

THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MASS CULTURE

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The formation and development of pre-war mass culture can generally be divided into three periods: the first, the 1910's—from the end of the Meiji era to the middle of the Taishō era, can be termed a “preliminary period”; the second, the 1920's—including the end of the Taishō era and the beginning of the Shōwa era, can be called a “formative period”; the third, the 1930's, corresponds to a “developing period.”

I. THE PRELIMINARY PERIOD

This period may be characterized by four major and closely inter-related trends: first, the emergence of the people as a force in the political and social field; second, the rise of capitalism during the First World War and the post-war series of economic crises; third, Japan's establishment of a position of international importance and the resultant shrinkage of psychological distance between Japan and foreign nations; fourth, the introduction and flourishing of foreign culture within the middle class.

A. In regard to the political and social emergence of the people, it may be noted that the institutional channels for the people's participation in politics had been extremely limited. Members of the House of Peers were nominated by the Emperor, and even with the 1900 revision of the *Shūgiin giin senkyo hō* 衆議院議員選舉法 (Law for the Election of Members of the House of Representatives) the franchise was extended to include only males of 25 years or over who paid more than 10 yen in direct national taxes. Later, when the Law was revised in 1919, the minimum tax requirement was lowered to 3 yen, but in spite of that, the number of voters remained small.¹ The expansion of the franchise proceeded but slowly, and was accompanied by the imposition of tighter

¹ In 1902, after the 1900 revision of the law, the franchise was extended to 983,193 men, or 21 per thousand of Japan's total population. It increased to 54 per thousand when the law was revised in 1919, while it jumped to 194 per thousand in 1928 after the promulgation of the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law.

restrictions of the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association. In 1900, for example, the Shūkai oyobi seisha hō 集會及政社法 (Law on Assembly and Political Association) was abolished and the Chian keisatsu hō 治安警察法 (Public Safety and Police Law) was promulgated in its stead. Thus, the greater part of the people could be said to have been taken "out of the régime."

In the 1910's, however, the people did enter the scene as a force that could not be ignored in politics. The first event in which the people organized themselves as a political force was the Daiichiji goken undō 第一次護憲運動 (First Campaign for the Defence of the Constitutionalism) in 1913. In Tokyo, demonstrators raided the offices of pro-government newspapers and set fire to police boxes. This outburst of pent-up energy spread out to all regions of the country. The second symbolic event was the establishment in 1912 of the Yūaikai 友愛會, the first organization of workers in Japan. The name Yūaikai was a literary translation of England's "Friendly Society."

The third event was the series of Kome sōdō 米騒動 (Rice Riots) which started in 1918. The prices of rice and other commodities had risen steeply because of the inflation in the last stage of the war. On July 23, the wives of fishermen in Uozu Town, Shimoniikawa County, Toyama Prefecture 富山縣下新川郡魚津町, the leading rice granary in the country, organized groups to prevent the shipping of rice out of the prefecture, and demanded the sale of rice at low prices. They claimed that the rising prices of rice—an additional blow to their livelihood which had already been hard hit by continuing poor catches of fish—was due to the export of rice to other parts of the country. The movement immediately spread all over the country, engulfing a total of 42 prefectures and touching off spontaneous uprisings at some 500 places.

As these symbolic events lucidly show, the people were institutionally barred from participation in politics. Given this situation, they sought to obtain an institutional channel for participation in politics, through seeking universal suffrage and, at the same time, finding a vent for their pent-up energies in direct and violent actions. Because the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association were strictly controlled under the Public Safety and Police Law and the Shimbunshi hō 新聞紙法 (Newspapers Law), there were scarcely any opportunities for the people to unite their dissatisfactions into action, nor did they have any channel through which to express themselves freely. Their dissatisfactions had accumulated and become explosive. These alarming outbursts of the people's energies finally caused the government to feel the urgent need to manipulate

public opinion. The election held after the First *Goken* campaign is especially worthy of note as the first time the government paid attention to the manipulation of public opinion. The people ceased to remain a "quantity that can be ignored." It could be said that they were emerging as the "bearers" of the mass culture.

