

IMAGES OF JAPANESE SOCIETY IN THE “NEW CIVICS TEXTBOOK”: NEO-NATIONALIST ANTIDOTES FOR DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract: Discussions of Japanese neo-nationalism and activities of neo-nationalist groups like Tsukurukai have very much focused on issues of historiography. Compared to publications such as the group’s “New History Textbook”, however, there has been little in-depth research on Tsukurukai’s civics textbook (*Atarashii kōmin kyōkasho*) that remains largely unknown to a non-Japanese audience. To partially fill this gap, a close reading of Tsukurukai’s civic textbook is presented in this paper. I will show that its narrative is fully in line with the claims of the neo-nationalist discourse published elsewhere. Focusing in particular on chapters that deal with the individual and the family, this reading helps to better understand Tsukurukai’s view on gender relations and topics such as social and demographic change. Findings are put into perspective by comparing Tsukurukai’s approach to other publishers’ textbooks that present rather different images of these issues. I will argue that the “New Civics Textbook” represents a minority view on the role of family members and gender relations in contemporary Japan. On the other hand, the textbook’s favourable view of an individual submissive to the state, juxtaposed with an alleged “excess of individualism” in postwar Japan, may find more approval in the present discussion on how to instil a sense of “patriotism” in Japanese school children.

INTRODUCTION

Since their emergence in the late 1990s, groups of right-wing intellectuals and political circles that advocate a fundamental change in the representation of modern Japanese history have received wide attention in Japan and – more recently – abroad. For roughly a decade, one of the most active groups promoting historical revisionism has been the *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai* [Society for the Creation of New History Text-

* This article is based on a paper given at the DIJ Forum of the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo, 23 March 2006. The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for many helpful suggestions to improve the paper. Mark Selden (Cornell University) offered supportive comments and corrections after reading an earlier version of this article. I would also like to thank my students at Munich University for many lively discussions on the topic.

books, henceforth Tsukurukai]. Since 1997, one of its main goals has been to “escape from the ‘masochistic view of history’ that produces contempt for your own country” and to promote “historical research and historical education based on a healthy nationalism (*kenkō na nashonarizumu*)” (Saaler 2005: 39–40). Among the most urgent issues on the Tsukurukai agenda has been the creation of a new history textbook for junior high schools to correct in all respects the “erroneous views” of postwar history education.

From the outset, however, it was also a goal to produce a civics textbook for junior high schools. The latter was published in 2001 under the title *Atarashii kōmin kyōkasho* [New Civics Textbook]. A revised edition appeared in 2005. As scholars have noted, this project reveals a clear political objective: to shape the attitudes of young Japanese towards the state. The text is a reminder that neo-nationalist thought is not restricted to the field of historiography, but is equally based on projecting images of contemporary society, social order, gender relations, and the individual. Notwithstanding the almost totally unsuccessful attempts to push their new textbooks into the classrooms, the campaigns conducted by Tsukurukai during the last few years are seen as a vital part of its political agenda (Uesugi 2001). As Shimada Yōichi, former member of the Ministry of Education’s Textbook Examination Committee (Monbushō kyōkasho chōsakan) and one of the editorial supervisors of the 2005 edition of the “New Civics Textbook”, pointed out in the magazine *Sapio* in May 2005:

I believe that the revised edition of the “New Civics Textbook” published by Fusōsha is a very important part of the conservative revolution in Japan, which, covering the whole range of domestic as well as foreign politics, aims at ensuring a state that has as much power as possible to foster respect for traditional values and righteousness. (quoted in Takashima 2005: 112)

There has been little in-depth research on this civics textbook, particularly when compared to Tsukurukai’s “New History Textbook” (*Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho*), which has been analysed by researchers in Japan and the West within the context of historical revisionism, neo-nationalism, and issues of identity crisis in contemporary Japan (for example, ‘Kyōkasho ni shinjitsu to jiyū o’ renrakukai 2000, Richter and Hōpken 2003, Saaler 2005). Japanese scholars have also pointed out some of the fundamental problems of the civics textbook (Iwasaki 2002, Koshida 2001, Oguma 2003, Takashima 2005; see also Saaler 2005: 56–59). These critics have highlighted the conspicuous emphasis put on the Self Defence Forces, the Meiji Constitution, and the national flag and anthem, issues that typify Tsukurukai’s revisionist agenda. However, the depiction in the civics textbook of society and social change, family, and gender relations has received

much less attention. Therefore, it is one of the main goals of this article to present a close reading of those chapters focusing on conceptions of the relationship between the individual and society and the representation of social and demographic change. In so doing, this paper will highlight the fact that these issues rank high on Tsukurukai's agenda and are central to a vision of Japanese society profoundly changed by a "conservative revolution". By contextualising the textbook's narrative within the overall discourse on problems of contemporary Japan that is sustained by publications of Tsukurukai members, it will become clear that the civics textbook is indeed an integral part of this discourse.

