WHEN THE NPO LAW SINKS IN: JAPANESE "CIVIL SOCIETY," *SHIMIN,* AND NEOLIBERALISM

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMPO	U.S.-Japan Security Treaty
JR	Japan Railroad
JT	Japan Tobacco
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NPO	Nonprofit organization
NPO Law	Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities
NTT	Nippon Telegraph and Telephone
SLG	The author's field site (pseudonym)

INTRODUCTION

JAPANESE NPOS AND "CIVIL SOCIETY"

Since December 1998, Japanese society has witnessed a rapid proliferation of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) incorporated under the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (the so-called NPO Law). As of June 2005, the number of volunteer-based NPOs had reached more than 20,000 groups, and their number is increasing at a relatively constant pace across the country. This means that, over the past seven years, Japanese society has experienced the establishment of a huge number of new civil-society organizations. One expectation among the general public in Japan was that the NPO Law would provide a platform for ordinary people to become engaged in setting the public agenda, something that – under the strong Japanese state – has been all too frequently regarded as the exclusive territory of the bureaucrats.

What is happening in Japanese society? What does the NPO phenomenon mean? What are the people actually feeling and experiencing in NPOs? Scholars, primarily political scientists, have held a privileged place in the production of knowledge about the current development of civil society in Japan (e.g., Alagappa 2004; Pekkanen 2004; Osborn 2003; Schwartz and Pharr 2003; Hirata 2002; Tsujinaka 2002; Pekkanen 2000). Meanwhile, there has been relatively little participation in the civil society argument by anthropologists, despite the fact that much of the ethnographic research has been focused on key features of civil society, such as the elements of connectivity, informal social process, mobilization of interest, modes of social affiliation, patterns of public participation, and so on.[1] To date, the discourse on civil society largely lacks

[1]The small amount of anthropological scholarship on Japanese civil society includes Bestor (2002), Nakamaki (2002), Witteveen (2003), Nakano (2003), Ogawa (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b), and Han (2004).

the anthropological perspective that is so frequently a critical element in thinking the lived perception and experience of social life (Ogawa 2005a).

From an anthropological perspective, the existing literature on civil society primarily generated by political scientists is highly idealized. Political scientists are looking at abstract theoretical formulations or analyses of high-level political institutions. The concept of civil society is used as a normative ideal or model, or as a strategic term for a slogan such as freedom or justice. As an anthropologist, I feel a sense of danger because there are few grounded analyses on grassroots' practices, values, and beliefs in the context of civil society. The civil society argument itself needs to be democratized among ordinary people. The discourse needs to be examined by "studying up" (Nader 1972). Furthermore, the civil society argument is very ethnocentric. Civil society represents a particular set of relationships between the state and society in the West. In the western European context, for example, the idea has been argued in the scholarship on political philosophy since the 18th century (e.g., Kant 1963 [1784]; Hegel 1967 [1821]; Smith 1974 [1776]; Marx 1978 [1843]). In the U.S. context, the idea is based on the American communitarian experience (e.g., De Tocqueville 1948 [1835]; Putnam 2000). Currently, the term is used in the context of the post-Soviet or the post-socialist regime (e.g., Habermas 1992; Cohen and Arato 1994; Ehrenberg 1999; Keane 2003). In a strict sense, not all of these Western concepts are applicable to non-Western societies like Japan.

Thus, my research question is: What is the meaning of "civil society" in Japan?
I have examined the social and cultural particularities of the Japanese notion of "civil society." In so doing, I have focused on a type of civil-society organization known as the NPO incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law. This paper explores what ordinary, grassroots-level people are feeling and experiencing as the NPO Law takes hold in Japanese society. My particular question is: why

has Japanese society been busy with the construction of "civil society" and the generation of *shimin* (citizens) supporting NPO activities? I will try to answer these questions by employing ethnographic data I collected and Japanese intellectual history scholarship providing a rich discussion on Japanese "civil society" or *shimin shakai*.

In this paper, I argue that the subjectivity currently called *shimin* has been actually produced and reproduced in Japanese society over the pre- and post-World War II era. It was a subjectivity supporting World War II as total war, and it was a subjectivity supporting the miraculous economic development after World War II. Now the subjectivity is located in the institutionalization of "civil society" through NPO activities, which aim to generate the neoliberal, calculated reorganization of the relationship between the state and the individual. Furthermore, people currently called *shimin* represent a different subjectivity from people called *shimin* who opposed the government in the new social movements of the 1960's and 1970's. In fact, the current people standardized as *shimin* have instead become apolitical and exclusive. Such people are populating "civil society" in contemporary Japan. This paper is based on a 20-month ethnographic fieldwork project from September 2001 through April 2003 in Kawazoe (pseudonym), a traditional area in downtown Tokyo.

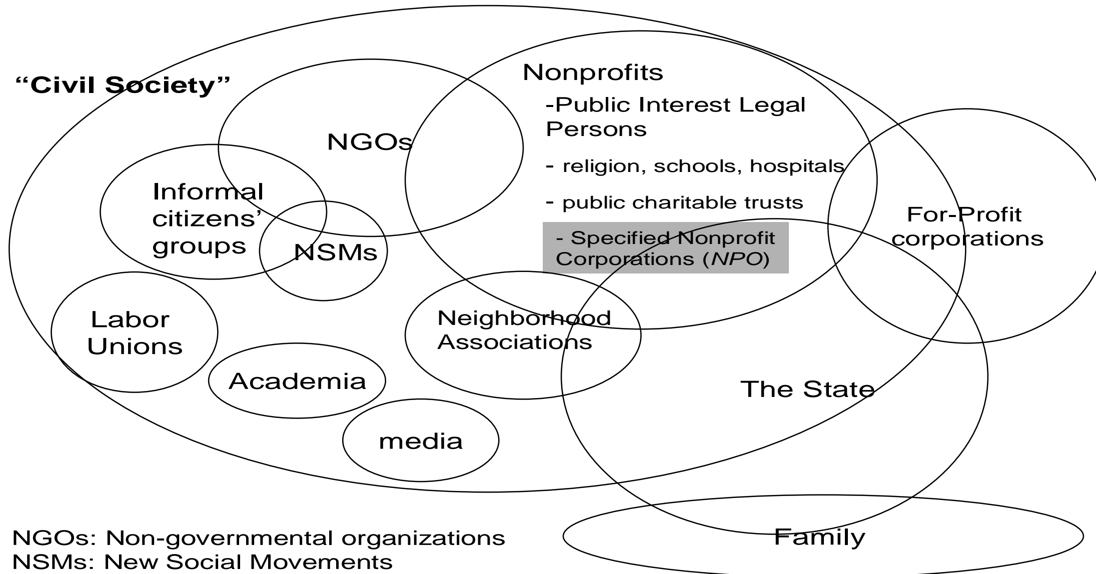
CHAPTER 1

SHIMIN UNDER NPOs

As I have argued elsewhere (Ogawa 2004b), what I looked at during the course of my ethnographic fieldwork was the mobilization of a type of subjectivity under the name of volunteerism supporting a newly instituted social sector – NPOs – in Japanese society. It is a coercive subjectivity – what I call "volunteer subjectivity." I identify the phenomenon from a viewpoint heavily influenced by the French philosopher and social critic Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality, which refers not only to political processes or state agencies, but, in a more general sense, to the art of guiding people (Foucault 1977). This theoretical perspective is interested in the interplay among forms of knowledge, power strategies, and modes at subjectivation. It concentrates on those rationalities and technologies that aim to systematically direct and control individuals and collectives containing forms of self-government as well as forms of governing others. The volunteer subjectivity is now being intentionally produced and reproduced by the state. The process of promoting this volunteer subjectivity, which has penetrated the very basis of human consciousness, is resulting in an institutionalization of a new rationality between the state and the individual.

