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Rural Conservatism and Japan's Liberal Democrats

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RURAL CONSERVATISM AND JAPAN'S LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Richard Bird
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DSP - Democratic Socialist Party
LDP - Liberal Democratic Party
SCAP - Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers
Post-World War II Japanese politics have been marked by the persistent dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party, whose members are generally considered to uphold conservative policies. This party with its several distinct factions has maintained control of the national government and the decentralized governments from the Occupation period (1945-52) to the present day. In order to preserve their position, they have remarkably withstood the democratization process imposed by Occupation policies upon the Japanese nation.

The Occupation did possess the physical power, in its military force, to impose any reform it desired, but as the Japanese themselves did not desire them, the reforms would inevitably lapse as soon as the Occupation pressure was removed.¹

Reforms outlined by the Occupation forces involved a clear revision of the political situation prior to the war with one goal being the achievement of political maturation throughout the country.

Politically, the Occupation sought to debar from power the individuals who had been responsible for the militaristic, ultra-nationalistic and authoritarian character of the Japanese nation and to encourage the rise to power of more popularly representative elements...²

¹Kazuo Kawai, Japan's American Interlude (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 25
²Ibid., p. 24
This goal has been achieved insofar as the Japanese have developed a strong parliamentary system of government still controlled by conservative majorities that seem politically representative of this developing nation.

The salient feature of Japan's government is the role of parties in the political system and their determined effort to achieve power. "Japanese politics...has been marked in the postwar period by the existence of a multi-party system," although "it is tempting...to call the Japanese party system a one-and-a-half party system..." The Liberal Democrats, representing conservative elements, have been the stalwarts of the government for they have aided in causing Occupation reforms while bolstering their own support even though revisions could considerably have diminished their controlling position. "Yoshida's disinclination to bow before the shrine of SCAF made him a reputed bulwark of Japanese institutions against evangelical zeal of the alien reformer." 

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*Harold S. Quigley and John E. Turner, The New Japan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p.290. Yoshida was prime minister in parts of 1946 and 1947; and from October 1948 to December, 1954. His break in power during 1947-48 found the Socialists gaining control of the prime ministership, the only time that they have enjoyed such control to the present day.
In the revival of political parties Japanese and Foreign influences intermingled. Early directives from SCAP encouraged new parties and stimulated the old. However, the attempts to establish new parties fell short in that the only significant change was that the parties vested new names. For example, the Liberals and Democrats, who were to merge in 1955 as the present-day LDP, reflected the positions held by the Seiyakai and Minseito parties of the 1920's. Both the modern and the earlier parties benefited from rural and business support, an advantage that has kept these conservative parties in control of the government processes. Therefore, in the plethora of parties existing after the war, many of the principles subscribed to were not altered, although the increasing political interest of the people has demanded substantial revisions and innovations in party politics. The extent to which the parties have met this transformation is signified by their existing power in today's government.

Thus the designation of the Japanese party system of the early post-war period as a multi-party system requires substantial qualification. Two of the five national parties were never critical or even vital factors in the national scene.

This predicament has been protracted into the present system where the Liberal Democrats continue to sustain their very

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7Scalapino, op.cit., p. 40
strong majority at the expense of a weak, but not powerless opposition. During this entire post-Occupation period, the Socialist Party has represented the main opposition to the LDP, with its strength (which has usually been approximately 30 to 35 percent) at times producing a two-party struggle. However, "the Socialists have never been able to break through the barrier that separates them from two-thirds of the electorate."8 Dissent bred by conflicting socialistic ideologies within their own ranks has caused what seems to be a permanent split by the right-wing Democratic Socialists from the basically left-wing organization.

Basically unable to consolidate their factional forces, they remain "...a permanent minority, never even in power."9 However, this division within the Socialist ranks is actually basic to Japanese parties for "...there is not a single party in Japanese history, except for the Communists, which has not been the result of a merger or a split of some kind."10 Moreover, the merger involved in establishing the LDP has produced continued success for their party, although they too are pressured by factional loyalty which could disrupt their strength as the leading party in Japanese politics.

8 Scalapino, op.cit., p.79.
9 Ibid., p.79.
10 Chitoshi Yanaga, Japanese People and Politics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1956) p.239. The Japan Communist Party is presently engaged in a rift over loyalty; whether they should remain completely and solely allied with Moscow or Peking or establish comparatively equal relations with both.
Japan does have a multi-party system including the LDP, Socialists, Democratic Socialists, Komeito, and the Communist, but it is more precisely "...a system of loosely-structured federations." Each party is a conglomeration of divergent and distinct factions, with their own particular leader(s) and goal. These two factors primarily produce any cohesiveness that a party enjoys, thus forcing national party organizations to depend upon their continued support. This allows each faction to manipulate their policies through the party of their choice. Simultaneously, they maintain a semi-autonomous nature even though specifically affiliated with a party. Existence of this indigenous system is necessitated by "factional loyalty which tends to become the primary loyalty, being greater than that being given the 'federation' or any external group."

Since 1945, the Liberal Democrats* have automatically received an overwhelming majority of the rural vote with a minimum of political communication. This unique rural support has reasserted itself election after election, with the resultant effects of enabling conservative candidates to compile excellent voting records and to maintain their control of government on all levels.

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11 Scalapino, op. cit., p. 79.
12 Ibid., p. 79.

*From the war to November, 1955, today's Liberal Democrats were two distinct groups: Liberals (known in 1948 as Democratic Liberals) and Democrats (known in 1947 and again in 1954 as the Japan Progressive Party).
Approximately 49 per cent of the Japanese electorate may be classified in the rural or agrarian categories, although many should be placed in the mixed or agrarian related categories rather than in the pure former designation.  

By controlling this heavy rural vote, which is currently diminishing, the LDP's struggle to acquire and exercise power has been greatly facilitated. The main reason that the LDP has been the benefactor of this rural vote is that they have stood for conservatism and thus received support consequential to peculiar traditional traits found in rural areas.

By exploiting these traditional socio-political traits, traits which one writer terms "...discredible vestiges of an outmoded or 'Asian' or 'feudal' past which should be given speedy burial," Liberal Democrats have been provided with electoral means to enforce a new conservatism.

