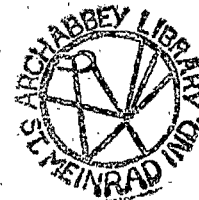


The Development of Democracy in Japan

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Introduction

The development of a stable form of government in any country requires time and patience. The development of a stable democracy requires even more time and patience than most other forms of government. A democracy, by its very nature, requires the acceptance, support, and experience of the large masses of people and this cannot be achieved in a hurried or forced manner.

This paper is an attempt to show that the Japanese democracy follows this pattern. It attempts to monitor the development of liberalism in Japanese history from its early forms until it achieved stability in the form of an independent democratic government. There has been an attempt to avoid historical data that is unrelated to this democratic movement. Certain facts which may seem irrelevant at first were included for the sake of continuity.

This paper has been divided into three chapters. Chapter one deals with the democratic development in Japan before 1932. Because this was a gradual change, this section has maintained a basically chronological order. The greatest difficulty with this section was the vast amount of time that was covered. This sometimes gives it a slightly disjointed effect. This chapter concludes in 1932 because after this time the few positive moves toward democracy were greatly overshadowed by the anti-democratic actions of the military.

Thus, the military period is excluded from this study and the second chapter begins with the reforms of the Occupation of Japan after World War II. This chapter may be somewhat biased by this writer's own prejudice as to the success of the Occupation. Further bias may have resulted from the extensive use of Mac Arthur's writing. Yet, Mac Arthur's enthusiasm and good will were among the strongest points of the Occupation so that sometimes a presentation of his views is similar to a presentation of how the Occupation affected many of the Japanese. This chapter tries to list most of the democratic reforms brought about by the Occupation and give an account of their effectiveness.

The third chapter is an attempt to present the overall view so that the continuity of democratic growth can be clearly seen. It also tries to give a more contemporary view of the democracy in Japan.

Hopefully, this approach will lead the reader to an understanding of the developmental nature of Japanese political democracy.

The Development of Democracy in Japan

CHAPTER I

The Development of Democracy in Japan prior to 1932

The beginnings of democracy, or a rather liberal movement in Japan, may be traced as far back as the early 17th century. This is when the Tokugawa Shogunate started its effort to unify feudalistic Japan into a nation. At this time the feudal system continued but the peace brought about by the shogunate promoted a money economy. This economy, in turn, signaled the development of a burgher class which would demand certain liberal concessions. Their central demand was a reconstruction of the social and political stratifications so that they would receive a status equal to their ability and position rather than their ancestry.¹

At the same time that the burgher classes were developing, the samurai, the great warriors, found themselves without purpose because of the new peace. For centuries the samurai had been the knights of Japan, defending the constantly warring feudal lords. The aristocrats, if they wanted to stay in power, had to satisfy both of these groups. They made power deals with the burghers and encouraged the samurai to develop themselves intellectually.²

The advance of the bourgeoisie and the bankruptcy of the aristocrats became a great democratizing factor. With time, the burgher classes became a powerful pressure group and the samurai used their scholarship to accuse the shogunate of usurping power from the Emperor. This internal pressure along with the fear of Western

encroachment brought about by Admiral Perry's visit in 1853 finally resulted in the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The Meiji Restoration was the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate which was replaced by a government in which the Emperor was supposedly restored to his rightful place as leader of the Japanese people. In reality, the shogunate was replaced by the Emperor surrounded by an oligarchy of former samurai.³ These samurai, while in support of many western ideas, were fearful of democracy. They were determined to make Japan a powerful modern state as quickly as possible but they felt that democracy would have a negative effect on this movement. They destroyed the intellectuals in favor of democracy calling them dreamers. Those who supported democracy because they felt it was the practical thing to do, were accused of being selfish political schemers. The oligarchs used the facade of supporting the Emperor to consolidate all the power in their own hands.⁴

Despite the complete control of power maintained by the oligarchy, by the 1870's political clubs were already being formed. The "Risshisha" founded by Itagaki (a former member of the Meiji Oligarchy) looked to the West for political ideas. They borrowed ideas of natural rights to life, liberty, property and happiness from John Locke. Clubs like this grew and though they were usually headed by the well-educated samurai that were out of power, they solicited support from all segments of society. As the samurai, now called shizoku, began to be outnumbered by the plebians, they were forced to give up much of their power in the political clubs.

This brought the rural aristocracy to power.⁵ The aristocracy had now begun to appreciate the democratic rights of minorities now that they were minorities and out of power. They looked to the intellectuals to explain the democracies of the West and joined with the farmers in demanding the representation in the government they felt they deserved.⁶

Other political clubs began appearing in the 1870's. The "Jiyto" was the most radical and militant. It was made up of mostly rural followers. The "Kaiskinto" was formed out of the urban aristocracy. This group tried to attract the proletariat but was not too successful. Socialism, which was becoming popular in western countries at this time, received little support because the party adherents feared the loss of private property.⁷

The oligarchs did have some democratic tendencies, such as favoring talent over blood and allowing social mobility,⁸ but they were encouraged by the parties and their own education to accept even more Western concepts. They established ministries and a prefectural system with central control in Tokyo. These helped establish a bureaucracy. The oligarchs adopted the western calendar but they kept the old year definitions. They allowed religious toleration and modernized the police, currency and postal system. They also created a national banking system and standardized the tax system. They further enlarged the bureaucracy by establishing a civil service and revising and legal system and courts along the lines of the French.⁹

Finally in 1889 the oligarchs made a major concession to the relatively small group of party leaders by presenting, as a gift from the Emperor and the oligarchs, a constitution. The constitution was designed by the oligarchs, after a study of Western powers, to widen governmental control although the oligarchs were far from willing to give up any real power. They had established a cabinet in 1885 to advise the Emperor and placed themselves within it. The constitution was established to allow the parties a place to voice their opinions. Obviously, non-party cabinets and party Diets started conflicts from the beginning. What resulted was the establishment of a new order of authoritarianism. Instead of the pre-Meiji order of shogun, the feudal nobles, the samurai, the commoners and the merchants, the new order placed the oligarchs (former samurai) on top in control of the Emperor. Beneath them were the industrial and financial magnants who had formerly been lowly merchants or adaptable nobles, then the bureaucrats with the remaining people, whether aristocrats or commoners, on the bottom.¹⁰