Obviously, changing family patterns and gender relations are issues that are closely linked to long-term demographic developments and their dramatic consequences. For years, research has highlighted the complex relationship between fertility rates, gender equality, family patterns, and social institutions in various societies. Researchers have pointed out that gender roles and so-called "traditional family values" have an impact on the conditions of the labour market that in turn may prove to be obstacles when dealing with the consequences of demographic change. A recent Japanese government report, for example, criticises the disadvantages faced by working women in Japan and concludes: "Achieving gender equal society by providing support for women's renewed challenges would be an effective countermeasure for the declining birthrate, because it will lead to a better society where women would feel safe and the joy of having and raising children [*sic*]" (Cabinet Office 2006: 1; quoted from the English original).

The expression "gender equal society" (*danzo kyōdō sankaku shakai*) mentioned above has been a key term since the late 1990s, referring to far-reaching reform measures (Osawa 2000). It not only addresses persisting problems of gender inequality in Japanese society but also highlights its implications for demographic change. The concept of a "gender equal society" has drawn fierce criticism from the neo-nationalist camp, however. This paper will demonstrate how this conviction is incorporated into Tsukurukai's civics textbook.

The term "civics" (*kōminka*) refers to classes in junior high school that address topics such as the organisation of the Japanese state, its political system, and the Constitution, as well as international relations, economics, welfare, social development, and the environment. The space allotted to the issue of declining birthrates and the ageing of society is clearly limited, usually only accounting for one page or a few paragraphs within a textbook of approximately 200 pages. This means that it is necessary to look for the subtleties of the narrative on these pages and in the implications suggested by the overall account of Japanese society, family life, and

the individual. Since much can be gained from a comparative perspective, this paper juxtaposes Tsukurukai's civics textbook (published by Fusōsha) with those of three other publishing houses, namely Tōkyō Shoseki, Ōsaka Shoseki and Shimizu Shoin.¹ Taken together, these three textbooks are presently used by more than three-quarters of Japanese junior high school students. Although the three textbooks vary in their treatment of Japanese society, these differences seem rather minimal when compared to the textbook issued by Tsukurukai.

Methodologically speaking, given the rich diversity of visual and graphic materials that often dominate each page and add information and complexity to the written text, a multimodal discourse analysis would seem appropriate (O'Halloran 2004). Studies on science textbooks (Guo 2004) or the Japanese morals textbook "Notes of the Heart" (*Kokoro no nōto*) (Miyake 2003) have applied this method quite successfully. Due to space limitations, however, in this paper I will confine myself largely to a textual analysis of the relevant narratives.²

After a brief introduction to the general context of Tsukurukai and its publications in the following section, I will outline the image of the individual and how the individual relates to society as presented in the respective textbooks. The following section deals with the challenges of Japan's demographic change. The comparative view will provide evidence that the solutions offered in Tsukurukai's textbook are closely in line with neo-nationalist discourse and lean towards the past. This point is followed up in the final part of the analysis, which locates family and gender issues at the very heart of neo-nationalist thinking. The concluding section highlights the fact that the textbook's solutions for dealing with demographic change suggest a model of family and gender roles no longer acceptable for a majority of Japanese. Tsukurukai's view that individual interests should be subjugated to the interests of the state, on the other hand, appears more palatable to the general public: the popularity of discourses on

¹ While Tōkyō Shoseki has published the single most widely used civics textbook in junior high school for years, holding an overall share of 60.9% of civics textbooks in classroom use in 2005, the volume published by Ōsaka Shoseki comes second, with a share of 13.6%. Shimizu Shoin is one of the smaller publishers that specialises in producing school textbooks. Its share of the civics textbooks market presently stands at 3.8% (Shimin no kyōkasho kenkyūsho 2005).

² The most extensive study on the treatment of gender, family, and the labour market in civics textbooks has been carried out by Murakami (2003). Her study, too, explicitly excludes illustrations and visual materials from the analysis (Murakami 2003: 94). For an assessment of values taught in Japanese civics classes see Ōtsu (2000).

"patriotism" or the need to counter an "excess of individualism" in contemporary Japan seem to point in this direction.

THE BEGINNINGS

To contextualise the two editions of Tsukurukai's civics textbooks, which were published in 2001 and 2005 respectively, it is necessary to look briefly at the beginnings and the background of this project as related by the organisation's former president Yagi Hidetsugu. According to Tsukurukai (2000: 63), it was Yagi himself who initiated the move to produce such a textbook. In late 1996, after reading through existing civics textbooks, Yagi concluded that "history textbooks are certainly bad, but civics textbooks used in Japanese middle schools are even worse".

