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ESTUDIOS

Brief overview of the factual and onto-epistemological developments of the idea of "civil society" in Japan

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Brief overview of the factual and onto-epistemological developments of the idea of "civil society" in Japan

Breve recorrido por los desarrollos fácticos y onto-epistemológicos de la idea de "sociedad civil" en Japón

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Abstract: In the context of post-industrial societies, there are few resources left to ordinary citizens to respond to the totalizing logic of systemic dynamics characterized by the expansion of economic and formal subjectivity. Likewise, the damage done to the environment and the increasing incidence of natural disasters, both driven by anthropogenic action, make a more complex response from society necessary and, in turn, pose the need to find collective answers to transnational issues. This global situation leads us to consider how civil society can generate community cohesion, leverage common interest and respond to environmental problems. After several ethnographic investigations focused on social change in Japan, we identified some things that, together with the shocking initial images spread globally after the catastrophe of March 11, 2011 in Tōhoku, have helped us take the pulse of the associative Japanese world. These images highlighted some of the fundamental characteristics of Japanese civil society, contributing to the spread throughout the world of a series of constructs that are as typical of a society socially exemplary as they are culturally totalizing. It might seem the eleven years that have elapsed since the Triple Disaster of March 2011 in Japan have provided us with a broad perspective from which to interpret the dynamics of Japanese civil society and public administration in the face of these events. However, we consider that the analysis of socio-historical developments that embody Euro-Atlantic modernity, with indigenous cultural constructs and with globalization, is essential. For this reason, in this article, from the perspective of intellectual history and historical sociology, we will analyse the adaptability of the concept of civil society in Japan

and a whole series of social processes that have been gestating for decades and whose development is brought together in entities of great factual importance for the future.

Keywords: Japan, Triple Disaster, Civil society, State, NPO, Volunteer.

Resumen: *En el contexto de las sociedades posindustriales, quedan pocos recursos a los ciudadanos comunes para responder a la lógica totalizadora de las dinámicas sistémicas caracterizadas por la expansión de la subjetividad económica y formal. Asimismo, los daños que se están produciendo al medio ambiente y la creciente incidencia de los desastres naturales, ambos impulsados por la acción antrópica, hacen necesaria una respuesta más compleja por parte de la sociedad y, a su vez, plantean la necesidad de encontrar respuestas colectivas a cuestiones transnacionales. Esta situación global nos obliga a plantearnos cómo la sociedad civil puede generar cohesión comunitaria, potenciar el interés común y dar respuesta a los problemas ambientales. Tras varias investigaciones etnográficas centradas en el cambio social en Japón, identificamos algunas cosas que, junto con las impactantes imágenes iniciales difundidas globalmente tras la catástrofe del 11 de marzo de 2011 en Tōhoku, nos han ayudado a tomar el pulso al mundo asociativo japonés. Estas imágenes destacaron algunas de las características fundamentales de la sociedad civil japonesa, contribuyendo a la difusión por el mundo de una serie de constructos tan propios de la sociedad socialmente ejemplar como culturalmente totalizante. Podría parecer que los once años transcurridos desde el Triple Desastre de marzo de 2011 en Japón nos han brindado una amplia perspectiva desde la cual interpretar la dinámica de la sociedad civil y la administración pública japonesa frente a estos hechos. Sin embargo, consideramos que el análisis de los desarrollos socio históricos que encarnan la modernidad euroatlántica, con construcciones culturales exógenas y con la globalización, es esencial. Por ello, en este artículo, desde la perspectiva de la historia intelectual y la sociología histórica, analizaremos la adaptabilidad del concepto de sociedad civil en Japón y toda una serie de procesos sociales que se vienen gestando desde hace décadas y cuyo desarrollo se conjuga en entidades de gran importancia fáctica para el futuro.*

Palabras clave: *Japón, Triple Desastre, sociedad civil, Estado, OSAL, voluntariado.*

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I. **Introduction**

Koselleck highlighted the importance of the genealogical analysis of the changes in the chain of meanings and signifiers, and of the contextual transformation of the value systems of the sphere of ideas over time. Therefore, all historical reflection must begin with an understanding of cultural practices delimited by the sociopolitical particularity of their context and their evolution over time[1]. This type of perception has always guided my academic work, and therefore supports this critical approach to both the development of the concept of "civil society" and its subsequent factual developments. We speak about a form of social articulation that has been acquiring meaning in a specific Western context and whose load, in its meaning, has been projected from Antiquity to the present, its operation in Japan, sociologically speaking, being similar to what we observe in Euro-Atlantic societies.

In this sense, a critical approach to the idea of civil society requires fundamental work branching out into the socio-historical, intellectual and political analysis of various layers of complex reality. To carry out this objective, the development of a state of the art that understands the evolution of the concept of civil society in the West, the epistemological impact of Western modernity in Japan and, therefore, the adaptability of this concept for the future is a *sine qua non* condition analysis of the associative sphere dynamics in this context.

If we go back genealogically to the constitution of the concept of civil society, this concept is dialectically prefigured through a process that started when Aristotle[2] and Cicero[3] began to define the opposition of the binomial private public sphere, and continued in the Middle Ages with Saint Thomas Aquinas[4]. In this period, the idea of "civil society" gradually took shape through the differentiation of society from the State, and the separation of the spiritual and ideological from the temporal and political. The subsequent social fragmentation of the old feudal order, and the rise of

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[1] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futuro-pasado. Sobre una semántica de los tiempos históricos* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2003), 14-16.

[2] Christoph Horn, «Law, governance, and political obligation», in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics* ed. by Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2003), 223-244.

[3] Marco Tulio Cicerón, *Sobre la República,* trans. Álvaro D'Ors (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1991), 68-74.

[4] David Pavón Cuéllar and José Manuel Sabucedo, «El concepto de "sociedad civil: breve historia de su elaboración teórica», *Araucaria Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades* 11, nº 21 (2009): 63-92. https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/282/28211600004.pdf

some sectors of the bourgeoisie and the generation of new ties between the State and the development of modern individual subjectivity, will give rise to a progression of the concept along the lines of classical contractualism and early liberal theory. As heirs of their context, Hobbes[5] and Locke[6] generated a dialectical confrontation between traditional power and the new legitimacies and forms of authority that they themselves represented. Rousseau also understood in a contractual line that civil society is the political conception of the government as representative of the general will[7]. Outside the current of classical contractualism, illustrated as Montesquieu[8], in a pre-revolutionary context, conceived that civil society was based on a specific right that differentiated it from political society, while Ferguson, in its socio- history of industrial revolution, opposed the idea of economic society and military (understood as civil society) to the honor of the military world[9]. Years later, but in similar intellectual positions, Stuart Mill understood civil society as a form of resistance against different forms of political tyranny[10]. Tocqueville, from his side, in the post-revolutionary contexts of the 13 North American colonies and the French Revolution, extolled the voluntary associationism of civil society as opposed to permanent associations[11].

Up to this point, we have seen how the concept of "civil society" was eminently linked to the legal appearance of the citizen in Greco-Latin politics and its evolution associated with the strength of a liberal bourgeoisie that little by little made its way into Western modernity. In order to provide a certain structure of plausibility to the applicability of this term in the Japanese sphere, we have taken into account the origin factor as a starting point. The cross-cultural operation of a concept such as civil society in the Japanese world, whose core structure lies in very specific

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[5] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* ed. Bart Molesworth (UK: Penguin Classics, 2017), 129-144.

[6] John Locke, *Segundo Tratado sobre el Gobierno Civil: un ensayo acerca del verdadero origen, alcance y fin del gobierno civil*, trans. Carlos Mellizo (Madrid: Tecnos, 2006), 89-109.

[7] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Two "Discourses" and the "Social Contract"*, trans. John Scott (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 77-148.

[8] Montesquieu, *El espíritu de las leyes*, trans. Demetrio Castro (Madrid: Istmo, 2002), 603-645.

[9] Adam Ferguson, *Ensayo sobre la historia de la sociedad civil*, trans. María Isabel Wences Simon (Madrid: Akal, 2010), 44-77.

[10] John Stuart Mill, *Sobre la libertad*, ed. by César Ruiz Sanjuán (Madrid: Akal, 2014), 16-17.

[11] Alexis de Tocqueville. *La democracia en América*, trans. Héctor Ruiz Rivas (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2019), 223-372.

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historical and sociopolitical developments in the European world, continues to be an object of open discussion. In this sense, the justification for its use must necessarily be given through a deep understanding of the phenomena of epistemological coloniality that the Euro-Atlantic world exercises through the political-cultural relations between the Japanese elites during the constitution of the nation-state in the Japanese archipelago. Hence, in this article, we devote a considerable part to four contexts in which fundamental changes of long duration take place. We will start with the Meiji Restoration and some developments that occurred in the interwar period, we will continue with the postwar period that includes the US occupation after 1945 and finally we will finish our ethnographic analysis of the transformations generated in the associative sphere after natural catastrophes and human lives occurring after 1995 and 2011.

