

NATHANIEL BOWMAN THAYER

How the Conservatives Rule Japan



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HOW
THE CONSERVATIVES
RULE
JAPAN



STUDIES OF
THE EAST ASIAN INSTITUTE
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HOW
THE CONSERVATIVES
RULE
JAPAN



NATHANIEL B. THAYER

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The Ladder of Success in Imperial China by Ping-ti Ho. New York, Columbia University Press, 1962; John Wiley, 1964.

The Chinese Inflation, 1937-49 by Shun-hsin Chou. New York, Columbia University Press, 1963.

Reformer in Modern China: Chang Chien, 1853-1926 by Samuel Chu. New York, Columbia University Press, 1965.

Research in Japanese Sources: A Guide by Herschel Webb with the assistance of Marleigh Ryan. New York, Columbia University Press, 1965.

Society and Education in Japan by Herbert Passin. New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965.

Agricultural Production and the Economic Development of Japan, 1873-1922, by James I. Nakamura. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966.

The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948 by Dae-Sook Suh. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967.

The First Vietnam Crisis: Chinese Communist Strategy and United States Involvement, 1953-1954 by Melvin Gurtov. New York, Columbia University Press, 1967.

Japan's First Modern Novel: Ukigumo of Futabatei Shimei by Marleigh Grayer Ryan. New York, Columbia University Press, 1967.

Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China

by A. Doak Barnett with a contribution by Ezra Vogel. New York, Columbia University Press, 1967.
The Japanese Imperial Institution in the Tokugawa Period by Herschel Webb. New York, Columbia University Press, 1968.
The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions: A Study in the Rewriting of Chinese History by James P. Harrison. New York, Atheneum, 1969.

Foreword

SO FAR in life, both my pleasure and profession have been to talk politics. This book is the result of conversations held in Tokyo during the years 1965 and 1966 and briefly on my return from Burma in the winter of 1968. There are four groups of men to whom I am particularly indebted: newsmen, scholars, politicians, and their secretaries.

For slightly more than three years, from 1962 to 1965, I acted as press attaché of the American embassy in Tokyo. Before that assignment, I served two years in what was then the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs in the Department of State. Both these jobs brought me into contact with some of Japan's most talented reporters. When I decided to write this book, I turned to these men. Their response was overwhelmingly generous. At the start, they spent long hours explaining to me the fundamentals of Japanese politics. Later, they opened the doors to the offices of politicians I had not met. Finally, they provided me with a critical sounding board for my ideas about the Japanese political process. This book could not have been written without their assistance at every stage.

After I had learned enough about Japanese politics to be able to ask sensible questions, I turned to the politicians themselves. My days were spent talking to them in their offices, in the outer chambers of the Diet, in the party or faction headquarters, or, in the evenings, in the restaurants of Akasaka or Shimbashi. I am grateful for the many hours they gave me, for the forthrightness with which they expressed their opinions, for the inside view they allowed me of the political process. It has not always been possible to reduce their cordiality and candor to the footnotes. I use this foreword to advise that the politicians themselves were my principal source for this book.

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Newsmen like to look under political rocks. Politicians are inclined to watch the stars. I found recourse to the secretaries of the Dietmen helpful. The secretaries are an extraordinary group. Most of them are young. Many plan to run for office themselves some day. All have a thorough knowledge of Japanese politics. Few hesitate to speak out so long as it does not involve their boss. Sometimes they confuse the woods with the trees. After all, their principal tasks are to insure that constituents' sons find jobs, that the bureaucracy does not get too finicky in interpreting laws, that political funds are gathered (and partially reported), that voters get enough to eat and drink before going to the polls. Even if they sometimes forget that the ultimate goal of politics is the welfare of the nation, they reminded me continually that politics is the art of dealing with people.

Another source was scholars, both Japanese and American. Japanese scholars believe that power not only corrupts but contaminates and they stand aloof from the politicians, particularly the conservative politicians. I therefore relied on them chiefly for researches into the elections and for studies in the history of political parties. Since most of this help was drawn from written sources I have been able to pay my intellectual debts in the footnotes. American scholars helped me keep my perspective when I was in danger of becoming too engrossed in Japanese politics. They reminded me that political science was a discipline not an emotion, that what seemed self-evident within the Japanese context was sometimes incomprehensible outside of it, and that my chief value would be to remain disinterested.

These are the four principal groups upon which I drew most heavily, although other groups should not be overlooked. The Japanese bureaucracy is one, particularly the specialists in the election bureau of the Home Ministry and the librarians in the national Diet library.