The constitution failed to promote democracy because its basic principle was not democratic. It claimed the sovereignty of the state for the Emperor alone. Therefore, the state was dependent, not on the people, but on the Emperor. The cabinet was answerable only to the Emperor and thus above and in control of the other bodies of government. The most significant restrictions in the growth of democracy in the cabinet were the military ministries, who had direct access to the Emperor, the Education Ministry, who not only achieved a high degree of literacy but also achieved a unified

indoctrination program, the Home Affairs Ministry, whose national police system could quiet the opposition, and the Ministry of Justice whose supposedly impartial judges were dependent on the Ministry for salary and advancement and thus not so impartial. The Diet lost much of its effectiveness because it did not control the power of the purse. The cabinet had to approve any budget reductions and if the Diet did not approve any budget, the budget from the previous year became law. The House of Representatives also had to struggle with the Upper House, the House of Peers, which was composed of members of the royal family, and other conservative members of Japan's highest social levels.¹¹

The democratizing effect of the Diet was further restricted by the limited suffrage. By 1915 only three per cent of the Japanese population was enfranchised.¹² Corruption in elections was commonplace because there were so few voters that most of them could be bought with money or influence. The oligarchs came to support the financial interest for they felt that this was the basis of the strong state they wished to produce. The big businesses threw their support behind the oligarchs because they needed governmental supports to grow. The businesses felt a duty to the government and, for the sake of speed and efficiency, the government allowed the large family industries (the zaibatsu) to grow.¹³

One measure of the success of democracy in Japan is the power of the political parties and their relative independence from oligarch control. For the first years of the Diet the parties fought against

the power of the oligarchs and found this to be a bad tactic. Then in 1895 the parties began to form alliances with influential oligarchs. The parties would give support to the oligarch in return for special favors and appointments from the oligarchs to the party. This sort of alliance did not work because the oligarchs were not ready to allow party influence to become powerful in government.¹⁴

In 1900, the Kenseito (a combination of the Jiyuto and the Shimpoto) asked Ito Hirobumi, an oligarch, to be party president. He agreed with the stipulation that the party name be changed to Seiyukai. While this divided the oligarchs, it started a period of cooperation between the parties and oligarchs. Ito was made premier in 1900, but retired in June 1901; this marks the end of the active involvement of the older oligarchs. Ito was called to the Privy Council and for the next twelve years the government went back and forth between General Katsura, the protégé of Yamagata, Ito's rival and predecessor, and Saionji Kimmochi, a follower of Ito.¹⁵ During this time the two men had an unstable alliance. Each faction tries to support the opposition leader somewhat when he was in power. The Seiyukai developed a mutual understanding of the bureaucracy and the Seiyukai remained the dominant party in the Diet. There was little change in this policy of conciliation between the oligarchs and the parties and thus little advancement toward democracy.¹⁶

Finally on February 5, 1913, Ozaki Yukio, a parliamentarian, took a step toward democracy by publicly challenging Katsura,

then premier, and the entire oligarchy for using the throne and the constitution for personal gain and through these controlling the parties and representative government. On February 9, 1913, Saionji, a still head of the Seiyukai, was asked by the Emperor Taisho to ask the Seiyukai to keep the political peace by withdrawing their non-confidence bill. Saionji presented the request but the Seiyukai refused the request thus defying the Emperor. This proved that united parties supported by the press and the people could have power under the constitution.¹⁷

The Katsura government fell, but while it was a victory for the party system, Katsura was replaced by another member of the old bureaucracy still supported by the leading party. The navy faction united with the Seiyukai, now under Hara, to form the new government. The other major party, the Doshikai, which had been founded by Katsura, began to grow but this growth was made up mostly of members of the bureaucracy who had little interest in democracy or popular movement.¹⁸

By the advent of World War I, the parties had definitely become the major force in Japanese government even though they were not really popular parties. The Seiyukai, who had earlier demanded party membership of all cabinet members, achieved a compromise in which all but the premier, the foreign minister, and the army and navy ministers had to be enrolled on party rosters. Furthermore, the premier, Yamamoto, Katsura's successor, was as conciliatory as possible regarding party demands. Still the original oligarchs, called the Genro, appointed the premiers and thus still held control

of the government. Katsura fell because of a scandal and the Genro appointed Okuma to succeed him. Okuma supported an increase in the size of the army. Okuma's election was supposed to have been a step forward for democracy because of his support of honesty and representative government. In reality, the Okuma government became very corrupt and very much controlled by the old oligarchy. The next premier appointed was General Terauchi who was determined to stay aloof from party politics. In his effort to stay aloof, he reduced the power of the Kenseikai, which had been the most powerful party, with the result that the Seiyukai again came to power and gave only partial support to the cabinet. Because of the inflationary problems of war, the Terauchi cabinet fell, starting a new era in Japanese government.¹⁹

The next premier, Arita Takashi, was the first real product of party politics to be premier. While he was dependent on his party for support,²⁰ he followed his predecessors in following the special interests of the Genro and Privy Council and being rather arbitrary in his attitude toward Seiyukai party members and the common man. He was a strong leader and brought the Seiyukai to the top of party politics, yet he was conciliatory toward the old powers which meant that he did little to advance representative government.²¹

By the end of World War I the popular parties had begun to control the Diet in ways that showed some resemblance to democratic parliaments of England and Europe. One of the big reasons for the rise of party control was that the Genro was either dead or too old

to continue their control over government. The younger generation, who had been newly educated, had little respect for these rulers of the past.²² The Meiji Emperor, who had been important in the oligarch, had died in 1912 leaving the incompetent Taisho Emperor. The Throne had become only a symbol. Ito, the framer of the constitution, died in 1909 and Yamagata dies in 1922.²³ World War I propaganda also had some effect on the development of party rule. It had been a war to "make the world safe for democracy" and so many Japanese rallied around the parties as a symbol for democracy.²⁴