So far at the helm of Japan's politics had been a handful of *genrō* 元老, or elder statesmen, who were appointed as counsellors to the throne by the Emperor. Not only did the *genrō* have the authority to recommend to the Emperor whom to appoint as prime minister of an incoming cabinet, but also the government had to obtain the consent of the *genrō* in making important policy decisions. In opposition to the custom of power wielded from above, as manifested in the institution of *genrō*, the people were beginning to possess the power to influence the course of politics from below. While they did not, as yet, achieve political leadership, the period of the 1910's may be seen as developing a polarity of old and new in the conduct of politics.

B. Japan's participation in the First World War, by taking part in the Allied Powers' rear lines of supply, gave a great impetus to the development of Japanese capitalism. The Japanese economy, although hit at the first stage of the war by a depression resulting from the confusion of the international economy, experienced an unprecedented boom from about the middle of 1915, which contributed a great deal to the progress of monopoly capitalism. On the other hand, however, the war boom was short-lived, and the post-war succession of depression induced the rising of rice and other commodity prices, sending the real wages of the people steadily downward. Among conditions necessary for the formation of mass culture, first in importance was that the war boom and consequent depression demonstrated that it was no longer possible to orient social developments to the bonds of tradition and social status. That is, it became clear that capital was now the central and orienting focus of social developments in Japan. Second, as a result, traditional Japanese pattern of thought and action crumbled. Not until after the Second World War, however, did new patterns emerge to wield decisive power of control.

The progress of monopoly capitalism to maturity as the result of the first condition and the concomitant development of technology facilitated the establishment of the information and entertainment industries. In contrast, the decay of traditional way of thinking and action prepared the people psychologically to receive the information and entertainment as "commodities" offered by these industries.

C. Japan participated in the Versailles Conference as one of the world's Five Major Powers. Her participation in the First World War had gone a long way towards enhancing her international position. Furthermore, reports of the achievements of war were useful in reducing the psychological distance at which the people had held the rest of the world. We must not forget, however, that as early as 1910, an Antarctic expedition led by Lieut. Shirase Naoshi 白瀬 巖 (1861-1946) had been undertaken, and an airplane flew for the first time in Japan. These events brought communication between Japan and the rest of the world up to a new level. As will be stated below, the surprisingly rapid infiltration of foreign culture into the middle class was only made possible on the basis of this shrinkage of psychological distance from foreign nations. Special mention must be made, too, of the influence exerted by the Russian Revolution of 1917. Not until the 1920's did this event exert any direct influence on Japanese society; the foundation for its influence, however, had already been built through Japan's participation in the First World War.

D. The 1910's is called a period of *haikara* culture. The term *haikara* is a Japanese corruption of "high collar," which symbolized the high fashion in those days; but the word evoked many connotations. First, it meant newness. Second, it meant being Western-style. Third, it also became the status symbol of the middle class. *Haikara* culture, utilizing the middle class as its principal "bearer," was highly compatible with the trend towards levelling culture. Fourth, *haikara*, as its etymology indicates, was a general term referring to trends of Westernization in manners and social behaviour.

The assimilation of foreign culture in this period began with Westernization of attire and accessories. Next, *haikara* culture constructed two material symbols—the Imperial Theatre completed in 1911, and Mitsukoshi 三越 Department Store. The Imperial Theatre, a totally Western-style building modelled on *Théâtre de l'Opéra* of Paris, differed from previous theatre houses, in the over-all installation of seats, and in the adoption of a ticket booking system. For the first time in Japan, moreover, actresses were trained to replace the *oyama*² actors, and the debut of women into the theatrical world was institutionalized. Thus, the Imperial Theatre was *haikara* both in equipment and system, abandoning the tradition of conventional theatre. Previously, in 1904, Japan's first department store came into being when the Mitsui *gofukuten* 三井

² In *Kabuki*, one form of Japanese traditional theatre, *oyama* actors played the female roles.