Certain individuals gave so unstintingly of their time and energies that they must be singled out and thanked by name.

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Among the newsmen, Yoshimura Katsumi,¹ who is now an assistant managing editor of the Sankei newspaper, deserves special mention. He has been active as a reporter since the end of the Pacific war. His chief contribution was his sense of history and his ability to put things in perspective. He was always able to direct me to another source for the other side of the story.

Among the secretaries, I would like to particularly thank Kobayashi Katsumi. He was an invaluable political source (through his good offices I was able to study closely the regional organization of his Dietman, Nakasone Yasuhiro), a patient listener and trenchant critic of my various theories, a meticulous proofreader of the manuscript as it went through several drafts, and finally, a precise translator of its Japanese edition. Except for the errors, the book has become as much his as mine.

Among the scholars, my greatest debt is to James Morley, formerly the director of the East Asia Institute at Columbia University, now a special assistant to the ambassador in the United States embassy in Tokyo. When I started writing this study, Professor Morley was on sabbatical leave in Tokyo. He read the first chapters as they came off the typewriter. More chapters were mailed to him after he went back to New York. Finally, when I returned to the United States with a complete manuscript, he read that. He has therefore been in on the study from the beginning and his advice and criticism did much to shape it. His blue pencil gave the book whatever style it has and his insistence on academic precision gave the book whatever scholarly value it has.

Among the politicians, I must single out Shiina Etsusaburo, senior statesman, who during the period of this study served variously as foreign minister, chairman of the executive council of the Liberal Democratic party, and minister of international trade and industry. Although we are a generation apart

¹ Japanese names are written in their Japanese order: surname followed by first name.

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(his daughter and my wife are college classmates), I feel that we operate on a common wavelength. It was he who showed me that Japanese politics were rich, exciting, sophisticated, and not always what they seemed on the surface. Looking over my footnotes, I find that I have quoted Minister Shiina only once. His impact on this book and on my thinking is far greater than that.

Finally, though I open myself to charges of having been brain-washed, I should like to say a kind word about the Department of State. State usually likes its officers to be seen but not heard. In my case, it not only relaxed this attitude but relieved me from all other duties in the embassy and continued my salary while I was making this study. Edwin O. Reischauer, presently university professor at Harvard, then American ambassador to Japan, may have urged State to be this broad-minded, but I am not sure. But even ambassadors don't readily change traditions in the State Department. My fellow officers, all too familiar with a more penurious and high-handed policy, are still amazed at State's largesse.

No doubt some reader, who has seen a bit more of the world than these diplomats, will suggest State had its interest in seeing this book published and that State should be held responsible for the contents. I, of course, would be delighted to go along with any scheme whereby I gracefully accepted the plaudits for the book and State bore the onus for the errors. But I don't think I could get away with it. State's only role was to give permission to write it in the beginning and to pay for it in the end. True, after I had gotten well on in the manuscript I asked several colleagues in the Tokyo embassy to read chapters, but as usual we fell to squabbling, and I never did incorporate all their criticism into the text. When the manuscript was complete, I sent several copies to Washington and asked for permission to publish. Six months later, I received a brief letter saying the manuscript had been cleared. There were no suggestions of any deletions or revisions. Unfortunately, I find that I must be solely responsible for the book's content.

FOREWORD

The final editing of the manuscript took place in New York after I had assumed duties at the Japan Society. I am indebted to its officers and directors for their patience and forbearance. In particular, I wish to thank one of the society's vice presidents, Hugh Borton, whose course on Japanese history started my formal studies on this fascinating country many years ago, and the society's president, John D. Rockefeller 3rd, whose interest and concern have done so much to better relations between Japan and the United States.

NATHANIEL B. THAYER
New York City
September 3, 1968

Note to the Paperback Edition

ONCE PUBLISHED, a book lives its own life. The author can become quite objective. He would make an excellent reviewer, but tradition precludes anyone from soliciting his views. Occasionally, that tradition falls to the publisher's desire to put out a paperback edition. I find myself in that position now.

Looking over the original manuscript, I recall all the things I wanted to do but never got done. I had intended to write at length about relations between the bureaucrats and the politicians since the LDP politicians do things that bureaucrats normally do and Japanese bureaucrats do things normally reserved to politicians. The intent remains unfulfilled. I had wanted to write about ideology. How conservative are the conservatives? The answer is best given negatively. The conservatives are not Marxists, but their ranks include just about every other shade in the political spectrum. I had also wanted to write about the newsmen and the newspapers. I am currently doing that, but the researches will go into another book, not this one.

I have second thoughts about many of the chapters.