Of greater importance than either of these factors was that World War I had opened up great trading possibilities for the Japanese both in lands and in rights acquired from Western countries that needed Japanese support. Money and big business became the new heroes instead of the military. Big business looked on the party system as a way to control government because it was easy to influence party members through financial support. These businessmen also hoped that through financial support they could make the political parties so powerful that the executive branch would be controlled by the parties. This would give business control of the executive branch while making it appear as if they were championing democracy.²⁵ The businessmen were able to thwart the efforts of the military expansionists after the War by using their influence to bring about a reduction of taxes. They pushed for economic expansion rather than colonial expansion. This drive as well as the general feeling of postwar isolationism put a temporary halt on colonial expansion.²⁶

The laborers in the cities, who had escaped the traditions of peasant country life, began to identify with big business. This also increased involvement in party politics.²⁷ On the other hand, as a sign of democracy, labor union membership and disputes had risen greatly during the war. In 1914 there were 50 labor disputes with 8000 participants. By 1919 there were 497 disputes with 63,000 participants. Hara's government tries to suppress these movements but they were hurt mostly by their own association with radical Marxism. The Party Cabinets seemed to suppress these disputes more ruthlessly than transcendent cabinets.²⁸ By 1929 there were 300,000 union members and it appeared that they would be a real political force.

Immediately after the war there was a great desire among the people for greater suffrage. The tax requirement for voting was reduced so that all but the peasants and urban proletariat could vote. This put power into the hands of the greatest amount of people ever, including businessmen, bureaucrats and intellectuals.²⁹ On May 5, 1925 suffrage was granted to all male citizens over twenty-five year olds.³⁰

In 1924 the only oligarch left was Prince Saionji. The new group of leaders were businessmen, admirals, generals, intellectuals and bureaucrats who had grown up during the "Restoration". These had no common background, goal, or status.³¹

During the 1920's the different powers came together in the Diet. Cabinets were largely party cabinets. Corruption abounded

especially as special interest groups, like the zaibatsu, tries to influence and control the Diet. The parties were basically conservative when they got into power. They suppressed labor and social democratic movements which would have been a strong force against nationalism and militarism.³² Despite the problems, this was the first case of the full use of democratic institutions in the non-Occidental World.

Hara's party cabinet lasted until his assassination on November 4, 1921. He was succeeded by Takahashi Korekiyo who had little control so the system of non-party cabinets resumed until 1924.³³ In January 1924 the unity of the parties and the support they received from the press brought down the Parliament. In the new elections the parties gained 284 seats while the oligarchs gained only 180 seats. The premier, Kiyoura, could not gain confidence from parliament. He was only in office from January until June 1924.

After 1924 a struggle began between the military expansionists, backed by the military, and backers of international cooperation, the parties. In 1924 the popular feeling was with the parties. The parties put forth a unified platform. First, they pushed to establish party cabinets permanently. Secondly, they wanted to suspend the arbitrary and monopolistic power and special privilege of the oligarchs. Thirdly, they decided that to achieve this would take the joint action of the leading parties. Fourthly, they wanted to repudiate the Kiyoura government which they brought down.³⁴

On June 11, 1924 Kato, head of the Kenseikai party, became premier and began an eight year period in which the leaders of

the strongest parties alternated as Prime Minister.³⁵ Kato reduced the military but with the extra money that this reduction produced, he bought new equipment and sent the extra officers to schools and universities where military training became required. This naturally stepped up the sentiments of military invincibility of the people. The military increasingly became composed of merchants or small land owners sons.³⁶

During the party years military leaders, bureaucrats, zaibatsu, and politicians representing small business and rural landowners remained the ruling body but the poorer city dwellers were coming to a political consciousness. There was a great expansion of education and these newly educated wanted power. The universal manhood suffrage law had increased the voting population from 3 million to 14 million. The new voters did not take much advantage of their newly won privilege. Most of these voters were poorly educated, but in the cities the middle class intellectuals tried to organize the proletariat. White collar workers and laborers placed their support with the left-wing intellectuals and several new parties were formed with names like the Social Democratic Party, Labor-Farmer Party, the Social Mass Party and the Communist Party. The Social Mass Party was the only one that met with much success. The Communist Party was suppressed soon after it began. The new parties were not overly effective in practical politics but they did provide a left wing which met with success in the middle class areas, especially after the rest of the country had gone against democracy and liberalism.³⁷

At the same time as the new suffrage law was passed in 1925, a major blow to democracy appeared in the Peace Preservation Law. This law was passed to keep the newly enfranchised under control. The law provided a sentence of ten years in prison to any person who joined societies which supported changing the existing form of government or constitution or the right of private property.³⁸ This law limited free speech or free political action in an effort to control "dangerous thought". The law was supported by businessmen and bureaucrats who were afraid of liberal and radical movements like the Marxists. The Peace Preservation law would be greatly used by the militarists as they tried any means to quiet dangerous thought in the name of the Emperor.³⁹

Still, even by the mid-1920's the ultra-nationalists and military movements were not very visible in the normal course of government. They were mostly found in the form of pressure groups and extra-legal groups. These extra-legal groups were in the form of secret societies like the Black Dragon Society.⁴⁰

The Diet and the party system had become very useful in balancing the varied interest groups. The militarists and the great bureaucrats came closest to taking the oligarchs' places but they lacked the respect given the oligarchs so the parties stayed in control. The zaibatsu, rural farmers, and smaller business men, had found that bargaining with the Diet could be very useful.

With harder times and the depression, the political parties began to be attacked because of the abuses of big business. Many began to feel that the old parties were too much controlled by

big business. Organized labor, intellectual sympathizers and the peasants began to support the more proletarian parties. These parties lacked money, ideology and leadership and were oppressed by big business. By the time of the Depression much of the trust in the parties has disappeared.⁴¹

In January, 1926, Kato died and Wakatsuki, former House Affairs Minister, assumed the office of chairman of the Kenseikai party and became premier. He was soon pressured out by General Tanaka of the Seiyukai who convinced Prince Saionji, the last Genro, to make him, that is, Tanaka, premier. During Tanaka's time in office the new Emperor Hirohito came to the throne. Tanaka was plagued with a bank crisis. He became very severe in suppressing all opposition and ruthlessly put the Peace Preservation Law into effect when he was dissatisfied with the election. Tanaka also became involved in China trying to abort Chiang Kaishek's efforts at unification. This caused him trouble when he over-estimated his control of his Kwantung army in China and they killed a Manchurian warlord, Chang Tso-lin. This was against Tanaka's wishes but he got the blame.⁴²