呉服店 (draper's shop) renamed itself Mitsukoshi *gofukuten* Co. Ltd. and established itself along the lines of department stores in Europe and America. Other big draper's shops such as Shirokiya 白木屋, Matsuya 松屋, and Matsuzakaya 松坂屋 followed suit. The newly created department stores utilized their features of the availability of many goods in a single store, the abundance of goods, and the selling of goods at set and labelled prices with no discounts in winning the trust of the consuming public and in enhancing their popularity. Later, Mitsukoshi's advertising phrase "Visit Teigeki (Imperial Theatre) today, Mitsukoshi tomorrow" (1915) came into vogue as a synonym for *haikara* culture. Thus, the Imperial Theatre and Mitsukoshi took the initiative in accelerating the Japanization of foreign culture and in diffusing the *haikara* culture. In order for the *haikara* culture to take root on a nation-wide basis, it was necessary, on the one hand, to develop a technology which would become the medium for its diffusion, and on the other, to further Japanize the culture. For realization of these two conditions, we must wait until the third period.

II. THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

As the determinants for the formation of mass culture in the 1920's, two social and political events must be cited. The first was the Great Earthquake of Kantō District on September 1, 1923. The socio-psychological impact of this earthquake was tremendous. The second event was the promulgation of the Chian iji hō 治安維持法 (Peace Preservation Law) in 1925, as the price for the Futsū senkyo hō 普通選挙法 (Universal Manhood Suffrage Law) promulgated earlier in the same year, which might be termed the fruition of the democratic movements in the Taishō era.

A-1. On September 1, 1923, at 11:58:44 a.m., a great earthquake occurred in the Kantō district, coming in several intermittent shakes. In Tokyo, the first heavy quake was immediately followed by fires which started simultaneously at some 140 places. Strong winds, in addition to the destruction of water mains by the earthquake, allowed the fires to rage for three days. It is estimated that about 135,000 houses were destroyed or damaged by fire and about 91,000 people were killed. The Kantō Disaster had the additional socio-psychological function of completely changing the people's image of their environment. It was an event symbolizing the "turning-point of the times," and is important in that it impressed vividly on the people's minds the meaning and importance of their environment. The sudden collapse tangibly indicated the intangible forces of natural environment which are beyond the reach of

human control. However, Tokyo recovered with spectacular vitality. It did not simply recover; it was reborn. Thus, the feeling of awe for their environment inspired in the people entertained through the disaster coexisted with a trust that natural disasters could be surmounted by mastery of technology.

Moreover, the destruction of the capital city, Tokyo, meant the collapse of symbols representing the heritages of the past. The traditions of Edo, symbol of a long-standing society, crumbled away. Instead, there emerged the new Tokyo as the symbol of a forthcoming era. Tokyo was expected to be the model of new social environment to which not only Tokyoites but also all Japanese should adapt themselves. Thus, the recovery of the metropolis gave new hopes and goals to the people. At the same time, we must not overlook a disastrous incident in which rumours yielded social violence. About one day after the Great Earthquake rumours circulated among the sufferers that Korean residents would rise in rebellion and throw poison into the wells. In all the towns, armed vigilantes were organized, and more than 1,000 Korean residents fell victims to the Japanese posses. Also killed were those listed as socialists by the police and military police, and among those killed, the slaying of Ōsugi Sakae 大杉榮 (1885-1923), an anarchist, became a major obstacle to the subsequent democratic movements of Japan. Thus, the Great Earthquake proved also that rumours exert a great stimulus to action in the life of the people.

A-2. On May 5, 1925, the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law was promulgated. Now the people's energies (social force) obtained an authorized legitimate channel of expression in the political process. Although the right of voting was limited to men and the franchise was denied to women, the promulgation of the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law is worth special mention as an event which openly recognized the people as social beings. In this way, the power of the people won both virtual and institutional recognition as a force which could not be ignored. However, the acquisition of an institutional channel for expression was obtained only in exchange for an instrument of suppression, the Peace Preservation Law, which was promulgated on April 22, 1925 (earlier than the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law, and effective from May 1 of that year). The people were subject to stronger legal restrictions than before. The law, established originally with a view to thought control, was employed as the basis of the subsequent security legislation system by Japanese Fascism, in suppressing all anti-government thoughts. Thus the content of the mass culture that the people would

enjoy came under positive restrictions.

B. The Kantō Earthquake Disaster, and the promulgation of the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law, transformed and greatly expanded the environment to which the people adapted themselves. This expansion of environment, however, would not have materialized without the rapid growth of technology which offered an expanded environment to the people through the new techniques which were introduced one after another in all forms of mass media. Here the major forms of mass communication—newspapers and radio—will be discussed briefly.