Recently, I have been reading in small group theory. I find that it offers apt concepts for analyzing the factions. I had explained a faction as a creation of a faction leader to bring him to power. I now realize that the faction leader is the captive of his faction. He is perhaps the only one who cannot violate the rules under which the factions play their games. I had pointed out the "normal" size of a faction to be twenty-five members. Larger factions tended to break down into units of twenty-five members each. The reason, I suggested, was that a faction leader found it hard to provide funds for a larger faction. Small group theory points out that direct contact cannot be maintained among all members

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in groups larger than twenty-five. That observation rather than economics may provide the better explanation for determining the normal size of a faction.

Events have demonstrated that the economic community has limited powers. And I now find that I cannot describe those powers without reference to the press. Originally I had suggested that the power of members of the economic community derived from their ability to supply the politicians with funds. My opening quotation from the bestseller, *Corona of Gold*, suggested that the members of the economic community worked in the tea houses quietly. During Yoshida's days, and perhaps until Ikeda's early days as premier, my description might have been true. I now believe that their power comes from their ability to articulate business interests to the government and government interests to the other businessmen and that they exercise this ability in public communication. One criterion for deciding who the most powerful member of the economic community is is to determine who can command the most column inches in the newspapers. The newsmen decide whom they shall quote as members of the business community and how much space they will give to each. Nobody challenges their decisions. These decisions do much to determine the shape of the economic community.

I believe more strongly than ever that further researches should be made into the typology of the *kōenkai*. It is no longer just a rural form of organization. It has come to the cities. I have made some electoral projections which suggest that the conservatives will hold a majority in the Lower House throughout the decade of the seventies. But whether they continue to hold a majority the following decade will depend on whether the *kōenkai* proves to be the most effective means of organizing the urban vote.

New challenges to the conservatives are coming from above and below. The House of Councillors offers the challenge from above. The Liberal Democrats may lose con-

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trol of this House, if not in the 1974 elections then in the 1977 elections. In the past, the Councillors have regarded their role as moderating the excesses, correcting the mistakes, and filling the oversights of the House of Representatives. Now they seem to be asserting a more positive role in the legislative process.

The challenge from below comes from the local institutions. It is threefold. First, governors, mayors, and local assemblymen, heretofore allies of the conservatives, have proved more and more willing to identify with the progressive forces. Second, the local institutions are no longer willing to accept the limited role of administrators of the central government but claim a constitutional right to some measure of self-rule if not a complete separation of power from the central government. Finally, the electorate is becoming more conscious of the importance of local institutions.

In the first edition, I paid little attention to either the House of Councillors or the prefectural, city, and town assemblies. Clearly, they need closer scrutiny.

In July 1969, shortly after this book was published, I argued in *Asian Survey* that the rules for electing the party president worked well for putting a man into office but failed badly in removing him. I noted that no incumbent president had yet been voted out of office. I doubted that an incumbent president ever could be. Prime Minister Satō kindly buttressed my argument by running for and winning the presidential office four times. After the fourth election, with Prime Minister Satō's concurrence, the party revised the rules.

I have discussed these new rules in a postscript to Chapter VI.

In the chapter on the making of a cabinet I overemphasized the role of the Cabinet formation staff. I had thought that this group would lose its *ad hoc* nature and become a permanent, if informal, institution. Such has not happened. The making of a cabinet remains very much a solo perform-

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ance of the prime minister. I had explained factional balance was the principle which guided a prime minister in appointing officers to his cabinet. I think that explanation should be refined. It seems to me that there is an inner and an outer cabinet, though no politician or scholar uses those terms. Key economic and foreign posts make up the inner cabinet. The prime minister appoints their ministers on the basis of experience and ability, and he makes these appointments first. These inner cabinets resemble prewar cabinets in that the same men show up time and again in the same chairs. The prime minister uses the appointments to the outer cabinet as a balance to his appointments to the inner cabinet. Thus, the prime minister gets the men he wants in the places he wants them, though the ultimate cabinet looks to be nothing more than a compromise between the various factions' demands.

The last three chapters of the book are the weakest. In my eagerness to point out the importance of the LDP policy affairs research council, I downgraded the committees in the House of Representatives. These committee chairmen are the principal vehicle for introducing opposition ideas into conservative legislation. Their role is becoming more important.

In my discussion of decision-making, I failed to establish a typology of decisions. There are decisions to do something. There are decisions to do nothing. Some decisions require consultation with a single ministry. Other decisions require consultations among several ministries. Each decision is made differently. I used the last chapter to list all the responsibilities of the Secretary General. Lists do not make exciting reading. What I should have done is describe how various politicians have answered the challenges of this office.