Tanaka was succeeded by Hamaguchi who was plagued by the Depression and all of its economic problems. Also, he was forced to compromise the Japanese Navy at the London Naval Treaty Conference which brought upon him accusations that he was usurping powers from the Emperor. Finally, in November 1930, he was shot and, although he survived for over a year, his leadership and party organization dissolved.⁴³ At this point the army stepped in to

save Japan. The army in the past has been made up of gentlemen, but since 1920 big business began to attract the wealthy so that the army was mainly made up of farmers who feared that big business was risking national security to assure foreign trade.⁴⁴

Why did party rule and democratic movements fail? The rise of the military resulted from a general disillusionment with parties. The parties, bureaucracy and the Genro fought this power encroachment but failed to stop the military because then it seemed the culture of Japan was not ready for democratic party rule. There was no general feeling in Japan of the equality of men. The Confucian notion of inequality still prevailed and people generally accepted the idea that they were part of the state and not individuals.⁴⁵

Another reason for the fall of the political parties was that they had formerly been supported by big business. This support was basically selfish rather than idealistic on the part of the businesses. They were solely interested in having some say in government, and if this could be achieved through an authoritarian government, that was agreeable with them. The big businesses were ultimately concerned with making Japan a major world power which is also what the militarists wanted. In a different era big business might have been a democratizing force but by 1930 Japanese business had too many rivals to try to go against the nationalistic neo-mercantilism of the militarists. The business interests also saw the worldwide trend at this time which favored fascism over liberalism.⁴⁶

One major flaw that allowed for the fall of the democratic movement from the beginning was the Shinto Cult and Emperor Worship. This cult has been instilled and perpetuated in the people by the parties. The militarists and ultranationalists used the devotion to the Emperor to manipulate or destroy its enemies.⁴⁷ The militaristic movement resembled a Traditions, docility, the Emperor myth and opposition to democratic tendencies. Militarily it revived ideas from feudal Japan. The irony of this desire for the past was that what they were proposing has little to do with past ideas. They proposed a national socialism which was partially Marxist. The samurai and nobles from the past were their bitter enemies because they had found their livelihood in industry and party politics. The desire of the militarists to return to a native spirit was ill-defined due to their lack of education. In their desire for their native spirit, they envisioned an integrated bloc of Oriental nations as defense against the West. This idea was also something foreign to the past.⁴⁸

The authoritarianism of the Thirties was also a result of Japan's feudal past which was not so distant history. Japan had tried to do in eighty years what certain countries took centuries to accomplish. The sudden central control that political leaders exerted over Japan's new economics and political machine also helped bring the militarists to power.⁴⁹

One of the major flaws of Japan's political structure was the lack of control by the Diet over the military structure. The

military retained a relative autonomy because, for much of the life of the constitution, the Army and Navy Ministers had to be active members of the armed forces and approved by the Army and Navy. This gave the military veto power in the Cabinet. The Diet lacked control because it did not control the purse strings.⁵⁰

Finally, one reason for the ease with which the military took control was the attitude of the Japanese people themselves. The Japanese are more influenced by the circumstances than by certain set ways or traditions. In other words, they are not as likely to follow a certain ideal like the Westerners rally to the cause of freedom. The oligarch rose because of a need for strong tight leadership. Parties rose because the oligarchy was not needed and popular desires could be fulfilled by the parties. The military came to power because of the disillusionment with the parties. In the final analysis, ideological principles, moral doctrines and habit were important but not nearly as important as social and political sentiment.⁵¹

With the Manchurian Incident the rise of democratic principles comes to a halt. Parties continued as did the constitution since it was a gift from the Emperor. Still, the parties became ineffective and all political life became a puppet of the militarists. There were some attempts by the parties to regain lost power but these were eneffectual.

Up until 1937, the cabinet continued to contain party men through their power was waning. As of 1937 there were no more party members in the cabinet and those in the Diet had lost most of their power.

By 1938 the cabinet had lost its power as the highest decision-making body in government. It was replaced by a small core of cabinet members and military personnel who simply ratified military decisions. The tendency toward military control of the government culminated in 1941 when General Tojo united military and civil powers by becoming the head of the army and the Prime Minister.⁵²

With the end of democracy in government came the end of democracy in Japanese life. Education, economics, and ideas all became controlled by the military through various efforts including the extensive use of the Peace Preservation Law of 1925. Thus, the democratic movement in Japan was aborted until the end of World War II.

CHAPTER II

The Democratization of Japan After World War II

On August 16, 1945, the day the United States received Japan's final surrender, the Japanese were more defeated than any other people in history. They not only had lost the war but they had lost faith in their entire way of life. The Japanese people had thought that they were an invincible nation and all along had thought that they were winning the war. When they realized that they had lost, they could not even turn to their faith because even that had been controlled by the government.¹ All their dreams, cities, manpower, economy and empire had been shattered. The thoroughness of this defeat was to play a large role in the attitude with which the Japanese accepted American Occupation and subsequent Democratization.²

The Japanese had never even imagined being occupied. They had never even been invaded, so they were left bewildered and accepted what came.³ Some attribute this submission to the fact that these people were accustomed to obeying their superiors no matter who they were. Added to this was the shock and exhaustion from the war which made it almost impossible to resist if they wanted to. Another point is that the goodwill, confidence, and good judgement of the Occupation forces made the people feel secure.⁴ The Emperor's call to his people to lay down their arms and "endure the unendurable" was another factor that encouraged the acceptance of the people although the Emperor had been disobeyed before "for his own good". A more historically

reflective explanation is that the Japanese had had so much experience with despots that they had learned to bend without breaking to authority. This theory maintains the pessimistic corollary that the Japanese have this ability to spring back into former ways at will.⁵

One motivating element in the Japanese acceptance of surrender that cannot be overlooked is that in the past one hundred years Japan's whole past has been uprooted. She had been constantly changing as has been seen in the change from shogun rule to rule by the oligarchs, to rule by the parties, to military rule. With the advent of the Occupation they were confronted with just another new situation and they hoped it would bring stability. Also, during the past hundred years the United States, their present occupying force, had had a greater effect on Japan than any other country. Despite hatred that arose among the Japanese over immigration exclusion laws in the United States, or even the hatred they had been taught during the war, the Japanese for most of the past had been an eager and attentive pupil of the United States. The Japanese had a heritage of belief in the inequality between people and between nations.⁶