In the early 1960's, conservatism means something far different from what it meant only two decades earlier. It does not stand for: emperor worship...subjugation of women...omnipotence of male head in family...economic control by the zaibatsu...single party system...militarism and aggression.

13 Scalapino, op.cit., p.67.
Although their conservatism is not the status-quo type since they are entangled in a country developing and maturing politically, they still balance programs directed toward a more independent country and preservation of economic democracy. To accomplish this they must maintain the rural vote, even if their Diet* members do not represent agricultural interests. For one thing, "not much more than one-fifth of the conservative Diet members today have their primary affiliation with agriculture."16 Since the LDP wishes to keep control of the Diet because it is their source of power as a political party, it is to their advantage to exploit the "comfortable cushion of passive support"17 which modern conservatism reserves from farmers and rural inhabitants.

The Japanese political system has matured to the extent that "political power has come to depend on the votes of the electorate,"18 of which a large percentage consistently votes conservative (or for the LDP). Therefore, continuation of a conservative pattern of government has been easily accomplished with the definite support supplied by the rural areas to the Liberal Democrats, who are still averting the political maturation of Japan

16Scalapino, op.cit., p.68
18Kawai, op.cit., p. 126.

*Japan's national Diet has a bicameral organization: The lower House of Representatives (467 members) and the upper House of Councilors (250 members). Since the Liberal Democrats have always strongly elected majorities to both houses, they have been able to control the selection of the prime minister, who has always been a conservative except for Katayama (Socialist) in 1947.
by the traditional vote and by becoming a more representative party for the entire nation.

Japanese voting records signify incredible success of conservative candidates at the polls. The most outstanding result of their being elected to office is that they have developed a "winner" psychology. Even though their total popular vote has been declining, they continue to control the national legislature and other assemblies. In what appears to be an unalterable situation, the Socialist Party stagnates in its minority role, unable to lift itself into power. It seems to have accepted the fact of LDP political predominance, a realization which aggravates their already disruptive nature among their factions. Without necessary coordination, the Socialists have not maintained a definite party policy program and have forcibly resorted to verbal attacks on LDP programming. The Socialist role has become too negative—their party too inconsistent—and their hopes for power too diminutive.

Augmenting the large rural support of the LDP is its linkage to several particular business groups, which are national in organization but whose support is most effective among smaller affiliations usually found in urban areas. Big business is the financier of the LDP and the reward for their support has been illustrated in the favorable legislation put forth by the party. This makes business, unlike the rural backers who are not fully rewarded for their support, a most powerful element in Japanese politics.
Thirdly, the LDP incumbents in the national legislature have one peculiar characteristic: many of them are former bureaucrats, experienced in a particular area of government, and cognizant of the political power that the LDP possesses. It is common for a bureaucrat to retire from the rigors of the administrative battlefield when he reaches 50 years of age (a very general rule) and immediately find his way back into the legislative process through party politics. This experienced bureaucratic element also tends to be conservative, thus giving the LDP a practice area for their future members.

In sum, "the conservative predominance in Japan is the product of a triple alliance between the bureaucracy, key national interest groups many of which are affiliated with business, and the LDP."19 "The new power elite of Japan consists in a combination of...rising entrepreneurs...top level bureaucrats...politicians representing...business and bureaucrats."20 Furthermore, even though the LDP receives such astounding rural support, the government seems to be involved in promoting particular policies of the triple alliance, none of which entails the true public interest. "There seems to be no agency which serves as the defender of the public interest..."21 "Japanese politics have been condi-

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19 Scalapino, op.cit., p.93.
tioned much more directly by economic and social realities..."22 envisioned mainly by the bureaucracy and various Diet members. Nevertheless, political parties are not beginning to overshadow both the Cabinet and the bureaucracy, accepting growing demands for governmental productivity. People are finding them promising rather than puerile.

The Japanese political system is definitely maturing, although it still is not truly representative of the public interest. A unique aspect of this situation is the strong backing of the LDP candidates by the conservative rural areas, although they are the least represented in national party policies. The opposing parties have not really permeated the strict traditional barriers of the rural areas. To truly understand this political situation, exploration of rural socio-political determinants combined with their relationship to the ascending order governmental levels is expedient. By evaluating buraku and village political participation, the solid majority which the LDP has possessed on all levels of government can be explained. As the Japanese nation matures in its political knowledge, the conservatism of these areas will be all-important to the survival of conservatism in the nation and the continuing rule of the Liberal Democratic Party.

22Yanaga, op.cit., p.89.
CHAPTER II

THE BURAKU AND GROUP COHESIVENESS

The foundation for traditional Japanese conservatism is found in the buraku. "...The buraku is an indigenous natural group operating on the basis of traditional mores..."23 It "plays a more immediate role in the daily lives of a larger proportion of the Japanese people than any of the more formal and better known units of organization,"24 and has been called the "most important structure of rural Japan."25 The buraku is not a legal political entity which makes it an autonomous area with little need for political management.

The buraku usually consists of a number of very closely-knit families, often related by kinship, constituting a household, i.e. "The family unit that most frequently forms the basis of buraku organization today is the household, a group of relatives usually embracing two or more conjugal families of different generations."26 Seldom, if ever, "...does any man, woman, or child think


of himself or another person apart from his role as a member of his house. The ie looms above the individual."

No matter what one is involved in, "...the family is always the prime constituent element..."

With this reinforced rigidity enveloping its composition, it becomes quite difficult for an outsider to penetrate the walls of the buraku or for outside influences to be attractive or known by the people. This group-enforced blockade surrounding the buraku people has rendered this area particularly susceptible to conservatism and group consciousness, two elements which complement each other, for the same traditionalism which sustains conservative attitudes within each individual also controls group behavioral patterns.

The Japanese family "...has a hierarchical structure and at the pinnacle of this structure...which may be thought of as pyramidal in shape, stands the male head of the family." This patriarchal affection has been the basis for Japan's one, native ideal—that of kokutai. The kokutai concept involved the nation until 1945 in emperor worship, for the emperor was to the nation what the father was to the family. Today, the emperor's position is defined in Article 1 of the 1947 Constitution: "The emperor shall be the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people."