I still, however, subscribe to the conclusions of the book. The party is a balance between personal and institutional authority. In the past, personal authority has been dominant.

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The trend, however, is toward the strengthening of institutional authority. The party has yet to achieve its most important goal: to secure the support and loyalty of the people.

Since the conclusions still seem valid, I believe the paperback edition may serve a useful purpose.

NATHANIEL B. THAYER

New York City

August 15, 1973

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

THIN clouds scudded across the autumn sky, and a northern wind brought a hint of rain and a promise of cold later in the afternoon to the campus of Chūo University. The students were out in force: they clustered in the paths, lined the windows and stood on the roofs of the dormitories, their eyes focused on the black limousines nudging their way through the crowds in front of the auditorium. Today was November 15, 1955, and all the important politicians of the nation were gathering to inaugurate formally a new conservative party—the Liberal Democratic party.¹

Party workers were pinning peach-colored ribbons on the lapels of the Dietmen to single them out from the rest of the people. But there was little need for this special attention. The students knew who most of the politicians were by sight. Look, over there is Ōno Bamboku of the Liberal party! Ōno had left his car and was pushing his way on foot up the stone steps, baleful eyes glaring under bushy white eyebrows, muttering through thick lips something that sounded like, "Damn students." And here comes Miki Bukichi of the Democratic party! Miki, as usual, wore formal black Japanese robes and carried a thin cane, though all the other politicians were attired in business suits. Finally, Hatoyama Ichirō, the prime minister, arrived. He was slightly late because he had dawdled too long in his rose garden after lunch. With his arrival, the

¹ All names of organizations, if feasible, have been translated into English. For the prewar period, I have used the translations found in the glossary published in Robert Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California, 1953), pp. 401-419. For other names, including those in the postwar period, I have used translations found in English language newspapers published in Japan, or English language publications of the Japanese government, or I have translated them myself. A glossary of the English equivalents and the original Japanese is appended at the end of the text.

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conference started, and the students began drifting away. They were more interested in the men than the event.²

The Japanese have always placed greater stress on personality in government than they have on institutions. Indeed, the institution has often been little more than an extension of personality. As Robert K. Reischauer noted of the two original parties started in Japan in the 1880's:

. . . the Liberal Party and the Constitutional Progressive Party, were established by Itagaki and Ōkuma respectively because these gentlemen were angry at the way the samurai of Chōshū and Satsuma were monopolizing all the good positions in the government. They used their parties as tools to pry open posts in the administration for themselves and their loyal henchmen.³

Both Itagaki and Ōkuma had previously been part of that small elite which ruled Japan at the time the parties were formed. They had been maneuvered out and they wanted to get back. The formation of the parties was at least partly a tactic in an intra-elite fight for power and position of a sort which had characterized Japanese history over the centuries. If the fight between the government and the parties had hinged solely on personality and the right to rule, however, the parties might have been defeated and forgotten long ago.

Japan had been relatively isolated from the rest of the world for three hundred years. When she had closed her doors, she had been as advanced as any other nation of the day. When she opened them again, she found herself in many ways far behind. The nations of the West were strong; they were advancing into Africa, starting to carve up the Chinese melon, indeed, threatening Japan herself. Young Japanese were sent abroad to discover from where this strength had come; and some of these returned with the answer that the strength of the West lies in her representative institutions.

² *Asahi Shimbun*, November 16, 1955, p. 3.

³ Robert K. Reischauer, *Japan: Government—Politics* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1939), p. 95.

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"The people whose duty it is to pay taxes to the government possesses the right of sharing in their government's affairs and of approving or condemning."⁴ These young men demanded a constitution, a parliament, and suffrage. The political parties became the means to gain these demands.

Initially, the oligarchs in the government adamantly opposed the parties. But the party movement was infused with the imperatives of nationalism and ultimately proved too powerful to oppose. In 1889, a constitution was granted. Although "political realists are apt to see in the document a selfish attempt to perpetuate the political power of the oligarchs,"⁵ the constitution did provide for a legislature, the Diet, with elected representatives. Its lower house was to prove to be the stronghold of the parties.

The political parties reached their ascendancy shortly after the end of World War I. The constitution had insured that the ultimate source of authority in Japan was the emperor, but now he exercised more and more of this authority through the prime minister, and during the period from 1918 to 1932, he designated the presidents of the two conservative political parties, the Friends of Constitutional Government Association and the Constitutional Association (which in 1927 was to become the Constitutional Democratic party) to lead nine of the twelve cabinets.⁶ Party government had been brought to Japan by imperial edict.