II. **Euro-Atlantic modernity and the Meiji State**

Although there is a large volume of academic literature on what the different facets of modernity have represented for the rest of the world, we will situate ourselves in the orbit of the works of Emanuel Wallerstein, Stephen Toulmin, Ramón Grosfoguel, Hans Blumemberg and Enrique Dussel. Dussel presents us with modernity as a European age of the world, which has a centrifugal or *ad extra impact* on an important part of the planet and simultaneously a centripetal or *ad intra return* of the information that the world has about it. This means that the European elites could handle the information of the peripheral ecumenes[12]. As Dussel and Wallerstein[13] say, this process will allow, in its different stages, the management of the centrality of the "world system" through an exercise of domination of multiple dimensions of the life of the colonized through what they called Boas[14], Krotz[15], Demorgon[16]and Grosfoguel[17], as processes of transculturation, acculturation and colonization of being.

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[12] Enrique Dussel, *1492: El encubrimiento del otro: hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1992), 22-23.

[13] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Análisis de sistemas-mundo: Una introducción* (Ciudad de México: Siglo XXI, 2005).

[14] Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1991).

[15] Estaban Krotz, «Alteridad y pregunta antropológica», *Alteridades* 8, nº 4 (1994): 5-11.

[16] Jacques Demorgon, *Critique de l'interculturel. L'horizon de la sociologie* (París: Anthropos Economica, 2005).

[17] Ramon Grosfoguel, *Unsetling postcoloniality: coloniality, transmodernity and border thinking* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Modernity in the words of Toulmin was born from the bankruptcy of the ancient cosmopolis, from a decomposition of the classical natural and human order, whose harmony had to be replaced[18]. This replacement will come hand in hand with an early phase characterized by the opening of Spain and Portugal to the Atlantic in the 16th century and their expansion (thanks to the Portuguese technical-naval progress of the caravel) throughout South America and North Africa with the creation of an empire system. In the economic sphere, it was defined by non-industrial capitalist mercantile structures, while in the cultural plane the strength of humanistic paradigms is observed. Scholars and scientists such as Nicolaus Copernicus, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Rabelais, Montaigne, among others, who, in contrast to medieval scholasticism, advocated greater tolerance and a return to Greco-Latin culture as a means to restore human values, would mainly construct the Renaissance-humanist moment.

Such current would collide head on with reactionary Catholic cultural groups based on the ideology of the Council of Trent, and on the work of the Spanish Inquisition, as well as the Portuguese and Roman ones. This counter-reformist replica will be a fundamental motor for the religious worldviews linked to these groups of mendicant and Jesuit orders to penetrate Japan. This first impact comes from the hand of the Iberian powers with a first attempt at rapprochement from the economic, technical and spiritual spheres, and whose significance is relatively limited. The initial thrust of early modernity finds its scientific-economic continuity with Dejima's Dutch connection and Dutch studies. However, the real extent of the impact of such influences is difficult to measure.

III. *Bakufu* crisis and evolution of the associative sphere in Meiji

Although in the Tokugawa period, the penetration of European thought had been developed through Dutch studies or *rangaku*, the residue that these had left in the sphere of the intelligentsia as well as in social debate was limited. With the exception of some intellectuals (Sugita Seikei, Sakuma Shosan, Yoshida Shoin, etc), the long-term worldviews mediated by Confucian ethics had not been transcended either epistemologically or ontologically. However, the Meiji Restoration transformed this reality by widening the gateway to the new axiomatic systems of classical European modernity. The expansion and adoption of a vision of reality based on the

[18] Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmópolis. El trasfondo de la modernidad* (Península: Barcelona, 2001), 13-17.

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bunmei kaika[19] were made possible through the great efforts of scholars like Fukuzawa Yukichi, who introduced and spread the concepts of civilization and enlightenment. The cultural load of these concepts was given precisely by the ways of thinking of the liberal intellectuals of the European enlightenment and their visions of linear positivist progression. This conception, based on the achievements of the technology and social sciences of Western powers, generated a perception of inferiority that caused the processes of intellectual self -colonization and transculturation to leave a very deep residue in the mentalities of scholars and politicians. Western civilization was becoming a *de facto* horizon to aspire to, at least until a similar technical development was achieved.

The analysis of sociopolitical and intellectual developments indicates that these final decades of the 19th century, both the members of the Iwakura mission and other intellectuals[20] managed to establish the structural bases of a cultural hegemony —which we understand in a Gramsci-Bordieu line of thought — based on the ideological precepts of progress, science and rationality from classical European modernity. This meant that in the initial process of creating the modern Japanese nation-state, all the scaffolding had its origin in the political-administrative developments of the Western powers. On the one hand, the creation of a recruitment system (in which Nishi Amane and Mori Arinori were fundamental) and a modern centralized army, which was based on a Franco-Prussian base, passing completely to the model of the German Empire after 1885[21]. Second, the educational model, as Lincicome points

[19] The old catchphrase *fukoku kyōhei*, enrich the nation and strengthen the army disappeared in favor of new discursive rhetoric represented by the *bunmei maxim kaika* (文明開化) or "civilization and enlightenment". *Bunmei kaika* in these years it became part of official and popular use (we are talking about the wealthy classes), being representative of the orientation taken by the political forces and the general mood of the 1870s.

[20] Nakae Chōmin (translator and defender of Rousseau's libertarian positions); Nakamura Masanao (promoter of Humanism and the thought of Mill and Smiles); Kanda Takahira (great connoisseur and applicator of Ellis's economic postulates in Hokkaidō); Tanaka Fujimaro (excellent expert on the American educational system); Tsuda Sen (driver of equal educational opportunities for women and a great connoisseur of European agricultural techniques); or Kato Hiroyuki (driver of European law and the division of powers in Japan), among many others.

[21] Nishi Amane at this time was also introducing an exegetical, if not hermeneutical, understanding of spheres of modern Western political-philosophical thought, especially Comte's positivism and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. This generated several very important dynamics, on the one hand, it helped the introduction of Anglo-European political philosophy both in the political sphere and in educational plans, to the detriment of Neo-Confucian ways of thinking. On the other hand, appropriating Western philosophy meant modeling the written language of Japan, as evidenced by the appearance of a new conceptual field of European origin – extensively worked on by Maraldo (1995) – such as *ideorogī* (ideology),

out, had been evolving from of 1871, moving from a Franco-American model to an increasingly British one after the Iwakura mission, arriving at an Anglo-Prussian model in the 1980s[22]. Thirdly, the bureaucratic-administrative structures, which using Weber's typology[23], used elements of contemporary European instrumental rationality imported by Soejima Taneomi and Fukuoka Takachika, mixed according to Kornicki, with the organizational reminiscences of the *Daijō kan* (太政官) of the Nara- Heian period , known in Meiji as "State Department"[24]. In turn, the legal system was adapting depending on the mobility and weight of the political forces of the system. A more or less sharp dichotomy is observed in the political thought of the liberal-democratic tendencies of the periphery and the reactionary-statist tendencies of the center.[25] Despite the primacy of the latter over the former, spaces of social pressure were being created that prefigured de *facto —although* not de *jure—*, the germ of what would later be called civil society. The intellectual ideology of the early years of Fukuzawa, Chōmin and in general of many of the *Meirokusha intellectuals* was promoted by grassroots social movements such as *Risshisha* or *Jijosha,* crystallizing in the 1980s with Itagaki Taisuke, in the creation of the *Jiyūtō* or "Liberal party". These movements —essentially made up of former *samurai* and peasants who remained outside the Meiji elite—, together with others that appeared later such as the *Daidō Danketsu Undo,* the *Kyūshū Dōshikai* or the more conservative *Sandaijiken Kempaku Undō*, did not

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tōtorojī (tautology) or *tēma* (theme) that, among many other concepts, ended up forming an important part of the intellectual spectrum used in higher education.

Arinori for his part, through his publications in *Meirokusha*, had promoted and introduced in Japan the ideas he had taken from European liberalism, such as liberal democracy, egalitarianism between men and women (except political participation and voting) and freedom of religion.

[22] Mark Elwood Lincicome, *Principle, Praxis and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 17-18.

[23] Max Weber, *La ética protestante y el "espíritu" del capitalismo* (Madrid: Alianza editorial, 2001).

[24] Peter Kornicki, *Meiji Japan: Political, Economic and Social History 1868-1912* (Routledge: London, 1998).

[25] Although perhaps, in a certain way, a different approach could lead us to the conclusion that the paradoxes might not be so deep. Given the alleged sharp dichotomy between liberal-democratic and reactionary-statist tendencies in political thought, a type of epochal intellectual coherence is observed, which identifies "Meiji conservatism" as a dominant ideology shared by a number of allegedly divided camps, defining it as a particularly modern mode of political understanding, required by a highly fluid world, where unthinking traditionalism is no longer a viable operation. Neither statically Confucian nor radically individualistic, Meiji conservatism permeated even the political thinking of a number of *Meirokusha* firmly committed to enlightening their members, as well as leaders of avowed nationalist associations such as the *Seikyosha*.

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achieve the constitution of a liberal democracy based on a national assembly. However, they were able to achieve the creation of a Diet and a Constitution, diversifying the political spectrum[26]. This shows that regardless of the final triumph of the discourse on national corporatism, the constitutional system was elaborated through a process of encounter, negotiation, and linkage with the principles of Western civilization resulting in its acceptance and assimilation. The entry into force of the *Dai Nippon Teikoku Kenpō* (大日本帝國憲法) or "Constitution of the Great Japanese Empire" in 1890 and together with the Imperial Education Edict of the same year, reflected the aforementioned and closed the constitutive structure of the modern Japanese nation-state-empire, according to Paine[27].