Despite Japan's feelings of superiority in the past, during the Occupation the Japanese did not look upon their submission to the West as a debasement but it took on the cloak of the relationship between a Lord and his knight requiring certain obligations from both sides. The Japanese were grateful for the helpful attitude of the Occupation forces and tried to be helpful in return. The occupation worked toward many of Japan's former unfulfilled movements toward democracy which helped to increase Japanese enthusiasm about

the Occupation. Those who had opposed the military regime, especially later, helped the Occupation work toward its desired goals. Finally, the most practical reason for Japanese acceptance of the Occupation was that they had no choice.⁷

The Occupation of Japan was lead by General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers.⁸ MacArthur was greatly concerned with winning the trust and friendship of the Japanese. During the signing ceremony for the Japanese surrender, MacArthur said "SCAP is not concerned with how to keep the Japanese down, but how to get her on her feet again".⁹ He exhibited his overwhelming trust in the Japanese when he arrived at Atsugi Airfield in Japan to start the Occupation. He maintained a cool and trusting attitude as he openly walked into a country of armed Japanese with only a nominal American force to protect him.¹⁰

Occupation was not new to the Supreme Commander when he arrived in Japan. He had experienced the military occupation of the Rhine after World War I and was well aware of the problems. Military authority was different from civil authority. The people tend to lose self-respect and self-confidence. Dictatorial powers have a tendency to thrive at the expense of local representation. The people tend to lose spiritual and moral direction and the occupation officials begin to deteriorate and become corrupt. MacArthur intended to deal with each of these to prevent their occurrence.¹¹

MacArthur believed that though the Japanese appeared to be a 20th century society, they were still in a feudal era. He pointed to the Theocracy as seen in Emperor worship. He also noted that there

were no civil or human rights. This was exhibited for 1937-1940 when 60,000 people were imprisoned for "dangerous thinking".¹²

MacArthur's personality dominated the Occupation to the extent that he has become a legend in Japanese history. He achieved the respect, gratitude and admiration of the Japanese population.¹³ He claims he achieved this trust and respect because they looked upon him as a protector. The Japanese feared other nations that took a more punitive attitude towards Japan. The good conduct of the American soldiers also helped with the positive attitude of the Japanese. MacArthur tried not to become involved in native cultural traditions but he encouraged travel to the West in hopes of giving Japan the best of both worlds. He explained to the Japanese that the West also hoped to learn from the Oriental countries. In this way he helped develop the self-respect that the Japanese lost in their defeat.¹⁴

As the Occupation forces began to work with the Japanese, they soon found that they were working for similar goals. This helped a warm relationship grow between the two parties.¹⁵ MacArthur had an idealism and dedication in his efforts to reform Japan. He took it on as his special mission and soon this dedication influenced others with whom he worked. The Occupation became a sort of moral crusade in the good sense of the term. The Supreme Commander maintained an aloofness but was a strong leader. He was not at all democratic in his actions but at the time that he began the Occupation the Japanese needed a strong, though benevolent, leader to replace the leaders who had been destroyed.

MacArthur was ideal for the position because he was a political genius and he was able to look at Japan with a long range perspective.¹⁶

Under MacArthur's leadership, the rest of the Occupation forces forgot their hatred and were generally warm and kind to the Japanese. The Japanese appreciated this. The Americans assumed the missionary zeal of their leader and wished to spread the American way. American humor was a great help to mutual understanding. The military personnel liked the Japanese because they were the most Western of all the people they had met in their long drive through the Pacific.¹⁷ In the end, the Occupation appeared to the Japanese to be first and foremost the work of General MacArthur. Secondly, they looked at the Occupation as an American venture. Only vaguely did they see it as an Allied venture. This is the way the Japanese wanted it because of the great trust they placed in MacArthur.¹⁸

When the war was ended, food supplies were extremely short in Japan. In the extensive Occupations which the Japanese had carried out in the Thirties and through the war years, they had demanded the most luxurious accommodations possible from the conquered peoples. The Japanese expected the Americans to treat them the same way. To their surprise, MacArthur prohibited the Occupation forces from eating local food. He asked for relief shipments to begin as soon as the occupation had begun. This action tended to solidify an outward trust which the Japanese had been showing towards the Occupation.¹⁹ MacArthur's request for relief shipments were highly criticized by the Far Eastern Commission. This was an allied body made up of the eleven nations that were at war with Japan. The

four major powers had the veto power so nothing was ever accomplished. They were supposed to control the Allied operations in Japan but MacArthur generally ignored them. They said that China, South-East Asia and India were also starving and they had been Allies. MacArthur still insisted and in April 1949 food was given to Japan from the United States.²⁰ MacArthur said that to achieve a real victory in war, there must be a complete spiritual reformation so that the people will not only be won over militarily but there will be an extended victory resulting in solving the basic problem that caused the conflict. Starvation breeds mass unrest, disorder and violence.²¹

The United States has begun to prepare for the Occupation early in the war. With the surrender, these plans were adopted, with some changes, by the Far Eastern Commission under the titles of the "United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan" and the "Basic Presidential Policy Statement". Essentially, these called for the democratization and demilitarization of Japan.²² The initial American attitude toward the Japanese Occupation was that it should be punitive. Japan should be deprived industrially and in the way of leadership from any ability to wage war. Then Japanese society should be democratized.²³

MacArthur was interested in reform. He insisted that if this reform came from himself, it would last only as long as he lasted. In October 1945, when the new Prime Minister, Baron Shidehara, came to power, MacArthur went and told him that reform must come from the Japanese people. In the Supreme Commander's New Year's speech,

January 1, 1946, he stated, "The masses of Japan now have the power to govern and what is done must be done by themselves".²⁴ So Japan's Occupation and reform, unlike the occupation of Germany, was carried out through existing civil authorities. This presented difficulties because the people were supposed to reform themselves and the country, which included purges.²⁵

Thus MacArthur was faced with enforcing his own ideas through the Emperor and his government. The Supreme Commander was very familiar with the Japanese government so he decided to keep that which was good and destroy and bad.²⁶ He ran the Japanese government with a strong hand. Besides his military establishment, he also controlled the many American agencies which represented the Washington bureaucracy with their red tape and rivalries. Despite all these agencies, they were not the government but rather were supervisory to the Japanese Government. A Central Liaison Office was set up as an intermediary between the SCAP agencies and their counterparts in the Japanese government. This office gradually lost importance as both sides learned to work together.²⁷ The military itself has very little to do with governing. Many of them became members of civil affairs teams that checked to see the SCAP objectives were being carried out in the local subdivisions.²⁸

By January 4, 1946, after about four months of Occupation, many basic reforms were well underway. The directions for the denazification of the bureaucracy had been issued. Major war criminals had been arrested. Mandates calling for freedom of speech, press and assembly had been issued. Thought control had been abolished.