27Richard K. Beardsley, John W. Hall, and Robert E. Ward, Village Japan (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1959), p.216. (This is a study of Niiike, a village in the Okayama prefecture.

28Steiner, op.cit., p.210

29Ike, op.cit., p.18
The Japanese father has never symbolically held his position but has rather maintained a patriarchal predominance as an actual social force within the buraku. It is to him that allegiance is due; it is he who partially develops the political thinking of his wife and children. For example:

While the household with the father as head is clearly the fundamental unit of the social and economic life of Niiike, the collectivity of households is itself an integral communal entity. When acting as a political unit, the people of Niiike refer to themselves as buraku.30

People of the buraku are further bound by an understanding of group consciousness. "Since the Japanese live in closely-knit groups and in actual physical proximity... they think, act, and live as a group."31 It is somewhat like the small American village where everyone seems to know all about any local topic. In Japan, it is paramount to perform and think exactly as the others do. The village group is considered far more important than the individual.

Each buraku individually selects a headman known as the "buraku cho"32 for the community. His duty involves overseeing the activities of the buraku, reporting important movements and decisions occurring in the immediate area, and consulting with important local people on certain stands to be supported. His job is

30Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op.cit., p.248.
31Yanaga, op.cit., p.43.
32Steiner, op.cit., p.211.
basically a part-time activity, unwanted except by those who are local favorites or by those who exhibit a recognized desire for leadership.

How does the headman maintain cohesiveness and compatibility in the buraku? He actually does nothing because the Japanese people have "traditional notions of harmony...reflected in the manner in which decisions are made at the buraku meetings."33 This traditional principle is known as wago. "It rejects quarrelling among ourselves."34 Replacing elements of debate are norms practiced to achieve a compromise evolving into consensus.

"The traditional means of taking group decisions in Japan is by the joint techniques of recommendation (suisen) and consensus."35 The Japanese seem to have a strong distaste for argumentation; they prefer to have a smooth compromise because their social propinquity all but commands it.

In relating wago to the political arena, this element has found acceptance as a "necessary...political modus vivendi."36 To what matters does the buraku assembly apply these techniques of decision? Formally, they are very simple and of narrowly local significance. "Their most important function is the selection of

33Steiner, op.cit., p.216.
34Ike, op.cit., p.59.
36Yanaga, op.cit., p.45
buraku officers, a headman, and vice-headmen."37 By establishing a shared attitude through consultation, no real counter-argument remains. Each individual in the buraku relies on those selected through compromise or outright unanimity to extend the element of wago into the selection of local political candidates. Through wago and its corollary, consultation, Professor Yanaga points out that:

...this attitude...underlies the practice of stressing acceptability as the decisive criterion in the choice of political leaders. This has the effect invariably of narrowing down the choice to the least objectionable, rather than the most desirable person.38

Those people influential within the buraku have some social status which serves as a determinant in electing these people to buraku positions. Since they primarily control the wago process through consultation, their decision will become the enveloping rule for the people. The main effect of such a condition is that the people vote en masse for the same candidates. Why? Because if the buraku leaders have determined to vote for a certain candidate, whether it be for the national legislature, prefectural assembly, or even village assembly, they must follow the consensus in the buraku. Failure to do so could result in social ostracism, mura hachibu.

One writer has hypothesized that "perhaps the most indigenous contribution of Japan to the science of government lay

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38 Yanaga, op.cit., p.85.
in the highly developed system of discussion, adjustment, consensus and joint responsibility.\textsuperscript{39} This may be true on the national or prefectural level, but in the \textit{buraku} "the farmer's traditional attitude toward politics has had no positive or responsible part to play in the public decision-making process,"\textsuperscript{40} which involves selection of candidates. Politically, an individual does not truly possess a separate role; instead one's political activities "are carried out within some group context."\textsuperscript{41} Ultimately, those who can vote are required to exercise their right to do so, and additionally, they must liken their votes to those of the entire \textit{buraku}.

To expose these political behavioral patterns further, transfer of these voting habits to village elections is necessary. Why? In village elections, "each \textit{buraku} desires to obtain as many seats in the assembly as is possible, considering the number of its votes."\textsuperscript{42} "The chance for this is best if the numbers of candidates equals the number of seats it can obtain if all voters vote for these candidates."\textsuperscript{43} Often, people who are village leaders

\begin{quote}

\textsuperscript{40}Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.441-2.


\textsuperscript{42}Steiner, \textit{op.cit.}, p.410.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p.410
\end{quote}
in government hold predominant positions in their respective burakus.

"In effect the buraku resident votes traditionally for a representative of his buraku in the village assembly." This has three peculiar effects on the political process: campaigning reaches a low ebb in buraku bailiwicks since it is unnecessary; competition will be highly unlikely, and party affiliation becomes superfluous in the election process. "The village governments established by the Local Autonomy Law may best be described as miniature semi-parliamentary systems, evolving primarily about the offices and interrelationship of a village assembly and a mayor." "Local autonomy on the village level requires that the inhabitants consider the village government as 'their government,' that they do not shrink back from it but participate in it." In order to use village government as a tool to implement certain buraku ideas or programs, the leaders must stand behind a candidate whom they trust and whose chances of winning remain practically beyond a doubt should all traditional determinants be functioning.

Campaigning is actually unnecessary in running for village office frequently because advance calculation of candidates

45Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op. cit., p.360. Village governments as established by law are the lowest regular units of regululatory public organization. A mayor and a village assembly manage their operations.
46Steiner, op. cit., p.226
are so accurate that no election is necessary. "In the election of town and village mayors... the ratio of candidate to position was 2.0 in 1947, 1.9 in 1951, 1.8 in 1955, and 1.9 in 1959."\textsuperscript{47} If any appeal be necessary, the candidate should petition the collectivity rather than the individual in the community. Such an appeal "is in line with traditional mores."\textsuperscript{48} "Active campaigning remains not only superfluous but also slightly improper in the eyes of tradition-bound villagers."\textsuperscript{49}