In summary, the understanding of the construction process and the achievements of the Meiji State contribute several fundamental elements to our investigation. On the one hand, the conditions of epistemological possibility were generated so that the worldviews of the Enlightenment and European bourgeois liberalism would penetrate Japan and, with it, the conceptions of social evolution associated with these lines of thought. This led to the creation of a new conceptual corpus that radiated to all spheres of intellectual life and gradually settled in the collective consciousness of part of the popular classes. A corpus that transformed the foundation of the normative orientation of social action, which, in turn, would crystallize in the socio-cultural dynamics that we will see in the Taishō era and the early years of Shōwa. This phenomenon would be generated with the assumption of certain liberal assumptions of the Enlightenment, such as: citizenship, society, justice, freedom, "civil" movement, universal reason and social right, which, among others, gave dimension to a new socio-political reality that operated at new levels through the colonization of cultural codes of Sinic origin.[28] These plot developments have their visible face first with the

[26] Although the opening of the Imperial Diet in 1890 led to the re-establishment of the *Jiyūto party* under the name *Rikken Jiyūto* his operability did not last long, Itagaki like other occidentalists would end up being assimilated by the *Genrō* (元老) becoming interior minister in 1896.

[27] Sarah Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perception, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47.

[28] The intellectuals of the Iwakura mission (1871) came into contact with a reality whose organizational forms of the social substratum considered as a third state were eminently different in their country of origin. Upon returning to Japan with all the knowledge acquired for the construction of the incipient Meiji Nation-State, the "civilian" concept would end up being omitted (Iwakura *et al*., 1878, p. 82-97). Given that with the Restoration the ideals around the emperor promoted (among other ideological forces) by the *mitogaku* current triumphed, the sociopolitical concept of a Western citizen is seen as something illegitimate. The most widespread idea and assumed by the popular classes was that everyone is subject to the Emperor. In this sense, the Meiji monarchy will establish a monarchical absolutism that will last until 1945.

appearance of grassroots social movements such as *Risshisha* and *Jijosha*, and second with the use of terms such as *Jiyū Minken Undō* or "Free Civil Rights Movement" in the constitution of the Itagaki Taisuke Liberal Party in whose semantic load the basis of European and American liberal law is observed. I consider that this perfectly reflected the nature of the social and political proposals that will underpin both the intellectual debate and the subsequent factual dynamics of civil society in Japan. Despite the fact that the figure of the Emperor and the expansion and prevalence of national corporatism thought would limit the possibility of a public discourse in which civil society was discussed, —since legally everyone was a subject of the Emperor— there was a reality latent liberal, used both by interest groups and their social movements and by opposition parties. These impulses, despite being constantly blocked and sometimes repressed by the central power, would crystallize in the "democracy" of the Taishō era.

IV. **Evolution of "civil society" during the interwar period**

The internal dynamics in the socio-political and economic sphere, together with the relocation of Japan in an international context monopolized by Western powers in the factual-ideological and adding Russia in the latter, shaped the public sphere of the Taishō era. In the Taishō era, referring to the typology of McAdams, McCarthy and Zald[29], the structure of political opportunities, mobilization and cultural frameworks were strongly transformed[30]. Especially after 1918, the identity repertoire associated with the class had expanded, giving rise to a multitude of new groups under the umbrella of common interest. The factor of ascription to a socioeconomic stratum had a certain importance, but it no longer had anything to do with the remnants associated with the status that passed from the Tokugawa to Meiji period and that acted as a limiting factor in the development of civil society at this time. Individuals from the Taishō period and the early Shōwa period came together freely to promote common goals, such as the right to unionize or universal suffrage. The initial uncritical assumption of a historical experience based on the cultural forms of Euro-American modernity —forms of thought, art, fashion,

[29] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald, C*omparative Perspectives on Social Movements Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[30] Mayer Zald, «Epilogue: Social Movements and Political Sociology in the Analysis of Organizations and Markets», *Administrative Science Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (2008): 568-574, doi.org/10.2189/asqu.53.3.568

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architecture and individualistic consumerist lifestyles associated with a materialistic perception of life, etc. — endowed it with a certain triviality to the incipient Japanese mass culture. However, the confluence and reinforcement of new and old ideologies such as liberal democracy and the currents of libertarian socialism which, together with Marxism, promoted the labor movement, allowed new emancipatory discourses for the civil society of the moment.

Sociopolitical analysis tells us that the proliferation of the ideals of democracy are linked to the expansion of civil society and the emergence of new social movements. For this, the existence of an intellectual base that elaborates, supports the discourse and expands it, as well as a context that legitimizes it, is fundamental. The dynamics of negotiation and the increase in the agency capacity of other more rebellious groups between 1918 and 1930 gave rise to the appearance of new academics and professionals who functioned as intermediaries of modernity. Somehow, they were representatives of neither the State nor part of the popular layers. Therefore, these people were educated elites who became spokespersons and shapers of new social realities, which we could synthesize in a pre-war "middle class" society. Moves like the *Shinjin Kai* or "Modern People's Association", composed of students from the University of Tokyo and also Keio University, or the *Reimeikai* group or "Sunrise Society" Yoshino Sakuzō, Fukuda Tokuzō, Kitazawa Shinjiro and other professors —in total more than forty— from universities such as Hitotsubashi, Keio and Waseda, expanded the message about certain perceptions of democracy —and, therefore, surreptitiously, of the implications of "citizen" participation in it— based on a sense of liberalism adapted to the Japanese historical trajectory. As Yoshino Sakuzō indicate, these groups understood democracy through *minshu shugi* "popular sovereignty" and *minpon shōgi* concepts, in the sense that the people are the base and end of the government[31]. The relevance of these lines of thought lies in the fact that until well into the 1920s, the majority parties organized the cabinet without hardly counting on other social forces. Social pressure generated a temporary change in this area, fundamental to which was the impact of these movements on the proposals for universal male suffrage between 1925 and 1927[32].

To the perceptions about what civil society represented, also different intellectuals of the previous groups ascribed to the statist tradition of the

[31] Sakuzō Yoshin, *Hakushi minshu shugi ronshū* (Tōkyō: Shin Kigensha, 1948), 37-38.

[32] Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Hegel[33] and Marx[34] lines in which civil society is embedded in the world of struggle of classes and is dominated by the bourgeois class that acts hegemonically within the conformation of the State. Hence, they considered that the corporations of the socialist State had the obligation to control it. This ideological position, together with the proposals of marxians such as Gramsci[35], penetrated fully into the Marxist debates called *Kōza ha* or "Academic Faction" and *Rōnō ha* or "Agricultural and Labor Faction"[36].

The muscle and resources of various interest groups complemented the discursive and intellectual substratum of the previous groups. On the one hand, *Shinjikai* established synergies with the *Dai Nihon Rōdō Sōdōmei Yūaikai* or "Great Japan Labor Friendship Club Union Alliance" a labor union group that had evolved from Suzuki Bunji´s Christian self-help group of 1912, —supported by Shibusawa Eiichi — through the incorporation of structural elements obtained from the United States Labor Union. In 1919, this group was made up of a wing of social democratic tendencies and another of communist tendencies, which due to different methods of struggle and ideology would separate after 1925[37].

On the other hand, the members of *Kensetsusha Domei* as Miyake Shōichi who, through his work defending human rights and small farmers in Kisaki and Fuseishi, joined and gave discursive force to the *Nihon payroll Kumiai* or *Nichinō* a peasant union led by Sugiyama Motojirō and Toyohiko Kagawa. *Nichinō*, in the words of Smethurst[38], represented the first national agrarian union of small farmers. This group had originated through the grievances suffered by agrarian tenants regarding the tax claims of landowners in a time of high inflation. The first, as Vanoverbeke[39] mentions, conceived the landed, political and judicial elite as the enemy,

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[33] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1955).

[34] Karl Marx, *Introducción a la Crítica a la filosofía del derecho de Hegel* (Murcia: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002).

[35] Gramsci on the theoretical basis of Marxism, developed a critical reflection on the class nature of state power and the profound role of civil society in the construction of hegemonic power.

[36] These two large groups clashed in a dialectical discussion between 1932 and 1937 that would lead to two lines of thought with Marxist roots, which, lasted in the post-war period and for decades had great significance in the field of social science.

[37] Dorothy Sue Cobble, «Japan and the 1919 ILO Debates», in *The ILO from Geneva to the Pacific Rim: West Meets East* ed. by Jill M. Jensen, Nelson Lichtenstein (Hampshire: International Labour Organization and Palgrave Macmillan), 59-65.

[38] Richard Smethurst, *Agricultural Development and Tenancy Disputes in Japan, 1870-1940* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 72-73.

[39] Dimitri Vanoverbeke, *Community and State in the Japanese Farm Village: Farm Tenancy Conciliation (1924-1938)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 121-122.

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because the economic situation of 1917 had undermined the prestige of the elites, who had generally acted as a placating element of the demands on economic justice of the tenant farmers. Hence that struggle for survival that we see in 1918 with the aforementioned *kome sodō* [40] or "rice riots", which in turn mark a turning point in the organization of popular political protests from this time. Due to the coexistence of various ideologies, ranging from the most conservative spectrum to the acceptance of the new socialist and communist currents, this group would also end up dividing, with the left wing remaining more mobile until 1928.

