

Studying Conflict in Japan Since 1984

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I was quite astonished when I read that the theme of this conference was based on the Conflict in Japan book that I co-edited with Ellis Krauss and Tom Rohlen a quarter of a century ago, and I was deeply honored when the program organizers invited me to present this keynote speech. I thank them, and you, for giving me this opportunity to reflect on what has happened to the study of conflict in Japan since 1984.

I cannot provide a comprehensive overview that would do justice to all the wonderful research that you and others have carried out in our unending efforts at making sense of Japan—a title neatly co-opted by Steve Reed some time ago. I also cannot offer any one true way to understand the infinite complexity of Japan. It is in fact the impossibility of doing so that keeps us all endlessly fascinated. All I can do is offer some reflections on how the study of conflict in Japan has changed since 1984, but first I must deconstruct my title.

To you, *Conflict in Japan* is a book of essays that was published in 1984, hence one can imagine a sharp division Before *Conflict in Japan*, and After *Conflict in Japan*, much as we divide the dates in the western calendar by a much more famous historical event that may or may not have happened in a particular year 2008 years ago. To me, however, *Conflict in Japan* was a project, not a publication date. It took place over almost a decade, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and it completely transformed the way I think about Japan. Therefore, I want to use the conflict project and the 1984 publication date of *Conflict in Japan* as a fulcrum to look at how the study of Japan differed before and after that time. From the contemporary vantage point of 2008, it is equally important to remember what Japanese Studies was like BEFORE *Conflict in Japan*, in order to appreciate why things have come to be different since then.

I am not of course in any way claiming that this book changed the world. It was much more a reflection of what was already changing than the instrument of change in its own right. If it helped illuminate some new possibilities, then I think all of its editors and authors would be more than satisfied. The book appeared at a turning point for the social science study of Japan in three different ways. Its authors had been grappling with those impending changes for a decade, but by the time the book came out they were becoming more broadly recognized, and thus the timing of the publication was propitious.

First, *Conflict in Japan* appeared as Japan was stepping into a new role as a major international player in the post-industrial, post-modern world. It is worth noting that Japan's new role also seemed to come as a surprise in the 1980s: to the Japanese, to Japan specialists, and certainly to outsiders. Japan's new role emerged because many changes had been going on within Japan itself—economic, political, and social—the stuff of the social sciences. We needed to understand the dynamics of those changes, what had produced them as well as what they in turn would bring about.

Second, the book appeared just as the world was having to deal with Japan's new global role and therefore was grasping for new ways to understand Japanese society and try to predict how it might behave. This raised new questions about Japanese society, and sometimes led to new answers to old questions. It also produced new external demand for social science research about Japan, driven by new economic interests that had not previously penetrated the isolated, ivory tower world of Japanese Studies. There were new audiences for what Japan specialists had to offer, and new criteria against which to evaluate the answers—some of which had very practical consequences for businesses.

Third, the book's publication coincided with major changes in the intellectual paradigms of the social sciences, particularly in the United States, which had already become a major producer of social science research on Japan. My experience and understanding of Japan comes out of this American academic context. While I acknowledge that it is one particular parochial context that may not apply to other people's experience, it was the context of the Conflict book. *Conflict in Japan* reflected some quite early efforts to grapple with the paradigm shift in the United States. I don't think it provided any definitive answers or pointed the way to a new paradigm, but it did help people climb out of the old one.

Paradigms matter, not because they are true or false, right or wrong, but because they become dominant. Paradigms matter particularly in the social sciences. On the one hand, social science knowledge advances because of a shared view about how things work and a shared practice of building on what we already know. Things move more quickly when there is a dominant paradigm because people know what the questions and answers are and what still needs to be pursued. On the other hand, a dominant paradigm, precisely because it tells us what questions to ask and what answers we already know, shapes what research gets done and how research observations get interpreted. It makes some interpretations easy and apparently sensible and makes others more difficult and less credible. At worst, it can blind researchers to what is right in front of them.

In the postwar world of the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s United States, but also in Japan and in other countries to a somewhat lesser extent, the dominant paradigm was functionalism. With roots in both sociology and anthropology, it viewed any society as an integrated, organic whole, undergirded by shared cultural values that were reflected and reinforced across all the institutions and micro-units of the society. Research and analysis within the functionalist paradigm focused on showing how the parts of the system were integrated, and how the core values were replicated and reproduced as the system maintained its equilibrium. The strong implication of these ideas was that there was no real structural conflict in a society; the strains or conflicts that might be observed were temporary, negative phenomena which would be overcome by the system's integrative mechanisms. They were dysfunctions, which could often be attributed to dysfunctional individuals who needed to be controlled or corrected.

