

PIONEER OF “TAISHŌ DEMOCRACY”: ABE ISOO’S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC IDEALISM AND JAPANESE CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY FROM 1900 TO 1920

Harald Meyer

Abstract: Japanese research about so-called Taishō Democracy can be classified into three study fields: party politics and political movements (“political democracy”), social movements (“social democracy”), and movements of intellectuals (“intellectual democracy”). Especially within the field of “intellectual democracy” there is still a lack of research in Japan concerning the selection and analysis of sources. Relevant materials like Abe Isoo’s writing *Chijō no risōkoku – Suisu* (Ideal state on Earth – Switzerland) have not yet been taken into account by Japanese historians. What were the fundamental ideas and conceptions of democracy in prewar Japan? The starting point for answering that question should be an analysis of Japanese definitions of the Western term “democracy.” During the Taishō period, quite a number of translations for “democracy,” such as *minponshugi*, *heiminshugi*, and *minseishugi* were in use. Astonishingly, there is no Japanese research so far exploring the origin and usage of those translations. The aim of this paper is not only to introduce Abe’s work, which was overlooked by historians until now, but also to give insight into the etymological and historical origins of the various translations of “democracy” in use during the late Meiji and the Taishō eras.

1. ABE ISOO’S IDEALISTIC VIEWS OF SWITZERLAND

“This small country of complete freedom! Where else can there be found a nation that exists only for the purpose of giving its people wealth, liberty, and equality? How can other countries still be eager for glory and territorial expansion? All the other countries in this world should be ashamed and venerate this small and yet ideal nation” (Abe 1947: 33f.).¹

Switzerland appears as the most ideal country of the world in a writing of the critic Abe Isoo (1865–1949), one of the foremost theoretical exponents of the early socialist and democratic movement in Japan. In his 100-page publication of 1904 entitled *Chijō no risōkoku – Suisu* (Ideal state on Earth – Switzerland) Abe describes the political system and social conditions of Switzerland in the late nineteenth century. Though written almost a hun-

¹ All translations are my own.

dred years ago, this source still delivers a description of the Swiss form of government and democracy that is basically valid even today. Abe's work was republished after the end of World War II. His study is of a high degree of objectivity, but partly idealizes the Swiss society of that time:

“Those who comprehend Switzerland only as a material paradise do not realize of its true condition. Switzerland is pursuing much more than just material aims. Its towering liberalism appears to be of more sublimity than the highest peaks of the Alps, and its fine social order more pleasant than the Lake of Geneva. However, this book about the most ideal nation in the world is not about Switzerland's high mountains and blue lakes, but about its liberty, equality, and peace” (Abe 1947: 3).

Yet, metaphorical comparisons between Switzerland's liberalism and the Alps or its social order and blue lakes, are very rare in Abe's book and serve only to point out clearly the actual objects of his study. While exploring the governmental and public institutions of Switzerland, Abe tries to reveal the fundamental ideas of this country, namely “liberty, equality, and peace.” In Abe's view, those values are universal and should be adopted by all other nations. He describes the political system of Switzerland as the most direct realization of democracy:

“Politics in Switzerland consists of pure democracy based upon the representation of the people. The governments of the cantons are assemblies of direct representatives of the people, and their political measures reflect the general will of a majority of voters. Considering the universal suffrage of the Swiss people and their right to make political decisions by referendum, one must confess that civil rights and true liberty are realized to the highest degree in Switzerland” (Abe 1947: 5).

In his study about Switzerland as the most ideal of all democratic nations, Abe concentrates on the three fields of politics, education and social conditions. The first chapter is about the federal states system and starts with the following remark: “A typical empire with federal organization is Germany. Typical republics with federal organization are the United States of America and Switzerland. In the thirteenth century, three cantons formed a defensive alliance, and in time more and more cantons joined the alliance, the number eventually reaching twenty-five. A centralized government was established in 1848, almost sixty years after the foundation of the United States. Relative to their area and population, those twenty-five cantons are of great variety” (Abe 1947: 4).²

² Since the formation of the canton of Jura in 1979, Switzerland now consists of 26 cantons.

