

The Influence of Historical Experiences on the Japanese Political Communication Research

by ITO Youichi*

Introduction

“Democracy” can be defined in many different ways. This is one reason why there have existed so many varieties of “democratic” states in the world. It can be an empirical scientific term referring to the common people’s participation in the political decision making process, and it can also be a normative ideological concept referring to an ideal political system. In order to make historical and international comparisons possible, the term “democracy” is used here in the empirical scientific sense referring to the phenomenon by which all eligible members, directly or indirectly, participate in the decision making process of the society to which they belong. Here the term democracy is not used as an ideology or a political goal.

Just as there have historically existed various forms of capitalism, there have also existed a variety of forms of democracy, especially when democracy is defined in the empirical sense. This paper focuses on Japanese experiences and the development of democracy in Japan although experiences in other countries are also sometimes referred to.

In major civilizations before the 17th century, the majority of the population was illiterate and in early medieval times so were some of the European kings. The Vatican initiated a campaign in 527 AD to increase the number of literate priests. Even in late 16th century England, the illiteracy rate was as high as 80% among men and 95% among women (Parker, 1980).

Under such constraints, “democracy” as defined above was possible only in small communities or societies in which individual members could discuss the issues face to face. The “direct democracy” of the ancient Greek city-states

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is the best known example of this. However, a long list can be made of other ancient and medieval civilizations with similar systems or practices: the first century German tribes (according to Tacitus), the Swiss cantons, the New England town meetings, and *yoriai* (meeting) in traditional Japanese villages.

While small-scale direct democracies at the city or village level existed, democracy at the empire, kingdom or state level did not exist anywhere in the world before the 17th century. The main reason for this is that it was technically impossible.

Evolution of Democracy as a Result of Mass Printing

The illiteracy rate in Europe dropped rapidly in the 17th century. In England it declined to about 55% for men and 75% for women by the early 18th century (Parker, 1980). This was true in some non-Western countries as well. In Japan, for example, the illiteracy rate was very high before the 17th century even among the elite samurai (warrior) class. Peace during the early 17th through the 19th century in Japan, however, gradually “civilized” ordinary people. As early as the late 17th century, Ihara Saikaku (a popular novelist, 1642-1693) describes an illiterate samurai in one of his novels as “sadly behind the times” (Dore, 1965).

A natural consequence of an increasingly literate population was an ever increasingly open expression of political opinions and criticisms by middle class intellectuals: low-ranking aristocrats, rich farmers, successful merchants, etc. The almost predictable response from the traditional political elite was repression, which was very severe and cruel in the 16th and 17th centuries but became gradually less so during the following two centuries. During this time, at least some constructive opinions and policy suggestions by middle-class intellectuals gradually came to be tolerated and incorporated into the policy-making considerations of the political elite. This process started in England with the reinstatement of a parliament in 1640 that demanded assurances against a resumption of the “absolute monarchy” of Charles I, and spread to Western Europe and North America.

When the first printed news medium published for ordinary citizens appeared is not clear. There are records that printed news reports were published in France in 1431 and in Bologna, Italy in 1470. The oldest extant copy is the German *flugblatt* published in Augsburg in 1482, which reported the invasion of Europe by the Turks. A copy of the *flugblatt* published in 1493 reporting the “discovery” of the American continent by Christopher Columbus is also still in existence. Like *kawaraban* in Japan (to be mentioned below), *flugblatts* were published irregularly and were often read aloud on the street.

In Japan, the first private news media for common people called *kawaraban* (tile print) was published in 1615 to report a major civil war that erupted in that year. *Kawarabans* were published by common people to be sold to common people to serve their needs. They provided the masses with news, entertainment and sometimes criticisms (usually not overt criticisms but satires) on government policies. Basically, their function was similar to that of the “extras” of modern times. They were sold and often read aloud on the street. *Kawaraban* covered all kinds of sensational news: civil wars, riots, murders, suicides, seductions, rapes and even humor. Eye-catching “Headlines” included “Eight-Year Old Girl Gives Birth to Baby Boy”, “Tatsumi’s Love and Suicide”, “Lie Contest in Edo (Tokyo at present)”, “Monster Attacks Mountain Village” and “Huge Whale Sinks Ship”. (See color pictures of these *kawarabans* in Nishimaki, 1978a, and 1978b).