Universal suffrage was established and the zaibatsu had begun to be broken up. Agrarian reform was beginning. Collective bargaining was guaranteed to labor. The Shinto religion had been disestablished from the government and education was demilitarized. The problem of what to do with the Emperor had not been discussed.²⁹

The first step of SCAP was demilitarization. This was not such a major operation because the Japanese war machine had already been destroyed. Millions of Japanese military and civilians had to be brought back from what had formerly been the Japanese Empire. All military installations and equipment were destroyed unless they could be helpful with the recovery.³⁰ Within six months the military was disarmed and shortly thereafter the ministries of the Army, Navy and the Air Force were abolished.³¹

The "Class A" war criminals were tried from May 3, 1946 to November 12, 1948 by a panel of eleven judges from eleven countries. Seven were hanged, sixteen received life imprisonment, and two received lesser imprisonments. None were acquitted. The "Class B" war criminals were made up of twenty high-ranking military officers who were accused of atrocities in the field. Two of these were executed by ad hoc courts in the field. The rest were acquitted in SCAP courts. There were 9,200 "Class C" criminals of which 400 were acquitted, 700 executed, with the rest receiving lesser punishments. The Japanese accepted the war trials but they became upset because they lasted so long. The Japanese looked upon these criminals as victims of circumstances both in their actions and their executions.³²

Besides handling the war criminals, the Occupation forces conducted purges. By 1948 200,000 people had been designated for removal from influential positions. By this time the Japanese had lost interest in the purges so they had little effect. From 1948 to 1952 many of those who were purged returned to public life. In 1950 the purges were just used against the Communist Party. By 1952 there were only 8710 purges. After this the purges stopped.³³

The Occupation forces had originally decided not to get involved in the economy of Japan. Soon they realized that political democracy cannot be separated from economic democracy. They then began a program of agrarian land reform "zaibatsu busting" and the encouragement of labor unions.

By the end of World War II, according to MacArthur, most of Japan's farmers were little more than serfs or sharecroppers who owed a large percentage of their crops to their landlords. SCAP set up a natural resource section to advise the Japanese government as to how it could redistribute land. The government passed laws buying up the land from large absentee landlords. This land was then made available to poor farmers on long term installment purchasing plans.³⁴ When the Occupation had begun, three-fourths of the farmers were dependent, at least half of their crop. When land reform was completed by 1950, three million farmers owned five million acres of land.³⁵ This meant that 89% of the arable land was controlled by those who lived on it. This helped eliminate rural indebtedness and stifled the Communists because it made the farmers capitalist.³⁶

By the end of the war, the zaibatsu consisted of about ten families who controlled about 90% of Japanese industry. MacArthur had these companies expropriated and compensated the families in hopes of breaking up this control over the nation's industry.³⁷

MacArthur claimed that labor never had the right to collective bargaining³⁸ though the strikes after World War I tended to disprove this. When unions were reorganized after World War II, the laborers were quick to join. By 1947 there were 25,000 unions in Japan with five million members. The Communists came to control several unions and called a general strike on February 1, 1947. MacArthur spoke out against the strike saying that it was badly timed because of the reconstruction and the starvation. The strike was banned. The Communists infiltrated some of the key transportation unions. These were mainly government owned and operated industries. MacArthur advised the government to bring all these industries into the civil service which eliminated the unions.³⁹ This action is an example of how the conflict between building an American ally in the Pacific and encouraging the native population to develop a democracy can result in inconsistencies.⁴⁰

By July 1947, inflation had gotten out of hand. Silk had been Japan's largest pre-war export but it had been replaced on the world market with nylon. As of December 1948, the Cabinet had done nothing about the problem so SCAP stepped in and ordered a balanced budget, control of price and wages and a reform of the tax structure. To accomplish this, Japan would have to find markets in developing nations. The economic policy of the Occupation forces began to change direction. Large corporations had been outlawed but the Japanese government did

nothing to enforce this. American businessmen influenced SCAP into accepting the idea that the zaibatsu corporations were really necessary for the quick recovery of Japan. In the end, it was the Korean War that really put the Japanese economy on its feet.⁴¹

Until the Occupation, schools, newspapers, theaters, radios and motion pictures were part of the official propaganda machine's attempt at "thought control". Schools throughout Japan had been centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education in Tokyo. There were no local school boards so all text books were issued from the Ministry of Education and were filled with ultranationalism and militancy.⁴²

The Occupation tried to work out a long range system to instill an appreciation of democracy in the youth of Japan. They began by reorganizing the school system, revising the curriculum, retraining the teachers, establishing adult education and libraries, and getting the people involved in community projects.⁴³

The Occupation started with the idea of forcing the acceptance of the democratic way on the people after which there would be time to produce an appreciation and an understanding of this system. MacArthur was against a central police authority like the Home Office because he felt that the police should be servants to the people. The Diet finally agreed to allow local police forces to manage local affairs and enact their own regulations within the law.⁴⁴

By the end of the war, the Meiji Constitution had been so distorted in interpretation that it commanded very little respect from the people. Because of the fact that that sovereignty of the state had rested in the Emperor, the people had no basic undeniable rights

and many of them were not ever aware that these rights existed.⁴⁵

SCAP wanted a revision of the Meiji Constitution written at the hands of the Japanese.⁴⁶ Before this would come about, SCAP issued its own "Japanese Bill of Rights" on October 9, 1945. This document prohibited legislation that restricted any basic human freedoms. It also released the political prisoners. It took away most of the powers from the Home Affairs Office which had been the central police control. This caused the resignation of Prime Minister Higashi Kuni because he felt that he couldn't control the country without the Home Affairs Ministry. The new Prime Minister was Shidehare Kijuro who was fairly conservative.⁴⁷

MacArthur emphasized the importance of writing a new constitution. A Cabinet committee, under the leadership of Matsumoto Joji, was formed to write this constitution. This committee began taking suggestions for the new constitution from anyone who had something to offer. They reviewed ideas, editorial letters, interviews, and suggestions from the parties. It became a common topic for discussion among the common people. MacArthur was insistent that the constitution be written by the people.⁴⁸

The Committees became split between conservatives and liberals and in January 1946 a conservative document was submitted. This constitution showed very little improvement over the old Meiji Constitution. The Emperor had become "supreme and inviolable" instead of "sacred and inviolable". The rights that MacArthur and SCAP had already guaranteed became dependent upon local ordinance.