Abe had realized soon that the special features of Switzerland's political system resulted from the alliance of various cantons and its federal organization. In the same chapter, Abe also analyzes the distinctively Swiss phenomena of direct democracy and permanent neutrality. Abe showed great interest in institutions such as the referendum and initiative, which he describes as follows:

"The English expression 'referendum' is usually translated as *chokusetsu rippōken* [direct legislative]. It signifies the opportunity for the people to vote on new bills even after they are passed by the national parliament or the council of a certain canton. If there are opponents against a piece of legislation, it will be put to a vote. Since the voters have the power of legislation, it seems to be appropriate to call this system direct legislative. On the other hand, 'initiative' expresses the opportunity for the voters to present a petition and put it to a vote, if there is some need for new legislation. For the time being, I shall translate this system as *kengiken* [the right of presenting a petition]. Even in a very democratic nation like the United States, those two systems of direct voting only exist at the city level. However, in Switzerland they exist on the national as well as on the cantonal level. Clearly enough, this demonstrates the truly democratic spirit of Switzerland" (Abe 1947: 14).

Abe adopted terms like "referendum" and "initiative" from English sources about Swiss politics. While quoting them in *katakana* characters, he also added Japanese translations written in *kanji*. Because of his statement "The English expression 'referendum' is usually translated as *chokusetsu rippōken* [direct legislative]," we can assume that this translation already existed during the latter half of the Meiji era. On the other hand, Abe writes about the term "initiative": "For the time being, I shall translate this system as *kengiken* [the right of presenting a petition]." This means that he was creating his own translation.

During Japan's modernization, there was a great need of translating Western terms that simply did not yet exist in the Japanese language. As the above example demonstrates, foreign words were not only adopted phonetically, but also translated with two or more Sino-Japanese characters. The acceptance of Western terms was one of the key elements for the introduction of democratic ideas in prewar Japan. In section 3, I will point out various ways of translating the term "democracy" into the Japanese language.

2. ABE ISOO'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC IDEALISM AND HIS OPPOSITION
TO THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR (1904–1905)

Because of his career, Abe Isoo can be characterized as one of the foremost pioneers of the so-called era of Taishō Democracy. Born in Fukuoka, he graduated from Dōshisha University, where under the influence of Niijima Jō (1843–1890), he became a Christian. From 1892 to 1895, he studied in the United States at the Hartford School of Theology (Connecticut). There he was drawn to Christian Socialism, and, after returning to Japan, he devoted himself to social reform. In 1903 he became a professor at Waseda University, where he was also a promoter of baseball as a student sport. As early as 1898 Abe founded the Shakaishugi Kenkyūkai (Society for the Study of Socialism) together with Katayama Sen (1859–1933). The ideology of this organization covered a broad variety of Marxist as well as democratic ideas and Christian humanitarianism (Katayama 1991: 53–56).

In order to found a socialistic movement, in 1900, members of this organization formed the Shakaishugi Kyōkai (Socialist Society) and, in the following year, Japan's first officially proclaimed socialist party, the Shakai Minshutō (Socialist Democratic Party). Abe was writing the manifesto, a combination of socialistic and democratic elements within the legal framework of the Meiji constitution. However, the party was outlawed by the authorities only two days after its formation. Yet, before the prohibition of the party, its manifesto was published in a newspaper called *Hōchi Shinbun* as well as in the *Mainichi Shinbun* and the *Rōdō Sekai* (World of labor). Abe and his fellows were denying violent measures or revolutions and called for universal suffrage, new elections, a cut in military expenses, and support of trade unionism. It was not mainly the working class that sympathized with the party, but rather it was a small group of progressive intellectuals around the socialists Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911), Katayama Sen, and Abe, who were critical of the imperialistic politics and the so-called *genrō* (elder statesmen), the oligarchs of the Meiji government (Takano 1970: 410–419).