With this directive to attain results of the election prior to voting day, competition can be eliminated through acknowledged support for a certain candidate. The decision on voting procedure is regulated through the buraku channels where the candidate to be supported holds a consensus vote. As a general rule, "the average villager wants a man of maturity and dignity, possessed of as many of the traditional Japanese virtues as possible. High among these ranks sincerity (mokato), politeness, and a humane interest in the problems of his fellows."\textsuperscript{50} When there is competition for a village office and no one candidate seems to have a definite majority, alliances of individual burakus may be made. Through this process, one candidate may likely achieve a leading position still subject to direct challenge. However, the

\textsuperscript{47}Steiner, op.cit., p.391.
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p.377.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., p.211.
\textsuperscript{50}Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op.cit., p.365.
principal reason for avoiding this particular situation is that "the buraku vote will be split and all the chances for maximum representation will be diminished."51 "...12 per cent of all town and village assemblymen in 1955 and 7.2 per cent in 1959 were selected ...without any opposition...Thus the system does not work to perfection...but it works well enough to keep the competition extremely low."52

Granted practically unanimous support and lacking any true competition, a candidate has no real need to be party-affiliated. Once he is elected to a village office and desires to ascend the governmental scale, he may then turn to a party for additional support, if the party does not first appeal to him for control of the vote he can promise. Even with this opportunity, "...most candidates do not appeal to any particular interest that transcends buraku lines; it is only natural that most of them are pure independents."53 And being independents, the people in the buraku are denied even a glimpse of the democratic political processes which are clearly a part of the heavier-populated areas. But, this situation is partially fostered by their own refusal to challenge traditional lines.

In such a taut, tradition-bound area as the buraku, continued emphasis placed upon traditionalism aids those candidates tabbed as conservatives. In the electoral process, many candidates

51 Steiner, op.cit., pp.410-11.
52 Ibid., p.411
53 Ibid., p.413
for local office run as independents, with most of them being conservative candidates. "In the 1955 elections, of some 43,168 "independent" candidates... 7.5 per cent had Socialist orientations... many were conservatives." Since the buraku people are conservative and the officials they elect tend to be likewise, unique support is rendered to the LDP. Over and above this contribution lies the fact that personality is far more important than party which distinguishes the individual's over-all donation to buraku conservatism from just that of the buraku proper. In being elected to a village post, for example, a person normally has the backing of a number of burakus, which become a definite support organization he can depend upon. These conservatives in the villages and the hamlets have a collective bloc of votes to be utilized either by themselves as independents or by a national party faction of the Liberal Democratic Party.

Summarily, the socio-political determinant of wage has caused the buraku people to be involved in conservative loyalty to personality, rather than complete participation in government and politics. Professor Maki concludes: "...the Japanese individual has already demonstrated that he is capable of acting as a responsible citizen under democracy." This seems quite unreasonable if one scrutinizes the rural political picture. Professor

54 Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op.cit., p.407
55 Maki, op.cit., p.128.
Maki believes that the Japanese individual:

...exercises the right of suffrage;
he is interested in controversial
issues of both politics and govern-
ment; he is capable of criticizing
political leaders, parties, and pro-
cedures; he is vitally concerned with
the maintenance of the democratic
processes and structure that have
given concrete benefits.56

Urban voters, who are more independent and politically refined,
fit the Professor's description; but, the individual enclosed by
buraku traditionalism lacks positive involvement in politics to
the extent that he is apolitical outside of exercising his right
to vote. The buraku individual's connection to government is non-
existent because he does not participate. "In Niike and Kame,
government continues to be regarded as something that is done to
and for rather than by the average citizen."57 Voting in blocs
as the singular political activity of the buraku people does not
prove their political responsibility because this is practiced
mechanically.

56Maki, op.cit., p.128.
57Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op.cit., p.403.
CHAPTER III

OBLIGATIONS AND POLITICS

A second socio-political determinant primarily unique in rural politics is oyabun-kobun, a system of obligational relationships "based upon simulated patrimonial principles."\(^{58}\) It is a system of perpetual obligations, as loyalty to superiors, imposed upon people through their natural interaction with others. Regarding politics, alignment of voter support through these obligational relationships enables a candidate to secure definitive backing external to particular party affiliation. Bureaucrats can establish a myriad of these relationships through promotion of legislation in the Diet advantageous to certain groups of people. As repayment for this cooperation, the affected group obligates itself to accept the role of kobun by accommodating the bureaucrat with a promised favor.

Relationships of this nature are entirely unattainable without norms to describe the obligation to be fulfilled. These particular norms are two: on and giri. "The word for obligations which cover a person's indebtedness from greatest to least is on."\(^{59}\) Life according to these norms is a perpetual accumulation of successive favors demanding reimbursement. "To an Occidental,


giri includes a most heterogenous list of obligations ranging from gratitude for an old kindness to the duty of revenge. Giri has two additional divisions: "...giri to the world...one's obligation to repay on to one's fellows...and giri to one's name...the duty of keeping one's name and reputation."

Within the buraku community a child has on to his father for his being brought into the world. What remains of this pattern in the buraku is used to bolster the traditional conservatism obstructing political maturation. How can this be accomplished? If a child is disallowed the opportunity to perceive political modernization through coercive devotion to the group and endless indebtedness provoked through fundamental interaction, he will develop the same apathetic concern for government still persistent in rural communities. Urban areas are practically devoid of these peculiar determinants due to their accent on individuality and definite concern for the political processes of the nation.

Furthermore, should the individual Japanese citizen obtain favors from other individuals who eventually run for political office, repayment in the form of a vote becomes very accessible. Recognizing that he has a definite duty to fulfill to his oyabun and a supplementary obligation to vote with the group, only one choice is available even if there is keen competition. Thoughtful voting cannot be exercised so long as the individual citizen does

60 Bennett, op.cit., p.133
61 Ibid., p.134.
not participate in a mature political system. On and giri constantly reinforce the dutiful reciprocation binding an individual to the oyabun (superior), and thereby forbidding escape should the matter of voting be introduced as a mode of repayment.

The Liberal Democratic Party has exploited this determinant since 1955 when the Liberals and Democrats merged. There is no doubt that through their success in attaining political office as a factionalized party they have undertaken the establishment of a branched party organization, one which includes tapping rural obligational relationships and inaugurating similar patterns on much higher levels. Instead of simply relying upon the vote they will receive from traditional supporters, the party has decentralized its organization in order to take greater advantage of this peculiar situation, although concentration of real local power is still held by factional leaders and their organizations.