Perhaps this was the fatal flaw. The Japanese politicians

⁴ "Japanese Government Documents: Memorial on the Establishment of a Representative Assembly," trans. W. W. McLaren, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. 42, pt. 1 (1914), p. 428.

⁵ Takayanagi Kenzō, "A Century of Innovation: the Development of Japanese Law, 1868-1961," *Law in Japan*, ed. Arthur Taylor von Mehren (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 6.

⁶ The Friends of Constitutional Government Association on the one hand and the Constitutional Association (later the Constitutional Democratic party) on the other hand were the two mainstreams of conservatism in the prewar period. We shall have occasion to refer to them again in later chapters. The latter two parties we shall lump together and call the Constitutional Democratic party for stylistic ease. They were, for our purposes, identical in organization.

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looked up, not down, for their source of authority. No one had bothered to create the institutions to tap the strength, support, and sympathy of the people. Robert Reischauer, in Japan at the time, noted, "Among the party politicians, there is no systematic organization but only temporary obedience to a few very powerful leaders."⁷ Membership in a political party meant loyalty to a man, not allegiance to an institution or a set of political ideals. When the men leading the parties failed to respond to the challenges of the day, it was not difficult to dismiss the parties.

Japan faced just such a challenge in the beginning of the thirties. The world-wide depression had struck Japan particularly hard. The Japanese military services, or at least the headstrong young officers, were demanding a more active foreign policy. The politicians had proved themselves all too human. "Corruption and malversation both in and out of office have become much identified with the idea 'politician' in Japanese society."⁸ The emperor turned to other men in other segments of Japanese society for leadership of the nation. After 1932, he was never again to call upon the parties to furnish a prime minister until the end of the Pacific war. Hamaguchi Ōsachi, one of the last party prime ministers, wrote: "No sooner had the people recognized the establishment of party government, than they were greatly disillusioned with its evils. . . . The people did not take time to discern whether the faults lay with the system or with the politicians. They quickly lost faith with the present and despaired of the future."⁹ The parties continued to exist and occasionally elections were held. But party government had clearly failed.

The political party movement was reconstituted following Japan's defeat in World War II and the arrival of American

⁷ Reischauer, *Japan*, p. 133.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁹ Hamaguchi Ōsachi, *Zuikanroku* [Record of Random Thoughts], quoted in the *Asahi Shimbun*, September 2, 1962, p. 2. Translations, unless otherwise noted, are by the author.

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occupation forces. These soldiers were charged with encouraging the Japanese people "to form democratic and representative institutions" among which were to be "democratic political parties with rights of assembly and public discussion."¹⁰ It required little more than this expression of purpose to put the Japanese politicians back into action. On November 2, 1945, the Japan Socialist party was formed, soon to be followed by the Japan Communist party. The conservatives created the Japan Liberal party on November 9, the Japan Progressive party on November 16, and the Japan Cooperative party on December 18.¹¹

The occupation forces, however, were not satisfied with the reconstitution of forces as they existed before the war. One of their first moves was to see that a new constitution was drafted "which diametrically changed the basic philosophy of Japan's government. . . . Power and the right to rule were . . . given to the people." Parliament, "not the Emperor, was the highest organ of state, . . . [and] the Prime Minister was selected by the Parliament."¹² A new framework for party government was created.

The Occupation also initiated a purge of undesirable men from public office. "The purge program," claimed the occupation authorities, "served the Japanese people who were enabled by it to choose new leaders capable of charting the nation's course toward a more hopeful future."¹³ Although the parties of the left escaped almost unscathed, the conservative politicians were hard hit. Almost eighty percent of them were affected by the orders and the survivors were further depleted

¹⁰ Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers [hereafter SCAP], "United States Initial Post Surrender Policy in Japan," *Political Reorientation of Japan* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 429-439.

¹¹ Tsuji Kiyooki, ed., *Shiryō—Sengo Nijūnen Shi* [A History of the Twenty Years after the War—Documents] Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1966), p. 333.

¹² Hugh Borton, *Japan's Modern Century* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1955), p. 410.

¹³ SCAP, *Political Reorientation*, p. 44.

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by the first elections, which were held in April 1946.¹⁴ Over eighty-one percent of the successful candidates in this election were men who had never served in national office, although some had served in regional assemblies.¹⁵ In subsequent elections, bureaucrats began resigning and running for office.