B-1. In regard to the growth of newspapers and magazines, the first thing to be noted is the rapid development of printing techniques in the press. Let us review a few major events. In 1921, the *Asahi* 朝日 started operation of a domestically-produced rotary photogravure press. The *Mainichi* 毎日 began gravure printing and typesetting with a Japanese-character monotyping caster. In the following year, both the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi* commenced operations using high-speed rotary presses. In 1924, the *Mainichi* experimented with a Korn-type telephotographic apparatus between Osaka and Tokyo. Also direct private telephone lines were opened between Osaka and Tokyo by both the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi*. In 1925, the *Mainichi* started to use a Thomson typesetting machine. In December of this same year, the *Mainichi* succeeded in transporting by air a flash report of the Emperor Taishō's death. In reporting the funeral services of the Emperor in the following year, a race was staged among the *Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and Dentsū 電通 (news service company) with the use of aircraft. Also, in 1926, the *Mainichi* replaced photoengraved copperplate by zinc plate. In 1927, a Carlos-type telephotographic apparatus was installed by the *Asahi* at its Tokyo and Osaka offices. The *Mainichi* began operation of a superhigh-speed rotary press and its papers carried Belin-type telephotographs. Thus, in terms of equipment alone, the press expanded by leaps and bounds its ability to gather and disseminate news.

During the 1920's, the newspapers established their position as providing a nation-wide medium of communication. It was the Kantō Earthquake Disaster that provided the largest direct stimulus in making the newspaper a national medium. In the 1910's, certain of the newspapers had put an end to the era of "opinion journalism" and ushered in the era of mass newspapers dedicated primarily to reporting. The change from "opinion journalism" to "mass paper" was heralded by Motoyama Hikoichi 本山彦一 (1853-1932), president of the *Mainichi*, who had been stating that "The newspaper is a commodity." In the

1910's, the newspapers working within the concept of "opinion journalism" remained powerful enough to function in the arena of politics in the first Campaign for the Defence of the Constitutionalism and in the subsequent Taishō democratic movements. However, the Kantō Earthquake Disaster provided the opportunity for an entire renovation of the status of the newspaper world in Tokyo. Almost all the newspaper firms suffered such a heavy blow from the disaster that it became impossible for them to recover, in contrast with the spectacular recovery of the metropolis. In Osaka and westward, the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi*, which had already established themselves as mass papers, led the other papers even before the disaster, while in Tokyo, "opinion journalism" was still flourishing with no fewer than 15 or 16 papers, to list only well-known ones, which competed with each other. The impact of the disaster, however, gave no opportunity for a quick rally to newspaper firms other than the big two, the *Mainichi* and the *Asahi*, which, with the backing of their capital and communication networks, put up a joint front to gain control of the newspaper world in Tokyo. The disaster put an end to the life of those newspaper firms which had existed by virtue of concentrating on features appealing to specific groups of subscribers. The *Asahi* and the *Mainichi* made headway by offering feature pages to various groups of subscribers, and in addition by creating pages aimed at mass audience; in this manner, they became national papers dominating Tokyo and Osaka and by further stretching out to Kyūshū 九州. Already in 1924, the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi* each had a circulation of over one million in Osaka. In 1929, the *Mainichi* topped 1,500,000 in Osaka, and in 1930, 1,000,000 in Tokyo. The Japanese press is characterized by the presence of three categories, as based on level of circulation—local papers in the individual prefectures, a few "bloc papers," and national papers. Except for the "bloc papers" which were brought into existence by newsprint control and by the integration of newspaper offices during the Second World War, the Japanese newspaper world was generally put on firm ground in the 1920's and 1930's. Also the editorial policy of carrying serialized popular novels became customary after the disaster when the obtaining of "mass audience" became the object of newspapers. Also, the four-panel comic strips which one never fails to see in any newspaper today, did not start until after the disaster. Whether serial newspaper novels and serial comic strips increase popularity or not had been a major factor to affect the sales promotion of newspapers until the appearance of television.