The experienced politician may be an oyabun within a certain group. And within each other group, this same "boss-henchmen" relationship may prevail, with competition among entire groups to infuse additional groups not as strong as they. Groups "...seek to bind one another in complex alignments and contractual obligations ramifying in various directions so that they form an overlapping and interlocking web." What has been established

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62 Kawai, op.cit., p.115.
63 Ibid., p.115.
is an oyabun-kobun interrelationship extending through the amalgamation of various obligational groups. "The man who fares best in this type of system is one who can subtly take advantage of the constantly shifting balance of power among these interacting groups to maneuver his group to the top." With an important political leader managing an obedient clientele or offering inducements to those who join his ranks, it is not surprising that the parties have become faction-ridden in the mad scramble for power and advantage."

Rural areas are much easier to control through the decentralized process because "...the passivity of the peasant...and the tendency of basic social units toward political solidarity invites the control of huge blocs of votes by knowledgeable and influential leaders in the community." These influential people are in turn pledged to another superior.

The LDP has recognized a break down of the traditional oyabun-kobun relationships and is "...trying to replace them in part by recruiting popular support for local chapters." Replacing them are more extensive support organizations which have less emphasis on the obligational norms found in the traditional system. One basic reason for this modern development is that "the

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64 Kawai, op.cit., p.115
65 Quigley and Turner, op.cit., p.357.
66 Ibid., p.268.
67 Kawai, op.cit., p.129.
new generation of political leaders haven't had time to develop oyabun-kobun to a great extent."68

Another reason for the diminishing influence of oyabun-kobun is that issues are increasingly becoming the focal point of political interest in Japan. Although this is a recent movement, it is spreading through the decentralized bailiwicks and currently promising to penetrate the rural interference generated by traditional socio-political traits. Moreover, the extent to which issues are gaining priority in villages and burakus could make them the pioneering element in the expunging of traditional political patterns. Where other parties have not diffused their organizations as have the Liberal Democrats or lack factional power controls as the LDP possesses, conservative elements should continue as the pattern for rural voting. Expanding the currents of oyabun-kobun into local branch organizations presides as a progressive movement in the conservative, grass-roots level of Japan. However, any success enjoyed by any party's local branches still depends upon support levied by local leaders.

68Kawai, op.cit., p.128.
CHAPTER IV

THE JIBAN: POWER POLITICS

Competition for government office is the highlight of political interest in most nations maintaining two party or multi-party systems. Incumbents seek as much organized support as needed to assure re-election. Accomplishment of this goal relies on the political record advanced by the incumbent and the persuasive and dedicated contributions made by party members. Rival parties condone policies they hope are acceptable to the people; elected officials execute party policies while pursuing personal programs derived from their own political beliefs and the demands of their constituencies and interest groups. This would seem to constitute a general perspective for most political struggles among parties in securing voter support. To some extent this can be verified in Japan's political system, unless one discerns the rural villages and hamlets, where political competition has been negated through traditionalism.

Japanese voters explicitly associate themselves with personalities rather than party in rural communities. Burakus have their "personality consensus" fortified by wago and the norms of on and giri. Urban areas, where a rising middle class enjoys some individuality in voting, has not shown significant changes when it comes time to vote; personality is still the basic criterion, not party or program. This reinforces the traditional leader-follower systemization of the rural areas which now comprise the foundations for support organizations of national party candidates.
Organizing support for high governmental office is a personal endeavor, one which depends upon traditional patterns to stabilize one's control of the vote. The political machine conclusive of this declared support is entitled a jiban.

"One must understand first that a jiban is a personal, not a party appurtenance. It is gained, belongs to, and is lost by an individual politician."69 "The primary goal of an organization of this type is the deliver of votes particularly in prefectural and national elections."70 A jiban organized by a rural leader is apt to be dependent upon traditional traits rather than any personal organizational aim. Maintaining the jiban necessitates cooperation with certain influential men, yuryokusha. "These 'influential' persons on the buraku level form the smallest mesh in a network that stretches upwards to the prefectural politician from a rural constituency."71 Outside of these influential men, jiban is either unobtainable or very unstable. Therefore, proper care must be placed in placating the yuryokusha.

Older local politicians have a definite edge in controlling a jiban. "Japanese voters are invariably attracted to name and face so that an obscure candidate stands a very small chance of winning even if he is able to put forth a worth-while political campaign."72 Applying the controlled vote a jiban represents, a

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69Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op.cit., p.425
70Ibid., p.426.
71Steiner, op.cit., p.432.
72Yanaga, op.cit., p.296
known local politician overcomes threats of competition with practically no effort. This can be accomplished without a political platform. Younger political aspirants are frequently unable to supplant the jiban of a favored incumbent unless they have succeeded in building one of their own. However, "young politicians and newcomers who have not yet succeeded in building a jiban... find it to their advantage to run in electoral districts with a heavy 'floating' vote,"73 where they will be unlikely confronted with staunch support organizations.

Prefectures are the principal, large-scale political divisions of Japan. From these 46 bailiwicks, 150 of the 250 members of the House of Councilors are elected, as are the critical members of the prefectural assemblies. At this level of government, jiban is currently being propagated with great enthusiasm.

"The jiban of the prefectural politician... has no a priori existence. It consists of a number of towns and villages that do not form a unit in the consciousness of the inhabitants, and that may indeed, have conflicting interests and other causes for antagonism."74 Personalism retains its primary position as the backbone for support, yet it is less stable for the prefectural politician. In composing a jiban, a prefectural candidate takes advantage of the following he has attracted in local politics, if

73Ike, op.cit., p.208.
74Steiner, op.cit., p.434
he has such experience. This following is characterized by personal loyalty to several other individuals whom the prefectural assembly candidate should exploit. If the candidate can claim this web of voter support, he is capable of effecting local elections and offering his vote support to a national party for national elections. The Japanese political process also accentuates the position of the prefectural assembly candidate for "in all elections, the candidates who have received the largest pluralities are declared the winners, provided that each has exceeded a legal minimum." Thus, the prefectural candidate can afford to have competition as long as his declared support looms as a durable standard for election. Furthermore, his asserted backing attracts national candidates who know that if they obtain several of these political mainstays in their election districts they can magnify their election chances. "A common way for a member of the House of Representatives to create such an organization is to acquire, through personal or financial ties, several followers who are active and influential in prefectural politics."