Regardless of the early failure of the Socialist Democratic Party, this small union of reformers succeeded in forming the basis of the Japanese socialist and labor movements. However, in 1910 socialist organizations and societies were greatly shocked by the occurrence of the well-known “high treason incident” (*taigyaku jiken*), and socialism in Japan never turned into a mass movement. After the arrest and execution of Kōtoku Shūsui and other anarchic socialists for an alleged plot to assassinate the Emperor Meiji, socialist groups disappeared completely for almost a decade.

During and after this time, Abe disassociated himself from those radicals and always professed a gradualist vision of social reform and change. He avoided direct and violent action to overthrow the state and maintained this attitude even while some of his fellow activists were becoming more radical (KNSUJD 1997: 101).

Abe's political conviction, his social democratic idealism, makes it obvious why he devoted himself to writing a book about Switzerland. From his point of view, an ideal state consists of socialistic and democratic elements. Abe made a fine distinction between a socialistic form of government and a combination of socialistic and democratic ideas. Socialism in Abe Isoo's diction mostly meant working for public welfare, namely, support of laborers and trade unions. With democracy, he demanded universal suffrage and political structures based on party politics representing the will of a majority of voters. In contrast to Kōtoku Shūsui, who was not led to socialism through Christianity and showed strong tendencies towards anarchism (*museifushugi*) in his later years, it can be said that Abe's socialism was penetrated with democratic ideas, while his democratic thought was connected with socialistic ideas. Abe described Switzerland as a symbol of his social democratic idealism:

"The Swiss system cannot be called purely socialistic. However, how much it relies on socialistic ideas should be evident to anybody. Within the financial sector, for example, a great number of monopoly companies are state enterprises. i. e. ... Many social problems are solved through governmental measures, which also fulfills socialistic demands. Socialists were standing up for the formation of labor exchanges and unemployment insurance, and their voices were heard. The field of welfare work is also based upon socialistic ideas. i. e. ... In Switzerland, there is no big gap between rich and poor because there are not too many people living in extreme wealth or great poverty. Likewise, this corresponds to socialistic thought. As a matter of fact, the Swiss Socialist Party is of course accepted by the authorities, but hardly has any influence. Still this is not regrettable at all. In a society where socialistic policy is already translated into action, there is no need to form socialistic parties or groups" (Abe 1947: 98–100).

Amazingly, Abe concluded that important socialistic demands like the support of laborers and public welfare were satisfied in Switzerland to such great extent that a socialistic movement was of no necessity. That is why Switzerland appeared to him as the most ideal of all nations.

Though it can be assumed that Abe's social democratic idealism roused his interest in Swiss politics, the question still remains why he decided to

write his book exactly in the spring of 1904. In the preface as well as in the conclusion, the author writes about his motives:

“Actually, I was planning to spend a few years on researching. But then I felt that the book should be published during the Russo-Japanese War, and so I started writing in haste. i.e. ... Today, our country is making great efforts for the war against Russia. In hard times like this, it is my great pleasure to dedicate this little book to my compatriots” (1947: 1, 100).

During the cabinet meeting on February 4, 1904, the opening of the hostilities against Russia was decided. Most intellectuals belonged to the warmongers. In June of 1903, the *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun* published the *Daigaku shichi hakase no ikensho* (Memorandum of seven Doctors of the Imperial University), in which drastic measures against Russia’s invasion into Manchuria were demanded. Intellectual resistance was only offered by socialists like Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko (1870–1933), or the Christian Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930). In articles of the newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō* (General morning paper), they protested against the imperialistic policy of the Japanese government. After the editor, Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862–1920), also became known as a supporter of the war, they all quit working for the newspaper.

In October 1903, Kōtoku and Sakai founded their own newspaper, the *Heimin Shinbun* (The common people’s journal). At first, they were successful, selling eight thousand copies of the first edition in November. But because of its critical articles against the Russo-Japanese War and its call for socialistic reform, the *Heimin Shinbun* was outlawed in January 1905. During the existence of the newspaper, a book series called the *Heimin Bunko* (The common people’s library) was published, in which Abe’s study about Switzerland also came out. Collaborating with the *Heimin Shinbun* meant that Abe was confessing himself to socialistic, democratic, and pacifistic ideas. By writing about Swiss democracy, neutrality, and welfare, Abe expressed his opposition to the Russo-Japanese War. He voiced his opinions by publishing a study about a country that did not struggle for imperialism and power politics.