In the past, Tsukurukai sought to disseminate its views by publishing numerous books at very reasonable prices through the publishing house Fusōsha and the publishing branch of the newspaper *Sankei Shimbun*. For example, in 1999 a book called "The History of the Nation" (*Kokumin no rekishi*) was published by Nishio Kanji (1999), and copies poured into the bookshops. Widely seen as a "pilot version" (Saaler 2005: 42) of the new history textbook for junior high schools, this thick volume covers a wide range of topics of Japanese history in detail. They are depicted in a neo-nationalist and often clearly chauvinistic and xenophobic fashion (Saaler 2005: 42–51, 'Kyōkasho ni shinjitsu to jiyū o' renrakukai 2000). In the same vein, though not attracting the same attention, Nishibe Susumu, a prolific writer of controversial books and one-time professor at Tokyo University, authored a book called "The Morality of the Nation" (*Kokumin no dōtoku*) in 2000 that was, he explicitly states, intended as a companion volume to Nishio's "The History of the Nation" (Nishibe 2000: 5). While the latter aims at correcting "too masochistic" an interpretation of Japanese history, the former takes issue with the norms and values of postwar Japan. Critically reflecting on terms like "humanism", "individualism", and "pacifism", this book is a fundamental critique of the postwar era and its ideology, to which all problems of contemporary Japanese society are attributed. In 2005, another book in this series appeared that is closely related to many of the topics treated in the civics textbook. Entitled "The Thinking of the Nation" (*Kokumin no shisō*), this book was authored by Yagi Hidetsugu and contains chapters on social policies and demographic challenges (Yagi 2005). Along with Nishibe's polemics against the fundamentals of modernity, Yagi's text too is important in understanding the approach towards issues like the falling birth rate, family, and gender in Tsukurukai's civics textbook. The relationship between these thick volumes and Tsuku-

rukai's textbooks for junior high schools is evident: Nishio Kanji and Nishibe Susumu served as representatives of the authors of the history and the civics textbooks respectively in 2001. Yagi is listed in this capacity in the 2005 edition of the civics textbook. Later, all fell victim to the internal factional strife that is a notorious characteristic of Tsukurukai.³ Although textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) for classroom use are not usually sold in bookstores, Fusōsha published a special "market version" (*shihanbon*) of both the history and the civics textbooks, in order to attract a wide audience and stimulate discussion. Short additions at the end of each book emphasise the merits of Tsukurukai's new products in comparison to the textbooks of other publishers. The following sections take a closer look at what exactly these "merits" are.

IMAGES OF THE CITIZEN: EGOISTIC CREATURE
VS. SUBMISSIVE NATIONAL SUBJECT

The efforts of Tsukurukai to produce a new civics textbook for junior high school students have been hailed by many conservative and neo-nationalist critics because of the special meaning the textbook attaches to the term *kōmin*. Commonly translated as "citizen", in the context of Tsukurukai's textbook the term is more appropriately rendered as "national subject". Thus, throughout the civics textbook, hardly any effort is made to differentiate society from the nation-state. The complexities of modern social life are largely reduced to a confrontation between the individual and the group, be it the family, the company, or the nation-state. As the authors explain at length, the welfare of society and state crucially depend on the subordinate citizen (*kōmin*). The term *kōmin* is then contrasted with the term *shimin*, which can also be translated as "citizen" but is often used in contexts associated with civil autonomy or civil movements. In the narrative of Tsukurukai's civics textbook, the term *shimin* is solely associated with the pursuit of personal interests and desires that neglect the interest of the greater whole, that is, the Japanese nation-state. In the narrative,

³ Nishibe left the organisation in early 2002 along with manga artist Kobayashi Yoshinori; both opposed the "compromising" stance towards the US war on terrorism in Afghanistan taken by Nishio, Yagi, and others at the time. In early 2006, it was Nishio's turn to resign amidst growing debate on who was to be held responsible for Tsukurukai's poor achievement in the textbook selection process. Yagi was forced to step down as president at the end of February 2006 and left Tsukurukai in summer that year to form a new movement (Tawara 2006, Uesugi 2006).

this notion of "citizenship" (as *shimin*) is closely linked to the term "individualism" (*kojin shugi*), which is clearly imbued with negative connotations (e.g. Fusōsha 2001: 7).⁴ From this follows that, throughout the book, all claims of civil autonomy tend to be labelled egoistic. The narrative on fundamental human rights and respect for the individual even implies that both are predicated on "keeping the rules" (e.g. Fusōsha 2001: 30). The underlying ideal the textbook seems to propagate is that of an individual supervised by a paternalistic or autocratic society or state, in which all public welfare is derived from strictly obeying these so-called rules – rules that are never really explained but appear to be based on Japanese traditions that, again, are never thoroughly explained, differentiated, or put into any historical context. One of the main differences from the narratives found in the other three textbooks is the fact that the latter present citizens as social agents who create the rules rather than being passively subjected to them. In this respect it is revealing to compare those paragraphs of the civics textbooks where the term "public welfare" (*kōkyō no fukushi*) is discussed in the context of the rights and duties of citizens. In the narrative of Tōkyō Shoseki's civics textbook we read the following account:

Just because human rights are guaranteed, there is no reason to believe that we can always do what we want to. It is not permitted, for example, to shout loudly in the middle of the night, claiming that this is 'freedom of expression'. In life in our society there are restrictions, as human rights must not violate other people's human rights. Also, for the sake of communal life we have to accept certain constraints. In this way, the exertion of human rights is limited by the 'public welfare'. However, if, for example, the government prohibits activities of certain citizens' groups, claiming that 'these endanger the social order and are thus against the public welfare', these groups completely lose the opportunity to carry out their activities freely. The term 'public welfare' is an abstract and vague one, and it is therefore necessary to examine very closely what it implies concretely in terms of public benefit and whether the individual case allows for restrictions of human rights. Thus it must not be the case that the government unilaterally decides what exactly qualifies as the 'public welfare' and then

⁴ One of the outstanding features of the notion of the citizen in this textbook is the close association of the terms individualism and egoism (Oguma 2003). In focusing only on the individual, this narrative overlooks the fact that "egoistic" behaviour in society is certainly found well beyond the realm of the individual too. Many examples showing "egoistic" behaviour of groups like companies or public corporations could be cited.

limits the free exercising of human rights by the people. (Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 54–55)

While Shimizu Shoin's volume often presents its argument in a somewhat more intellectual tone, its judgement of the issue well echoes Tōkyō Shoseki's narrative:

In reality, it is quite difficult to define what the public welfare might be and for what reasons and to what extent it might allow a restriction of individual human rights. For example, to what extent are the mass media allowed to report on the private lives of politicians or famous people? Or to what extent and to what purpose should limitations on the height and style of buildings be allowed? These are difficult problems. Because the public welfare tends to limit individual human rights in this way, it must be dealt with very carefully. The public welfare is thus not at the disposal of the state or regional public bodies. Just as an egoism that goes under the name of rights and liberty cannot be allowed, so a restriction of individual rights and liberties beyond what is necessary cannot be allowed in the name of the 'public welfare'. (Shimizu Shoin 2005: 57)

The account in Ōsaka Shoseki's textbook resembles those just quoted, additionally pointing to the role of the courts as institutions where human rights restrictions are weighed against the claims of the public interest in a democratic society (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 60–61). The nuances in Tsukurukai's narrative, by contrast, are markedly different:

Rights are to be exercised based on the individual's good sense and manners (*manā*), 'maintained by the constant endeavour of the people' (Constitution of Japan, Article 12). In regard to the exercising of these human rights, however, the Constitution in Article 12 states that the people, 'who shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights, shall always be responsible for utilising them for the public welfare'; it thus warns the people against upsetting the order of society and causing trouble to others. When living together as a group it happens sometimes that one's own rights clash with those of other people in some respect. This is an important problem and there will be different methods according to each individual case to reach an accommodation or weigh the balance between both sides. The fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Constitution thus certainly neither acknowledge unlimited claims and demands by individuals, nor stand in opposition to the 'public welfare'. Rather, we can say that they are based on lessons from history, teaching us that individual freedom and rights are achieved precisely when the fundamental

rules of society are kept and we consider the harmony of the whole (*zentai no chōwa*). (Fusōsha 2005a: 81)

Written in comparatively vague language and lacking any concrete examples, this account omits to mention the danger of abuse of the restriction of human rights by the state and the possibilities of disguising government interests as "the public welfare".

LOOKING TO THE PAST FOR SOLUTIONS: IMAGES OF FAMILY AND GENDER RELATIONS IN TSUKURUKAI'S CIVICS TEXTBOOK

While there are paragraphs in each textbook explicitly introducing the terms *shōshika* [declining birthrate] and/or *kōreika* [ageing population], related issues are also discussed on various other occasions across the narratives of the four books. Tōkyō Shoseki's textbook, for example, in a chapter on "The individual and social life", uses a manga sequence titled "Let's try to look into the future". It depicts the everyday life of a family where the husband, who has opted for parental leave, stays at home and cares for the baby, while his wife works at a company. At the bottom of these two pages, an additional graph shows the unfolding of family life from a couple's wedding up to the birth of the second child and urges the students to discuss questions such as who should take parental leave and whether the whole family should move in the case of a transfer ordered by the company (Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 28–29).