At the practical level, municipal governments *invite* residents to become volunteers to provide specific social services such as continuing education program planning (this was the case where I did my field work), museum operation, and elderly-care services, all of which were originally provided by the governments themselves. As a current popular technique in public administration, which is called *kyōdō* or collaboration between the government and third-sector organizations like NPOs, the government organizes the residents into NPOs under the NPO Law and then transfers their business in the process of devolution. In fact, as the figure below implies,

a predominant user and beneficiary of the NPO Law is actually the state. The state at various levels strategically introduced NPOs to the existing social and political structure.



Macro Landscape of Japanese Society Since 1998

My field site, SLG (pseudonym), was such a case. It was located in Kawazoe (pseudonym), a downtown Tokyo neighborhood alongside the Sumida River with a population of about 200,000. In the mid 1990's, the municipal government in the area opened a public facility for promoting continuing education in the municipality.[2] This was a community-oriented continuing education project, mobilizing the existing social capital. The government played a visible and significant role in recruiting volunteers, actually *inviting* the residents through the local associational life. There are a wide variety of social groups and social networks active at

[2]Here, I should probably to mention that the Japanese Social Education Law mandates that governments at both the national and municipal levels provide all residents with learning opportunities over their lifetimes.

the grassroots level, such as neighborhood associations, PTAs, cultural and physical education associations, community development groups, the Red Cross, women's groups, and local environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Initially, 34 residents belonging to these organizations responded to the invitation from the government. When I did fieldwork, more than 100 people were registered as volunteers and organized under an NPO. In place of the government, the volunteers planned and operated the courses. For the fiscal 2003 year, SLG offered 154 courses, including, literature, foreign languages, Japanese drum, *haiku* (a form of Japanese-style poetry), photography, computers, accounting, and social dance. One of the most popular courses was area studies, focusing on history and culture in the local community. During the year, more than 16,000 local residents attended the courses. The government funded the NPO activities. The expense to this municipal government for the facility management was one fourth compared with that of other governments that provided the same services directly.

I argue that the civic engagement embodied by volunteer subjectivity is shaped by the way in which individuals' bodies are acted upon by disciplinary technologies. In its discourse, the government has now produced and supported the body, as an object of social concern, and used policy to produce particular types of populations in a more formal, strategic way. On March 20, 2003, the Japanese government received an epoch-making proposal – one that aimed to revise the Fundamental Law of Education – from the Central Council for Education, an authoritative advisory body to the education minister. The education law has determined the basic structure of the Japanese educational system since 1947, controlled textbook content, and defined the daily school regimen. In the above-mentioned 2003 proposal, a new term – *atarashii kōkyō* or *new public* – was introduced. The following is an excerpt from the proposal:

> Through the volunteers' work seen just after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, we confirmed that we have a tradition of mutual aid. Now we are stepping into a new era, one in which we are supporting a sense of values, one that we now call a "new public".… We will try to solve the social problems we face on our own, including life improvement issues in the daily lives of the local community as well as beyond-national-borders matters of the global environment and human rights. It is expected that one will try to use one's ability and time for others, local communities, and society, based on one's own will.
>
> (Central Council for Education 2003)

The concept of the public, thus, has been expanded to include an area of civic engagement for supporting a "new public."[3] This is a sphere in which people in general or people who are interested in a particular cause can voluntarily participate. The proposal aims to establish a foundation of solidarity among good citizens to promote a better society, which is defined in terms of increased civic engagement. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, when the proposal argues in favor of civic engagement, it never uses the English-loan word *borantia* for its definition of "volunteering." This concept is translated as *hōshi* in Japanese*,* which literally means "service" in English. The term *hōshi* connotes supporting society or even sacrificing oneself for the public welfare. The Central Council for Education urged students from elementary school through college to participate in *hōshi* activities to prop up a persistently deadlocked Japan. In November 2004, the Tokyo metropolitan government, led by Governor Shintaro Ishihara, a popular conservative critic, followed the recommendation of the council by promptly including *hōshi* activities in the core curriculum of all government-supervised schools.

[3]The Chinese character *kō* (also read *ōyake* in Japanese) has historically been equated with government bureaucracy. The same character, *kō*, was adopted to convey the term "public," which was imported from the West in the early Meiji period as a concept "premised on the presence of values divorced from the state and common to all members of a society" (Maruyama 1986). The term, however, has never been free from the imprint of its earlier association with the ruling authorities. Yoshida (1999) provides an effective explanation of this issue.

Such normative, self-disciplined subjectivity is recognized as important and ideal for society, and justified as a desirable social identity for supporting the society. Under the name of *hōshi,* people are expected to spontaneously do what they feel they need to do by themselves, instead of waiting for something to be provided by the government. In fact, it seems that people with this subjectivity are labeled *shimin* (citizens) and are standardized under the NPO, a new social institution that aims, in the language of the NPO Law, to just "contribute to the advancement of the public welfare."

CHAPTER 2

SHIMIN – PAST AND PRESENT

The current concept of *shimin* conjures an image of volunteer subjectivity with civic engagement; with this term, the NPOs are presented as vehicles for spontaneous participation in the problem-solving processes of public affairs for the betterment of society. Meanwhile, there were people called *shimin* in Japanese society in the early postwar era and the new social movements – the citizens' movements (*shimin undō)* in the 1960's and residents' movements (*jumin undō)* in the 1970's.[4] The subjectivity represented by this word, *shimin,* however, is unique to each context.

In the early postwar era, s*himin* were generally regarded in a negative light in Japanese academia. Among many Japanese intellectuals who were heavily influenced by the Marxist doctrine, civil society meant capitalistic society, and *shimin* meant bourgeois. The origin of the term civil society can be traced to the German term *bürgerlich gesellschaft*, which Georg Friedrich Hegel used to describe bourgeois or civil society. In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (1967 [1821]) showed that the growth of civil society was the most characteristic feature of modern society. In contrast, medieval society featured an inseparable relationship between the state and the kinship structures that determined the station of every person in life. Hegel saw civil society as expressing the work of the idea "behind the backs" of people who were governed by forces of which they were unconscious, whereas he saw the state as the self-conscious actualization of reason. Hegel promoted the separation of the state from civil society in that the state had no business interfering in the economy.

[4]New social movements, in line with Alberto Melucci's definition of such movements, appeared when it became clear that neither representative politics nor the administration, pressure groups, or existing social movements could begin to resolve social contradictions and distortions (Melucci 1989).