But the old politicians could not be completely counted out. From October 1950 until August 1951, the purge orders were lifted and in the general elections of 1952, many of these men returned to the political arena. Of the 352 successful conservative candidates, 111 came from these ranks.¹⁶ These old politicians tried to assume control of the parties, but the new men were not willing to surrender so easily. It was a complicated fight. New politicians fought with old politicians. The old party politicians of one party fought with old party politicians of the other party. Men from the regional assemblies clashed with the ex-bureaucrats. The purge's effect was, thus, to divide the conservative leadership.

Occupation economic policies also greatly influenced the collection and distribution of political funds. Before World War II, the Japanese economy was controlled by several huge financial combines called *zaibatsu*, the most famous of which were the Mitsui and the Mitsubishi. Each of these *zaibatsu* had close ties with one of the political parties. The Mitsui was the financial backer of the Friends of Constitutional Government Association and the Mitsubishi backed the Constitutional Association, which later became the Constitutional Democratic party. Moreover, these *zaibatsu* contributed their funds to the top leaders of the party, usually the secretary general or the party president. A single source of funds

¹⁴ Yoshimura Tadashi, "Sengo ni okeru Waga Kuni no Hoshutō [Conservative Parties in Japan after the War]," *Shakai Kagaku Tōkyū*, Vol. 1, no. 1, January 1956, p. 2.

¹⁵ Jichishō Senkyo Kyoku, *Shūgiin Giin Sōsenkyo—Saikō Saibansho Saibankan Kokumin Shinsa—Kekka Shirabe* [General Elections of the House of Representatives—National People's Judgment of the Legal Officers of the Supreme Court—Survey of Results] (Tokyo: Jichishō Senkyo Kyoku, 1967), p. 14. Hereafter cited as *kekka shirabe*.

¹⁶ Yoshimura, "Waga Kuni no Hoshutō," p. 8.

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controlled by the top leaders of the party did much to insure loyalty and discipline, if not to the party itself, then to the top leaders of the party.

Although scholars now question the judgment, the occupation authorities firmly believed the *zaibatsu* to be intimately involved with Japan's aggression before the war and dissolved them, purged their directors, and made their stock available to the general public. Inflation was soon felt in the aftermath of the war, and in February 1948 the occupation forces imposed stringent financial restrictions. The political effect of these measures was to prevent not only the *zaibatsu* but also the other established wealthy elements of society from using their funds for political purposes. Yoshimura Tadashi of Waseda University notes, "Political funds were no longer derived from one or two, or at the most two or three large donors. Instead, political funds came from relatively numerous small contributors." These small contributors gave to many individual politicians. "Political power revolved around the various political strongmen who collected and distributed political funds."¹⁷ The power of the purse could no longer be used to hold the parties together.

Lack of any regional organization also contributed to the weakness of the new political parties. The last election in which the political parties had vied with each other had been in 1937. It was to be nine years before the first elections were held in the postwar period, and during the interim the regional organization of the parties, such as it was, fell apart. The occupation forces contributed further to the difficulties of organizing the vote by ordering that the franchise be given to all men and women over the age of twenty years, thereby increasing the number of voters about 2.5 times.¹⁸ Finally, the Occupation instituted a land reform program aimed at placing the ownership of the land in the hands of the men who cultivated it. This reform over the years was to alter fundamentally the traditional social structure of the villages. The

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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new political parties were unable to cope with these changes. Each politician who wanted a seat in the Diet had to fend for himself.

Disagreement over leadership, many new politicians, an expanded electorate, no established source of political funds, no organization in the countryside—these were not the conditions conducive to the growth of party institutions. In the decade after the war, sixteen conservative political parties were at one time or another cluttering the political stage. A party was nothing more than a clique of new politicians clustered around a leader with access to funds, political experience, and ambitions for leadership. As in the past, the personality of the leader was more important than the institution of the party.

It was against this background that the party movement in Japan began to reconstitute itself. In April 1946, the first elections were held. The three conservative parties were able to emerge with control of 248 of the 464 seats in the lower house. Of the three parties, the Liberal party was the strongest, occupying 140 seats, and its leader, Hatoyama Ichirō, confidently looked forward to forming a coalition with the Japan Progressive party, which had won 94 seats, and to becoming the prime minister.¹⁹ But the occupation authorities stepped in and on May 4, 1946, they informed Hatoyama that he was purged. Hatoyama called upon Yoshida Shigeru to assume the prime ministership. Yoshida was a career diplomat, a former ambassador to Great Britain, and his democratic credentials were in order, as he had been arrested by the War Ministry in 1944 for opposing the war. Hatoyama claims to have extracted a promise from Yoshida to turn the party and premiership over to him when the purge charges against him were cleared.²⁰ If such a promise existed, Yoshida never honored it. In 1951, the purge orders against Hatoyama were lifted and in October 1952, he won a seat in

¹⁹ *Kekka Shirabe*, 1967, p. 12.