SCAP was disappointed with the attempt at the constitution so,

on February 23, 1946, General Courtney Whitney, the chief of the government section of SCAP, and MacArthur presented minimal principles for the writing of a new constitution. War was to be abolished forever as a national policy and right, even for settling disputes. The peerage would be ended with the present generation and nobility would lose its political power. The budget would have to follow the British system.⁴⁹

The final stipulation was that the sovereignty of the State would be placed in the people instead of the Emperor. The Emperor, who had denied his own divinity on New Years Day, would be retained as a symbol of the state.⁵⁰ This last stipulation had caused a lot of controversy. Emperor Hirohita was felt to be a war criminal by many Americans and Allies. On the other hand, he had cooperated well with SCAP and he was still held in high regard by most of the Japanese.⁵¹ General Whitney believed that the Emperor had given so much help to the Allies that it would be unfair to try him as a War Criminal. The Emperor had been the High Priest of Shinto as well as a god, but with the end of state subsidies to Shintoism and the Emperor's denial of his own divinity, freedom of religion emerged. To help to broaden the idea of freedom of religion, MacArthur invited missionaries to Japan.⁵²

MacArthur claims that the clause that outlawed war was requested by Prime Minister Shidehara because he wanted to prohibit the revival of a military establishment in Japan. Also, Japan could not afford a military establishment in Japan. Also, Japan could not afford a military establishment at this point in time. The "no war" clause

does not mean that Japan could not defend herself from outside aggressors but only that she couldn't start any aggression.⁵³

Elections were scheduled for April of 1946 and MacArthur was determined to have a new constitution that met his minimum standards by then. He assembled a group of Americans to rewrite the constitution. Supposedly, the committee was to work closely with the Japanese on the final draft. The Emperor readily approved the new draft of the constitution although it removed much of his power and land.⁵⁴ When the document was presented to the original Japanese constitutional committee, they protested that it was far from liberal than anything they had considered and that it wasn't Japanese. MacArthur gave them little choice but to accept the constitution saying that it would be issued whether the committee approved or not and the committee members would be left behind if they did not accept it. The committee did demand that the document be translated into Japanese, which was done. This left the Japanese constitution weak because it was not a native product.⁵⁵

On March 6, 1946 the Constitution was published and received the approval of the Emperor and MacArthur. It placed the sovereignty of the State with the people as exercised by the executive legislature and judicial parts of government. War was outlawed, civil rights were guaranteed and the cabinet was made responsible to parliament. This would mean that a non-confidence vote in parliament would either cause the Cabinet to resign or dissolve the Diet.⁵⁶

The published Constitution was circulated throughout Japan to be evaluated by the people. Suggestions for small changes were received

from throughout Japan but in general there was genuine approval by everyone except the Communists. The government began massive programs to educate the people about the Constitution.⁵⁷

SCAP pushed for some political reforms before the April election. The Diet passed a universal suffrage law that gave anyone over twenty years of age the right to vote. This law gave women their first chance to vote.⁵⁸ In the April election, those who were committed to the Constitution were elected.

The process of discussion and review of the Constitution continued until August 1946, when the Lower House approved it. The House of Peers approved it in September of 1946. Finally the Emperor declared it law on November 3, 1946 so that it went into effect in May of 1947.⁵⁹

In many respects the new Constitution is really an amendment of the Meiji Constitution in that it kept many of the same structures of government. This allowed for a continuity that is essential in Japanese society. It took the best of the past and the present. The Diet now assumed supreme power from the Emperor. The Constitution also had a Bill of Rights and provided for the division of the power into three parts. Amendment to the Constitution was allowed for through a two-thirds majority vote in a referendum.⁶⁰

Many political parties began to surface due to the newly guaranteed Rights. The old leaders had been discredited and the country was committed to one sort of democracy. The conservatives wanted to make Japan into a respectable country.⁶¹ The Communists campaigned for popular causes. The Social Democrats were workers

and urban intellectuals who wanted nationalization of the banks and industries. The Liberal Party was large and conservative. They believed in a laissez-faire economy. The Progressive Party was the most conservative and had the greatest following.⁶²

The success of the democratic moves could be seen even before the new Constitution went into effect. In the elections of April 10, 1946 75% of the eligible voters voted. This included 13,000,000 women. Of all those elected, only six were professional politicians from the past. The new parliament was made up of farmers, teachers, doctors and laborers including thirty-eight women out of 466 elected.⁶³

Women made other great advances in post-war Japan. They joined the professions, labor unions and workers' organizations. They worked for equal pay and maternity leave. In education they achieved co-education and total equality. Laws concerning marriage, divorce and adultery were changed so women could be equal with men. Contract marriage and concubinage were forbidden.⁶⁴

A review of the Occupation shows that the first two years were spent in frantic efforts to reform Japan. By 1947 the Cold War had changed the emphasis from reform of Japan to making Japan an ally to the United States. Japan replaced China as the "bullwark of Democracy" and "workshop of the Far East". In the Autumn of 1949, Great Britain and the United States agreed that Japan should be granted a liberal treaty to assure Japanese friendship toward the West. With the Peace treaty of September 8, 1951, Japan entered the United Nations and the Occupation ended, somewhat hurried by the