In Shimizu Shoin's narrative, some general features of family life and changing family structures in modern times are introduced. Then, the theme "Who is better off – men or women?" is suggested as a possible topic of a debate to be prepared and carried out by the students (Shimizu Shoin 2005: 12–13). Along with this topic, gender relations and gender equality, discrimination against women in the workplace, and the participation of men in household work and childcare are suggested as issues to be taken into account.

What has Tsukurukai's civics textbook to say on the topic of family relations and gender? First and foremost, the family is described as the basic unit of society, where children learn rules and manners, customs and traditions. In comparison to the well-established tradition of child-care facilities in the US or the ongoing discussion on the lack of such infrastructure in Germany, the textbook is particularly critical of child care that takes place outside the family. In this respect it criticises recent government efforts like the New Angel Plan (*Shin enzeru puran*), which aims at a better infrastructure of day-care centres for babies. It warns that long separation

from parents might negatively influence an infant's development (Fusōsha 2005a: 21).⁵

Another prominent feature of Tsukurukai's civics textbook is its discourse on the merits of the functional division of labour along the lines of gender. The narrative on the equality of the sexes and family members according to Article 24 of the Japanese Constitution is part of the curriculum in junior high schools (Monbushō 1999: 129–30). In Tsukurukai's textbook, however, much emphasis is put on the claim that "the rights pertaining to equality do not aim at dissolving the functional divisions (*yakuwari buntan*) that provide the order of society" (Fusōsha 2005a: 84). Referring to various gender equality measures introduced by the government since the late 1980s and 1990s, the textbook criticises the tendency to transcend the gendered division of labour, asserting that "the sexual distinction between men and women is a precious part of each personality" that should be honoured as such (Fusōsha 2005a: 90). This rather vague formulation barely conceals the idea that the gendered division of labour is "natural".

The respective chapters on "equality" in the other three civics textbooks present detailed descriptions of actual cases of gender discrimination. These include inequalities at work (Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 48), contextualised by international comparison (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 43) and highlighted by individual cases in which women have successfully sued companies with charges of unequal pay (Shimizu Shoin 2005: 48–49, Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 131). There is no factual material like this in the Tsukurukai textbook, whose narrative, without explicitly mentioning the term "gender", instead asserts that while "unreasonable/irrational discrimination (*fugōri na sabetsu*) based on being a man or a woman must not be allowed, at the same time this notion alone does not permit the complete denial of social customs and traditions inherited from the past" (Fusōsha 2005a: 94).

One consequence of this conviction is the strong and outspoken support the Tsukurukai textbook lends to the full-time housewife (*senjyō shufu*), who is seen as the embodiment of the woman's part in the functional division of labour. The spiritual role of the full-time housewife as supporter of the family and its order is heavily emphasised. In a column that is included in both editions of Tsukurukai's civics textbook, there is a somewhat critical account of the well-known attempt to assess the economic value of housework and to calculate costs, for example, for the work of cleaning, preparing meals, taking care of the children, and so forth. But

⁵ In his book "The Thinking of the Nation" Yagi Hidetsugu even goes so far as to accuse the supporters of these measures of taking child rearing away from the families and attempting to "nationalise education" (Yagi 2005: 150).

rather than stressing the economic role and value of these activities for society at large, the column concludes:

The really important question is whether housework is simply 'work' or not. Housework is the source from which family ties and the happiness of family life emerge. Rather than being unpaid work, one should say, housework is an activity possessing a precious value that cannot be measured in terms of money. (Fusōsha 2005a: 11)

Such emphasis on one particular gender role is conspicuously absent from the narrative of the other textbooks, which, on the contrary, address the theme of "diversity" in society (e.g. Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 28–29, 34–35). This also becomes evident from the visual materials selected. Tōkyō Shoseki's textbook, for example, has a full colour page under the heading "Living together", which depicts women in professional positions traditionally occupied by men (such as Shinkansen driver, astronaut) and vice versa (e.g. care worker in hospitals and day nurseries) (Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 209; see also Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 130).

On the opposite side and in line with its strong adherence to the gendered division of functions in Japanese society is Tsukurukai's criticism of the 1999 Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society. While in the 2001 edition, this law is only mentioned in passing (Fusōsha 2001: 64), the 2005 edition dedicates a full page to it. Stressing the importance of the difference between men and women, it uses considerable space to cite activities of civic groups from all over Japan that oppose the extinction of "masculinity in men" (*otokorashisa*) and "femininity in women" (*onnarashisa*) at which this law allegedly aims (Fusōsha 2005a: 94).⁶ The criticism of so-called "gender-free" education is not only included in the column on the Basic Law but also among the list of the nine outstanding features of Tsukurukai's civics textbook given at the end of the "market version" of the book. As the final paragraph of this section asserts, "in the new edition of our civics textbook we draw a clear line against this way of thinking, which funda-

⁶ If we also take into account what Yagi Hidetsugu writes about this topic in his "The Thinking of the Nation", it becomes clear that the Basic Law and in particular the term "gender free" (*jendā furī*) associated with it and with measures to cope with the falling birthrate have become one of the main targets of recent criticism by Tsukurukai. Yagi accuses at length the advocates of so-called gender-free education of leading an attack on Japanese traditions, inspired by Marxist feminism (Yagi 2005: 98–140). In particular, the efforts of feminist scholar and former government advisor Osawa Mari to promote the Basic Law in the late 1990s (summarised in Osawa 2000) are criticised in a very dismissive tone. For a critique of Yagi's book see Suzumura (2005).

mentally overturns human civilisation and Japanese culture and severs family bonds" (Fusōsha 2005b: III).