In Karl Marx's view, meanwhile, civil society is an illusion that needs to be unmasked. The apparent freedom of action it grants to the individual serves to disguise underlying realities of class exploitation. The capitalist state, instead of resolving the tensions of civil society, merely cements the power of the ruling class. Citizens are hopelessly fragmented, alienated from one other and from their "species-being," as well as from the means of production and the product of their labor (Tucker 1978).

For Marxist-oriented scholars, who represented the dominant power in Japanese intellectual circles of the early postwar era, *shimin* were symbols of individualism and liberalism. Thus, *shimin* represented key ideological elements of bourgeois or civil society. Even today, as Hajime Shinohara (2004: 93), professor emeritus of political science at the University of Tokyo, points out, even though the term *shimin* is currently gaining currency among politicians and journalists, some scholars still hesitate to use the expression. From the Marxist viewpoint, *shimin* were capitalists, members of an exploiting class who pursued their own self-interests without thinking of the public welfare. Michitoshi Takabatake (2004: 33), professor emeritus of political science at Rikkyo University, too, states that, for scholars influenced by Marxism, it was difficult to accept the term *shimin shakai* (civil society) since it overlaps with bourgeois society.

Postwar intellectuals such as Masao Maruyama did not often invest the term *shimin* with positive connotations in their arguments. In fact, it seems that Maruyama intentionally did not use the term *shimin* because he thought that there was no space in Japanese society, due to its peculiarities, for European-specific civil society to exist (Ishida 1997: 11-16). When translating the word *citoyen*, which emerged during the French Revolution, from the French, Maruyama used the term *kōmin*, directly translated as public person, rather than *shimin*, describing the

"modern *kōmin* as key leaders of political responsibility" (Maruyama 1951: 301). Makoto Oda (1995: 7-8), a writer and social activist who led *Beheiren* ("Peace for Vietnam" Committee) in the anti-Vietnam War movement in the 1960's in Japan, has described the feelings he had about the term in 1965: "The term *shimin* was not generally used, even when it was discussed by a university professor giving a lecture on the French Revolution. It sounded like something peculiar and affected.… For the left-wing, revolutionary intellectuals, the term *shimin* was always related to some 'discriminatory' words, such as 'petite bourgeois.'"

Shimin first came to have a positive sense in the late 1950's, when the negative image the term had assumed in dominant Marxist thought was largely wiped out. During this decade, Japan experienced new social movements, such as citizens' and residents' movements. The term *shimin* first appeared in a positive light when Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi tried to revise the Police Duties Bill in 1958, a step to renew the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (AMPO) in 1960.[5] People, including intellectuals and journalists, organized demonstrations against Kishi's efforts. Osamu Kuno, philosopher and political activist, was one of the first persons to use the term *shimin* in a positive manner. Kuno heralded the rise of *shimin*-based movements capable of mobilizing people whose consciousness was based on their occupational ethics because they cut across organizational loyalties and demanded universal adherence to procedural rules. Kuno asked the masses to generate their subjectivity through their own occupations:

> In order to be an active *shimin*, his/her occupation should be basically separate from national and political authority. Citizens' movements are based on a strong awareness of occupation. Each individual can freely express his/her opinion for/against the government, based on his/her occupation. Values based on occupations can expand beyond national borders in that the same people in the same occupation would share the same values.
>
> (Kuno 1960: 12-3)

[5]The 1958 bill was called *Keisatsukan Shokumu Shikkō Hō.* It was "intended to broaden police powers; it was intensively opposed, and ultimately blocked, by progressive political forces." (Yamanouchi et al. 1998: 323)

Through the AMPO demonstrations of the 1960's, a series of massive protests against the Japanese government's renewal of the treaty, the term *shimin* was popularized. The following passage offers an example of how the term *shimin* was actually used during this period. This is an excerpt from a pamphlet of a citizens' group, the Voiceless Voice (Koe Naki Koe no Kai).

> Hello. All of you *Shimin,* let's all walk together.
> Even if it is only five minutes or just a hundred meters,
> let's walk together.
> We don't stick to any particular political thoughts
> nor do we loudly stake claims.
> But even the "voiceless voices" can distinguish what is right and what's not,
> and we really want to protest politics.
> So, let's walk together and quietly show our opposition to politics.
>
> (Koe Naki Koe no Kai 1962: 30-31)

Shimin seemed to attract people, and was, therefore, used to mobilize people for new social movements. Makoto Oda, as a social activist, realized diversity in the term *shimin* (Oda 1974: 11). He described various kinds of people who were uniting for anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, including salaried workers, housewives, teachers, young people, and the unemployed. In Oda's sense, *shimin* existed outside social class and occupation, rejecting any kind of exclusion and respecting diversity. *Shimin* were the key subjects of the movements of the 1960's; they networked horizontally and freely manifested a wide range of lifestyles.

Does the connotation of dynamism in Oda's definition of *shimin* still hold in the emerging NPO sector in Japanese society? At my field site, during the meetings of SLG's volunteer recruiting division, held twice a month, that I attended, we discussed a new volunteer recruiting system. SLG often received calls from people who were responding to the organization's Internet advertisement seeking volunteers. The agenda of the meeting focused on

the following question: How should SLG respond to such requests for volunteer opportunities? They were discussing specific details about how to welcome newcomers in a series of introductory sessions at SLG. As a key principle, they emphasized that cooperation with other volunteers was the highest priority in volunteering at SLG. In this context of welcoming newcomers, what does cooperation entail? I sensed that cooperation, in essence, meant, “not giving other volunteers trouble.” What SLG needed, Ms. Kato, a housewife volunteer and a leader of the division, seemed to be saying, were people who could follow the rules of the organization without registering complaints. Volunteers were only expected to come at their appointed times and to devote their time and energy to productive work at SLG.

This discussion actually made me recall a newspaper article I had read that morning.[6] The article dealt with the recent boom of company mergers in Japan. According to it, after such mergers, disparate types of people were forced to work together. And, due to the mixture of different corporate cultures, miscommunication frequently occurred. The article went on to say that, when people face such situations, they have a good excuse that helps to reduce their frustration. They can rationalize: “Now that there are ‘various kinds of people’ (*tasaina hitotachi)* in our company, it is difficult to communicate with each other very well. It can’t be helped. It’s the reality.” I believe that the phrase “various kinds of people” originally had a positive nuance in Japanese. Having “various kinds of people” in a company should represent an asset, as the term suggests rich, valuable human resources. In this newspaper article’s context, however, the phrase “various kinds of people” sounded quite negative. Various kinds of people colored by different corporate cultures were presented as an obstacle to effective management. Instead of pursuing diversity among volunteers, my impression was that SLG sought to

[6]The article, “Tasai na Hito ga Irukara [Because There Are Various Kinds of People…],” appeared in the *Asahi Shinbun* on 12 November 2002,

standardize volunteers' behaviors. I began to wonder if diversity among SLG volunteers was valued.