In August of 1903, Abe participated in a lecture meeting organized by socialistic societies. His address was entitled: *Sekai no heiwakyō Suisu ni tsuite* (Switzerland as an island of peace on Earth) (Morita 1994: 42). With this lecture, Abe was already offering resistance to preparations for the war against Russia. With the ensuing publication of his book about Switzerland, he protested against the outbreak and continuation of the war. Idealizing the decentralized form of government in Switzerland, he criticized Japanese centralization of power and, consequently, Japanese imperialism:

"Today the great powers are concentrating completely on foreign policy, so they are not capable of serious domestic policy. In order to put so-called imperialism into action, there is a need for centralization of power. Decentralization of power can be compared to the distribution of money: if there is no fairness, many citizens are deceived. I believe that after the collapse of imperialism, the age of decentralization will arrive and the great powers will accept this excellent system of Switzerland" (Abe 1947: 98).

Abe's social democratic idealism can finally be traced as a hope for "the collapse of imperialism" in the near future. From today's point of view, his hope might have been illusory or premature. The collapse of imperialism did not happen before the time of Abe's death. Nevertheless, this shows how truly progressive Abe's idealism was, though his voice remained unheard at the time.

Abe's enthusiasm for the Swiss political and social system was also related to his conviction that Switzerland and Japan had similar geopolitical conditions. In the same way that Switzerland was surrounded by four great powers – Germany, France, Austria, and Italy – in his view, Japan was also surrounded by four great powers, consisting of Russia, China (the Qing dynasty), the U.S., and Australia. As a natural defense, Japan was equipped with the sea, while Switzerland was protected by the Alps. Considering those similarities, Abe believed that Switzerland should serve as a model state for Japan. Instead of being in conflict with its neighboring countries, Japan should have been concentrating on home affairs just like the Swiss Government did (Abe 1947: 96–98).

Looking back from today, it is hard to determine whether or not the Swiss model was transferable to Japan. Only in the conclusion of his book, Abe delivers a direct comparison between Switzerland and Japan. But he did not offer any concrete program of political and social reforms taking the Swiss system as a model. Perhaps this was too risky, and his study would have been censored by the authorities soon after publication. During times of unsparing censorship, Abe could express himself only in a metaphorical way. While writing a book about Switzerland during the Russo-Japanese War, Abe called for peace, democracy, and social reform.

3. VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WESTERN TERM “DEMOCRACY”

As I showed in the above section, democratic ideas in the late Meiji era were represented mostly by socialists like Abe, Katayama Sen, Sakai Toshihiko and Kōtoku Shūsui. At the beginning of the Taishō period, not only socialists but also a great number of other intellectuals, especially journalists and university professors, participated in a broad discussion about the significance of democracy. Writing about the political and social order in Western democratic nations and its adaptation to Japanese circumstances was often difficult because of the lack of Japanese equivalents to Western terms. As mentioned in section 1, Abe occasionally created his own translations for technical terms like “initiative.”

The key word for the democrats of the late Meiji and the early Taishō era, of course, was the Western expression “democracy.” It is well known that this word stems from the ancient Greek *demokratia* (*demos* = “people,” *kratos* = “power”/“rule”). In modern times, the term was defined, for example, by Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) in his famous Gettysburg Address as a “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” How was the expression and concept of democracy translated and interpreted by Japanese scholars?

3.1 The Term *minshushugi* – 民主主義

The most frequent translation of democracy even today is *minshushugi*. The term already existed in the early Meiji era. Statesman Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830–1878), an advocate of the autocratic Tennō system, used the expression’s first pair of *kanji* (*minshu*) in an official letter to Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) in 1875 (Sumiya 1957: 43).