²⁰ Hatoyama Ichirō, *Kaikoroku* [Memoirs] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū Sha, 1957), p. 55.

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the lower house. The rivalry between these two men for the control of the premiership was to occupy a central place in Japanese politics for the next several years. Yoshida gave his nation long and faithful service. In the decade from 1945 to 1955, he was prime minister five times for a total of seven years. But even he could not remain in power indefinitely. In 1954, after a noxious scandal involving the conservative politicians and the shipbuilding industry, he was forced to take responsibility and resign. Hatoyama became the new prime minister.

The socialists, the chief force in opposition, were not powerless all these years. They had participated in two coalition governments, once under their own prime minister, Kato-yama Tetsu, and once under the conservative Prime Minister Ashida Hitoshi. They were gradually increasing their strength at the polls and in the Diet. They looked forward to forming their own government. The socialist movement, however, had always been composed of many shades of the left, and in 1951 they split to form two parties and were no longer able to offer a credible alternative to the conservatives. With the retirement of Yoshida in 1954, however, these two socialist parties patched up their differences, and again formed a single party. The conservatives, frightened that the socialists were now in a position to take over the government, also began discussing the creation of a single party.

At that time there were two conservative parties. One was the Liberal party, in which most of Yoshida's men clustered, now led by Ogata Taketora. The other was the Democratic party, led by Hatoyama Ichirō. The talks were started on May 15, 1955, by a phone call from Miki Bukichi to Ōno Bamboku. Miki was a lieutenant of Hatoyama and Ōno was a follower of Ogata. They were sworn political enemies since the days they had served together in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly. "In thirty years, we had never even drunk a cup of tea together," relates Ōno Bamboku. "Once in a while, I would bump into him in one of the drinking shops in the back alleys of the Ginza. But even then we would take seats

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far apart and drink by ourselves. . . . We wouldn't even share the same waitress."²¹ The talks proceeded with mutual distrust, but progress was made. Ōno and Miki were joined by Shōriki Matsutarō, the owner of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and by Fujiyama Aiichirō, then a ranking official in the Japan Chamber of Commerce. After many more meetings, there was a sufficient meeting of the minds so that the parties could be brought formally into the act. In August, ten men from each party sat down to draw up a platform and principles for the new party. Another committee composed of thirty men from each party met to consider the party rules and organization. In October, a preparatory conference of all the members of both parties was held, both secretaries general pledged their efforts to making the venture succeed, and another committee was set up to work further on the terms of merger. Finally, on November 15, 1955, a formal party conference was convened in the auditorium of Chūō University and the new party—the Liberal Democratic party—was launched.

The formation of the new party marked a new epoch in Japanese political history. "When I am asked when the present political structure was put together, I always answer in 1955," Masumi Junnosuke, one of Japan's eminent political scientists, has written.²² Not only did the relative strength of the various parties shift but there were changes within the Liberal Democratic party itself.

First, the external change. After the formation of the Liberal Democratic party, there was no opposition party in the wings with the slightest chance of assuming power. The socialists, the strongest of the opposition groups, were unable to find a common ground on which to stand and again in 1959, split into two parties, the Japan Socialist party and the Democratic Socialist party. In addition to dividing their forces, a further problem for the socialists has been their in-

²¹ Ōno Bamboku, *Ōno Bamboku Kaisōroku* [The Memoirs of Ōno Bamboku] (Tokyo: Kōbundo, 1964), p. 111.

²² Masumi Junnosuke, "Sen-Kyūhyaku-Gojū-Gonen no Seiji Taisei" [The Political Structure of 1955], *Shisō*, June 1964, p. 55.

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ability to expand their strength through the electoral process to any significant degree. Through three general elections held since the split, the Democratic Socialist party has expanded its strength from 17 to 30 seats. The Japan Socialist party won 145 seats in the 1960 elections, 144 seats in the 1963 elections, then fell to 140 seats in the 1967 elections.²³ Since there are at present 486 seats in the lower house, the press speaks of the socialists as being unable to break through the "one-third barrier." Shiina Etsusaburō, a former foreign minister, puts it more bluntly, "The socialists are the cat who can't catch the mouse."²⁴

The socialists are not the only opposition group. Besides them, there are the communists, who reached the peak of their legislative strength in the 1949 elections, when they captured 35 seats. In the 1967 general elections, they won 5 seats.²⁵ In 1960, a Buddhist organization, the Value Creation Society, supported candidates for the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, of whom 51 were elected. In succeeding years, they have met with a certain measure of success in placing their men in the prefectural assemblies and in the upper house. In November 1964, the Value Creation Society finally organized the Clean Government party²⁶ and in the 1967 election it entered the lower house, winning 25 seats.²⁷ All four of these parties have cooperated in challenging the conservatives on specified issues. It is conceivable that these parties may some day be able to whittle away the absolute majority that the conservatives now hold. But few observers are willing to predict that a coalition will be formed by them, since they are so different in political views. Unless there is internal dissension and splintering, the present Liberal Democratic party seems fairly certain to rule for some time to come. The press, politicians, and scholars alike refer to it as the "party which will rule half an eternity."