CHAPTER 3

VOLUNTEER SUBJECTIVITY RECONSIDERED

> We need to know more positively that the currently emerging new economic ethics (ethos) is … based on individual responsibility for production that demands from the whole (state). The whole requires us to expand productivity. By discarding profit-making consciousness, we need to discern the fact directly and clearly.
>
> (Ōtsuka 1969 [1944]: 341)

> In order that the new ethics leads to something "productive," we need to establish two distinctive characteristics – inner originality and institutional rationality – as the crucial structure of our inner commitment for the whole.… The supreme inner originality should be generated through aesthetic training by normative, self-disciplined subjects.
>
> (Ōtsuka 1969 [1944]: 341)

These lines were written in 1944 by Hisao Ōtsuka, an economic historian at Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo), while he was witnessing the Japanese army fighting in a crisis against the United States in Saipan. Ōtsuka advocated a type of subjectivity that he believed was necessary if the Japanese were to fight World War II as a "total war." What he sought was a normative, self-disciplined subjectivity that would support the whole, which was clearly the state. In his 1944 article entitled *Saikōdo 'Jihatsusei' no Hatsuyō* ("Generating a Supreme 'Inner Originality'"), Ōtsuka argued that people's priorities needed to shift. The Japanese people, according to Ōtsuka, needed to stop working to increase their own wealth; instead, they should direct their efforts toward benefiting the state. In this way, they would accept full responsibility for expanding the productive forces of society. Self-disciplined subjects

were expected to support a new economic order. He understood that the wartime crisis required the Japanese people to establish a new economic ethic.

This discourse – the formation of normative subjects working for society as a whole – is, however, not unfamiliar to the Japanese. In fact, the subjectivity advocated by Ōtsuka for supporting total war actually sounds familiar to those of us who are examining Japan in the 21st century. It seems that Ōtsuka's underlying tone in 1944 is echoed in the discourse of contemporary Japan, which is facing a chronically deadlocked economy and society. This has become more evident as "revisionist" historians have reassessed modern Japanese society in light of wartime and postwar continuity.[7] These historians argue that the transition from the pre-World War II era to wartime and through the postwar era represents a shift from a class society to a system society. In a system society, all members share the burden of the social functions that are required in a time of total war. In this fashion, the mobilization for total war helped to establish a system society organized on the basis of functionalist principles. Individuals with total war subjectivity are expected to fulfill particular functions to facilitate the smooth operation of the whole society. In Japan, "normative subjects for the whole" were produced during the total war mobilization process.

I see that the production of the same subjectivity supporting total war continued during the miraculous economic development of the postwar era. Today, following the collapse of the

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[7]I used this term "revisionist" in the best sense (Koschmann 1998: xi), as defined in the book *Total War and "Modernization."* This book seeks to criticize postwar democracy by illuminating from various angles the threads of continuity that link post-World War II ideology and institutions to their wartime predecessors. The contributors to this book critically dispose progressive historiography, another revisionist historiography – *jiyūshugi shikan* – that itself reacted critically against the academic histories of wartime. It is undeniable that revisionism has become associated, in some instances, with deliberate distortions of the past: lack of "hard evidence" has been used by some writers to cast doubt on the credibility of entire events, such as the Nanking Massacre. Indeed, revisionism has become a code word for "lying about the past." As Tetsuya Takahashi (2001: iii) in the other branch however, argues, revisionism is integral to the writing of good history. If we take revisionism to mean revising interpretations of the past, without implying a "distortion" of that past, then we can understand revisionism as a device that shapes and reflects changing historical consciousness. Revisionism can reflect changing concerns in contemporary society or it can reflect the emergence of new information that requires reinterpretation of the past.

"bubble economy" in the early 1990's, Japan has entered a national crisis, in which its economy has languished for more than a decade. NPO activities supported by volunteer subjectivity have been recommended as a model to support and even galvanize the deadlocked society. NPOs are used by the state to rationalize the convenient and strategic integration and reorganization of ordinary people under the state while mobilizing people as *shimin* under the name of "civil society." In so doing, the state primarily aims at maintaining and supporting the existing social and political system. "Civil society" in Japan is a product of discursive norms.[8]

[8]In developing this thought, I was greatly influenced by Yasushi Yamanouchi el al. (1998), Toshio Nakano (1999, 2001), and Eiji Oguma (2002).

CHAPTER 4

BECOMIING *SHIMIN:* STANDARDIZATION OF VOLUNTEER SUBJECTIVITY

In contemporary Japan, *shimin* are a highly recommended subjectivity. What Japanese people are now experiencing is the state-led standardization of ideal subjectivity called *shimin*, which involves an intentional process of homogenization. Japanese society has experienced the homogenization of subjectivity several times, and I argue that the Japanese are now experiencing this process through the creation of NPOs. Japanese political historian Shoichi Amemiya (1998) argues that modern Japanese society has, to date, experienced two homogenization processes, which have been led by the state in order to achieve national reorganization for achieving particular purposes. He called this intentional process *gleichschaltung*, which is usually translated into Japanese as "forced uniformity" (*kyōseiteki kakuitsuka*) or "forced homogenization" (*kyōseiteki kinshitsuka).*[9] According to his argument, Japan experienced the first *gleichschaltung* in the 1930's and 1940's. After the Great Depression in 1929, he says, Japan's recovery could occur only through further rationalization and expansion of capitalism; specifically, recovery would rely upon the development of the heavy and chemical industries. Meanwhile, Japan's international relationships brought it into intense competition with the Western powers for markets. The result was heavy industrialization, which centered on the rapid, short-term expansion of military production in preparation for war.

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[9]The German term – *Gleichschaltung* – was used by Masao Maruyama and scholars in former East and West Germany to refer to the state's suppression and dissolution of political parties, labor unions, and other modern organizations. Sociologist, philosopher, and politician Ralf Dahrendorf has used it to describe the dismantling of pre-modern, authoritarian groups. Amemiya expanded the meaning of the German as follows: First, he included as its object all autonomous groups and organizations, whether modern or pre-modern, old or new. Second, he argued that there was a powerful current of intentional social change that included the content of social revolution. Third, the leading force in this movement included not merely the state, but also business enterprises and other social groups. In the present project, I am most interested in the second definition. See Amemiya (1998: 237) for more details on the definition.

It was inevitable, Amemiya asserts, that the existing industrial structure – production, distribution, and consumption – would be radically transformed. He goes on to argue (1998: 225) that labor power needed to be forced out of the nonindustrial sector (i.e., agriculture and the distribution and service industries) and into the heavy industrial sector. Anything that impeded this process, including organizations independent of state power – whether "old" or "new," "authoritarian" or "democratic" – had to be dismantled. Under these circumstances, Japanese society was reorganized under strong state leadership. In politics, the parties were dissolved and re-formed as the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, which also directly controlled the neighborhood associations in local communities. Japanese industries, meanwhile, were under the control of the Greater Japan Industrial Patriotic Association, the Agricultural Patriotic League, the Commercial Patriotic Association, the Naval Patriotic League, the Greater Japan Women's Association, and the Greater Japan Young Men and Youth Association.