With a basis grounded in rural areas where the yuryokusha, who "...range in type from men of integrity to those on the criminal fringe..." exploit the traditional mores, constructed jibans are "...most frequently the stock-in-trade of conservative

75 Quigley and Turner, op.cit., p.262
76 Ike, op.cit., p.199
77 Ibid., p.75
Being basically conservative, the Liberal Democrats have awaiting them decided support. "It may be assumed that candidates are less likely to be party affiliated where the hold of tradition is strong," but conservative bases allow Liberal Democrats to identify with these "unaffiliated" candidates.

In the grass-roots buraku, jiban is political support far removed from any party linkage; nevertheless, it is political support. When a prefectural leader declares political party affiliation, he automatically secures "party affiliation" for his supporters, who remain undeclared. However, the party of the leader may repulse his followers causing him to yield his backing which may be sought by another popular leader.

Liberal Democrats avert much of this changeableness with their proclaimed conservatism. These men have usually experienced the perplexing conditions of local voting behavior and thus understand what modes to follow in order to sustain support.

Party label remains insignificant even in prefectural elections, signifying that candidates do run as independents. What success do independent candidates currently have as support systems continue to expand? In village elections, party labels do not effect the voting patterns because most people vote conservative, although not directly for the LDP. Many prefectural candidates still run unaffiliated which is "...evidence of the

78 Steiner, op.cit., p.437.
79 Ibid., p.395.
public uncertainty about politics,"80 a valid uncertainty since parties have failed to related all political activities to rural areas.

In the 1955 elections, "...98.2 per cent of the elected town and village assemblymen were independents. This dropped to 95.0 per cent in 1963."81 "In 1955 all town and village assembly seats in Fukui and all but one of the seats in Yamagata, Ibaraki, Shimane, and Oita went to independents."82

Many independents claim to have conservative leanings with small portions claiming Socialist inclinations and several contending pure independency. The role of the independent in national elections is no longer significant nor is it very meaningful in prefectural elections. And to some degree, pure independency has been eliminated even though the electoral records disclose that independents should be holding many political offices in the governmental assemblies. Independent has become a title for candidates not openly affiliated with a political party.

81Steiner, op.cit., p.398.
82Ibid., p.398.
CHAPTER V

FACTIONALISM: THE LIFEBLOOD OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Buraku conservatism, modified obligational systems, and potent yet shifty support blocs are the predominant political traits found today in Japan. These three elements, collectively taken, constitute the foundations of Japan's factionalized party system. In their attempts to accommodate the maturing political individual, the parliamentary parties are coerced to circulate in the remotest areas. Accomplishing this party decentralization forces the parties to rely heavily upon their factions who are closer to the changing political person although they are proximate to only a limited portion of the nation.

"Shifts in party membership and splintering of parties are occurring constantly in Japan. But these shifts and splinters are not caused by the intensity of political beliefs and sentiments but by the intensity of personal feeling and loyalty to a leader."83 "The Japanese parties, especially the conservative parties, may still be described as clusters of leader-follower groups involved in continuously shifting alliances and with each group itself undergoing frequent changes."84 Japan's political parties depend upon factional leaders and their support organizations to demonstrate the political processes to their people. Electoral success for national parties cannot be delivered outside

83Yanaga, op.cit., p.91.
84Neumann, op.cit., p.339.
of the factions. On the other hand, "the relative strength of factions within the parties depends largely on the number of Diet seats the respective factions manage to capture."85 Party factions thus are semi-autonomous, having their own support groups and policies, while simultaneously being connected with national parties and their respective programs. When factional leaders lack true party loyalty they control their constituencies for themselves alone, eliminating any party affiliation. Should they be affiliated and lose their connection through a shift in leadership or by disassociation, they can offer support to another national party or remain simply an autonomous group. Subsequently, "the factions within each party must therefore continue to be handled pretty much as separate parties..."86 The national party "...has to function as a mediatory or conciliatory institution..."87 in resolving conflicts between the factions.

The LDP has been blessed with the traditional conservatism of the rural areas which has affected the characteristic bloc voting. Attracting the rural bosses, not entire groups, has been sufficient because "...practically no effort is made in the recruiting of new party members at the grass-roots level because votes can be delivered to the designated candidate."88 Once the

85Kawai, op.cit., p.126.
87Yanaga, op.cit., p.237.
88Ibid., p.254.
rural leaders are in the fold, the national party can dismiss any elaborate plans for a local organization. Controlling hierarchal leaders, as those in the prefectural assemblies, is a more prominent factionalization factor because these leaders manage such larger voting blocs.

Having controlled the government continuously since 1955 as the LDP and for many years previous through conservative organizations, several personalities have constantly pulled heavy majorities in the nation, except in some urban areas. It should be conclusive that "factionalism in the LDP has neither kept it from power nor paralyzed its action in political crises."\(^{89}\) In 1960, the LDP held 296 seats or 63.3 per cent of the entire membership in the House of Representatives.*

Maintaining harmonious relations with each faction is difficult because of the semi-autonomous nature of the parties. This self-governing ability permits rival factions to conflict in attempting to finance their respective factions and also to elect particular faction candidates.

"The lack of a really effective centralized fund-raising organization in the conservative party has also contributed to factionalism, by making individual politicians look primarily to

\(^{89}\)Maki, op.cit., p.161

influential political support." 90 "Moreover, each faction within
the conservative party has at least one organization bearing some
innocuous or academic title, the real purpose of which is to col­
lect political funds." 91 When the LDP faction seeks influential
patrons, they primarily entreat conservative individuals with na­
tional power. Because these local entities frequently rely on na­
tional party funds, their conservative candidates "...are likely
to stress their relationship to persons in positions of power on
the national level, persons who are also conservative." 92 Buttres­
sing their factional organization with external sources of funding,
LDP factions tend to represent limited interests which must rely
on the success that the faction earns at the polls if they are to
be advanced.