Abe used the term *minshushugi* frequently in his study about Switzerland: “If mankind is willing to follow the course of liberty and equality with the aid of democracy [*minshushugi*], the road inevitably leads to socialism. i.e. ... In Switzerland, it is willingly accepted that the main burden of taxation has to be borne by the rich. Without doubt, this is directly an effect of democracy [*minshushugi*]” (Abe 1947: 5, 23, 26).

The expression *minshu* is borrowed from Classical Chinese sources. This compound word already appears in the writing *Chunqiu Zuoshi zhuan* (*Shunjū Sashi den*, “Commentary of Zuoshi about the Chunqiu writing,” fourth century B.C.): “Those words [those lies] are not appropriate for a sovereign [*min shu*, Chinese: *min zhu*]” (Kamata 1977: 1172).

This term was also used in another Classical Chinese writing, entitled *Guoyu* (*Kokugo*, "Narrative of the [Chunqiu-]Kingdoms," fourth century B. C.): "Our ruler is not capable of anything and has lost the ability of *ruling over the country* [*min shu*]" (Ōno 1978: 493).

Therefore, the original meanings of the term *minshu* were "sovereign" and "ruling over the country," which is quite the opposite to the meaning in which the term was used by Japanese intellectuals from the beginning of the Meiji era. The compound word *minshu* was taken from Classical Chinese writings, given a new meaning, and connected with the suffix *-shugi* ("-ism").

In 1904, when Abe wrote his book about Swiss policy, the expression *minshushugi* was already established as an equivalent of the English "democracy." Abe used the term in a general meaning without giving any definition of his understanding of it. Below, I will point out some translations of "democracy" that appear as interpretations and conceptions of the Western term.

3.2 The Term *minponshugi* – 民本主義

The expression *minponshugi* was, besides *minshushugi*, the most frequently used translation of "democracy" during the first half of the Taishō period. The term became well known through a number of writings by Yoshino Sakuzō (1878–1933), which helped to establish his reputation as the foremost theoretical exponent of the new democratic movement to protect constitutional government and party rule. In an article of 1915 entitled *Ō-Bei ni okeru kensei no hattatsu oyobi genjō* (The development and status quo of constitutional government in Europe and America), for the first time, Yoshino gave a proper definition of the term:

"The Japanese word *minponshugi* is of very recent use. i.e. ... I think [the Western word] 'democracy,' as used in the fields of law and political science, has at least two distinct meanings. In one sense, it means that 'in law the sovereignty of the nation resides in the people.' In the other it is used to mean that 'in politics the fundamental end of the exercise of the nation's sovereignty should be the people.' i.e. ... I should like to use *minshushugi* and *minponshugi*, respectively, as the suitable translations for these two senses of democracy." (Yoshino 1915: 16–18)

Yoshino made a clear distinction between the term *minshushugi*, meaning that "in law the sovereignty of the nation resides in the people," and the term *minponshugi* meaning that "in politics the fundamental end of the ex-

ercise of the nation's sovereignty should be the people." In other words, he used the term *minshushugi* as equivalent to the idea "government of the people, by the people" and *minponshugi* as an expression of the notion "government for the people." Yoshino classified the Western term "democracy," being a complex of ideas, into two different senses and stated that only the concept of "government for the people" was suitable for Japanese constitutionalism. His interpretation of democracy was an adaptation to Japanese circumstances taking into consideration the absolute sovereignty of the emperor according to the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

The expression's first pair of *kanji* (*minpon*, respectively *min/hon*) is also a borrowing from Classical Chinese sources. It appears in the aforementioned work *Guoyu*: "Justice and morality are the *base of the people* [*min no hon*, Chinese: *min zhi ben*]" (Ōno 1978: 511). The original meaning "base of the people" is quite similar to the sense in which Yoshino Sakuzō used the expression *minpon*, a compound word which stems from the phrase *min no hon*. Though it was a well-known slogan during the Taishō period, today the term *minponshugi* is no longer in use.