The second *gleichschaltung* came shortly after World War II and was carried out by large corporations and other social organizations. The postwar "productivity first" policy generated people with standardized values who were oriented solely toward commodity production and distribution. More specifically, a newly emerged middle class – salaried workers – embodied these policy values. As Amemiya (1998: 233) asserts, "Overall, this amounted to the mass-production of one-dimensional company-men who inherited the total-war propensity and used it to submerge themselves entirely in an organization." Meanwhile, economic policies strengthened links designed to promote industrialization through a revived wartime pattern. These policies marked a shift in emphasis toward the size of the economic pie and how it was distributed. Furthermore, the total war system destroyed both the autonomous old middle class that had formerly taken responsibility for the local community and the new middle class that was capable

of inheriting such norms. After 1945, the homogenization of regional and class differences sacrificed the independence of the upper level of the old middle class while encouraging the belief that everyone was a member of the middle class or *chūryū kaikyū*. Amemiya (1998: 234) concludes that "This might very well be called an 'historical rapprochement' between the old and new middle classes, premised on the first and second processes of *gleichschaltung* and the 'achievements' of industrialization, the welfare state, and social equalization brought about by erasing distinctions among the 'upper class,' the 'middle class,' and the 'poor.'"

Following Amemiya, I would argue that what I observed – the NPO phenomenon in contemporary Japan – is the third *gleichschaltung*. Amid a national crisis in which the economy has been languishing for more than a decade following the collapse of the "bubble economy" in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the *shimin*, which was developed through the historical experience of total war mobilization, has been reexamined and recommended as an ideal subjectivity. This subjectivity has now been standardized through the implementation of the NPO Law, which aims to "contribute to advancement of the public welfare."[10] Furthermore, as I argued earlier, the state is now trying to institutionalize this subjectivity through state-supervised education. This process is a national project. As a result of these efforts, people are expected to play a significant role in supporting the existing system, which was responsible for Japan's miraculous economic reconstruction during the postwar decades. The standardized subjectivity embodied in *shimin* is enforced among ordinary people through NPO participation. Ordinary citizens are expected to become *shimin* in order to support the existing system.

Shimin, mobilized by the state within the NPO structure, are even avoiding politics against the state. *Shimin* are compelled to avoid politics in the NPO setting, as the NPO Law prohibits political involvement by these organizations. The law explicitly defines NPOs as

[10]The NPO Law.

organizational entities that are not involved in any political and religious activities. The November 1, 2003 edition of the *Asahi Shinbun* reported an interesting story regarding NPOs' involvement in politics. In December 2002, the Kanagawa Prefectural Government Community Relations Department (which is in charge of NPO-related issues) sent a letter to all the NPOs in the prefecture. Anticipating the national election scheduled for the upcoming year, the letter reminded them that NPOs were not to be involved in any political activities related to election campaigns. The letter emphasized the NPO Law's clear prohibition of political involvement and stressed that NPOs were expected to understand this point.

The newspaper story reported annoyance from NPO members in responding to the letter. As one such person said: "I thought that NPOs were supposed to play significant roles in the process of legislating and objectifying the government. This letter, however, put a kind of pressure on us. I am afraid that some NPOs will step back, thinking that it is better to have nothing to do with politics." More surprisingly, a newsletter published by an intermediary NPO in the prefecture expressed concerns that most of the NPOs in the prefecture kept silent on this issue (Kanagawa Information Center for Citizen's Activities 2003: 21). As this incident suggests, the contemporary meaning of *shimin* lacks a dynamic connotation; *shimin* are apolitical subjects who are simply expected to "contribute to advancement of the public welfare" through NPO activities.

CHAPTER 5

WHO ARE *SHIMIN?*

One key question, however, still remains. Exactly who are *shimin*? Who are becoming *shimin*? At my field site, SLG, there were more than 100 registered volunteers. The core group, as I have already noted, consisted of people invited by the government. These people were leaders who contributed to local community activities such as neighborhood associations, PTAs, and local physical education associations. In addition, most members of this group were highly educated, holding college degrees. The rest of the volunteers could be described (using conventional terms of social classification based on occupation) as retirees, housewives, businesspersons/salaried workers, and students performing internships for college course credits. These were, in short, very ordinary members of the Japanese middle class.

In the movement to standardize *shimin*, these "ordinary people" have been targeted. The concept of *shimin* has been intentionally institutionalized around them. They have no particular characteristics, roughly speaking. In informal Japanese terminology, their ordinariness is probably described as *futsū*. In fact, at my field site, I often heard the term *futsū* used as a key word. SLG staff often said that the organization needed "ordinary people" – *futsū no hitotachi* – as volunteers.

Again, Makoto Oda also used the word *futsū* when he described the people who participated in the anti-Vietnam War movement. As noted above, participants in the movement included salaried workers, housewives, teachers, young people, and the unemployed. Oda (1974: 11) called these people *futsū no shimin* or "ordinary citizens." In this usage, however, Oda implied "various kinds of people," as I argued previously, calling them "ordinary citizens." Furthermore, "When he was told, 'I am an ordinary company worker.' Oda responded by saying

'I am an ordinary writer'" (Oda 1974: 11). Oda's usage suggested that ordinariness is something that transcends existing social classes and occupations, rejects any kind of exclusion, and respects diversity.

The implications of the term *futsū,* however, seemed different at the NPO I observed. SLG actually appeared to reject diversity among the volunteers. In fact, when members of this NPO used the term *futsū*, I found that exclusivity was implied. When they recruited new volunteers, they were looking for persons much like the current volunteers – people who were willing to follow the rules of the organization without complaint. Meanwhile, however, from time to time, I observed serious complaints among the volunteers about how to eliminate several annoying members of the group. These complaints always ended in vain; the volunteers did not find any solutions to their concerns. There was a common belief among the SLG volunteers that spontaneous will in volunteering should be greatly respected. Therefore, none of them could honestly and directly confront the "annoying people" with comments like "Don't come anymore." Although the volunteers were frustrated with certain individuals, they never tried to bring the topic to the discussion table on an official level. This was partly because they hated conflict. In fact, they were quite silent every time they had an opportunity to voice such concerns.

As I contemplated the "ordinariness" represented by the term *futsū*, I had a chance to read a book entitled *Iyashi no Nashonarizumu* (roughly translated as *Nationalism as Healing*) (Ueno 2003), an ethnography of a group of grassroots conservatives in the late 1990's who supported a neo-nationalistic history textbook. The textbook was written by nationalistic academics from the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, who were attempting to revise the history texts used in the nation's junior high schools. As members of an academic circle called the

Association for the Advancement of Liberalist View of History, they advocated the liberal view of history – *jiyūshugi shikan*.[11] They argued that the root cause of Japan's deadlocked economy and society in the 1990's lay in a masochistic overemphasis on the negative aspects of Japanese history. They called for a new type of history education that would help to build the identity of the Japanese people. In order to awaken a sense of national pride among Japanese students, the scholars promoted a view of early 20th-century Japan that refused to acknowledge Japan's invasion and colonization of other Asian countries and that exonerated Japan for its responsibility in World War II. Furthermore, they believed that the acceptance of individualism and the development of democracy – the guiding principles of reform after World War II – are highly regarded because prewar Japan neglected such social values. In postwar Japan, however, the concept of public responsibility, which must counterbalance the recognition of private rights, has been neglected. Thus, the deadlock in contemporary Japan can be viewed as the culmination of 50 years of postwar Japanese history.