In spite of continual suppression by the government, *kawarabans* survived until the middle of the 19th century when they were replaced by modern newspapers. *Kawaraban*, supplemented by word of mouth, sometimes formed “public opinion” or quasi public opinion. For example, at the time of a large-scale private revenge by 47 *ronins* (masterless or unemployed samurais) that took place in 1702, *kawaraban* reporting the event appeared as early as the next day (Nishimaki, 1978a, p. 16). The general public was so sympathetic to those loyal and faithful *ronins* that the government had to be very cautious and postponed its decision regarding their punishment. This event of 1702 is probably the first case in Japanese history in which “public opinion” formed by commercial news media influenced the central government’s formal decision making process. (See the NHK television documentary program featuring this phenomena entitled “Ako Ronins: 50 days until their Hara-kiri.” [“Ako roshi,” 1999]. Also see *The Loyal Ronins* [Saito & Greey, 1880] ¹ published in English or its French version, *Les Fideles Ronins* [Gausseron, 1882]).

The numbers of titles and circulation of books and private news media such as *kawaraban* increased so much that controlling them had, by the early 19th century, become quite a problem for the central government. Also, by the early 19th century nationwide networks for the distribution of private primary school (*terakoya*) textbooks had been established and political books banned in Tokyo flowed unhindered to distant and remote areas of the country through the textbook distribution pipeline (Konta, 1977, pp. 185-195). As a result, restrictions on publications became more relaxed and punishment for publishing infractions became less severe by then compared with the 17th century (Konta, 1977, p. 196).

The increase of publications intensified the need for intellectuals and experts in the government bureaucracy who could understand and evaluate all of these published books and documents. This was especially noticeable in the fiscal, monetary, agricultural, and foreign policy areas as well as in the judicial

system. Consequently, experts and scholars serving government came to be recruited based on their merits and competence rather than on their lineage. Specialization led to the creation of government agencies that dealt with defined and narrower policy areas. This division of responsibility within the new “meritocratic” establishment meant the greater participation of lower ranking people in the political decision making process. In addition, by the early 19th century, economic and social policies became so complicated that people with expertise and experience were needed to take on the responsibility of policy making. Rohju and other positions, equivalent to “cabinet ministers” in modern times, were recruited based on merit rather than lineage. Therefore, an “absolute dictatorship” which was common before the 17th century was becoming impossible as the division of power within the establishment progressed.

An epoch-making event for the development of democracy in Japan was when Roju Abe (the equivalent of the prime minister at present) sent, in 1853, more than 250 questionnaires to feudal landlords asking for their opinions on how to respond to the official letter from President Fillmore of the United States, which demanded that Japan open the country and establish formal diplomatic relationships with the United States. Sending more than 250 questionnaires to local landlords asking for their opinions would have been definitely inconceivable in the 17th century.

This questionnaire survey, however, set a precedent. When the Emperor was restored to power in 1868 (the Meiji Restoration) the Meiji Emperor proclaimed the five basic principles, one of which was that “everything should be decided based on public opinion”. This “public opinion” is said to have meant opinions of local landlord or governors and not the opinions of the general public. Even so, such a statement would have been impossible in the 17th century.

As Yamamuro (1990, p. 522) points out: “because of the existence of such a political atmosphere emphasizing the importance of public opinion, the Japanese understanding of Western democracy proceeded rapidly.” In many articles written by Japanese scholars and journalists at that time, “the parliamentary system in England and other European countries are often mentioned as good models for Japan’s political reform”. For example, books were written about newspapers in England (Yasukawa, 1875), theories and history of the freedom of the press in Europe (Amano, 1887), and the duties of journalists (Tokutomi, 1891). *Shimbungaku* [Journalism], written by Matsumoto (1889), deals with the idea of the freedom of the press in the West, organizations and practices of major American newspapers, and the techniques of writing and editing.

The statement of Charles Cooley that follows basically applies to the histories of both the East and the West: “Printing means democracy, because it brings knowledge within the reach of the common people; and knowledge, in the long run, is sure to make good its claim to power.” (Cooley, 1993, p. 75.)

Crisis of Democracy in the Mass Media Age

As discussed above, pre-modern undemocratic governments assumed that the masses should not participate in the political decision making process; therefore they suppressed both publications that criticized them and any efforts at free expression on the part of their subjects. However, they did not attempt to operate their own mass media or manipulate the existing mass media to influence the masses for their own benefit. This only began to happen with the emergence of new types of undemocratic governments that resulted from the development of mass media. Most of them took advantage of democratic tenets, such as free elections and freedom of expression, to seize power. Once they had seized power, however, they abolished or drastically restricted those fundamental democratic rights and became dictators. With a twisted logic, some of them persisted in calling their regimes democratic because the majority of the population once supported them. In the twentieth century, Fascist, Nazi, ultra-nationalist, militarist, Communist, and radical Socialist governments all belong in this category.