The success of the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi* as nation-wide papers

was won by their becoming mass papers through and through. The *Asahi* and the *Mainichi*, which today have a nation-wide circulation, are mass papers and high-quality papers as well, but from the latter half of the 1920's to the 1930's, their quest of an expanded readership led them to the heights of vulgarism and sensationalism. (In the 1930's, the developing period of mass culture, the country's newspapers—centring on the *Yomiuri* 讀賣, the *Asahi*, and the *Mainichi*, which were on their way to nation-wide coverage as mass papers, came as close to “yellow journalism” as one could imagine.)

Also, it was in the 1920's that Japan saw the advent of weekly magazines in the form they retain today. In 1922, the *Asahi* founded the *Shūkan Asahi* 週刊朝日 and the *Mainichi* the *Sandē Mainichi* サンデー毎日. In 1923, meanwhile, the *Asahi* started the *Asahi gurafu* アサヒグラフ, a gravure weekly magazine. These periodicals are in operation today and are among Japan's representative weekly publications.

It is generally accepted that the concepts behind the publishing activities which exerted such a great influence on pre-war Japanese patterns of thought and action may be grasped in the conflict between the “Iwanami 岩波 culture” and the “Kōdansha 講談社 culture.” The Iwanami culture refers to the publishing activities of Iwanami-shoten, and which had a great influence on the intelligentsia of Japan. In contrast, Kōdansha culture, which gave impetus to the formation of mass culture in Japan, refers to the activities of the Kōdansha Publishing House, whose position was firmly established in the latter half of the 1920's. The monthly magazine *Kingu* キング (King), founded in 1925, was put on sale by Kōdansha with the advertising phrase: “The most interesting in Japan, the most instructive in Japan, the most inexpensive in Japan, the largest circulation in Japan.” The founding of *Kingu* is noteworthy in two respects. First, by interweaving the two elements of “instruction” and “entertainment” into its pages, the magazine successfully established a pattern of action and thought appealing profoundly to the people. The magazine teemed with vulgar morality stories stimulating human interest. Thus, *Kingu*, in spite of its being an amusement magazine, could be viewed as a culture magazine appealing to the old middle class of Japan. That *Kingu* functioned as a highly powerful culture medium shaping the backbone of pre-war Japanese, is attested to by the fact that the inaugural number of the magazine won a circulation of 750,000 copies, and in January, 1927, two years after its founding, the magazine cleared one million copies.

Second, the big sales promotion campaign waged in the founding of

the magazine *Kingu* was remarkable. To begin with, all advertising media were employed, including newspaper advertisements, posters, hand-bills, standing signboards, ad-balloons, *chin-don-ya*,³ and *kamishibai*.⁴ Also, about 325,000 sealed letters and 1,835,000 postcards were reportedly sent out through the country to town mayors and village headmen, public officials, youth association directors, and veteran association directors—all opinion leaders of the old middle class—as well as to principal company and bank executives—opinion leaders of the new middle class. Thus, “direct mail” strategy was employed on a highly organized basis. In addition, publicity corps of juvenile employees were organized and dispatched to cities all over the nation. Direct canvassing by salesmen was also conducted on a highly organized scale. That such a big sales promotion campaign was waged in those days might be said to indicate graphically that mass culture in Japan had developed very fast with the utilization of various media along with the developing process of nationwide media.

B-2. The other medium which required special mention is radio broadcasting, which began when the initial waves of 800 kilocycles and 220 watts were sent out from the Tokyo Broadcasting Station on March 22, 1925 (the year the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law and the Peace Preservation Law were promulgated simultaneously.)

Radio receivers came into use at a faster pace than was generally expected—the nation-wide rate of ownership of receivers by household, which stood at 0.1% in fiscal 1924, rose to 2.1% in 1925, 3.0% in 1926, 3.2% in 1927, and 4.7% in 1928, exceeding 500,000 units.

The major feature of Japan's radio broadcasting has been the adoption of a monopolistic system. In 1925, three distinct broadcasting enterprises, as public corporations, were set up in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya 名古屋; but in the following year, 1926, they joined to establish the Nippon hōsō kyōkai 日本放送協會 (Japan Broadcasting Corporation). Japan's broadcasting industry was under monopoly of NHK until commercial radio broadcasting stations were opened in 1951 after the Second World War.