While none of the other three textbooks mentions the term "gender free" at all, their assessment of the Basic Law is positive throughout. It is referred to in the context of, for example, fundamental human rights (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 42, Shimizu Shoin 2005: 48), measures against discrimination (Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 48–49), or NPO activities (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 153).

All civics textbooks take into account historical changes pertaining to the family and the status of individuals that occurred with the promulgation of the Constitution in 1947. While the narrative in Ōsaka Shoseki's textbook critically remarks that the prewar *ie* [family] system "was contradictory to [the ideas of] respect for the individual and equality before the law" (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 21), an account under the heading "Towards a Gender Equal Society" in Tōkyō Shoseki's book emphasises the necessity of the Basic Law in order to overcome remnants of prewar thinking in contemporary and future Japanese society:

In prewar Japan, [society] was based on the family system (*ie seido*), which valued the 'family' (*ie*) much more highly than the individual. But after the war, the equality of men and women before the law has been realised by the Constitution and the revised civil code. On the other hand, it is also true that many people today still have this traditional attitude towards the division of functions based on gender, implied for example in the notion that 'men go out to work while women stay at home caring for home and children'. Under these circumstances the Equal Employment Opportunities Law has been revised and the Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society was passed in 1999 amidst an ongoing process of creating a society in which we are able to make good use of our abilities as individuals regardless of gender (*danjo no kubetsu naku*). For the realisation of such a 'gender equal society' it has become necessary to create an environment where work and parenting can go together, through, for example, the diversification of day care services and the full utilisation of a system of parental leave to allow parents to take part in nursing care and child rearing.

Each one of us too can search for ways to live that are not bound by gender restrictions. (Tōkyō Shoseki 2006: 31)

This statement is echoed in the narratives of Shimizu Shoin's and Ōsaka Shoseki's textbooks. In its account of "today's problems in the workplace", the latter asserts that, "for our country, with its declining birthrate and ageing population, the female labour force is necessary to maintain

economic vitality" (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 132) – echoing the statement of the Government Report on the State of the Formation of a Gender Equal Society quoted above (Cabinet Office 2006: 1, Naikakufu 2006: 3).

The discourse in Tsukurukai's textbook on this topic once more expresses a markedly different viewpoint:

With regard to family life, the Constitution stipulates the 'dignity of the individual' and the 'equality of the sexes' (Article 24). In the family system of prewar times, the continuity of the family, which was conceived as a 'household' (*ie*) comprising ancestors and descendants alike, was highly respected. In contrast, the present Constitution and civil code state that each member of the family is to be respected as an individual and treated equally before the law. But on the other hand, the family as community exerts a considerable influence during the formation process of an individual's personality. If there is the attitude that the family is only a group of individuals or the tendency for the individual to be put before the family, the danger emerges that the sense of belonging to the family will be lost. The weakening of family bonds may well shake the foundations of society, and thus efforts are necessary to preserve this community called family. (Fusōsha 2005a: 11)

The positive appreciation of the prewar family system forms a subtext in this textbook's account of "family and individual" and draws attention to one of the "traditions" that the students are subtly urged to cherish. Again, a considerable vagueness in Tsukurukai's narrative should be noted. It is also typical that this mode of discourse omits all reference to power relations. Thus, while the prewar *ie* here seems to symbolise the alleged "harmony" of the "traditional society", other civics textbooks explain in detail the considerable power held by the male household head in prewar Japan. Inheritance, marriage, and other vital family issues serve as examples to indicate the consequences of this system based on patriarchal power (Ōsaka Shoseki 2006: 21). Needless to say, only by taking these power relations into account will students be able to grasp the particular stipulations made in postwar legislation and come to understand why these were welcomed so highly by many Japanese in postwar society.

TSUKURUKAI'S CIVICS TEXTBOOK AND NEO-NATIONALIST DISCOURSE

In the selection process of civics textbooks, Tsukurukai's volume fared particularly badly. While the neo-nationalists' goal of a 10% share of all history textbooks set at the beginning of their 2005 campaign turned out

to be mere wishful thinking – their market share stands currently at 0.4% – the “New Civics Textbook” reached a share of only 0.2% of civics textbooks used in classes (up, however, from a 0.055% in 2001/02) (Shimin no kyōkasho kenkyūsho 2005). This might serve as some consolation to those who, in view of Tsukurukai’s campaigning in spring 2005, had feared a coming resurrection of prewar ideals in Japanese schools.