When newspaper readerships were limited to well-educated middle-class intellectuals, they contributed to the evolution of democracy (as Cooley points out in the previous section); however, when newspaper circulation expanded further to include the general masses, newspapers sometimes changed to engines of mass agitation and exerted a dangerous influence on national policies.

In the past, nearly every modern democracy has had some experience of this. For example, it is well known that the sensationalism and jingoism of the William Randolph Hearst newspapers were responsible for the Spanish-American War (1898). British newspapers were largely held responsible for the unreasonably onerous reparations imposed on Germany at Versailles following the First World War (Nicolson, 1969). Chauvinistic, ethnocentric and racist newspapers helped undemocratic political parties seize power in Germany and Italy.

In Japan, in the 1930s and 40s, there was no political party equivalent to the Nazis or the Fascist or a leader equivalent to Hitler or Mussolini. Westerners and the Chinese have accused Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Tojo Hideki as being the equivalents of Hitler and Mussolini. They were certainly responsible in the sense that they could not control the military properly, but Emperor Hirohito was by no means like the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Tojo was by no means like Hitler or Mussolini.

The German Kaiser Wilhelm II talked much about politics, leaving several infamous inflammatory remarks such as the "yellow peril" to poison the minds of future generations. In contrast, Emperor Hirohito published three scholarly books during his lifetime. The subjects dealt with in these three books pertain to shellfish, marine bacteria, and other marine life forms. It was said that he

was happiest when he was observing marine bacteria through a microscope in his research laboratory. He left very little — for a head of state — in the way of political statements or written political commentary.

Tojo was merely a competent military bureaucrat before he became Prime Minister in 1941. He was a man more like Dwight Eisenhower or Douglas MacArthur than Hitler or Mussolini. *The Encyclopedia Americana* (index) introduces Tojo as just a “Japanese army officer” while it introduces Hitler as “a German dictator” and Mussolini as “an Italian dictator”. Tojo became the Prime Minister on October 17, 1941, only six weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and when the island of Saipan was captured by the U.S. Forces in August 1944, one year before Japan’s surrender, he apologized to the National Diet, resigned as prime minister, and completely retired from politics. Although Tojo may have pursued power, there was no scandal attached to his name regarding money or sex. He led an average and commonplace family life and apparently never had any flamboyant love affairs as those enjoyed by Hitler and Mussolini. If Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Tojo were such seemingly innocuous personalities who was to blame for Japan’s history from 1930 through 1945?

Hata Seiryu, a former editor in chief of the *Asahi Shimbun*, answered this question in a long column written in 1987 immediately before his retirement. According to him, the most responsible was the (military) government and then the newspapers. This statement is persuasive considering that Mr. Hata was the editor in chief of the most prestigious national newspaper in Japan, worked as a leading journalist before the Second World War, and had reached this conclusion by the time of his retirement. Reflecting on his entire journalistic career and especially the hectic 15 years from 1930 through 1945, he testified as follows:

Newspapers at that time did not necessarily try to flatter those in power. Rather, they wrote to please readers. I may sound evasive, but *there certainly existed some kind of mechanism that aggravated the situation through subtle interactions [between newspapers and the public]* (italicized by Ito). Readers were waiting for articles reporting the exploits of the victorious Imperial Forces. Newspapers indulged themselves in a competition to appear more patriotic and to see who could print the most articles urging and exalting victory. Newspaper companies cooperated through the dispatch of entertainers, calls for patriotic songs, campaigns for contributions to build more airplanes, and various other ways. The heavy responsibility that the newspapers bear is second only to that of the government. However, I disagree with the claim that “the general masses were victims”. Newspapers form public opinions, but public opinion also influences newspapers. The general masses are not like horses that can be tamed and trained to do their masters’ bidding (“Senso,” 1987).

Mr. Hata's personal and intuitive realization is in fact supported by abundant academic literature. Kakegawa (1972), Ikei (1981, 1988), and Tsukamoto (1986) content analyzed prewar Japanese newspapers and severely criticized prewar Japanese journalism: Also see commentaries and memoirs by journalists such as Chamoto (1984), Ishida (1995), Maesaka (1989, 1991), and Suzuki (1995).