The two most significant pieces of legislation of the 1920's, namely the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law and the Peace Preservation Law, created a context in which the potential of radio broadcasting as a

³ Troupes of several men in eye-attracting attire, carrying on their backs commodity sale advertisements or waving streamers and playing trumpets, drums, etc., as they parade the streets.

⁴ Travelling vendors who present sets of serial picture story cardboards along with oral commentaries while selling millet jelly, seasoned seaweed, candies, etc.

national mass media could be developed either in the direction of freedom of expression and hence democracy, or in the direction of manipulation of expression and hence Fascism. On the one hand, the radio could exert a great influence towards acceleration of the progress of democracy by publicizing, through rich and varied expression of ideas, the people's desires and wishes. On the other hand, it was also possible for the radio to be a powerful instrument of Fascism, and to play the role of controlling the people by expressing only a single pattern of thought and action. The arrival of the radio was an event symbolizing the formation of mass culture; and the further development of mass culture was characterized by the alternation between the two directions.

From the inception of broadcasting, the government entertained a vast interest in the tremendous potential of the radio. The government had handled the mass media of those days by a system of subsequent censorship. Whereas the government now adopted a presentation copy system for newspapers and magazines, and a subsequent censorship system for motion pictures, it imposed a prior censorship system of the radio alone, indicating the serious attention the government paid to the influence of the radio. Furthermore, the government insisted on maintaining an attitude of "guidance and control" towards the planning and contents of radio programmes. The public-interest aspect of the broadcasting industry was emphasized from the outset, and the government advocated that all programming should be designed with the following four points in mind: the universality of the radio and the quality and quantity of cultural opportunities presented; the innovations which could be brought to home life; the socialization of the people and standardization of education; the stimulus to economic activity. However, this moralistic view of the administrators was distant from the very simple feeling of surprise with which the people responded to the new medium. They found, it might be said, the whole of the radio's *raison d'être* in the new world of amusement opened to them. The administrators and intellectuals, for their part, tended to make light, consciously or unconsciously, of the people's simple desires for amusement, and thus, there was a gap of expectation between the administrators and the people.

The direction in which the radio was to be used may be seen in the fact that it created a particular atmosphere by broadcasting one major event after another to laud the national glory. In 1925, the inaugural year of broadcasting, the Nagoya broadcasting station relayed the scenes of a military review from the training grounds of the Third Division in Nagoya. In 1926, the broadcasting stations in Tokyo, Osaka,

and Nagoya, respectively, relayed various programmes on the hookup. In 1927, the funeral services of the Emperor Taishō went on the air. In November, 1928, the Emperor's enthronement was relayed on the first nation-wide hook-up. In the same month, the major lines of the nation-wide broadcasting network, which enabled the nation-wide relayed broadcasting, was established. The power of such relay broadcasts was particularly important, in that by disseminating the spirit of the Emperor System and militarism into the homes of citizens throughout the country, a tendency to acquiesce in the progress of Fascism was established. Since that first instance, the radio, by offering nation-wide hook-ups of functions and events fit for national purposes, was to determine the environment to which the people should adapt themselves. Thus, nation-wide running commentary hook-ups became the basis, literally, for "goose-step co-ordination" as Karl Mannheim put it; or, in other words, a powerful tool of social integration to concentrate the attention of the people onto one concept, in one frame of reference.

III. THE DEVELOPING PERIOD

Needless to say, in the 1930's, the course chosen in the 1920's was followed at full speed down the track already laid. Specifically, we refer to the China problem in foreign affairs and to the series of financial crises in domestic affairs. In both cases the direction in which policies would be formulated was determined during the 1920's, but the incidents and policies matured in the 1930's and had their decisive influence on the development of mass culture during that decade. It is also important to note that the development of material civilization in the 1930's as symbolized by the rapid progress of the technology of communication media, aroused an inordinately gay atmosphere amid a succession of raging depressions. The atmosphere of the times has been described as *ero, guro, nansensu*, namely, erotic, grotesque, and nonsensical. Urbanization of the labour force with the development of Japanese capitalism and the growth of nation-wide coverage by the mass media, joined hands to make the conflict between urban Tokyo and the more rural provinces a principal theme in the newly-established mass culture. Finally, these three trends outlined above focused onto one point and moved towards Fascism, for which the first symbolic event is the Incident of February 26th of 1936, and the second is the plunge into the Second World War, beginning with the Sino-Japanese Incident of 1937.