Yoko Ueno, the author of this ethnography, conducted fieldwork in a grassroots group in Kanagawa Prefecture that supported the neo-nationalist textbook, which had appeared amid the trend toward a more open way of teaching history in the 1990's. In Japan, all textbooks used in public and private schools must be submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval. Ueno's ethnography describes how this group of grassroots conservatives supported the history textbook

[11]The major figures of the scholars' groups are Nobukatsu Fujioka, a professor at Takushoku University, and Kanji Nishio, a professor at the University of Electro-Communication. Among articles available in English, for extensive analysis of the neo-nationalism, see Curtis Anderson Gayle, "Progressive Representations of the Nation: Early Postwar Japan and Beyond" in *Social Science Japan Journal.* 4: 1 2001, 1-19; Rikki Kersten, "Neo-nationalism and the 'Liberal School of History'" in *Japan Forum.* 1999, 191-203; and Ryo Oshiba (2002), "National Symbols, History Textbooks and Neo-Nationalism in Japan" in *We the People in the Global Age: Re-examination of Nationalism and Citizenship.* A critical argument is found in "A Comic Book View of History" by Tessa Morris-Suzuki in *Quarterly Bulletin* June 2001. She argues as follows: "Some texts had begun to acknowledge uncomfortable subjects – like the existence of 'comfort women.' Now, a backlash is in progress, tied inextricably to Japan's economic woes, rising unemployment and concern about the future. Such conditions have fostered a climate where simplistic neo-nationalism can flourish."

in an attempt to reverse the masochistic view of Japanese history (in particular, Japanese World War II history) and how they justified the textbook's nationalistic discourse. While reading this ethnography, I was especially interested in the following questions: Exactly who supports the textbook? Who are grassroots conservatives? In the ethnography, the supporters of the textbook are people who might be labeled "white-collar" workers. They seem quite removed from social activists in political movements. They emphasize respect for individualism, and they value their professions and families more than the activities of advocacy groups. Furthermore, they hesitate to take extreme positions. They never even call themselves "right-wingers" or "nationalists." Ueno identifies the shared characteristics she observed among the group members. When the people in her field site described themselves, they called themselves ordinary citizens – *futsū no shimin* – although they sometimes had difficulties finding the correct words to accurately express themselves. Throughout the fieldwork, the members of the group often asked Ueno: "Do you think this is a gathering organized by people who are not typical? We are ordinary, aren't we?"

In contexts such as this, the term *futsū* is used to guarantee membership in the majority in Japanese society. In Ueno's ethnography, the movement's supporters are extremely afraid of being excluded from the majority and sense that society may cast a suspicious eye on their activities. Furthermore, Ueno points out that one of the favorite expressions among the group members is "silent majority" or *sairento majoritī* in Japanese (Ueno 2003: 145). In fact, they *are* silent. They avoid conflict. They are passive. They attempt never to complain in public. Within the inner circle they created, they have become good spectators in their support of the nationalistic textbook. Why do they choose to function as passive observers? Ueno reasons that they choose this role because their group's activities have no direct impact on their daily lives. They are busy with their professions; supporting the textbook is not their first priority.

In my view, the people supporting the nationalistic textbook movement and the people supporting activities at my field site look very much alike. In fact, both prefer to have people label them as ordinary – *futsū*. At SLG, as my ethnographic findings show, the volunteers were primarily middle-class members of the local community. Although the NPO was located in a blue-collar district of Tokyo, most of the participants were white-collar workers. Members of the former outcast *burakumin* and members of other nationalities, such as Japanese-Koreans and migrant workers from China and the Philippines, were not represented, even though these groups were present in the local community. The SLG volunteers were also far removed from the progressive activism that characterized the new social movements of the 1960's and 1970's. I confirmed in my ethnography that the left-wing social activists, in fact, hesitated to join the nationwide NPO movement.

Nevertheless, it did not appear that people at my NPO supported the extreme right wing. I believe that they were neither on the left nor on the right. Instead, they held the center. They probably represented the ordinary, middle-class people who had been called the "silent majority" throughout postwar Japanese history. If anything, they might have been conservatives who supported the policies implemented by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the ruling party during most of the postwar era. They never complained about the existing government in public, and they never tried to instigate conflict with it. They were silent. Such people are now conveniently, but tactically, mobilized under NPOs, new social institutions that aim to "contribute to advancement of the public welfare." They are simply expected to do something for the betterment of society. Furthermore, when they use the term *futsū*, the word suggests a subconscious attempt to exclude otherness. In order to protect their comfort in small, insular communities, they try to reject otherness. They reject something heterogeneous to them. Due to a

lack of imagination, they do not even notice otherness. Their exclusive subjectivity rejects diversity. Today, the apolitical, exclusive subjectivity has been standardized in *shimin.* The term *shimin* as it is used today has lost its connotation of heterogeneousness as opposed to Oda's usage in the 1970's. Such *shimin* are nowadays populating "civil society" in contemporary Japanese society.

CHAPTER 6

NPOS AS NEOLIBERAL REPRESENTATION

Why does Japanese society have NPOs? Why are they in vogue? In order to develop the present argument, I would like to briefly introduce the manner in which NPOs are discussed in Japanese academia. NPOs are primarily studied by political scientists, sociologists, and economists. For example, Koichi Hasegawa, a sociologist at Tohoku University, pointed out that the characteristics of social movements in Japan have changed over the past three decades.[12] In the early 1970's, Japan saw the development of residents' movements. In the mid-1980's, the country saw the emergence of network-based social movements. These movements, which were categorized as new social movements in line with the work of the theorist Alberto Melucci (1989), drew upon participants who viewed their involvement as an end in itself. They sought action because they needed to fill their lives with activity – any activity – as activity is stimulating and exciting. The movements of this era were also characterized by the achievement of people in society voluntarily coming together for a common, beneficial purpose. Hasegawa further argues that, in the late 1990's, Japanese society institutionalized these movements.

Why did the institutionalization of social movements occur? Following the impressive (and spontaneously organized) disaster relief activities of 1.3 million volunteers after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, there was a shared consensus among Japanese people that our society needed to support volunteer-based social movements. A new formal and institutional framework to support these social movements – one that would be controlled neither by the conventional government nor by private, for-profit businesses – was necessary. After the

[12]This argument is from a keynote speech made by Hasegawa at a special seminar on Japanese NPOs titled "NPO no Saizensen." It was held at Tokyo Institute of Technology on 19 November 2001.

earthquake, there was not much of a system in place to provide long-term, efficient support to the disaster-stricken area. That experience led Diet members to bring forward new legislation to encourage the establishment of more voluntary NPOs by granting them corporate status, which would enable their members to share their assets and make contracts in the name of organization. Without this status, members had to open bank accounts as individuals. To form an NPO, one does not have to prepare capital; thus, it is much easier for an NPO to achieve corporate status than it is for other types of corporate bodies. This has led some to argue that the institutionalization of NPOs was an inevitable result of the great earthquake.