Ikei (1981, 1988) emphasized that it was only after 1937, or 1934 at the earliest, that government control of journalism became tight. In the book provocatively entitle, *Newspapers Ruined Japan: Agitation Toward the Pacific War* (in Japanese), Ishida (1995, pp. 21-22) states that Japanese newspapers enjoyed the freedom of expression until 1936 or late 1932 at the earliest. Maesaka (1991, pp. 202-204) also argues that newspapers could have criticized the military if they had wished at least until around 1936, and if all major newspapers had done so at that time, Japanese national policies would have certainly been affected. As to be mentioned in the next section, at the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), newspapers had the freedom to publish anti-war editorials if they wished. It is said that Japan's democracy before the Second World War reached its peak during the Taisho period (1912-26), which is called the "Taisho Democracy".

In spite of that, major Japanese newspapers in the early 1930s were so concerned with the growth of circulation and profits, they did not seem to notice what they were doing to themselves. By carrying jingoistic articles to expand their circulations, they were helping the military replace civilian leaders and take over the government. When they finally woke up to what was going on, it was too late. Their freedom of expression had been curtailed by the military government. "[Japanese] journalists should never forget that it was the lack of mission consciousness, courage, and international sensitivity in journalism that brought the collapse of the nation" (Maesaka, 1991, p. 204).

Research on the *Kuuki* Phenomena

Immediately before the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), Japanese newspapers were divided into two groups: pro-war and anti-war. As tension mounted and the war broke out, pro-war newspapers expanded circulation whereas that of the anti-war newspapers declined. Not only that, but also one of the major anti-war newspapers, *Kokumin Shimbun*, was attacked by angry mobs, set on fire, and eventually went bankrupt. Another major anti-war newspaper, *Yorozu Choho*, changed its editorial policy during the war and switched to the pro-war side. Before the war, *Yorozu Choho* was well known for anti-government and anti-elite reporting. It was especially well known for breaking news concerning the scandalous behavior of politicians.

However, when this newspaper switched its editorial policy at the time of the Russo-Japanese War, Kuroiwa Ruiko, the president and chief editor of this newspaper, left posterity a famous adage: “Newspapers should be antigovernment during peacetime, and chauvinistic during wartime.”

When the Manchurian Incident broke out in 1931, Japanese newspaper managers, who were fighting “circulation wars” similar to that between Pulitzer and Hearst in the United States, recalled Kuroiwa’s remark. As a result, as mentioned in the previous section, almost all major Japanese newspapers carried chauvinistic and jingoistic articles. They not only supported the military but also criticized “weak” civilian government leaders. As a result, within the Japanese government, moderate statesmen were gradually replaced by hawkish expansionists and the government was finally taken over by the military.

In 1977, a social critic, Yamamoto Shichihei published a famous book entitled A Study of “*Kuuki*” (in Japanese) in which he argued that *kuuki* was more responsible for Japan’s history from 1930 through 1945 than anybody or anything else (Yamamoto, 1977).

“Some kind of mechanism that aggravated the situation through subtle interactions [between newspapers and the public]” mentioned in Mr. Hata’s memoirs, quoted in the previous section, describes what is now called the *kuuki* process. By provoking and promoting the “war spirit”, Japanese newspapers in the 1930s created a jingoistic *kuuki*, which throttled their own necks. As Tsukamoto (1986) wrote:

Newspapers uncritically flattered the military’s coercive logic for invasion and indulged themselves in excessive compliance at the time of the Manchurian Incident. This very fact facilitated the suppression of speech and the press by the expanding military, which eventually brought the situation in which journalism had to surrender (p. 163).

Individuals can have an “anti-war spirit” as well as a “war spirit”. By the end of the 1930s the number of Japanese casualties in China had climbed to a considerable level. As a natural result, the number of people who were wearying of the endless war in China was increasing. If Japanese newspapers had maintained the degree of freedom that they used to enjoy during the “Taisho Democracy” period (1912-26) and had encouraged and promoted an “anti-war spirit” that was growing in the masses, an anti-war *kuuki* might have been created. Then, a powerful civilian prime minister might have emerged and proclaimed a withdrawal from China. Consequently, there would have been no war with the United States and the British Empire.