The study of the creation and symbiotic relationships of these groups offers us information on how some of the forms of Japanese civil society were taking shape, and how they were projected outside the sphere of State control thanks to the permeability or conscious assumption of European, American and Russian historical experience in the different strata of the popular layers. We observed that the ideological residue of Meiji liberalism had been developing in the universities, reproducing among the cultural elites, and projecting itself to other strata, giving rise with its expansion to a new culture of masses and consumption that crystallized between 1918 and the beginning of 1930. To the search for political representation pursued by members of the liberal professions, less favored socioeconomic groups were added, such as workers in large factories (we cannot forget that Japan was becoming a highly industrialized country). They fought with the elements that the new currents of Marxist and socialist ideology gave them, against the collusion between political society —represented by the State and the big bureaucracy— and the world of big industrial capital, embodied in the *zaibatsu* (財閥) or "big corporations". While the post-war context had impoverished small farmers —who were fighting for reduced income—, the economic boom emboldened precarious urban workers, who, through joining unions and the development of strikes. They pressed to achieve from the simple improvement of working conditions in the most moderate groups, to political and structural changes proposed by the most combative wings such as the communist union group *Hyōgikai*.

However, the militarization of the regime intensified between 1937 and 1940, when all spheres of associative life, the groups and unions that still remained, were forced to dissolve and join those created by the State. For example, Watanabe[41] indicates that all women's youth organizations were

[40] The 1918 rice riots had nationally known repercussions, strongly demonstrating how popular sentiment could manifest itself.

[41] Yoko Watanabe. «Women, Work, and Education in Modern Japan. An observation of the career life and the social role of Yayoi Yoshioka», *Kurenai*, n.º 11, (2011): 25-46. http://id.ndl.go.jp/bib/027211505

forced to merge into the *Joshiseinendan* or "Group of young women", while in the male field the young people were integrated into the *Yokusan Seinendan* or "Youth Support Corps" (to the Imperial Regime of Greater Japan). The housewives' associations and other women's groups that were still operating ended up agglutinating in the main group of patriotic women, the *Dai Nippon Aikoku Fujinkai* or "Greater Japan Women's Patriotic Association", which according to Wilson[42] had 27 million members throughout the empire.

In conclusion, by 1940, most non-governmental associations, farmer' leagues, teachers' and writers' guilds, business federations or women's groups were forced to dissolve and join official patriotic associations. As a trend that would reach its greatest projection at the end of the 1930s, the *Naimushō bureaucrats* managed to impose a command structure on local life, which meant the homogenization of the pre-existing associative mosaic. In addition, the organizational monopolization that occurred under the patriotic and nationalist umbrella of the *Taisei Yokusankai* or "Imperial Rule Assistance Association" almost completely obliterated the autonomy of the public initiative. As we will see in the next section, the defeat of Japan in World War II would represent a new stage for Japanese civil society.

Thus, broadly speaking, up to 1945 we can synthesize the organizational typology of the associative sphere in three main forms. In the first place, in a variant closer to the developments that today we consider to be the ideal aspirational form, that is, a quasi-apolitical conception of civil society, established in small niches based on ethics and morals, mainly charity, care, the education. On the other hand, a second form, whose democratic and/or social liberation expectations produced an important rejection of the State philosophical-political justification of the imperial system and whose positioning would quickly end up placing them as an element of opposition to the State. This provision would lead these movements to end up buried under the State sanctions (prohibition, control and censorship regime) of the last interwar period. And finally, thirdly, a form characterized by the ramifications subsumed and absorbed by the State, which act as a gloomy instrumental counterpoint and represent the totalizing homogenization and absolute control of the State over the public sphere, especially visible after 1937.

Despite the above, regardless of the type of general guidelines in which civil society developed, it always faced an ideological-structural problem that derived from the way in which power was conceived both by government elites and by a very important part of the population. The problem was that the various proponents of the State, regardless of their ideological positions

[42] Sandra Wilson, «Family or state?: Nation, war, and gender in Japan, 1937–45», *Critical Asian Studies* 2, n.º 38 (2006): 209-238.

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whether they were conservative, Marxist, or liberal, assumed that there was a single, easily identifiable *locus* of authority—the state-empire—that was clearly discernible in the larger field of political practice. As a point of view inherited from the Meiji State, the public good was necessarily inextricably linked to everything that conformed in harmony with the objectives of the State. Only the State was capable of defining both the public interest and its nature with sufficient legitimacy, hence the general perception of spontaneous groups, regardless of their purpose, always generated a high degree of suspicion. With different levels of laxity or closure —depending on the evolution of the sociopolitical context of the time—, everything that went against the will of the government or that it did not legitimize, was not attributed a public value. In other words, what was considered good for society was so insofar as it had been shown to be in harmony with the interests of the State. The thought pattern inherited from the Edo period, synthesized in the concept of *kanson minpi,* which literally meant respect or exaltation of authority and denigration (or at the expense) of the common citizen, was so deeply ingrained that not even all the small qualitative and quantitative leaps that occurred in the civil society of the Taishō period and part of Shōwa were able to change it. In fact, if I may excurse, we can venture that the privileged place occupied by the bureaucracy as a fundamental political actor allows us to recognize a long-term pattern characterized by "soft" authoritarianism. This type of structural slab constantly conditioned the development of the public sphere, whose initial drives and original proposals always ended up being absorbed or influenced by its relationship with the State. However, although during the interwar period civil society had different moments of greater or lesser autonomy, with a tendency of the State towards the end of the period to erase any heterodox elements obstructing its expansionist and imperial project, the Japanese society of the end of the 1930s was much more heterogeneous and politically literate than it had been at the beginning of the Taishō period. Therefore, the repression exerted by State dynamics would not fully subsume the critical drives of pre-existing emancipating social action, as we will see after the Second World War.

V. **Civil society and social movements in postwar Japan**

In the previous section, on the one hand, we have analyzed the conditioning factors and the historical-factual developments both in the socioeconomic plane and in that of political philosophy, which gave rise to the creation of an incipient civil society in Japan. However, the forms of articulation society-state did not allow for the necessary conditions of possibility for the appearance of a sustainable public discourse on the social

category that now concerns us. The space that allowed for the development of the public sphere after the defeat of Japan after the Second World War enables us to glimpse, a priori, new social dynamics and discursive margins. Thus, we will dedicate the beginning of this chapter to the elaboration of a reconstruction of the context and later an analysis of the transformations of the theoretical aspect of the term.

In the summer of 1945, Imperial Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allies, in compliance with the Potsdam Declaration. The radio broadcast of the event, carried out by the emperor himself, had fundamental consequences for the development of civil society. The desecration of the figure of the *Tennō* meant the decomposition of imperial subjectivity and therefore the political use of its coercive symbolic value. With this, the delegitimization of the *Tennōsei* or "Imperial Regime" and the imposition of a democratic system by the *Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan* (SCAP) after the defeat in World War II enabled a legal space in which the subject no longer existed, if not the citizen, the civilian. We understand that this "liberation", although limited by different barriers, now gave the possibility of an ontological reconfiguration of the individual as an autonomous entity, capable of generating *shutaisei* in the sense of self-subjectivity, something that post-war thinkers like Maruyama Masao[43] and Ōtsuka Hisao[44], among others, considered a fundamental element of any true democratization.

It is essential to understand how, on an intellectual level, the idea of civil society began to develop in this period. In the European case, Khilani (2001) briefly mentions that the concept of "civil society" did not play any organic role, at least during the 1960s. The analyses carried out by representatives of the Frankfurt School with a clear disposition to theorize about social emancipation and associationism, such as Herbert Marcuse, or the arguments of liberal political theorists of the magnitude of Jacob Talmon, Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper, etc. suggest the same. All of them are committed to individual freedom and liberal values, and their theoretical bases observe a project of specification of the individual sphere and the limits of the political authority. However, it was precisely at this time that in Japan, anticipating the Prague Spring of 68, *Solidarność* and contemporary Western intellectuals, the theses of the old continent on civil society were taken up again. Although they did not carry any weight at that time outside of a very small academic

[43] Masao Maruyama, *Senchū to sengo no ma: 1936-1957* (Tōkyō, Misuzu Shobo, 2018), 174.

[44] Kazuhiki Kondo, «The Modernist Inheritance in Japanese Social Studies: Fukuzawa, Marxists and Otsuka Hisao» in *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600–2000: Volume II: The Political–Diplomatic Dimension, 1931–2000* ed. by Ian Nish y Yoichi Kibata (London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2002), 173-188.

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environment in Japan, Marxist and liberal thinkers of the caliber of Uchida Yoshihiko, Maruyama Masao or Hirata Kiyoaki generated a discourse that we value here.

As Barshay[45], Matsumoto[46] and Yamada[47] mention, the debate on *shimin shakai* or "Civil Society" reached its peak in Japan during the second half of the 1960s, especially with the work of Marxians like Uchida Yoshihiko and Hirata Kiyoaki. Indeed, Avenell[48] and Keane[49] point out that the discourse we observe in Japan in the 1960s probably represents the archetypal renewal of language about civil society and the State. We understand that it is precisely at this moment that it exercises an active category in Japanese social thought, since it was only after the post-war period that the necessary moral power and capacity for analysis were generated so that it made sense as something more than the translation of an allochthonous term.