A. The increased activity of nationalist movements and labour move-

ments in China in the 1920's provided an excuse to the Japanese military for interference in the internal affairs of China on the pretext of protecting Japan's interests. This gradually bred a xenophobic atmosphere among the people. In the stimulating of a sense of crisis *vis-à-vis* foreign nations, a large role was played by the nation-wide infiltration of mass media, including the radio. The various disputes with China and the opinions of the government and the military in dealing with the disputes were publicized and utilized to create a common focus of attention and a common psychological environment. While the formation of such a sense of crisis was proceeding gradually, the monopolization of Japanese capitalism which had originated in the post-war economic crisis of 1920 and become decisive with the 1927 financial crisis gathered momentum. The increased prevalence of monopoly capitalism exacerbated existing social problems.

Furthermore, the Great Depression of 1929 spread immediately to Japan and caused the Shōwa economic crisis. The 1930's thus began with economic crises, and the people's life was impoverished to the point of destitution. The cutting down or delayed payment of salaries, and the increase of unemployment following personnel reductions, led to a host of social problems. But it was farmers, in particular, who suffered the worst hard blows. The privation of farming communities provided a major basis for Japan's plunge into Fascism. And this economic and social confusion at home added further to the need to turn the people's eyes towards foreign crises. It is especially important to note that the ground for the people to accept Fascism without protest was prepared gradually by fanning up a sense of foreign crisis through the mass media.

B. In the 1920's, technical innovation yielded progress in various social fields. First, it was represented by the establishment of nation-wide media. Second, it enabled the quick reconstruction of Tokyo after the devastation of the Great Earthquake. The recovery of Tokyo could best be symbolized by the development of the Marunouchi 丸の内 business quarters centring around the Tokyo Railway Station. Third, it meant improved means of transportation, both public and private—in 1925, the Yamate Loop Line was completed. In 1927, the first subway service was opened between Ueno 上野 and Asakusa 浅草. Taxicabs came into use as a common means of transportation. Assembly plants were built in Japan by the Ford Co. in 1924 and by GM (Chevrolet) in 1927, to start mass production, while the *Datsun*, a domestic product, was not mass-produced until after 1935; thus the decade between 1925 and 1935 witnessed the

establishment of motorized transportation. In October, 1930, the super-express train *Tsubame* (Swallow) cleared the Tokyo-Kōbe 東京—神戸 route (Tōkaidō 東海道 Line) in 8 hours and 55 minutes—a milestone because the time was 2 hours shorter than required before. Fourth, it meant introduction of newer forms of amusement—in 1929, the motion picture entered the talkie days. The first talkie picture in Japan was produced in 1931. Japan's first film was shown already in 1927, and Japan's first electrically-recorded disk was cut in 1928. Thus, during the 1920's material civilization rapidly made the life of the people more convenient, and the living standard was raised considerably.

Department stores displaced retail merchants in popularity with the consumer, and automobiles became the most fashionable means of transportation. In the case of Mitsukoshi Department Store, for example, it is said that, from the latter half of the 1920's on, the sales policy shifted emphasis from quality and luxury items to popular-priced and utility items, while the turnover rate of commodities rose remarkably, and the number of customers expanded while the profit rate rose. Thus, the development of material civilization and the consequent progress of the generalization of culture or the levelling of living standards represented the trend of the times.

In contrast, the decade of the 1930's saw a decrease in the living standard. The difficulty of living and the difficulty of getting employed both attest to the increased poverty and economic instability, and contributed to the rise and suppression of various social movements and labour movements. The atmosphere of the times was fluid; there appeared, especially in Tokyo, a number of amusement centres where modern modes of life set the pattern of mass consumption. In those days, prefixing the adjectives *bunka* (cultural)⁵ and *modan* (modern) to novel things was in vogue, so, for example, *bunka seikatsu* (living), *bunka jūtaku* (dwelling), *bunka kamisori* (razors), *bunka nabe* (casseroles), *modan bōi* [*mobo*] (modern boys), *modan gāru* [*moga*] (modern girls), etc., and they were deprecated as decadent "modern disease." In music, jazz and versions of American popular songs flourished.