"Factionalism within the LDP...is a matter of personal­
ities..."93 and the financial backing each conservative candidate
can acquire from his factional leader may determine his chances
in an election. An individual candidate can augment the vital
assistance of his factional leader by running as an official mem­
ber of the LDP, unless the factional leader is not strongly con­
nected with the national party. The principal dilemma which con­
servative factions are faced with is which conservative candidate

91 Scalapino, op.cit., p.89.
92 Steiner, op.cit., p.397.
93 Maki, op.cit., p.160.
to support.

For example: A House of Representative district in Japan generally returns from three to five Diet members in their elections. Conservatives have repeatedly controlled this House by taking advantage of traditionalism and affiliated support organizations. Therefore, should they attempt to sweep an election district or maximize their chances and run only those whom they positively feel will be victorious?

Faction leaders often must decide on which candidates will run. An LDP incumbent usually has no endorsement problems because having been elected, his "...strength becomes solidified until it is nearly impossible to dislodge him from party nomination."94 Other aspirants must be selected and financed through the faction itself and interest groups. The party too may donate additional funds. Thirdly, certain conservatives not allied with the faction leader or the national party cause supplementary problems by nominating their own choice. What can and does invariably occur is that the conservative-based candidates are too numerous, thereby diminishing their chances and fomenting struggles with one another. Factional control of pertinent districts decreases the probability of such occurrences, but the instability of these organizations permits the possibility to persist.

The LDP has branched its party organization hoping that it "...would help to eliminate destructive factional competition

among what remains of rival personal machines of the same party in each locality."95 This rivalry, external to the problems mentioned previously within the faction and to the top factional leader, also diminishes conservative strength during the elections.

Despite the dependence on unstable factional cooperation and the ineffectiveness of national party branching, conservatives continue to procure majorities in many districts at all levels of government. Exploitation of the traditional socio-political determinants and the conservative organizations producing mass voting has greatly enhanced the LDP position as the leader among Japanese political parties. Jiban is the most notorious political entity of the conservative LDP and its factions. It has become a permanent political force through which a candidate not only helps himself, but helps his fellow party candidates. Use of the jiban has been an absorbent political tool in the rural areas for the LDP factions. Conservative leanings which are characteristic in rural areas must be nursed if they are to be utilized on higher election levels. For if the people did not attach this support to a personality, there would be a distinct "floating" or undetermined vote. As long as the LDP can rest assure that they possess the indubious support for conservatives, they are permitted more time to politically influence people in less conservative areas, such as the cities. This explicitly depends on the degree of political maturation throughout Japan and the policies promoted by the LDP and rival parties.

Kawai, op.cit., p.129.
CHAPTER VI

THE EXPENDABILITY OF RURAL CAMPAIGNS

Political campaigns serve as implements for bringing a candidate into full view of the voters. Distribution of propagandist pamphlets; statements to the public and retorts of opposition charges through the mass media; and unceasing hand-shaking and baby-kissing are integral parts of an election campaign. In Japan, government regulations are imposed on political campaigning legally limiting the role they play. On the contrary, these set rules are easily avoided and overlooked through tactical procedures, making these legalities barely realistic and completely impractical. The one specific advantage of government regulation insofar as the Japanese parties are concerned is that they do offer various free services to the parties as limited numbers of campaign posters and sponsorship in the mass media.

Campaigning in the burakumin is practically negligible except when the local candidates visit their constituencies in order to brief their henchmen (as the yuryokusha) on election trivialities. "We may note that in town and village assembly elections the overwhelming prevalence of the 'fixed vote' - in other words, the almost complete absence of a 'floating vote' - makes campaigns unnecessary."96

"There are also a substantial number of individuals who are in effect nothing but robots in the voting process. Such

96Steiner, op. cit., p.411
individuals, found most frequently in agrarian communities, exercise no judgment, but vote according to advice and instruction of others." 97 The local candidate need not waste time and funds in conducting any campaign where it has proven to be dispensable, unless vigorous opposition appears.

Absence of active rural campaigning also enables the LDP to substantiate their power for the conservatives have more time and money to distribute among their factions in insecure or quite doubtful regions where "floating" votes are numerous.

97Ike, op.cit., p.205.
CHAPTER VII

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AND SOCIALISTS IN JAPAN TODAY

With the Japanese political process in a definite state of maturation, party policies are becoming essential in electioneering, although the force has not as yet truly penetrated rural areas. "Because of the plurality of interests that people have... policies are formulated with great flexibility and stated simply."\(^98\) The national parties therefore "do not tell the voters very clearly what they may expect from them."\(^99\) Nevertheless, as the Japanese continue to broaden their political knowledge, explicit policies are being demanded although political parties are not always accommodating. Just what are the major parties doing to meet this development and what can be speculated about rural conservatism and the LDP?

"The fact that both major parties today are in some degree single interest group parties, contributes in certain respects to political stability."\(^100\) In accordance with political stability and growing political modernization, the individual has become more politically involved independent and knowledgeable and therefore increasingly evaluative. During the 1950's, "the individual was being emancipated from traditional social controls,"\(^101\) thus

\(^98\)Yanaga, op.cit., p.261.

\(^99\)Ibid., p.265.

\(^100\)Scalapino, op.cit., p.77.

\(^101\)Burks, op.cit., p.264.
allowing him to attain his own outlook on politics. Also, "the decay of the family system accelerates the social and behavioral shift from an almost collective or family basis to a considerably more individualized basis."\textsuperscript{102} With this expansion of political modernization into the development of actual political thinking, LDP power should be challenged especially on the grass-roots level. We may now inspect both the Socialist and Liberal Democratic Parties in order to perceive what they have accomplished in meeting this changing political society.