Both Uchida[50] and Hirata[51] introduced significant advances in the epistemological constitution of the *shimin shakai* as a social category.[52] In the first place, giving a positive charge to the concept itself within the orthodox Hegelian-Marxist conception, in addition to reviving the reviled idea of individuality and property. They also introduced a fundamental idea, the consideration that civil society was not merely a historical phase. It was an ideal pan-historical social formation, latent in different socio-political systems that was based on human relations mediated by ethical-economic principles tending to prudence and equity. In addition, as an element that could serve as the very center of Marxist ethics, they introduced a fundamental idea: despite being intimately related, the link between capitalism and civil society could be extended, providing a critical

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[45] Andrew Barshay, *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions* (California: University of California Press, 2007).

[46] Reiji Matsumoto, «A historical repraissal of civil society discourse in postwar Japan» in *Globality, Democracy and Civil Society* ed. by Terrell Carver and Jens Bartelson, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 31-46.

[47] Toshio Yamada, *Contemporary Capitalism and Civil Society: The Japanese Experience* (Singapore, Springer, 2018).

[48] Simon Avenell, «Japan and the global revival of the "civil society" idea: contemporaneity and the retreat of criticality», *Japan Forum* 3, n.º 23 (2011): 311-338, doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2011.597510.

[49] John Keane. *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

[50] Yoshihiko Uchida. *Keizaku no seitan* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1989)

[51] Kiyoaki Hirata, *Shimin shakai to shakaishugi*, (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1969).
Kiyoaki Hirata, *Keizaigaku to Rekishi Ninshiki* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1971).

[52] We cannot forget either the contributions of Takashima Zen'ya, Ōtsuka Hisao, Kawashima Takeyoshi, Mochizuki Seiji and especially also outside the orbit of Marxism, Maruyama Masao contributed from a perspective relative to the analysis of democracy and the state.

perspective to the social sphere so that it could exercise ethical-moral guide of the economic sphere.

Lastly, Uchida and Hirata as inheritors of the *Kōza ha* and *Rōnō ha interwar debate*, as well as the confluence with other *kindaishugisha thinkers*, such as Maruyama Masao, Ōtsuka Hisao or Kawashima Takeyoshi, also deeply analyzed the forms of engagement of civil society with the State. Civil society was formed as a suppressive or limiting element of State control over society. For Uchida[53], the Japanese semi- feudal State before 1945, its paternalism and the traditional bureaucratic consideration of the members of society as if they were "minor", had to be overcome by the proliferation of a type of "new man" that promoted equitable ethical relations between autonomous individuals, understood as civil society. For Hirata[54], the context to dissolve was that of the authoritarian regimes of the Soviet bloc. Both thinkers would end up transcending the somewhat simplistic tones of their first visions, which were based on the assumption of the idea of Western linear positivism by the first of the group of liberal democratic theorists. Thus, in this way, they envisioned a more local struggle to make civil society exist in postwar Japan. They believed that the post-war struggle for civil society could be well organized within a libertarian socialism coupled with Japan's traditional communal political culture, and even wagered on the need to try to harness the potential within communal cultures in order to create civil society.

Traditionally, the Eurocentric narrative represented by a considerable number of major civil society theorists, such as Habermas[55], Cohen and Arato[56], Pérez[57], Bobbio[58], Brito[59], Kocka[60], Ehremberg[61], Elias[62] or Giner[63], to cite some of the referents assumed to be fundamental, has

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[53] Uchida, *Keizaku*…162.

[54] Hirata, *Keizaigaku*, 205.

[55] Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990).

[56] Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994).

[57] Víctor Pérez, «Sociedad civil: una interpretación y una trayectoria», *Isegoría*, n.º 13 (1996): 19-38, doi.org/10.3989/isegoria.1996.i13.224

[58] Norbeto Bobbio, *Gramsci y la concepción de la sociedad civil* (Barcelona: Avance, 1977).

[59] Enrique Brito, «Sociedad civil en México: análisis y debates», *Sociedad civil* 1, n.º 2 (1997): 190-213.

[60] Jürgen Kocka, «Zivilgesellschaft in historischer Perspektive» in *Zivilgesellschaft als Geschichte: Borgergesellschaft und Demokratie*, ed. by Ralph Jessen, Sven Reichardt and Ansga Klein (Heidelberg: Verlag Für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 29-42.

[61] John Ehremberg, «The History of Civil Society Ideas» in *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, ed. by Michael Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 15-25.

[62] Norbert Elias, *El proceso civilizador* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica de España, 2011).

[63] Salvador Giner, *Teoría sociológica clásica* (Barcelona: Ariel Ciencias sociales, 2011).

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pointed out that the roots of contemporary post-war interest in civil society lay in the disquisitions and discussions of some dissident intellectuals in Eastern Europe in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, a more holistic perspective provides a different view.

On the other hand, as regards the factual developments of the associative world during the second half of the 20th century, we see important grassroots movements The Korean War (1950-1953) as well as The Vietnam War (1955-1975) brought with them peace movements that integrated the previous groups. As Yamamoto[64] and Carlile[65] point out, groups of academics and intellectuals organized themselves in the *Heiwa Monday Danwaka*. Moreover, a collective made up of renowned intellectuals such as Maruyama Masao, Yoshino Genzaburō, Uehara Senrokyū, Shimizu Ikutarō, Nanbara Shigeru or Nakano Yoshio, among others, played a pioneering and fundamental role in drawing society's attention to cardinal issues such as peace and security. In addition, these peace movements established important synergies with the anti-nuclear movement in Japan formed after the 1954 event known as *Daigo fukuryū maru jiken* in which several fishermen suffered the consequences of the nuclear tests carried out by the Americans in Bikini Atoll. The event triggered the convergence of multiple civil society groups, which gave rise to the creation of a large national movement in pursuit of the prohibition of atomic bombs, the *Nihon no Gensuikin Undo*. Once again, multiple civil society groups appeared, organically constituting themselves through a large grassroots movement, and creating a turning point in the relationship between the de facto power and the ordinary citizen. This produced a task of disseminating knowledge that allowed the rest of the population to see more clearly the consequences of radioactivity on living beings in the short and medium term; taboo issues were also brought to the table, such as the suffering and stigmatization of the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the extension of previous movements and the appearance of new typologies. The Treaty of Cooperation and Mutual Security between Japan and the US known *as Anpo jōyaku*, led different groups in defense of peace to come together against the use of US military bases in Japanese territory for the Vietnam War and the reintegration of Okinawa under national sovereignty. The shelter for dissident US soldiers served as a catalyst for social change and for the collectives that made up *Beheiren —three* hundred at the time of greatest

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[64] Mari Yamamoto, *Grassroots Pacifism in Post-war Japan: The Rebirth of a Nation* (Abingdon: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 121.

[65] Lonny Carlile, «The labor movement» in *The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. by Alisa Gaunder (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 162-175.

heyday—*Beheiren* integrases, by defining themselves in relation to their American counterparts, concretized and promoted new conceptions for the formation of an autonomous Japanese subject[6667]. Since the organization did not have a membership system and participation was voluntary, we see that these new dynamics of collaboration and affiliation constituted a new form of citizenship and activism called *Shimin Undō* that will be fundamental for the configuration of subsequent movements and a civil society with greater autonomy and civic commitment in Japan.

Coincidentally, many of the trade union, consumer, and homemaker groups that had participated in the movements of the 1950s, and other new women's movements like *Tatakau Fujin* joined *Beheiren* in the protests strongly opposing Japan's role in the Vietnam War and in defense of the aforementioned proclamation[68]. The main contribution of this group to the configuration of the popular imaginary about civil society was, mainly, the conception that the defense of civil liberties should be carried out by conscientious citizens who were critical of both the State and the political parties, established trade union sectarianism and the different private interest groups. The autonomy of the citizens had to be acquired due to their own movement and be separated from the political sphere to avoid its distortion.

To all this dynamism and social problems was added a set of actions called *Yakugai Soshō*, a series of lawsuits brought by victims of dumping waste from the 1950s up to the 1970s. Some of the most alarming cases of industrial pollution during the 20th century occurred in Japan within these years. The then strong Japanese developmental State gave carte blanche to an industrial advance that did not take into account the consequences of its economic activity. What is commonly known as "The Big Four" arose from this type of dynamics. The two cases of Minamata Disease originated due to poisoning caused by methyl -mercury waste dumped by the Chisso company in the Minamata area. *Itai Itai* disease in Toyama was generated by cadmium-containing chemical waste that was dumped into the Jinzu River Basin due to Mitsui's mining activity Kinzōku. Lastly, Yokkaichi Asthma was caused by sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions from the *Shōwa petrochemical industry Yokkaichi Sekiyu* and *Shell Oil*

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[66] Miyume Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 94.

[67] William Marotti, «Japan 1968: The Performance of Violence and the Theater of Protest», *The American Historical Review* 1, n.º 114 (2009): 97-135, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30223645

[68] Roman Rosembaum, «Oda Makoto and grassroots citizenship movement- Behiren» in *Civil Society and Postwar Pacific Basin Reconciliation: Wounds, Scars, and Healing* ed.by Yasuko Claremont (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 143-144.

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Company. The groups of homemakers, the demonstrations of angry fishermen, and the activists of the Fukuoka area, integrated the demands of those affected in their movements, managing to generate a kind of dynamics of direct democracy that led the government to take action on the matter, creating pioneering anti- pollution control laws in the world. After those affected received the first compensation for the problem, activism faded, so it was not possible to create an environmental movement at the national level.