3.3 The Term *heiminshugi* – 平民主義

The word *heiminshugi* was used in the middle of the Meiji era by Tokutomi Iichirō (also Sohō, 1863–1957) in his book *Shōrai no Nihon* (Future Japan) of 1886. Tokutomi was defining *heiminshugi* as freedom of the press, political and religious liberty as well as economic freedom and equality (Tokutomi 1888: 105). Obviously, he used the term as a translation and conception of democracy.

Later on, *heiminshugi* became a key word of early socialism in Japan. The expression's first pair of *kanji* appeared in the title of the *Heimin Shinbun*, and the compound word *heiminshugi* was used in the manifesto of its first issue, written by Kōtoku Shūsui:

"Freedom, equality, and brotherhood – those are the three principles of human life. In order to realize freedom, we respect the idea of democracy (*heiminshugi*). Class distinctions between people of different origins, possessions, and families shall be abolished and all suppression overthrown" (Kōtoku 1903: 1).

In this case, the expression *heiminshugi* was also used in the sense of freedom and democratic rights. Again, this shows how close early Japanese socialism was to democratic thought. However, there is still a slight difference between Tokutomi Iichirō's and Kōtoku Shūsui's conception of *heiminshugi*. While Tokutomi defined the term as a combination of civil liber-

ties with economic freedom and national reputation in general, Kōtoku used this expression to overwhelm class distinctions and to found a coalition between the proletariat and the working class within the petty bourgeoisie in order to get "civil liberties" in a specifically socialistic meaning. The expression *heimin* was also borrowed from Classical Chinese sources. This compound word already appears in the writing *Chunqiu Zuoshi zhuan*: "Justice and loyalty are of great advantage. This advantage makes it possible to *rule peacefully over the people* [*hei min*, Chinese: *ping min*]. This is the basic principle of politics" (Kamata 1977: 674).

Today, the word *heimin* only means "the common people" or "a commoner," and is no longer used as a translation of "democracy."

3.4 The Term *minseishugi* – 民生主義

In 1892, the jurist Tsuzuki Seiroku wrote a book entitled *Minseiron* (An essay on democracy). He translated "democracy" as *minsei* and defined it as the establishment of civil rights and the participation of the majority of the people in national policy (Sumiya 1957: 49).

At the beginning of the Taishō era, the terms *minsei* and *minseishugi* were used by Oda Yorozu in his article *Kokutai to minsei* (Form of polity and democracy):

"Democracy [*demokurashī*] is not at all the opposite of monarchism but merely a form of government. Therefore, it is misleading to translate democracy [*demokurashī*] with the expression *minshusei*. To avoid misunderstandings, I prefer the term *minsei* as a translation. i.e. ... Belgium and England laid down even in their constitutions that they are based upon democracy while, at the same time, remaining monarchies. This shows that from the view of constitutional law there is no opposition between monarchism and democracy [*demokurashī*]. i.e. ... Constitutionalism therefore is equal to democracy [*minseishugi*], and today's policy always has to reflect the will of the people" (Oda 1913: 67).

Oda Yorozu avoided the risky question of sovereignty, acknowledging the Tennō system and the governmental power of the emperor. Yet, he tried to prove that monarchism and democracy are not paradoxical. He believed that constitutionalism and democracy are identical, if democracy is defined as the principle of consulting and respecting the will of the people. Oda's notion of *minseishugi*, like Yoshino Sakuzō's concept of *minponshugi*, signified "government for the people" rather than "government of the people, by the people."

The compound word *minsei* also was borrowed from Classical Chinese sources. It appears in the *Song shi* (*Sōshi*, “The History of the Song”), written around 1100 A.D.: “It is forbidden that a high official of the emperor leave the palace to *rule over the people* [*min sei*, Chinese: *min zheng*] himself” (Tuo 1977: 153).

Today, the expression *minsei* is no longer used as a literal translation of “democracy,” but still means “civil administration,” which in fact is very close to the usage of this term during the Meiji and Taishō eras.

3.5 The Term *minshūshugi* – 民衆主義

The expression *minshūshugi* was mostly used at the beginning of the Taishō period. In his article *Minshūteki keikō to seitō* (Democratic Tendencies and Political Parties), Maruyama Kandō used the adjective *minshūteki* as a translation for the Western word “democratic”: “To put the current democratic [*minshūteki*] tendencies into practice, party rule has to be installed to break the overall power of the bureaucrats” (Maruyama 1913: 713).