Such an anti-war *kuuki* process emerged and functioned in France in the 1960s (withdrawal from Indochina and Algeria) and in the United States in the 1970s (withdrawal from Vietnam). Unfortunately, however, this did not happen

in Japan because of the immaturity of its democracy, the military bureaucrats' resistance to admitting failure, and the complexities of international politics at that time, such as the military alliances with Germany and Italy and the fear of the international communist movement and its sponsor, the Soviet Union.

According to Yamamoto (1977, p. 58), the ancient Greeks and Jews were already aware of the danger of group decisions made under the influence of this "spirit" (or when the "spirit" is working). Thus, they, and especially the Jews, because of their strong faith in their sole, omnipotent god, established a tradition of avoiding group decisions made under the influence of "spirit", which liberated decision makers and group members from making hasty decisions under the influence of this compelling "spirit". Technically, it means tolerance toward dissent, thorough discussion, and the avoidance of an easy consensus.

There is no such tradition in Japan. On the contrary, the Japanese tend to give priority to consensus and avoid discussions that may delay a consensus. Therefore, Yamamoto (1977) argued that *kuuki* is a dangerous phenomenon, especially for Japan. *Kuuki* or *ki* has a somewhat "animistic" connotation. When it comes to something "animistic" wrote Yamamoto (1977, p. 60), rational people "would immediately dismiss it as ridiculous and barbaric and decide that the best policy is to ignore it". That is what Japanese leaders in the early Meiji period (late 19th century) did in regard to modernization and enlightenment. Even if they ignored it: "what existed continued to exist anyway and dominated the Japanese people leading us to the edge of self-destruction." Thus: "all the important policy decisions since the Sino-Japanese War [1894-95] through the Pacific War [1941-45] were made under the strong influence of *kuuki*. Therefore, it is necessary for us to study it instead of ignoring it." (Yamamoto, 1977, p. 61).

What is *Kuuki* ?

The strict literal translation of *kuuki* is "air" in English. Functionally, however, the closest English equivalent for it is said to be "climate of opinion". In the fifth edition of the *Dictionary of Media & Communication Studies* *kuuki* is simply introduced as "a climate of opinion requiring compliance" (Watson and Hill, 2000, pp. 165-166).

According to Noelle-Neumann (1984, p. 78), the term "climate of opinion" was coined and first used by the English philosopher Joseph Glanvill (1636-80). He used it in the meaning similar to public opinions (plural) or people's opinions. Criticizing "dogmatists" he wrote that those who respect "Climates of Opinions are more cautious in their resolves, and more sparing to determine". (Quoted in Noelle-Neumann, 1984, p. 78).

Nowadays, “climate of opinion” refers to distribution patterns of public opinions rather than the opinions themselves. I have checked the indexes of many English language books on public opinion, but it appears in few books. Except for the “spiral of silence” theory, climate of opinion seems to be considered as a somewhat general, obscure and weak framework in which political leaders are expected to make decisions. (See, for example, Hellmann, 1969). According to these books, the climate of opinion may or may not influence each individual’s attitudes and opinions or a political leader’s decisions. On the other hand, the Japanese concept of *kuuki* connotes a far stronger political, social and psychological pressure.

The ancient Chinese thought that there existed some substance or energy that moves or drifts back and forth across the border between the inside and outside of individuals and determines or restricts their thoughts and behavior. They called it *qi* or *ki* in Japanese and Korean or “spirit” in English.

The word *kuuki* is related to “reiki”. According to *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998):

reiki /'reiki/ >noun [mass noun] a healing technique based on the principle that the therapist can channel energy into the patient by means of touch to activate the natural healing processes of the patient’s body and restore physical and emotional well-being. - ORIGIN Japanese, literally ‘universal life energy’.

Note that “reiki” and *kuuki* both have *ki* or “spirit” at the end. While “reiki” energizes individuals “to restore physical and emotional well-being”, the situation to which *kuuki* leads individuals and indeed the whole of society can be dangerous.

Kuuki can emerge and function in all kinds of human groups as long as the majority of group members consider the subject matter critically important to them. This means that *kuuki* can emerge in one group but not in another regarding the same subject matter. Take the privatization of the national railways corporation, for example. *Kuuki* could emerge in the corporation or in its labor union, but it is unlikely that it would emerge among the general public because they would not consider it very important to them. *Kuuki* is different from atmosphere (*fun’iki* in Japanese) or social mood which is less specific, more obscure, and less compulsory or restrictive than *kuuki*.