"Socialists are stronger in the cities than in rural areas, and with cities growing their total vote can be expected to increase... However, eight million votes still separate the two parties and how to surpass the 'wall of one-third' is the Socialists' perennial dilemma."\textsuperscript{103} Even though "the leftist vote... has been growing at a slow but remarkably steady pace..."\textsuperscript{104} "the popular vote for the Socialists has revealed an erratic trend..."\textsuperscript{105} This eccentric course now leaves the Socialists with a steady, yet diminished vote, for the Democratic Socialists have completed their split. The Democratic Socialists stand by parliamentary democracy and a welfare state founded on the electoral process. Their rightist leaning also makes them fair game for absorption by the LDP

\textsuperscript{102}Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, \textit{op.cit.}, p.443.
\textsuperscript{103}Olson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.397.
\textsuperscript{104}Reischauer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.264.
\textsuperscript{105}Maki, \textit{op.cit.}, p.156.
should their electoral ability prove unsuccessful. In 1963, the Democratic Socialists managed to gain six new seats in the House of Representatives while they lost better than one per cent of their already small popular vote.

A second failing of the Socialist Party is their absolute dependence on Sohyo, an amalgamation of Japanese trade unions. This group is the lifeblood of socialistic existence although it "...cannot produce enough votes for the Socialists to come to power as a class party."106 There is intense factionalization even though the Socialists hold to a rigid ideology, a factor which has "made it difficult for them to appeal to other interest groups."107 outside the labor organizations. In order for the Socialists to receive a majority standing they will have to persuade the DSP back to their ranks by discarding harsh ideological principles. Also, "any Socialist party...will have to broaden and moderate its stand to such an extent that its formation of a Government will probably not represent any fundamental threat to the conservative forces."108

Thirdly, Socialists have the minority party stigma."Under any system of party government, the party out of power can develop a considerable sense of frustration if long kept from control of

107Baerwald, op.cit., p.227.
108Morris, op.cit., p.408.
government. "109 Professor Steiner states:

But in Japan, this frustration is aggravated because the opposition feels that it represents the politically conscious and the articulate segment of the population and that the 'public opinion' it represents is constantly disregarded by the ruling party which controls the masses of politically unsophisticated rural voters and is able to exercise its power without regard for the correctness or incorrectness of its policies. 110

Another factor contributing to Socialist inability to generate stronger vote appeal is that "neither the new generation of young voters, not the people moving into the rapidly expanding urban areas... seem to be nearly as favorably inclined toward the Socialists as they might have been expected to be."111 Breaking the ties of traditional society is now affecting political understanding for each individual who seeks it. But, the ideology supported by the Socialists, which talks of "Marx and neutrality, power politics, and the American enemy,"112 has met with disfavor thereby pushing ideologically untinged LDP policies into the political limelight since they represent a broad spectrum with which to identify.

Summarily, the Socialists do not attract "...sufficiently large numbers of men who have influence and standing in their..."113

109Steiner, op.cit., p.467.


112Ibid., p.798.
communities. Especially in the eroding, traditional buraku communities they would seem to have had success yet the conservative vote patterns persist. Detaching the LDP from control of Japanese government does not seem likely unless the Socialists can ally themselves with all other parties. Even then, this amalgamation would account for a minority position.

Liberal Democrats have been an entrenched majority in the national legislature and other governmental levels since the Occupation terminated the haunting militarism characteristic of pre-war and war-time days. They have perceived the effects of the Allied Occupation and the democratic institutions and policies condemned for Japanese society. Political modernization, inaugurated in the late 1940's and early 1950's, consisted of a "... search for new methodological principles... and development of so-called undeveloped areas..." Modernization could only be accomplished by unsettling traditional behavior, especially in the rural areas. Some tradition had to be preserved in order to avoid complete confusion and probable defeat of any new measures. Whatever changes have taken hold, the LDP remains in control of Japanese government with a fairly strong hand.

During the 1950's, attempts were made to break down the rigid traditionalism of rural Japan with hope that the individual could escape the group consciousness which perpetuated familial

113Ike, op.cit., p.176.

cohesiveness. Individuality has been stressed together with political maturation for the intention of advancing Japan socially and politically. What has been the effect on buraku life and traditional conservatism?

"Most buraku inhabitants admit that there is less cohesion than there used to be, and the older generations frequently complain about the unrest, disobedience, and non-conformist views and practices of the younger people."\textsuperscript{115} The familial system is gradually decaying thus causing "...the social and behavioral shift from an almost completely collective or family basis to a considerably more individualized basis."\textsuperscript{116} What has this imposed on the political situation in the buraku?

"The slack resulting from the weakening of traditional behavior patterns has to be taken up by new types of appeals and by the creation of local party organizations."\textsuperscript{117} The LDP has challenged this trend by instituting agrarian reforms and by centralizing their party organization, thereby reinforcing the conservative commitment in the burakus. "Limited in occupation and living area, apathetic and resigned..."\textsuperscript{118} the buraku people remain partially isolated from modernization.

\textsuperscript{115}Steiner, op.cit., p.224.
\textsuperscript{116}Beardsley, Hall, and Ward, op.cit., p.443.
\textsuperscript{117}Steiner, op.cit., p.228.
\textsuperscript{118}Olson, op.cit., p.73.
Despite their numerical decline and infiltration of non-agrarian elements into their midst, Japanese farmers still are a supremely important political bloc for the conservative cause. They continue to represent the largest single socio-economic category of voters by a considerable measure. 119

"Most Japanese are still conservative, but this does not mean that they necessarily approve of what conservative candidates do after they are elected." 120 (This is Olson's summary of 1960 election patterns—patterns currently in effect). As the people become wary of LDP activities they are apt to exercise their political individuality at the polls, discarding traditional behavior in favor of an appeal to policy. Since opposing parties have remained doctrinaire (as the Socialists and Communists) or do not have sufficient support as yet (as the Democratic Socialist and Komeito), the LDP has partially filled the gap by presenting new faces of political leadership through their faction-ridden organization. This has caused further rift among LDP members today as Prime Minister Sato continues to struggle with conflicting party members and segments of the national population.

The Liberal Democratic Party continues its reign as controller of Japanese government, a role which still defies true consideration of a "public interest." Not everyone participates in the political process nor benefits from its activities. Political

119 Scalapino, op. cit., p. 90.
120 Olson, op. cit., p. 227.
parties leave something to be desired as main instruments in Japanese politics. It can only be concluded that "...Japan has not attained a full measure of political modernization." \(^\text{121}\)

\(^{121}\text{Ward and Rustow, op. cit., p. 410.}\)
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