Although the oil crisis between 1973 and 1979 meant a break in protest activity, as we have seen, for this decade, new social movements called *Josei Kaiho Undō* dedicated to women's liberation[69]. The great difference between these groups resided in their specificity around gender issues. During the sixties, many of the feminist women's groups had participated in the anti-pollution movements and in pursuit of peace, and the gender discourse had ended up fading. New women's liberation movements were now being created along the lines of the second international wave, such as the *Ūmanribu Katsudō*, *Chūpiren* or the collective *Tatakau Onna* that included proclamations of sexual liberation, a strong questioning of motherhood, and also the struggle for an attempt to make visible the oppression of women by women[70]. In the following decade, during the 1980s, the last of the quantitatively important grassroots mobilizations in Japan took place, the *Not in my back yard movement* (Nimby). After the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, the movement was reactivated and groups of homemakers from all over Japan joined in capitalizing on the anti-nuclear initiative together with primary sector producers and unions in 1988. This led to the 1988 demonstrations. It was a brief though powerful popular explosion; it did not have a transcendent impact and projection in time. The main contribution of this group to the configuration of the popular imaginary about civil society was mainly the conception that the defense of civil liberties should be carried out by citizens who were aware and critical of both the State and the political parties, established trade union sectarianism and the different private interest groups.

It is at this time that the concept of civil society began to operate in Japan in line with the proposals of Habermas. This, from a phenomenological perspective, through the concept *Lebenswelt* or "World of life" begins to define civil society as an entity separate from the family

[69] Barbara Molony, Janet Theiss and y Choi Hyaeweol, *Gender in Modern East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2018), 61-68.

[70] Beate Sirota Gordon, Susan Pharr, Barbara Molony and Sally Hastings, «Celebrating Women's Rights in the Japanese Constitution», *U.S. Japan Women's Journal*, n.º14 (1998): 64-83, jstor.org/stable/42772126

and the State in which social actors do not seek profit within the market or power within the State[7172]. An interpretation in which, deep down, a very heavy weight is given to some supposed automatisms of the bureaucracy and capital. Therefore, it generates a problem that resides, from our perspective, in the excessive delimitation of a space that eliminates a good part of the social movements and of counter-cultural networks, a vision that would be enriched after the events of 2011 in Fukushima.

Although, all the efforts that we have analyzed were significant and contributed to enriching democracy and generating a more solid civil society, we must bear in mind that the country had gone through World War II and subsequently through poverty and social dislocation. This context had generated the necessary conditions of possibility for the development discourse to penetrate deeply among the majority of the population. Until the 1990s, a large part of the Japanese shared the opinion of the government and the bureaucracy that economic growth was the most important national objective. If we analyze the political opportunity structure of time and the forms of the resource mobilization, we observe that these, due to their structural nature, generate a limiting context that would end up burying the projection to the medium and long term of a large part of the initiatives of civil society. Much of this "barrier to entry" for civil society developments resided in the synergies established between three important factual forces in a dynamic known as *Tetsu no Sankaku* (鉄の三角) or "Iron Triangle". It was a triad composed of: the bureaucrats of the *Tsūsanshō* (通商産業省) "MITI", the *keiretsu* (系列) "Corporate Conglomerates" and political groups such as the *Jiyū Minshutō* (自由民主党) or PLD[7374]. Until the 1990s, the State enjoyed strong public support for policies oriented towards a neoliberal model, which is why everything that remained outside the economic sphere, such as the expansion of citizens' rights or respect for the environment took a backseat[7576]. Hence, these

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[71] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 73-79.

[72] Rosa Sierra, *Kulturelle Lebenswelt: Eine Studie des Lebensweltbegriffs in Anschluss an Jürgen Habermas, Alfred Schütz und Edmund Husserl* (Würzburg, Königshausen and Neumann, 2013), 177-196.

[73] Martin Collcut, Isao Kumakura and Marius Jansen, *Japón: el imperio del sol naciente* (Barcelona, Ediciones del Prado, 1992), 210-212.

[74] Michael Brannigan, *Japan's March 2011 Disaster and Moral Grit: Our Inescapable In between*, (Lexington Books, London, 2015), 192-194.

[75] Frank Schwartz and Susan Pharr, *The State of Civil Society in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28-39.

[76] Mark Mullins and Koichi Nakano, *Disasters and Social Crisis in Contemporary Japan: Political, Religious, and Sociocultural Responses* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 23-41.

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political or civic movements, while significant in their own capacity, did not last beyond their particular campaigns and hence their long-term impact on Japanese civil society was relatively limited.

VI. **Civil society and the great earthquake of 1995**

In the previous section, we have identified what were the main structural limitations that restricted the growth and projection of the proposals of the associative sphere. These conditions were transformed at the end of the 1980s and, in accordance with the contingent events that we observed in 1995, they would cause a profound change in the evolutionary dynamics of Japanese civil society. There were several actors, both endogenous and exogenous, who overlapped to shape this transformation. In the first place, the bursting of these bubbles triggered the severe crashes of 1989 and 1991. These events had a direct causal relationship with the model crisis that would occur in the 1990s; which would dismantle the famous iron triangle, thereby generating an enabling context for new spaces for civil society. To this situation, two other factors of a social nature were added in second place, again, with an extrinsic and an autochthonous aspect. Regarding the first, the academic literature tells us that the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro is one of the driving milestones of the non-governmental organization (NGO) movement in Japan. Through successive UN conferences, such as the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in the same year[77][78].

Likewise, regarding social phenomena of an autochthonous nature, we find the birth of the social germ of volunteering. Although, some "paid volunteer" groups had already been operating in collaboration with private enterprise since the mid-1970s, it is with the *Hanshin Awaji Daishinsai* or "Great Awaji or Kōbe Earthquake" of 1995 with which volunteering reaches a new status.

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[77] Robert Mason, «Whither Japan's Environmental Movement? An Assessment of Problems and Prospects at the National Level», *Pacific Affairs* 2, n.º 72, (1999): 187-207, doi.org/10.2307/2672119

[78] Yasuko Kameyama, «Can Japan Be an Environmental Leader? Japanese Environmental Diplomacy since the Earth Summit». *Politics and the Life Sciences* 2, n.º 21 (2002): 66-71, www.jstor.org/stable/4236676.

As we well know, natural catastrophes, like armed conflicts, generate multiple adverse effects on society, and, as Ember and Ember[79] propose, on the one hand, they can fragment it (mainly because the labor force assumes the weight of reconstruction costs). It is convenient to recover here, Durkheim's theses on anomie and the different forms of solidarity that occur in the event of a war, despite having been formulated between the end of the 19th century and the 20th century, we consider that they are fully valid in the understanding of the phenomena that we are trying. As Durkheim[80] proposed, armed conflicts can improve social cohesion by reducing levels of anomie and also restore forms of mechanical solidarity that put past forms of cohesion into operation. Following these proposals, and adding the theories of the growth of civic engagement in situations of war catastrophe, in line with the lines of psychosociological thought of Gottfredson[81], Rothstein[82]and Brenner[83], we readapt them for use applied to natural disaster contexts. Natural disasters produce a social mobilization that could be spontaneous, in the case of the Great Kōbe Earthquake of 1995 and the phenomenon of volunteering. Nonetheless, recovering elements of Weber's thought, a part of the mobilization can be oriented by the State through a strategic articulation of the subjectivity of total war, as occurred after the debacle suffered by the Japanese with the tsunami of 2011. Regardless of the forms of mobilization, a fundamental context is generated so that the affected population acquire the necessary civic skills, thus generating an increase in civic engagement. In turn, the application of the analyses that Evans[84] and Kage[85] make on war contexts, also show in natural disaster contexts to what extent the associative activities prior to

[79] Carol Ember and Melvin Ember, «War, Socialization, and Interpersonal Violence: A Cross-Cultural Study», *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 4, n.º 38, (1994): 620-646, doi. org/10.1177/0022002794038004002

[80] Emile Durkheim. *Le suicide: Étude de sociologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 289-303.

[81] Linda Gottfredson, «Circumscription and Compromise: A Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations», *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 6, n.º 28 (1981): 545-579, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.28.6.545

[82] Arnold Rothstein, «Compromise Formation Theory: An Intersubjective Dimension», *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives* 3, n.º 15 (2008): 1-18.

[83] Charles Brenner, «Conflict, Compromise Formation, and Structural Theory», *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 3, n.º 17 (2017): 397-417, http://doi.org/10.1002/j.2167-4086.2002.

[84] Peter Evans, «Government action, social capital and development: Reviewing the evidence on synergy» in *State-Society Synergy: Government and Social Capital in Development* ed. by Peter Evans (California: Berkeley University Press, 1997), 178-206.

[85] Rieko Kage, *Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto
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these events function as accumulator elements of social and cultural capital. Moreover, although the new legal context has modified its functioning, its legacy makes it easier for them to reorganize themselves more quickly after the natural disaster.