If I wrote that a *qi*, *ki*, or “spirit” moves back and forth between the inside and outside of individuals and affects their attitudes and opinions, I would probably be regarded as unscientific or “animistic”. However, the theories of “spiral of silence” or “spiral of cynicism” make similar arguments. The “spiral process” in these theories refers to interactions between social phenomena and individual motivation or attitudes.

As for the interaction between social phenomena and individual motivation, there exist many examples that are more similar. Racism as a social phenomenon interacts with people's innate desire for superiority or self-esteem. Jingoism as a foreign policy interacts with human, especially male, aggressiveness or "struggle instinct". Thus, when certain conditions are met, some spiral process or interaction between social phenomena and people's innate motivations, beliefs, or inclinations can produce a monster that people find difficult to resist. *Kuuki* or "climate of opinion" is a social construct and exists outside the individual. However, it includes *ki* or "spirit", the implication of which is the existence of an interaction between *kuuki* and the *ki* or "spirit" inside individuals.

As the title of this paper indicates, the emphasis of this article is to shed light on the relationship between historical experiences and political communication theories. Please see other articles by me for actual case studies of *kuuki* theories and the quantitative measuring of the changes of *kuuki* over time (Ito, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1996a, and 1996b).

Summary and Conclusions

What is evident from a historical review of the relationship between the forms of communication (especially mass media) and the power elite is that in any society with a well educated population, criticisms of government policies and demands for participation in the political process are bound to be heard. There are only two ways to deal with this eventuality: either to suppress these criticisms and demands or to co-exist with them. Historically, political leaders of almost all the countries in the world chose the former option at first.

In countries where printing developed earlier than in other parts of the world, however, the latter choice, co-existence, became established, but only after much struggle and bitter experience. Thus, "free criticism of the government", which is practically the same as "freedom of the press" became the paramount prerequisite for a modern pluralist democracy.

Idealists in the 19th century thought that if the free press reflects public opinions and political leaders incorporate public opinion in their policy decisions, democracy would be realized at the national level. Events in the 20th century, however, indicate that the alliance between the free press and public opinion can bring about undemocratic situations also and dangerous phenomena such as jingoism, racism, ethnocentricism, ultra nationalism, wars and mass murder can result.

There are certain subjects that incite people's "*ki* (Japanese and Korean)", "*qi* (Chinese)", "spirit (English)", or "*geist* (German)". These "spirits" are not always negative or undesirable. However, when people's "evil or dangerous

spirits” are fostered, incited, and inflated by mass media, a dangerous climate of opinion or “*kuuki*” as a social construct may be created and function as a powerful social pressure for compliance. Furthermore, the critical situations brought about by the excited general masses may be taken advantage of by undemocratic groups. They may first appear as democratic forces but later turn into dictators. These situations were often brought about because of competition among mass media for more circulation, better ratings, or higher profits. While it is natural for mass media to pursue profits, they must recognize their responsibilities for influencing political change.

However, as Mr. Hata Seiryu of the *Asahi Shimbun* pointed out in a previous section, not only the mass media but also the masses are responsible for the creation of “*kuuki*”, the degree to which they are may have to do with the country’s “communication culture”. In Japan “consensus” and “harmony” have traditionally been emphasized at all levels of the social stratum. Consensus and harmony in themselves are desirable for democracy and they have certainly contributed to Japanese style democracy in the prevention of dictatorship (which also means relatively weak leadership) and the emphasis on compromise (which also means the lack of clear-cut and consistent principles or ideologies). However, studies of *kuuki* made us realize that consensus, harmony, and compromise are not enough in order to sustain democracy. Another important factor is how consensus, harmony, and compromise are arrived at. Under the Confucian tradition, consensus and harmony have often been achieved not by thorough debates representing different and dissenting viewpoints but under the silent influences of seniority, authority, and social position.

Humans have many contradictory spirits such as the “war spirit” and “anti-war spirit”, “parochialism” and “internationalism”, a “spirit of justice” and a “criminal spirit”, a “democratic spirit” and an “authoritarian spirit”, a “capitalistic spirit” and a “socialistic spirit”, and so on. The only sure way to avoid the danger of “rule by *kuuki*” (Yamamoto, 1977) is that all kind of opinions based on different kinds of “spirits” are expressed, fully respected, and thoroughly debated before important decisions are made.

NOTE

1. President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) of the United States reportedly read this book and was strongly moved by the story. He later admitted that it was one of the reasons why he worked hard for the benefit of Japan, a newly emerging country at that time, in the diplomatic negotiations to terminate the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 (“Ako roshi,” 1999).

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