²³ *Kekka Shirabe*, 1967, p. 12.

²⁴ Shiina Etsusaburō, interview, October 13, 1965.

²⁵ *Kekka Shirabe*, 1967, p. 12.

²⁶ Tsuji, *Shiryō*, p. 436.

²⁷ *Kekka Shirabe*, 1967, p. 12.

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It is with the internal structure of the Liberal Democratic party that we shall be most concerned. In the years shortly after its formation, the party seemed like other conservative parties. To be sure, the conservatives had spent more time than usual in creating this party. There were formal position papers stating the party's beliefs. There was also a party law which established various party organs and offices, including the president, the vice president, the secretary general, the executive council and the policy affairs research council; and each of these organs and offices had its responsibilities. But all the previous conservative parties had had similar beliefs, laws, and organs. They had not seemed too important in the past and they did not seem too important in 1955. Real political power resided in the various strong men within the party and by 1957, these strong men had hardened their personal power into a number of factions.

The factions were all-important. The faction leaders decided who the next prime minister was going to be and who was going to enter his cabinet. Meetings of the factions in the restaurants of Akasaka could be more important than sessions of the Diet. Squabbles among the factions could upset the smooth conduct of the nation's affairs. But like the political parties before the war, the factions were unable to fulfill political hopes. In particular, they failed to generate enthusiasm among the populace, instill confidence among the economic community, or provide the political stability which the conservative politicians themselves wanted. Although the movement is halting and is barely perceptible, political power has begun to swing away from the factions and lodge in the organs of the party. The factions still exist, and are still essential to the functioning of conservative politics. But the Liberal Democratic party which exists today is an amalgam of personal power lodged in the factions and institutional power lodged in the party organs. This balance between personality and institution is the subject of this book. We turn first to an examination of the factions.

CHAPTER II

The Factions

IT WAS an evening shortly after the 1963 general elections. The Spring and Autumn Society [the faction led by Kōno Ichirō] of the Liberal Democratic party had been holding an election victory celebration at the Hotel Ōkura. The banquet over, the Dietmen began to get ready to troop out when a voice spoke up from one corner of the hall. "Wait a moment!" It was one of the lieutenants of the faction.

"Since I am in charge of the education of the recruits, I have something to say to the new Dietmen gathered here."

The freshmen Dietmen, befuddled with victory toasts, remained in their seats wondering what was coming next.

The Kōno lieutenant slowly and deliberately pulled from his pocket a newspaper clipping.

"I have here a newspaper survey taken of the new Dietmen. In it there are questions like 'What do you think of the factions?' and 'What faction do you intend to join?' There is one man who answered, 'I don't have anything to do with factions.' He is sitting in this room. This two-faced attitude of saying to the outside 'I'm a good boy' and then attending this banquet is outrageous. I don't want that sort of person in the faction.'"¹

The present conservative party can be divided into a number of factions. They are formal political entities with a headquarters, regular meetings, a known membership, an established structure, and firm discipline. Many commentators refer to them as parties within a party. Few of the actions taken

¹ *Sankei Shimbun*, December 1, 1966, p. 1.

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in the party's name make any sense unless the interests of the factions are taken into account.

The factions are composed of members of the Diet, the national legislature, which has a House of Councillors (upper house) and a House of Representatives (lower house). The House of Representatives is the stronger body, both constitutionally and by tradition, and the factions are much stronger in it than in the upper house, although both the representatives and the councillors belong to factions. In the following discussion I shall be thinking primarily of the lower house. Later in the chapter I shall describe the special circumstances surrounding the upper house.

The factions became a major element in Japanese politics about two years after the Liberal Democratic party was formed. Table 1 shows that in the past decade the number of factions has increased by approximately one-third. Factions differ in size: the largest faction today is Prime Minister Satō Eisaku's faction, which numbers 111 representatives. A

TABLE 1. GENEALOGY OF FACTIONS 1955-1968