Despite the significance of Tsukurukai’s highly problematic historiographical stance, it is crucial to note that issues related to Article 24 of the Constitution have ranked equally high on the neo-nationalist agenda for years. What has been suggested recently by Beate Sirota is interesting in this respect. As a young woman in 1946, Sirota had been involved in the drafting of articles pertaining to civil rights, particularly to the equality of the sexes, as a member of Douglas MacArthur’s Constitution Steering Committee (Dower 1999: 380–81, Hellegers 2001: 580–84). According to her account, the principles of “individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes” embodied in this article had been as difficult to swallow for the conservative political establishment at that time as the adoption of the emperor as a mere “symbol” of the state (Article 1) or the renunciation of military force (Article 9). This rejection of the ideas of what was to become Article 24 of the new Constitution was firmly rooted in the conviction that the patriarchal family system had been a central pillar of modern Japan and its society since Meiji times (Sirota, as quoted in Takashima 2005: 135–36). As Inoue (1991: 221) claims, “(o)f the thirty-one articles included in Chapter 3 of the new Constitution [...], Article 24 was the most controversial at the constitutional hearings of the National Diet”. Seen in this light, Article 24 qualifies perfectly for contemporary claims dismissing the Constitution as “imposed on the Japanese people by the United States”. Also, it becomes clear that Tsukurukai’s attacks on measures to promote gender equality are an integral part of a long-term agenda pursued under the slogan of a “conservative revolution”.

In this respect it should be noted that, in the debates held in the Japanese Diet more than 60 years ago, the traditional household system was defended using a line of argument that seems to underlie much of Tsukurukai’s thinking today. To quote just one example from this debate:

On 5 July 1946, Miura Toranosuke of the Liberal Party defined gender relations in terms of an equality based on “different responsibilities” that closely resemble an ideal proposed in Tsukurukai’s civics textbook. At the same time, his argument and its symbolism provide an example of how the American concept of “equality”, proposed as a new key term to overcome the notorious “remnants of feudalism”, took on rather “traditional” meanings when appropriated to the Japanese cultural context.

It goes without saying that the husband and wife should be equal in marriage. Men and women are equal and have equal rights, but I believe that they have different responsibilities (*shokubun*) within a home. The woman has responsibilities as a housewife within her home, and the man has his responsibility as a man. So I believe that in maintaining a home, each one should respect one's own role. I do not think that this would prevent equality between husband and wife. I don't know if my metaphor is appropriate, but if we compare [marriage] with a tree, the wife is the roots that hold the tree from below the ground, and the husband is the branches above ground. ... I believe we can maintain the Japanese family system and equality of the sexes quite well along this line [of thinking]. (English translation given in Inoue 1991: 240–41)

Tsukurukai's narrative on solutions to demographic challenges seems very much linked to this discourse of the past. Moreover, the subtle appreciation of the prewar family system, even when disguised in language conforming to the rules of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), could serve as an example that demonstrates how Tsukurukai's historiography is interconnected with its conception of contemporary and future Japanese society. Glossing over the complex issues of power relations, this conception is obviously based on an ideology of "social harmony", deeply entrenched in a gender-biased view. In spite of its defeat in the official selection process, therefore, there are reasons to take Tsukurukai's civics textbook rather seriously.

This also applies when the claims made in their civics textbook are related to other discourses in contemporary Japan. Critical views on post-war Japanese democracy, pacifism, equality, and individualism, as disseminated in the books by Tsukurukai authors such as Nishibe Susumu and Yagi Hidetsugu, might indeed be shared by a much wider audience than the low circulation of the textbook would suggest. One indicator of this assumption could be the continuing support of the majority of Japanese for revising the Fundamental Law of Education in order to include "patriotism" as a goal of school education. The revision, given high priority on the agenda of the Abe administration from early on, was pushed through the Diet with unprecedented haste in late 2006 (Kyōiku kihonhō 'kaisei' jōhō sentā 2006, Sakata 2007, Tsujii, Fujita and Kita 2006).