The functionalist paradigm also tended to be a-historical and focused on how part worked together in the present, rather than in how they might be changing over time. Some of its origins came from the anthropological study of small traditional societies that were assumed to be rather unchanging, since they were encountered and studied at a time when other societies were more advanced. In sociology, where theories had to grapple with the social changes brought about by industrialization, the functionalist paradigm produced modernization theory, which used simple opposing pairs of characteristics to define ideal states of traditional and modern. It assumed that there would be some temporary stresses and strains

as societies moved progressively from the former to the latter, where they would again find a state of integration and equilibrium. In the postwar United States in the grip of the Cold War, functionalism was a safe approach for the social sciences. It was anti-Marxist to its core, and modernization theory legitimized and promoted American interests and activities abroad, including its activities in postwar Japan. It also fit well with the language and area studies model of Japanese Studies that was promoted in the United States, in which students learned about Japan through courses in many different disciplines at the Master's level that would then produce an integrated and holistic interdisciplinary perspective, before going on to specialize in studying Japan in a particular discipline at the doctoral level.

Functionalism and modernization theory became the dominant paradigm, the lens through which most western trained social scientists studied postwar Japan in the 1950s and 1960s. Although there were many social scientists in Japan who did not accept the functionalist approach, it had a certain attraction within postwar Japan both for scholars and for the ordinary people who became informants for social scientists. In a society eager to put the horrors of the war and defeat behind them and embrace a new, modern Japan, the prevailing interpretation of postwar Japan became the harmony model, a homogeneous society integrated by underlying values of harmony and cooperation that disavowed conflict. Nakane Chie's vertical society model (Nakane 1970) and Doi Takeo's social psychology of *amae* (Doi 1973) provided indigenous theoretical validation and new tools for understanding harmonious Japan. (Both theories were known through Japanese and English articles in the 1960s, long before the books were translated into English.) With few social science studies of Japan available, a study of any single village or community became "the Japanese" way of doing things, and individual informants helpfully offered their opinions as what "we Japanese" think, in a kind of collective singular. Within that environment there developed a small body of English language social science studies of Japan using the harmony model, which in turn was part of a much larger body of social science theorizing and research relying on functionalism. A new generation of aspiring Japan specialists in the 1960s learned about Japan and how to study it through this body of social science literature.

Many of the participants in the conflict project, including myself, were part of that second generation of Japan specialists. We went to Japan in the late 1960s and early 1970s, asked questions that came out of the functionalist paradigm and modernization theory, and tried to fit our findings into the harmony model. The 1960s in Japan was a period of extreme social conflict, marked at both ends of the decade by massive street battles and challenges to the state. With all that conflict swirling around us, we turned our gaze toward the social institutions that functionalism and modernization theory pointed to, and asked functionalist questions about how they worked to integrate the society, based on its cultural values of harmony and cooperation. It was quite possible to offer functionalist explanations for many phenomena in Japan that seemed to fit quite well. In fact, modernization theory persisted as the dominant explanation for Japanese development long after it had been supplanted by dependency theory and other development theories in the rest of the world. Japan became the poster child for modernization theory and the harmony model remained dominant.

My own dissertation experience is a case in point. When my Harvard sociology advisor Robert Bellah asked what I wanted to do my dissertation on, I said that I was interested in the student activists from 1960 Ambo, because Robert Lifton had observed that they seemed to be making a series of ideological shifts called “tenkō” (Lifton 1961). Bellah immediately said tenkō was a good topic, but I should study the original tenkō situation in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He was right that this was the more important case of tenkō, but the effect was to deflect my attention away from the contemporary conflict towards what had happened 30 years earlier in a quite different historical context. I went to Japan and did my fieldwork on prewar tenkō from fall 1966 to winter 1968. This was just when the next round of student conflict was gearing up on the University of Tokyo campus, paralleling student conflict in the United States and Europe at the same time. But I had my head in old documents in the Shaken library and barely noticed what was going on around me.

At the time there was no subfield in sociology called the study of social movements. Within the functionalist paradigm such activities were viewed as the dysfunctional behavior of mindless crowds spurred on by ideological agitators. Having been a close observer of the committed student activists on

American campuses, I wrote more sympathetically about the Japanese political activists who had been arrested and then pressured to recant their beliefs through the process of *tenkō*. I analyzed the kinds of pressures that had been brought to bear on them, and I clearly saw it as the suppression of the communist movement by a powerful state.