Ishibashi Tanzan (1884–1973) used the noun *minshūshugi* in his article *Keizaikai to minshūshugi* (The Economic World and Democracy): “Since last year [1913] we have witnessed that in politics democracy [*minshūshugi*] is advancing, and the call for reform is getting stronger every day” (Ishibashi 1914: 8).

The compound word *minshū* is also borrowed from Classical Chinese sources. It appears in the *Guoyu* meaning “people,” or “the masses”: “To fill the stores and make the *people* [*min shū*, Chinese: *min zhong*] rich is the best way to avoid riots” (Ōno 1978: 813).

Even today the adjective *minshūteki* means “democratic” or “popular,” but the noun *minshū* is only used in the meaning of “the people” or “the general public.”

4. RESEARCH OUTLOOK

The appearance of several expressions that were in use during the Meiji and Taishō periods as translations of the Western term “democracy” clearly demonstrates the existence of a broad discussion about democratic ideas during that time. There are quite a number of other terms that were in use – for example *gasshūshugi* 合衆主義, *jinponshugi* 人本主義, *minseishugi* 民生主義, *minjishugi* 民事主義, and *shuminshugi* 主民主義. Except for the established translation *minshūshugi*, all such terms are more or less inter-

pretations and conceptions of democracy that no longer exist in today's usage. Most of those neologisms were borrowings from Classical Chinese sources. Only the terms *shuminshugi* and *jinponshugi* do not exist in the Classical Chinese vocabulary.

Astonishingly, there is no Japanese research so far exploring the origin and usage of those neologisms. It is therefore necessary to make an etymological study of the various translations of "democracy" that were in use during the Meiji and Taishō eras. The most important task is to distinguish between those words that were newly coined and those that were borrowed from Classical Chinese and given a new meaning. For this reason, expressions that already existed in Classical Chinese sources have to be traced to their origins and compared with their modern usages. Japanese scholars have not yet studied the derivation of the equivalents of the Western notion of democracy, though this should be considered as the starting point of all research about the introduction of democratic ideas in prewar Japan.

Yet, the so-called "Taishō Democracy" appears almost as a genre within modern historical research in Japan. Most historians date "Taishō Democracy" from the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 up to the enactment of universal suffrage in 1925. Japanese research of "Taishō Democracy" can be classified into three study fields: party politics and political movements ("political democracy"), social movements ("social democracy"), and movements of intellectuals ("intellectual democracy"). Most studies treat at least two of the three fields, mixing different areas without even giving a proper definition of what is meant by "Taishō Democracy." This easily deceptive term falsely indicates that the whole Taishō era was colored by democracy. The ambiguity of this catchphrase made it possible to attach all kinds of social movements like the rice riots of 1918 or the liberation movement of the *burakumin* to the "spirit" of "Taishō Democracy." This dazzling catchword appears in the titles of almost every important historical study about democratic movements and thought in prewar Japan. (See, for example, Kinbara 1967, 1994; Matsuo 1974; Mitani 1974; and Ōta 1975.)

All those studies are actually collections of articles published previously in university journals or other periodicals. In consequence, they are more or less fragmentary studies about incomparable aspects, containing subjects of the political as well as the social and intellectual history of the Taishō era. As another consequence, no clear structure or conception can be recognized in those studies. Heterogeneous research objects are treated without providing methods or criteria of analysis. The lack of a proper theory is especially conspicuous in the field of the movements of intellectuals ("intellectual democracy"). It is therefore necessary to mark off the study

field of intellectual history from other aspects of the Taishō era and to search for methods to analyze the democratic thought of intellectuals during that time.