In addition to the fact that the Japanese State was characterized in 1995 by significant centralization, there was the sociocultural and political factor that decision-making had to go inexorably through all the hierarchical steps. This in turn conditioned bureaucratic processes that became excessively slow and cumbersome, and incapable of adapting to contextual needs. Finally, from this causal derivation came the limited reaction capacity of the emergency response teams of the police, fire departments and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Hence, neighborhood networks, known as *chōnaikai*[86], were the first to act, often being the main forces to arrive on the scene. These groups of civilians organized themselves into sections for firefighting, as well as debris removal and neighborhood rescue corps, and were the first to deal with the fires[87]. In this situation, an unprecedented phenomenon occurred in the previous stages: the influx of large numbers of volunteers —estimated at more than one million— from different parts of Japan to the Kobe[88]. Although volunteering existed before[89], this overwhelming number of volunteers converging in a disaster situation had never been experienced before[90]. As a result of this new dynamic, the social subject known as *borantia* (ボランティア) "volunteer"[91], settles at this time a new type of fundamental identity in the configuration of the philanthropic component of civil

[86] This type of organization is a traditional community-based organization that traditionally functioned as a municipal-based administrative arm, whose functions included organizing the national census, organizing local festivals, and helping the neighborhood community in emergencies.

is important in the administrative tasks of the community such as collecting garbage and helping to carry out the national census.

[87] Umeeda, M, Hatakenaka, T and Yoshida, M, interviewed by M. Malo, September 21, 2017.

[88] Ichiro Yatsuzuka, «The Activity of Disaster Relief Volunteers from the Viewpoint of Social Presentations: Social Construction of "Borantia" (voluntarism) as a New Social Reality After the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake in Japan», *Progress in Asian Social Psychology* 2, n.º 47 (2008): 275-290. https://doi.org/frm6s2

[89] Imada (1999) calls 1990 the year of the renaissance of philanthropy, but historical analysis tells us that we do not only see it from the last third of the 20th century, since there has always been a long tradition of community assistance through associations of neighbors and other civic typologies.

[90] Hence, in the academic literature, 1995 is known as "the year of the renaissance of volunteerism".

[91] The concept comes from the English word "volunteer" and generally refers to an individual who on their own initiative helps others in a spirit of goodwill.

society and of the structural conformation in NPO's and NGO's[92]. The considerable initial influx of volunteers from all over Japan generated a large – highly contextual – projection of social expectation, [93] a situation that produced a knock-on effect and the consequent arrival of numerous groups of volunteers throughout the Hyōgo area. This fact would highlight the significant shortcomings in the capacity of government management and the relational nature of the State with other forms of civil society. Many of these groups, instead of being articulated by the government in reconstruction, rescue or aid tasks, remained semi -inactive for a long time or helped the *chōnaikai* in the area on their own initiative[94].

As time went by, many of the emerging entities that were not part of the community environment prior to the disaster disappeared. However, some groups with more solid projects like *Shimin Katsudō or Sasaeru Seido or Tsukuru Kai* or "Coalition to create a support system for civic activities" known under the *Shīzu synthesis,* endured. This network of experts was in charge of legally conforming the proposals of the associative world at that time. This organization with liaison in Tōkyō, had wide support from the non-profit sector and sought to achieve its goal of shaping the government's agenda for NPOs by working with political parties, such as the Shintō Sakigake, the Uha Shakaito and Shinshintō[9596].

Thus, the official acknowledgment that both officials and civic groups were really ill-prepared to respond to a crisis of this magnitude led the Japanese government to initiate policy reform in 1998 to improve the disaster management system. As Shaw and Goda[97] (2004) indicate, these policies were generally oriented towards the decentralization of State power and the promotion of the growth of civil society through civic groups such

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[92] The great nuance that can be made here is that volunteering before 1995 in general came from shared sociopolitical and cultural convictions in which group orientation was very strong and that is now configured as an individual identity form.

[93] Social expectation is the general mood of a society about what people should do. It is a kind of spirit of the times or *kuuki* (空気) "Air" in the sense of atmosphere.

[94] Initially there was no procedure or protocol for the coordination of volunteers. The volunteers, therefore, were coordinating according to their own daily experiences; some introduced techniques used in warehouse management, others were based on procedures that came from their experience in the Boy Scouts or in general improvised to provide rapid support to those affected.

[95] Yasuo Takao, *Reinventing Japan: From Merchant Nation to Civic Nation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

[96] Sandra Schu, *Gemeinnützige Rechtsträger in Japan und Deutschland* (Heidelberg: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 270.

[97] Rajib Shaw and Katsuihciro Goda, «From Disaster to Sustainable Civil Society: The Kobe Experience». *Disasters* 1, n.º 28 (2004): 16-40, http://doi.org/fjtncj

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as NGO's and NPO's[98]. With this, a law enacted in March 1998 marks a milestone in the *Tokutei associative field*. *Hieiri Katsudo Sokushin Hō* or "Law to Promote Specific Non-Profit Activities". These types of negotiations were fundamental in the drafting of the NPO law, whose proposals still play a central role in shaping modern civil society today.

From this moment on, the concept operates both intellectually, socially and legally in the same way as it does in the Euro-Atlantic world. Here we recover here the postulates of already mentioned authors such as Cohen and Arato and Diamond, who consider civil society as a space of associationism that consists of a sustained and organized social activity that is not state, religious or market and it is distinct from the family or the individual.

VII. **Civil society and the triple Fukushima disaster of 2011**

The previous sections have helped us to understand the delicate balance of power relationship between the State, civil society, and the private world, and its fit into historically fluctuating socio-cultural and political-economic dynamics. During the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, social movements in Japan suffered some processes of slowdown, as well as stagnation and regression. However, what happened in March 2011, together with the expansion of the Internet and the appearance of social networks, helped to generate new synergies in the creation of networks and forms of mobilization of resources necessary for the development and projection of civil society after 2011.

On March 11, 2011, at a depth of about 24 km and a distance of 72 km from the northern coast of Japan, a trench-type earthquake of magnitude 7 on the Shindo scale and 9 on the Richter scale occurred, the largest recorded in the country. The earthquake generated a tsunami of colossal proportions almost at the same time whose impact on the coast of Sanriku was devastating, reaching the prefectures of Iwate and Miyagi. It is estimated that it penetrated around 6 km into the ground, generating direct

[98] The acronym NPO refers to *Non-Profit Organization*, in Japanese they use katakana for this, calling it *enupīō* (エヌピーオー). The Japanese nonprofit world can currently be divided into four categories: 1) NPOs created under the NPO Law, 2) public interest corporations, 3) neighborhood associations, and 4) citizen groups. The first two entities, NPOs created under the 1998 law and public interest companies, are officially registered as non-profit entities with the government. In contrast, neighborhood associations and citizen groups are not considered legal entities, yet they are the main forces in the sector, in terms of their number and influence (Ogawa, 2009). Normally the difference between an NPO and an NGO is their range of action, being, in general, more national-local in the case of the former and more national-international in the case of the latter.

casualties of 15,899 dead, 2,526 missing, 6,177 wounded and approximately 470,00 displaced. Added to this, 122,000 buildings were completely destroyed and 283,117 heavily damaged[99][100]. Added to this catastrophe was the human factor represented by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, which aggravated and ended up prolonging its consequences until today.

Until now, we have seen the forms of expression and pressure that some configurations of the associative plane practiced in the first years that preceded the disaster, which indicates a first level of commitment to social change. The next step was to legitimize the arguments with action, hence a large number of volunteers came from all parts of Japan, and especially from the Kantō area to the Tōhōku region. According to *Kokusai Shakai Fukushi Kyōgi Kai* or "National Social Welfare Council", between March and June approximately half a million people traveled to different areas of the Tōhōku area, especially areas of Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate with the aim of helping the locals to deal with the disaster[101]. As we can see, it was about half of those who had initially traveled to Kobe after the 1995 earthquake, among other issues due to the danger and the difficulty of access that the area posed. Added to the problem of radioactivity was the partial and complete destruction of infrastructure, accounted for in 4,198 roads, 116 bridges and 29 railways[102]. Many of these communication arteries were essential to reach the affected area,[103] so it should be noted as one of the fundamental factors of the problem. We have to consider also, that the difficulty in obtaining fuel at that time also acted as a restrictive element for the arrival of volunteers. Despite these limitations, international support was important at that time. 128 countries and 33 international non-governmental organizations offered their support to Japan, with the *International Medical Corps,* a world leader in disaster response, being one of the first to respond to the call of help, beginning the first stages of coordination with the Japanese government, Japanese non-profit organizations and local communities. In the immediate first weeks, the International Medical Corps worked together with local partners such as the Kesennuma and Kamaishi Emergency Response Centers, the Tokyo NGO

[99] Kokudo Kōtsūshō, «*Kishōchō: Heisei 23 nen Tōhoku chihō Taiheiyō oki jishin ni tsuite 7nen kan no jishin katsudō*». Accessed on January 21, 2021. http://shorturl.at/ktMV6.

[100] Keisatsuchō, «*Higaijōkyō*». Accesed on January 22, 2021. http://shorturl.at/ozFGV.

[101] Daniel Aldrich, «Rethinking Civil Society–State Relations in Japan after the Fukushima Accident». *Polity*, n.º 45 (2013): 249–264, http://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2013.2

[102] "Kokudo Kōtsūshō" and "Keisatsuchō"…

[103] In Kōbe it was possible to approach from the outskirts, however, in the case of Fukushima many affected sites could not be reached, neither by train nor by road.