Thus, the period from the latter half of the 1920's to the beginning of the 1930's is called the era of modernism. This era, however, was also termed an "era without hope for tomorrow." Amusement was nothing more than "life in the streets" where the one could take a brief

⁵ Although *bunka* corresponds to "culture" in English, *bunka* has further particular connotations in Japanese as, for example, convenience, efficiency, modernism, novelty, simplicity, rationality.

respite from the worries of everyday life; nowhere else could one seek "freedom," and forget momentarily sense of tension and crisis, as well as the hardships of life. The hectic spirit of the times may be said to have played the role of a "mental buffer" against the swelling of crises and the sharpening of thought control with the progress of Fascism; in short, it provided temporary escape for the people who could not stop the drift towards the abyss of Fascism.

C. The exhaustion of rural communities is a prominent feature of the 1930's. Labourers from rural communities flowed out to the cities as "emigrant workers," but instead of becoming modern urban workers, they merely sought for temporary jobs, maintaining with their permanent residences and moral base in the rural communities. In contrast to outflow of labour, urban culture flowed into the rural communities through the nation-wide communication media. From this arose the phenomenon of conflict between cities (especially Tokyo) and the prefectural rural communities. A typical pattern within mass culture may be seen in the allure that gay urban life had for youths coming to the city for temporary work, while at the same time they looked to their home towns in rural Japan for a moral basis to their lives. This pattern has, until today, constituted one aspect of mass culture. For example, it has been observed by Sonobe Saburō 園部三郎 that ever since the pathetic melody *Sendō kouta* 船頭小唄 (Boatman Song) became a hit in 1921, a pattern of "Miyakobushi tunes and minor scale excluding the fourth (F) and the seventh (H-flat) notes"⁶ has been a feature of Japanese popular songs, and that the lyrics of many of these songs have been concerned with the relationship between cities and rural communities.

D. Early in the morning of February 26, 1936, the prime minister's official residence and other public and private buildings were raided by 1,400 soldiers, mainly of the Third Imperial Guard Infantry Regiment, led by a group of young officers of the Kōdōha 皇道派 (Imperial Way Faction) who cherished a concept of an Emperor-centred *kokutai* 國體 (national polity) and aimed at Fascist revolution by military coup. This incident, although brought under control in four days, marked the greatest uprising in the history of Japanese Fascism. The young officers, the core of the coup, resorted to armed action in an attempt to clean up the political and military world corrupted by conspiracies between the

⁶ Sonobe Saburō, *Nippon minshū kayōshi kō* 日本民衆歌謡史考 (Study in the History of Japan's Popular Songs), Tokyo, Asahi shimbunsha, 1962. This musical scale, which reminded the Japanese of the traditional scales of the *shamisen*, a stringed instrument, successfully expressed the melancholic atmosphere that is peculiar in the Japanese music.

financial cliques and the military hierarchy. To their peculiarly moral way of thinking, the development of mass culture in the first half of the 1930's was nothing other than an orgy. The young officers did not have any particular ideology of their own; however, the incident might properly be called the last pre-war large-scale renovation movement sympathetic to the people, in that on principle, the officers hoped to relieve the plight of the people, particularly those in the rural communities where most of soldiers came from. Actually, however, the outcome was quite different from what they had intended. Though it was the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese Incident in the following year, 1937, that doomed Japan to the Second World War, people's "freedom" was to lose ground continuously after the February 26th Incident. Particularly symbolic is the fact that newspaper offices and radio stations were not occupied in the Incident. Newspaper offices were raided, but the radio stations were not. It is ironic, however, that the radio message entitled "The soldiers are requested to take notice" became the last words in bringing the incident under control.

Thus, from 1937 on, mass culture was to be overwhelmed by war-time colours. And it was none other than the nation-wide media, the radio and the press, that instigated this tendency. It may also be noted, however, that it was the Emperor's war-terminating message broadcast on August 15 that saved the situation in the defeat of 1945. And it was as a result of the nation-wide information networks that had been so elaborately developed during the war, that a nation-wide democratic atmosphere made headway immediately after the war.