The aim of this paper was not only to present an etymological approach, but also to introduce a historical source that has been overlooked by Japanese historians until now. Since there is still a lack of research in Japan concerning the analysis as well as the selection of sources, relevant historical materials like Abe Isoo's *Chijō no risōkoku – Suisu* have not yet been taken into account. Without analyzing this important work of the late Meiji era, one cannot fully explain the beginnings of the democratic movement during the following Taishō period and its relation to early Japanese socialism. Socialism in the late Meiji era was combined with democratic ideas for the first time by Abe Isoo, who described Switzerland as a symbol for his conception of a social democratic society.

REFERENCES

- Abe, Isoo (1947): *Chijō no risōkoku – Suisu* [Ideal state on Earth – Switzerland]. First edition 1904, Heiminsha. Tōkyō: Daiichi Shuppan.
- Ishibashi, Tanzan (1914): Keizaikai to minshūshugi [The economic world and democracy]. In: *Tōyō Keizai Shinpō* 667 (April), pp. 7–8.
- Kamata, Tadashi (ed.) (1977): *Shunjū Sashi den 3* [Commentary of Zuoshi about the Chunqiu writing, Vol. 3]. Shinshaku kanbun taikai, 32. Tōkyō: Meiji Shoin.
- Katayama, Tetsu (1991): *Abe Isoo den: denki, Abe Isoo* [A biography of Abe Isoo]. Tōkyō: Ōzorasha.
- Kinbara, Samon (1967): *Taishō demokurashī no shakaiteki keisei* [The social formation of Taishō Democracy]. Tōkyō: Aoki Shoten.
- Kinbara, Samon (ed.) (1994): *Taishō demokurashī*. Kindai Nihon no kiseki, 4. Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.
- KNSUJD (Kindai Nihon shakai undōshi jinbutsu daijiten) (ed.) (1997): *Kindai Nihon shakai undōshi jinbutsu daijiten* [Encyclopedia of personalities in the history of modern Japanese social movements]. Tōkyō: Nichigai Associates.
- Kōtoku, Shūsui (1903): Sengen [Manifesto]. In: *Heimin Shinbun* 1 (November), p. 1.
- Maruyama, Kandō (1913): Minshūteki keikō to seitō [Democratic tendencies and political parties]. In: *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* (January), pp. 712–716.
- Matsuo, Takayoshi (1974): *Taishō demokurashī*. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.

- Mitani, Taichirō (1974): *Taishō demokurashī ron* [Essays about Taishō Democracy]. Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha.
- Morita, Yasukazu (1994): *Suisu: Rekishi kara gendai e* [Switzerland: From its past to the present]. Third, enlarged edition from 1980. Tōkyō: Tōsui Shobō.
- Oda, Yorozu (1913): Kokutai to minsei [Form of polity and democracy]. In: *Taiyō* 19/8 (June), pp. 67–71.
- Ōno, Takashi (ed.) (1978): *Kokugo ge* [Narrative of the (Chunqiu) Kingdoms, the Last Volume]. Shinshaku kanbun taikai, 67. Tōkyō: Meiji Shoin.
- Ōta, Masao (1975): *Taishō demokurashī kenkyū* [Studies on Taishō Democracy]. Tōkyō: Shinsensha.
- Sumiya, Etsuji (1957): Demokurashī yakuji kō [Studies about the translation of democracy]. In: *Kenkyūshitsu no uchisoto* [Inside and outside the office]. Kyōto: Ōsaka Fukushi Jigyō Zaidan Kyōto Hodōsho, pp. 28–65.
- Takano, Zenichi (1970): *Nihon shakaishugi no chichi: Abe Isoo* [Father of Japanese Socialism: Abe Isoo]. Tōkyō: Abe Isoo Kankōkai.
- Tokutomi, Ichirō (1888): *Shōrai no Nihon* [Future Japan]. First edition, 1886. Tōkyō: Keizai Zasshisha.
- Tuo, Tuo (ed.) (1977): *Song shi* [The History of the Song]. Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Yoshino, Sakuzō (1915): Ō-Bei ni okeru kensei no hattatsu oyobi genjō. Minponshugi I. [The development and status quo of constitutional government in Europe and America. Minponshugi I.]. In: *Kokumin Kōdan* 2 (July), pp. 16–43.