Instead, I contend that Japanese society would have NPOs even if the great earthquake had never occurred. Arguably, the current NPO phenomenon derived from the context of the social movements. By the early 1990's, the development of the Japanese nonprofit third sector had already been discussed in an American think-tank journal as a new dynamism stemming from a convergence of domestic and global developments, which are "awakening Japanese citizens to the possibility of new ways of relating to their environment" (Frost 1993: 28). In fact, official activities supporting the institutionalization of a nonprofit sector began in November 1994, about two months before the earthquake. A citizens' group known as the C's (formerly the Coalition for Legislation to Support Citizens' Organizations) was organized by 24 citizens' groups to facilitate citizen-based activities. The C's were widely known as the group that played a significant role in lobbying for the legislative process of the NPO Law in 1998. When the C's established themselves, they sought three objectives: a system for citizens' groups that would allow them easy access to corporate status, a tax exemption system for citizens' activities, and information disclosure relating to citizens' activities.

I do not totally deny, however, that the earthquake triggered the trend toward the institutionalization of some types of citizen-based social movements in a very positive manner. I have developed my argument in a different way. I see NPOs as key agencies in neoliberalism.[13] I directly attribute the NPO phenomenon seen in Japanese society to globally expanding neoliberalism. The NPO phenomenon is not something unique to Japanese society. Rather, it is a representation of the way in which a global trend – neoliberalism – is placed, shaped, understood, and operated in a society.

Neoliberalism, as a global trend in politics and economics, is theoretically backed by the late economist Friedrich Hayek. A general characteristic of neoliberalism is the desire to intensify and expand markets by increasing the number, frequency, repeatability, and formation of transactions. I understand that the main points of neoliberalism include: (1) the rule of the market – liberating private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government, no matter how much social damage this causes; (2) cutting public expenditure for social services; (3) deregulation – reducing government regulation of everything that could diminish profits, including protecting the environment and safety on the job; (4) privatization – selling state-owned enterprises, goods, and services to private investors; and (5) eliminating the concept of the public good or community and replacing it with self-responsibility.

[13]Neoliberalism is a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last quarter-century. The prefix "neo" suggests a "new" kind of liberalism. The "old" kind was the liberal school of economics, as argued in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776. The old school advocated the abolition of government intervention in economic matters. According to Smith, there should be no restrictions on manufacturing, no barriers to commerce, and no tariffs; free trade was the best way to ensure that the nation's economy would develop. Such ideas were "liberal," in the sense that they rejected the notion of controls. This application of individualism encouraged free enterprise and free competition. On the other hand, the Great Depression of 1929 led John Maynard Keynes to develop a theory that challenged such liberalism as the best policy for capitalists. Keynes argued that full employment is necessary for capitalism to grow, and that it can be achieved only if governments and central banks intervene to increase employment. These ideas had considerable influence on U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal policy. The belief that government should and could advance the common good became widely accepted. The capitalist crisis of the past two decades, however, with its shrinking profit rates, inspired the corporate elite to revive economic liberalism. That is what has made this liberalism "neo" or "new." Now, with the rapid globalization of the capitalist economy, we are seeing neo-liberalism on a global scale.

Following the conservative administrations of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States, Yasuhiro Nakasone, a political leader of the conservative LDP and Japanese prime minister from 1982 through 1987, promoted deregulation policies under his administration. He privatized three state-owned businesses: the national railways, telephones and telegraphs, and tobacco and salt. Those businesses are currently known as the Japan Railroad (JR), Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT), and Japan Tobacco (JT), respectively. The government thus downsized, transferring its businesses to the corporate sector.

The 1990's, popularly called in Japan the "Lost Decade" or *ushinawareta jūnen,* saw a paradigm shift in Japanese social and political life. In his book surveying postwar Japan, Jeff Kingston, an American historian based in Tokyo, describes that era as follows:

> Mired in recession during the 1990's, Japan is facing the consequences of prolonged economic malaise. It enters the 21st century as the world's leading debtor nation, with total public debt amounting to 123 percent of the GDP, a result of massive counter-cyclical government-spending packages aimed at stimulating recovery and rescuing the financial sector from insolvency. From a nation that enjoyed double-digit growth and minimal unemployment throughout the miracle years… growth has become anemic and unemployment has sky-rocketed. The twin pressures of recession and economic deregulation have generated a powerful riptide with considerable consequences for the employment system. This system seems to be unraveling as companies discover that measures which saw them through past slumps are exhausted. Corporate Japan can no longer afford the rigidities and high costs of lifetime employment and seniority-based wage scales (*nenko*). The social contract between employers and employees based on security and loyalty is a likely casualty as firms gradually pursue more aggressive restructuring. What went wrong?
>
> (Kingston 2001: 90)

Under these circumstances, the neoliberal trend has been solidly supported as Japanese people were becoming distrustful of the government, in particular, of the bureaucrats – the people who had been labeled as the cleverest in the society and had led the miraculous postwar

reconstruction. Many attributed the sluggish economic situation to mismanagement of domestic economic policies by bureaucrats from the Finance Ministry. This situation has been exacerbated by the fact that the bureaucrats have lost much of their prestige and trustworthiness due to a nationwide flurry of bribery scandals, such as *kankan settai,* which involved lower bureaucrats who entertained higher bureaucrats at the taxpayers' expense. Some Finance Ministry officials even accepted entertainment from business at a *no-pan* restaurant, where the waitresses wore short skirts and no underwear. Gerald Curtis, a specialist in Japanese politics, pointed out that these incidents "symbolized how far bureaucratic behavior had strayed from the lofty ideal of the selfless professional who dedicated his life to serve the interests of nations" (Curtis 1999: 56). This bureaucratic fall from grace was finally and decisively highlighted by their woeful performance in disaster-relief activities following the great earthquake. "The governments cannot respond to our needs promptly and flexibly."

I think this was the shared impression among us Japanese, which I reported as a journalist in the mid-1990's. The bureaucrats no longer seem to have the answers and no longer seem able to cope with new challenges. As we came to learn of their incompetence and malfeasance, we felt a solid need for increased scrutiny and monitoring of their activities. At that exact time, the concept of NPOs was strategically introduced to the society, in a very timely, and in a sense, tactical, manner. The third sector, which is not the government nor for-profit businesses, was officially instituted.

Why NPOs "Now"? The answer should not be mono-causal. I primarily believe, however, that Japanese NPOs should be situated in line with the neoliberal policy implementations of the 1980's and early 1990's. They are an inevitable extension of the neoliberal politics we have experienced over the past two decades. The emergence of NPOs is a

reverse discourse of neoliberalism, which pursues small government. NPOs, or "civil society," actually gained attention in the context of structural reform, or *kōzō kaikaku*, which primarily aims at a devolution from the government to the private sector. Within the private sector, NPOs are a target. Structural reform has been a key term in neoliberal politics since the late 1990's and the Ryutaro Hashimoto administration of the LDP.[14] In the argument vis-à-vis structural reform, NPOs are definitely expected to play a powerful role in setting the terms of the debates by mobilizing key constituencies and coordinating grassroots companies to effect change. They are expected to be a device that will drastically alter the conventional social, political, and economic customs in Japanese society by tapping volunteers to better society and revitalize the economy. In fact, in 1999, the Economic Strategy Council (*Keizai Senryaku Kaigi*), an advisory body to the prime minister, officially proposed introducing NPOs into the existing system to enhance dynamism in society. In the proposal, the role of NPOs is certainly mentioned, for example, as partners in private finance initiative (Economic Strategy Council 1999). In this context, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Japanese business daily *Nihon Keizai Shinbun,* and the Japan Business Federation (*Nippon Keidanren*) have been ardent supporters of NPO activities.