Korean War, on April 28, 1952.⁶⁵

CHAPTER III

The Development of Democracy in Japan: An Overall View

In summarizing the political change in Japan after World War II, MacArthur said that the Japanese had always been a warrior people. The masses were under the control of tradition, legend, mythology and regimentation. Because they had never lost a war, they felt that they were invincible. This was all destroyed in World War II and left a moral, physical and mental vacuum. Then "a spiritual revolution ensued which almost overnight tore asunder a theory and practice of life built upon 2,000 years of history and legend."¹ Democracy came in to fill this vacuum. The validity of this statement must be questioned when the historian considers the political developments in Japan prior to 1932. The Meiji Constitution, the rise of the Middle Class, industrialization, and the rise of the parties did not bring Japan to a full democracy but, depending on one's definition of democracy, they were seeds of growth in that direction. Thus, though the original democratic movement failed, its democratic features made the democratization after the war much easier.²

It might be helpful to list some of the democratic features: 1. The Meiji Constitution guaranteed equality under the law. This, of course, did not include the Imperial family, but it did provide some class mobility necessary for a democracy. It also granted concessions of freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of association. These were concessions and not rights so that the Emperor retained total authority over the people. 2. The system of compulsory, universal and uniform education also tended toward democracy. This was an equalizing force which helped to produce a greater sense of equality. On the other hand, the education was controlled to such an extent that it limited free and creative thought which is also necessary for democracy. 3. The Meiji government also used the merit system which prefers ability over social position.³

The most helpful feature of the government under the Meiji Constitution in developing democratic tendencies was that, although the power was always in the hands of the oligarchy, plutocracy or military regime, the Japanese gained experience in at least the mechanics of a parliamentary system. They learned how to scrutinize and criticize existing authorities. They even gained experience at forming a national budget. Though most of the criticism of the government was suppressed, for three generations many Japanese found the courage, tenacity and sense of democracy to criticize their efforts. Even when the militarists were in power, many party people continued to be elected to the Diet. In 1942, when strong intimidation began to be used to coerce the voters to vote for the military, 20% of the vote was against the military.⁴

Still, the democratic tendencies failed to produce a democratic government. The reasons for this are as varied as the different historians who study the problem. Many of these reasons have already been discussed. The docile background of the people, the shortness of time (especially when considered next to the centuries allowed for the development of Western democracies, the sovereignty of the Emperor, the xenophobia produced by the spread of Western encroachment, the power of the military, the shallowness of the move toward liberation and the need for quick industrialization are just a few of the reasons for the failure of a pre-war democracy in Japan.

This failure can hardly mean that the post-World War II democracy was so revolutionary that it suddenly "... tore asunder a theory and practice based on 2,000 years of history, tradition and legend." In fact, studies of the post World War II Constitution show that while it did borrow some things from American and European institutions, it basically followed the Meiji Constitution.⁵ The democracy after World War II was new in certain respects, but it appears more logical to say it was the fulfillment of a movement in that direction that had begun as early as 1890 with the Meiji Constitution. This statement must be qualified to the extent that without the catalyst of defeat and occupation, the democratic move-

ment in Japan may have never been so successful.

The real success of the democratization of Japan after World War II must also be evaluated. The Occupation and democratization has been called a "massive experiment in planned political change".⁶ Yet the success of the Occupation demanded that democratic tendencies from the past be searched out and cultivated.⁷ The results of such a search depend upon one's opinion of what democracy is. The Occupation felt that a really democratic government rests in the consent of the governed. This implies the sort of equality in which each man must prove his own worth. It also implies a guarantee of the safety and security of all whether or not they are in agreement with the present ruling body.⁸ The purges, suppressions and other restrictions of the pre-occupation government prevented this sort of equality and freedom. The Japanese Bill of Rights tried to insure these rights.

On the other hand, the efforts of the Occupation force to promote democracy had many drawbacks. Although MacArthur claimed that the new constitution was the will of the people, it can be easily seen (just by the way that it was written), that it was not a grass roots document nor even a native Japanese document. It has been argued as to how democratic a constitution which has been forced down one's throat can be.⁹

Others have argued that a little punitive action taken against former members of the bureaucracy led many of the same men, who were used to "irresponsible government" back into government.¹⁰ As the occupation went on and economic recovery was emphasized over political recovery, the machinery that had been set up to purge the right wing, which had destroyed Japan, began to be used against Communists and radicals. This was also a step backward for democracy.¹¹ At the time of the Occupation, others feared the retention of the Emperor. They realized his legal restrictions but feared the popularity he still commanded.¹² The support that was given to the zaibatsu in the later years of the Occupation tended to be less democratic than the initial democratization plans.¹³

Still, in spite of these and many other steps backward, the Occupation can claim credit for reform upon reform which gave Japan essentially the same political structure it has today. The Commission on the Constitution, which met from 1957 to 1964, did provide for a few substantial changes in the Constitution but these appeared to be a reaction from having the Constitution forced on them from outside. The original democratic foundation of the Constitution was kept intact.¹⁴

Therefore, it appears that the Occupation of Japan after World War II did bring about a general democratization of Japan. Yet, these changes would have disappeared on April 28, 1952 when the Occupation pulled out, if they had not been essentially backed by the Japanese people. The Japanese people could not have supported or operated the system forced upon them if they had not experienced a liberal, democratizing movement before the Occupation. The development of democracy in Japan, then, is not a miracle by MacArthur, but is a slow, developing process which, like anything healthy, has had to have time to grow roots, suffer hardships and receive help from the outside, until it achieves the self-confidence of maturity.

Footnotes

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23. Reischauer, "The Rise and Fall of Democratic Institution in Prewar Japan," p. 4.
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25. Ibid., pp. 39, 40.
26. Reischauer, "The Rise and Fall of Democratic Institutions in Prewar Japan," p. 6.
27. Kawai, Japan's American Interlude, p. 40.
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29. Reischauer, "The Rise and Fall of Democratic Institutions in Prewar Japan," p. 4.
30. Hugh Borton, Japan's Modern Century From Perry to 1970, p. 350.
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35. Ibid., p. 349.
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7. Ibid., pp. 8 - 10.
8. The Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers is abbreviated SCAP. SCAP is used to refer to General MacArthur and all of the Occupation operations under his command.
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10. Kawai, Japan's American Interlude, pp. 12, 13.
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12. Ibid., pp. 283, 284.
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23. Jon Livingston, Postwar Japan 1945 to the Present (New York: Random House Inc., 1973) p. 6.
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