Oct. 19, 2004).

The *Tokyo Shimbun*'s editorial that marked its 120th anniversary in 2004 stated "the essence of the *Tokyo Shimbun* for the past 120 years has consisted in 'being together with ordinary people'". After that declaration came mention of the conventional mission of journalism: "At the same time, we must not forget that a newspaper is a 'watchdog on power'" (*Tokyo Shimbun*, Sept. 25, 2004 (morning edition)).

Those statements do not contradict Terashima's definition of public journalism.

As long as one understands public journalism in the way Terashima does, no one would oppose it, whether he/she is working for a national or local paper. It is no wonder that while major newspapers like the *New York Times* are suspicious of public journalism, it was the *Asahi Shimbun*, Japan's most prestigious national paper, that has taken the most positive attitude toward incorporating it into its activities.

The confusion of the local media's reporting with public journalism can be explained partly because we are not familiar with the argument of communitarianism. The word "communitarianism" reminds us of community-oriented journalism. But if my understanding of public journalism is correct, communitarianism in the context of public journalism has an affinity with the republican emphasis on people's participation in decision making and in the public lives of their communities. James W. Carey stated that in the context of the public journalism debate the community is "a republican community", which does not presuppose the community members' common roots or common religion, but needs public living whereby people communicate with each other and talk about issues common to them.

Confusion of the local media's reporting with public journalism loses sight of the most important point raised by public journalism, that is, use of the philosophy to reflect on the meanings of democracy, journalism, and freedom of expression.

As I stated earlier, those who reviewed the public journalism movement generally take a favorable attitude toward the movement, while they tend to be indifferent to practices of the Japanese media. On the other hand, one can see that working journalists using techniques of public journalism are indifferent to its background philosophy. While those in the academic community mention or examine the relationship between public journalism and communitarianism, it is hard to see that philosophical background at work in the use of public journalistic techniques in Japan.

Public journalism is significant because it involves new techniques of reporting and a movement for invigorating democracy based on the above-mentioned philosophy reminding us of the relationship between democracy and journalism, or freedom of expression. Neglecting the aspect of philosophy and confuse public journalism with community-oriented reporting means loss of the ability to "theorize" about journalism or reflect on the raison d'etre of journalism. Even in the case of the *Asahi Shimbun*, one can see they incorporate the aspect of techniques, not philosophy, into their practices. It is presupposed that journalists work as readers voices, and it is hard to find devices that encourage ordinary people to participate in the political process in its reporting.

It could be said that what is important in journalism is practice, not theory. However, journalism as well as freedom of expression is being severely called into question in Japan, as well as in the other parts of the world, as NSK chairperson Hakoshima stated. Bills like the Personal Data Protection Act and Human Rights Protection Act, which were strongly criticized by media people as "media regulation

bills", were submitted to the Diet at the beginning of the 21st century. The former bill passed the Diet in 2003 after the original bill was withdrawn and new legislation was created without the most controversial parts in the original. The Human Rights Protection Bill was withdrawn at the end of 2002 partly due to media pressure. Amounts of compensate to persons whose reputation are damaged by the media are getting higher and higher in the 21st century. But Diet legislation and judicial judgments reflect people's mind that put a higher value on personal safety than freedom of expression. On the other hand, a common problem for journalists worldwide is that governments are becoming more adept at controlling the media, especially in the wake of the Iraqi war after the 9/11 attack on the United States.

Journalists hate such trends. But ordinary people may think that freedom of expression is less important than personal safety. No one can deny that safety is one of the most important things in life, and it is true that we need safety to enjoy freedom and that more media freedom may harm the private lives of ordinary people in this information age, when all information rapidly spreads. In this context, we need a balance between freedom and safety. This may be an everlasting question for journalists. To give the right judgment in face of this eternal question, we need to theorize journalistic activities, that is, we need to reflect on the meanings of journalistic activities and freedom of expression in a democratic society to find the right balance between freedom of expression and other values, including safety. By putting the question in very general terms like "freedom or safety"' or "the right to say things freely or the right to protect individuals' lives", we may be leading ourselves to one side. The real questions are more complex in this complicated world.

By recalling how the public journalism movement is being viewed or incorporated in Japan, one can find that media people, including critics in the academic community, lack the attitude to theorize about journalism and reflect on the meaning of freedom of expression and the relationship between democracy and journalism.

NOTES

1. The section was reorganized as the Life Style & Welfare News Department in February 2004.
2. The *Tokyo Shimbun's* circulation is approximately 620,000 for the morning edition and 310,000 for the evening edition. The circulation figures cited here and below are based on a survey done by the Audit Bureau of Circulation in Japan in the first half of 2003.
3. The *Kahoku Shimpo's* circulation is 560,000 for the morning edition and 120,000 for the evening edition.
4. The *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun's* circulation is 480,000 for the morning edition and 180,000 for the evening edition.
5. The *Nishi-nippon Shimbun's* circulation is 850,000 for the morning edition and 50,000 for the evening edition.
6. The *Shimotsuke Shimbun's* circulation is 310,000 for the morning edition.
7. The *Chunichi Shimbun's* circulation is 2,750,000 for the morning edition and 700,000 for the evening edition. It is the largest regional newspaper in Japan. The paper's publishing company also publishes the *Tokyo Shimbun*.
8. The *Chugoku Shimbun's* circulation is 720,000 for the morning edition and 80,000 for the evening edition.
9. I interviewed Yoshiaki Shimoi, the leader of a citizens' movement to rid the city of hot-rod groups, and Mr. Kazunori Hanamoto, a Hiroshima city official in charge of policies for dealing with hot-rodders, on Sept. 1, 2004. I confirmed that they feel encouraged by coverage of the *Chugoku Shimbun*.

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