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PeaceBoat , the *Sekando* Food Bank *Haavesuto* or " Second Harvest "[104], to deliver food, psychosocial support, medical supplies, and communications equipment to disaster-affected areas[105][106]. In addition, in the preceding days, two semi-governmental organizations were in charge of coordinating all the volunteers who were arriving. First the *Zenkoku Shakai Fukushi Kyōgikai* "National Social Welfare Council"[107] and the *Akai Hane Kyodo Bokin* "Red Feather Community Chest"[108] under the premise of "*kensetsutekina kyōdō* "[109] acted as a node or backbone in the incardination of government institutions and medical services, and of these in turn with NPOs, NGOs and unincorporated volunteer groups[110][111]. They were especially relevant in successfully managing what Pekkanen[112] calls "invisible civil society"[113]. Initially, together with the aforementioned groups, they managed to coordinate almost 14,000 volunteers from around the world and organized projects that provided psychological support to residents of temporary housing. Besides, in addition to carrying out awareness campaigns about the tragedy, they helped in the search for job

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[104] This organization operated for quite some time in Ishinomaki and closely cooperated with the local government in the area, with the self-defense forces, the Social Welfare Council, the Japan Youth Chamber.

[105] Eric Anthony Des Marais, Subhasis Bhadra and Allen Dyer, «In the Wake of Japan's Triple Disaster: Rebuilding Capacity through International Collaboration», *Advances in Social Work* 2, n.º 13 (2012): 340-357, http://doi.org/10.18060/1964

[106] Jeff Kingston, *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan's 3/11* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

[107] We are talking about an organization that was already operating at the end of the 1980s, managing volunteer centers in various prefectures. It was in charge of offering centers and training to volunteers to improve their coordination. To get an idea of its importance among unincorporated groups, in 1989 only 39% of the groups were attached to this type of center. By 2005 the percentage had increased to 96%, which numerically represented a step from 1.6 million to 7.4 million people. Especially after 1995 they became more active as a node linking government institutions with medical services, and these in turn with NPOs and unincorporated volunteer groups (Zensakyō, 2008; Kingston, 2012).

[108] It is a group that manages donation funds, which are used in cases of national emergency. In recent years, when some kind of natural disaster occurs, they support the disaster volunteer centers through the "red feather welfare fund". Apart from doing a great job supporting the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, they also created projects to support the area affected by the 2016 Kumamoto earthquake (Akaihane, 2021).

[109] *Kensetsutekina kyōdō* (建設的な共同) or "Constructive collaboration".

[110] Akaihane. «*Chūō kyōdō bokinkai ni tsuite*». Accessed on March 14, 2021. http://shorturl.at/fhsI4.

[111] "Keisatsuchō"

[112] Robert Pekkanen, *Japan's Dual Civil Society: Members Without Advocates* (Standford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 103.

[113] That is to say, a sphere formed by small groups of volunteers, informal and non-hierarchical that are easily formed and dissolved once the primary needs of those affected are met.

opportunities for farmers and fishermen in the area who had lost their traditional way of life[114][115].

Although the context in 2011 was considerably more dangerous than that of 1995, the social and technical capital accumulated during this period of sixteen years served so that in this case the mechanisms of the State also acted quickly after the earthquake. As recounted by Ogata (2016), Prime Minister Kan Naoto, after convening the National Emergency Management Committee, declared a national emergency in Tōhōku and dispatched self-defense forces and disaster medical assistance teams for medical and emergency operations rescue. Within hours, the first detachments were on the scene and around 11,000 arrived during the preceding three days. On this occasion, both the medical aid teams and the self-defense forces actively cooperated with NGOs and volunteers to help with the rescue and relief of the victims, also avoiding the ineffective overlapping that occurred in Kobe.

The influx of volunteers is estimated to have peaked around the summer of 2011, varying in concentrations of 140,000 to 180,000 between Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima prefectures. As usual, by the same dates the following year, once the primary needs of those affected had been covered, the number of volunteers on the ground had already been reduced to about 20,000[116]. A large part of these volunteers had been groups that were created and disappeared, so, despite their very important work, they were supported by highly contextual expectations. In other words, these were not groups with sufficient strength and potential to develop a long-term project. It should be remembered here that one of the elements for the development of a strong civil society, or what we understand as an aspirational form, is to ensure the durability of the project to be developed and the ideas associated with it, after the initial euphoria has ended. Hence, it is important to highlight the work of NPOs, such as *Fukushima Saisei no Kai* or "Rebuild Fukushima", in charge of rearticulating the entire area, and Iitatemura or *Magokoro Netto* operating in the Iwate area, and whose convoluted mechanisms of articulation and proposals are the object of past (and future) research addressed by the author of the present article[117].

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[114] Rachel Leng, «Japan's Civil Society from Kobe to Tohoku. Impact of Policy Changes on Government NGO Relationship and Effectiveness of Post Disaster», *EJCJS* 1, n.º 15 (2015): 1-9.

[115] Joanna Guzik, «New Japanese Civil Society: Kobe Earthquake of 1995 and Fukushima Accident of 2011 as Focal Points in the Development of the Japanese Civil Society After WW II», *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 2, n.º 20 (2017): 145–160.

[116] "Zensakyō"…

[117] Mario Malo, «Breve recorrido por el emprendimiento social en Japón: Del Japón premoderno hasta el Tōhoku post Fukushima», *Mirai. Estudios Japoneses*, n.º 4 (2020): 75-85, https://doi.org/h5qg .

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Nowadays, regarding the state of the arts in the development of the concept of "civil society", it is worth mentioning contemporary authors specializing in civil society studies in the Japanese sphere, such as Yamamoto[118], Swartz and Pharr[119], Nakano[120], Pekkanen[121], Takao[122], Ogawa[123], Gill, Steger and David[124], Kingston[125], Brannigan[126], Slater, Kindstrand and Nishimura[127] or Wiemann[128], among others. They add or eliminate new social actors depending on the context, and provide semantic changes in the definition of the concept. In any case, they do so from the same interpretative basis of the Illustration-Gramsci line, together with the currents of the 90s contemplated by Gouldner, Habermas, Cohen and Arato or Diamond.

VIII. **Conclusion**

In the synthesis of these conceptions, and through the bibliographic study and the application of qualitative analysis techniques and field research with Japanese civil society groups, evidence shows that we are facing a concept with a wide variety of facets. In fact, its dynamism and historical transformation have been substantially modified depending on the characteristics of the context in which they were articulated, economic interests, the State, movements and organizations of civil society. The adaptation of this concept of the discursive tradition of the European illustration, essentially *emic,* assimilating and transforming into an *etic*

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118 Tadashi Yamamoto. *Deciding the Public Good: Governance and Civil Society in Japan* (Tōkyō: Japan Center for International Exchange Press, 1999).

119 Schwartz and Pharr, *The State of Civil Society in Japan*….

120 Lynn Nakano, *Community Volunteers in Japan: Everyday Stories of Social Change* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005).

121 Pekkanen, *Japan's Dual*….

122 Takao, *Reinventing Japan: From*….

123 Akihiro Ogawa, *The Failure of Civil Society?: The Third Sector and the State in Contemporary Japan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010).

124 Tom Gill, Brigitte Steger and David Slater, *Japan Copes with Calamity: Ethnographies of the Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disasters of March 2011* (Swiss, Peter Lang, 2013).

125 Jeff Kingston, *Critical Issues in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 2014).

126 Brannigan, *Japan's March*….

127 David Slater, Love Kindstrand and Keiko, «Crisis and Opportunity: Social Media in Kōbe, Tōhoku, and Tōkyō» in *Disasters and Social Crisis in Contemporary Japan* ed. by Mark Mullins y Koichi Nakano (Hampshire: Pallgrave MacMillan, 2016), 209-238.

128 Anna Wiemann, «Zivilgesellschaft in Japan: Schlaglichter auf ein bewegtes Forschungsfeld», *ASIEN*, n.º 144 (2017): 105–118. https://doi.org/10.11588/asien.2017.144.14779.

concept, has been applied to Japanese society in a transnational and national context, from a perspective halfway between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. We can affirm that the Japanese academic world in the field of social sciences, in general, works with a wide variety of non-native concepts *without* any type of methodological inconvenience, such as: *vorantia* (ヴォランティア)、 *fashizumu* (ファシズム), *sōsharizumu* (ソーシャリム), etc. For this reason, *de facto*, the translation of the concept of civil society into Japanese, analytically, at socio-structural levels, operates in a very similar way, which is why it has been secularly functional.

As we see through this article, the idea of civil society in Japan has been enriched through the epistemological irradiation of the Euro-Atlantic world. It has had its own internal developments and adaptations during the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, it has ended up being part of the global interpretations, understanding it as an organized social drive, or at least partially, trying, basically, to provide services to communities in areas where the State does not reach or is not effective. In addition, as a guarantor of substantive subjectivity, it has the dialectical function of counteracting the formal subjectivities of State power and economic forces when they act through coercive dynamics, or when particular interests prevent a rapid response to a situation of social need or emergency. In addition, it functions as an entity separate from political society and from other regular and secular powers that run through it, and with which it coexists in competition. On the other hand, it has the function of giving legitimacy to any democratic State and in its aspirational form represents the social legality of the common interest, being the guarantor of shared welfare when what Michels[129]characterized as the "iron law" of the oligarchy is imposed. Likewise, its definition is based on concomitant concepts such as volunteering, non-profit, altruism and shared conventionalism, in a process in which civil society performs fundamental tasks for the strengthening of the plural values of democratic citizenship and the articulation, aggregation and grassroots interest representation. In addition, especially after March 2011, we include new forms of socioeconomic action such as certain types of social entrepreneurship that have operated as the backbone of the territory in contexts such as the Fukushima Triple Disaster[130].

[129] Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Free Press Paperback Edition, 1966), 21.

[130] Malo, "Breve"…

Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto
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