Another case in point is the fact that the book "The Dignity of the Nation" (*Kokka no hinkaku*), by Fujiwara Masahiko, became a bestseller in late 2005.⁷ Despite many differences to the approaches of Nishibe, Yagi, or Nishio, Fujiwara (2006: 65–94) too resorts to holding "freedom, equality, and democracy" responsible when diagnosing the failures of contempo-

rary Japanese society. He identifies these values as American ideas, originally foreign to Japan and therefore unsuitable for reviving the dignity of the state. Instead, Fujiwara looks back to the best of Japanese tradition and finds it, for example, in *bushidō*, the “way of the samurai”. While being a fervent supporter of Japanese patriotism, Fujiwara is by no means advocating militaristic thinking. Deploring the turn to the worse that Japanese politics took in the late 1930s, Fujiwara recommends a Meiji- and Taishō-like spirit and explores the uses of Nitobe Inazō’s famous book on *bushidō* for Japanese society today (Fujiwara 2006: 122–29).

Judging by the Japanese public’s positive reception of this volume, we might conclude that many felt reasons to agree with his arguments. What is striking in his discourse on how to cure the malaise of contemporary Japan is his clear preference for elite leadership over democracy, arguing, for example, that Hitler evolved out of a democratic system and was elected by the people (Fujiwara 2006: 77–78). This statement very much resembles arguments put forth by Nishibe Susumu, such as that “‘democracy’ means nothing else than rule by the people and [...] this in itself is neither good nor bad” (Tsukurukai 2000: 44). Based on his plea for a revival of the *bushidō* spirit in Japanese society, Fujiwara thus clearly favours a paternalistic or even authoritarian regime in order to lead the people onto the right path. This, it seems, is not too remote from the ideal order of society that is implied in some passages of Tsukurukai’s civics textbook.

CONCLUSIONS

My analysis has shown that the solutions for social change and demographic challenges suggested in the “New Civics Textbook” are clearly opposed to what government bodies and specialists have suggested for many years. Considering measures for coping with the difficulties for women of combining work with child rearing, the extremely low participation of men in household tasks, or the persistence of gender-based discrimination in the workplace and other areas of Japanese society, to name but a few, Tsukurukai’s civics textbook looks in exactly the opposite direction for solutions. Most vital to the welfare of Japanese society are some so-called “Japanese traditions and customs” that, very much to the educational disadvantage of the junior high school students, are hardly explained or defined.

⁷ This book by Fujiwara, a prolific writer and mathematics professor at Tokyo’s Ochanomizu Women’s University, was first published in November 2005 and had gone through 17 impressions within the next six months (Fujiwara 2006).

One of the major conclusions drawn in Saaler's (2005) study of Tsukurukai's "New History Textbook" was that, in spite of considerable public attention, its revisionist views on modern Japanese history and the Asia-Pacific war represent a minority position (Saaler 2005: 128–46), particularly when it comes to Tsukurukai's denial of the war's classification as a war of aggression. I would conclude from my analysis that the "New Civics Textbook" likewise constitutes a minority position on issues such as discrimination based on gender and the stereotypical role model of the "full-time housewife". Regarding these issues, recent polls suggest that the majority of Japanese support the idea that both husband and wife should work and that women should return to the labour market as working mothers after childbirth.⁸ Since the early 1990s, double-income households have outnumbered households with a working husband and a non-working wife, a tendency that has clearly accelerated since 1996 (Cabinet Office 2006: 16). Given the challenges of Japan's demographic change, what Tsukurukai has to offer here is thus highly incongruent with the real lives of a growing majority of the Japanese population today.

More easily acceptable to the general public appears to be the textbook's idealised image of the "traditional family" and the high value attached to "social harmony" that is accomplished by the individual's almost unconditional submission to "the rules of society". This projection of society is fully in line with the remedies suggested by neo-nationalists for years. In this respect, Tsukurukai's textbook has been just another attempt to foster the need for a "conservative revolution", this time utilising a medium that specifically targets the younger layers of the population. The apparent popularity of this discourse well beyond neo-nationalist political circles might indicate that a larger number of people seem quite positive about reinforcing these values as a means of dealing with a wide range of problems in society, the education system, and the family.

As has been pointed out, Tsukurukai's textbook endeavour completely failed in terms of distribution, not least due to strong opposition at the local level and the important role of local education boards in the textbook selection process. But this may change in the future, as the reform of the educational system is given highest priority on the agenda of the present and most probably future administrations led by the Liberal Democratic

⁸ According to a recent White Paper (Cabinet Office 2006: 2, Naikakufu 2006: 8), 41% of female and 38.6% of male respondents in a government survey in 2004 answered that they would prefer women to be able to continue working right after childbirth, while 37% of female respondents (32.4% of male respondents) indicated that women should resume their activities in the labour market only after their child(ren) had grown up.

Party. As is clear from the new requirements of the revised Basic Law of Education, many changes will apply precisely to issues treated in civics classes, among them the most hotly debated clause on “fostering an attitude of loving one’s home (*kyōdo*) and country and respecting the traditions and culture that have nurtured them” (Sakata 2007: 19, Narushima 2006: 223–26). It remains to be seen whether and how these legal stipulations will be enforced and come to influence the narrative of future civics textbooks.

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