NPOs, representations of neoliberalism, are justified and described as "civil-society organizations," a term that connotes something correct, ideal, and desirable. The state strategically and tactically introduced NPOs to Japanese society by the state at many different levels. I observed a field site where the primary user of the NPO Law was the municipal

[14]Here, I probably should mention that Hashimoto is a key political figure, since he strongly pushed deregulation politics. Hashimoto sponsored the financial Big Bang program in the Tokyo market under the name of structural reform. Above all, he was the prime minister when the NPO Law was legislated. Gerald Curtis (1999: 39) described the Hashimoto administration, as follows: he "came into office promising to reform everything from the bureaucracy to the educational system. His government, however, proceeded cautiously with implementing his reform program. It had to deal with a bureaucracy that resisted change. It needed to balance competing interests and avoid alienating any key constituency in its broad social base."

government. The government mobilized the local residents as volunteers and organized an NPO. Under the name of structural reform, the NPOs were officially included in the arena of public administration under the name of *kyōdō*. Citing my ethnographic findings, I have documented the Japanese NPO phenomenon as a part of the neoliberal, calculated reorganization of the existing social and political system, which has been dominated by bureaucratic instrumental rationality. Now people are being mobilized through NPOs to support this reorganization. NPOs, which originally intended to break the instrumental rationality, are being tactically and strategically co-opted into the existing social and political system.

For me, this move looks ironically as if it is intensifying the conventional bureaucratic rationality. The result is that the state has remained as dominant as it ever was. The state continues to be strong, and NPOs – products of the state's deliberate institutionalization of "civil society" – have become nearly synonymous with the state. The state, an unusually strong actor, actually retards the development of a healthy, dynamic civil society. I might say that the state is using underhanded tactics to institutionalize a "civil society" that will meet its goals.

CONCLUSION

I was looking for the distinctive meaning of civil society in contemporary Japan, exclusively focusing on NPOs incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law. Japanese NPOs are believed to provide greater accommodation and space for diversity in contemporary Japan. If I may borrow the phrase of leading political theorists Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985: 173), however, NPOs "redefine the notion of democracy itself in such a way as to restrict its field of application and limit political participation to an ever narrower area." The NPO Law limits the organizations' activities to only 17 areas that can "contribute to advancement of the public welfare." The normative subjectivity supporting the 17 areas is now standardized as *shimin*, and the subjectivity is extensively produced and reproduced nationwide. Normalized, exclusive subjects are supposed to play significant roles in providing public services to communities.

Under the circumstances, people are actually becoming alienated from increasingly remote and commercialized neoliberal policy-making processes. In fact, on September 29, 2002, a handicapped person even contributed a sad comment to the *Asahi Shinbun* questioning this ongoing trend. "I, a handicapped person," she said, "am always supposed to be 'given' (*hodokoshi o ukeru).* I am always supposed to be helped. If those activities are standardized, becoming something normative under the name of volunteerism, I would be really uncomfortable living in this society. For me, it is really difficult to survive. I feel I must be small and weak.... I wonder what this society is trying to achieve. Even I can push the button on the elevator."

Toward the end of this paper, I conclude that civil society in contemporary Japan is a strategic articulation of total war subjectivity – a distinctive characteristic, which has been

imbedded in Japanese people – and neoliberalism – a globally dominant political technique. NPOs absorb total war subjects very well. We Japanese are nowadays experiencing such institutionalization of "civil society." We are being mobilized and organized under the name of civil society for achieving public good. I myself experienced the active, dynamic process.

I created a picture of the state attempting to depoliticize the local residents, but my case also suggested how this was not being meekly accepted. I hope, optimistically, that most Japanese people vaguely realize this ongoing reality. It is a fact that more than 60,000 citizens' groups have existed in Japanese society. Only a small percentage of them, however, have sought recognition under the NPO Law. In fact, most of the NPOs currently incorporated exist because there is the NPO Law. There may be a self-selection bias to those that are less inclined to challenge the government. In fact, some were very cautious about participating in this NPO phenomenon. I confirmed that some social activists from the past are hesitating to join. Some certainly left NPOs because they felt the organizations were not what they were looking for.

Lastly, I should mention that the huge number of NPOs that have incorporated advanced simultaneously with conservative nationalistic legislation. These include the passage, in August 1999, of the Communication Monitoring Law and an amendment to the Citizens' Residence Registration Law, which allowed the government to monitor all citizens by assigning each a number. At almost the same time, the Diet formally adopted the *Hinomaru*, the Rising Sun flag, a symbol of the Japanese military invasion of Asia in the Pacific War, as Japan's national flag, and *Kimigayo* ("His Majesty's Reign") as the national anthem, imposing a legal duty on all schools to adopt both. In 2000, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori stunned the nation with his statement that Japan was a divine country with the emperor at its center. Since 2001, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has regularly visited Yasukuni Shrine, which honors – among others

– Class A war criminals. In 2002, a right-wing group, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, successfully campaigned for the elimination of "masochistic" war clauses in a history textbook. This was only one textbook among others approved under the state-supervised education system. The key issue, however, is that such a textbook has been formally sanctioned by the Japanese government, and some schools currently use it; additionally, this trend is becoming more dominant in the selection process for textbooks at the municipal government level.

In January 2004, the Japanese government dispatched its self-defense forces to Iraq. This was a historic moment because it marked the first time that the Japanese military had been sent to war zone since World War II. Today, it seems to me that all of these moves converge on a key political course – the revision of the Japanese Constitution. In particular, they converge on the revision of Article 9, which distinctively articulates Japanese pacifism and the renunciation of war in the post-World War II political discourse. According to a poll conducted by Kyodo News in September 2004, 84.5 percent of members of both chambers of the Diet support the idea of revising the Constitution, and eight out of 10 LDP lawmakers favor revising the war-renouncing provision of Article 9. It seems that the Japanese people are seeking pride and meaning by creating a nationalistic legacy.

This ongoing NPO phenomenon serves the state at various levels in maintaining and strengthening the existing social and political system. The NPO policy does not serve grassroots people. It limits the meaning of democracy, as well as social and political participation. It even makes some people feel they are being alienated. Admittedly, my ethnography may not be all inclusive of the Japanese NPO phenomenon, which has only a short history. But, I believe I have identified an important reality in examining the relationship between the state and society. My

concern is what will happen when the concept of society is extended to include the state. This is along the same lines as the phenomena seen in the 1930's and in the 1940's, when nationalistic Japan advanced into total war.

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