The problem was how to interpret the case study theoretically as a social science question. There were intellectual historians examining the shifts in individuals' ideas, which was quite different from my sociological approach. Marxist scholars were describing what had happened in class terms, but that also didn't quite fit. Because that was the interpretation offered by the participants in one side of the conflict, I wanted a more neutral way to describe the interaction between activists and the state. Although I understood it as a social conflict, I ended up using Durkheim and the language of functionalism and modernization to explain it. My dissertation was entitled *Tenkō: Ideology and Societal Integration in Prewar Japan*. Integration. Not conflict. Integration. I soon became very uncomfortable with the functionalist implications of the analysis I had done, although it still seemed to fit the case very neatly. I delayed publishing the dissertation because of that discomfort, and 20 years later Garland Publishing came to my rescue with a series of unpublished Harvard sociology dissertations in which I could present the dissertation as I had written it, with a new introduction to distance myself from the analytic framework I had used. It was not until the late 1990s, working within the now richly developed field of social movements, that I have found and helped to develop the tools for analyzing what we would now call the state repression of a social movement.

Almost as soon as I had completed the dissertation, I had misgivings about the functionalist paradigm I had used for the analysis. The student conflicts that shook Japan in the 1960s were also rocking the United States and Europe in the same time period, and young social scientists began to question the functionalist paradigm and modernization. By the early 1970s younger Japan specialists recognized that we had in fact been observing a lot of conflict within Japanese society, for which functionalism and the harmony model of Japan did not have very good explanations.

The conflict project was born out of that frustration. Our strategy was to invite participants to rethink their own research in terms of conflict, and to use an existing social science conflict theory to help explain their findings. In addition to the younger American scholars who participated, we invited several of our own Japanese mentors to contribute to the volume. Although I might have used the project to rethink my prewar study of *tenkō*, the focus of our project was on postwar Japan (there was another historical volume being done at the same time by a different group of scholars), and I had already begun studying the student conflicts of the late 1960s.

The essays in the conflict volume looked at conflict and conflict resolution in various parts of Japanese society, and explained them using a wide range of conflict theories. Various essays looked at village conflict, industrial conflict, gender and status conflict in the workplace, interpersonal conflict, conflict in educational institutions, and political conflict in the Diet, the bureaucracy, and interest groups. It was a start, both in introducing Japan specialists to the existence of conflict theories and in taking seriously the existence of conflict in Japanese society that could not be explained away or swept under the rug. Yet it was only a start, and a very conservative one at that. Although we acknowledged the existence of structural conflict in Japanese society, the closest we got to Marx was Ralf Dahrendorf. Many of the conflict theorists we applied were themselves attempting to bring the study of conflict into functionalism, such as Lewis Coser. I used labeling theory to examine how some students became radicalized as conflict escalated in the late 1960s. It was hardly a radical enterprise.

In the course of doing my third study of the state of Japanese Studies in the United States and Canada for the Japan Foundation over the past few years, I spent quite a bit of time pondering how the field had changed over the postwar period, trying to understand the changing demographics of the field as well as changes in programs and courses offered in universities, the areas in which Japan specialists claimed expertise, and the topics of their research. It was through that process that I saw the outlines of three successive paradigms that have characterized different periods of Japanese Studies: the functionalist paradigm through the 1970s and early 1980s, the competition paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s, and the cultural studies paradigm since the 1990s.(Steinhoff 2007) I used these three paradigms to describe

changes in Japanese Studies programs in very general terms, and not to suggest that every Japan specialist's research is defined by them. Because demographically Japanese Studies is always an amalgam of Japan specialists who were trained at different times and have pursued different research trajectories, aspects of all three paradigms and many theoretical variations can be found in contemporary Japanese Studies programs and among any gathering of specialists.

Yet I do think paradigms matter. The paradigms and theories that shape social science research on Japan are not so much a product of intrinsic factors within Japanese society as they are a product of broader intellectual trends that may originate outside of Japan. I believe this is true for social scientists working inside Japanese society as well as for outside scholars who study Japan, but it is probably most true of those whose training and normal working environment is outside of Japan. The broader changes in the intellectual paradigms of American and European social science affect the kinds of questions that graduate students and young scholars are trained to ask within their disciplines, which then get asked about Japan. The researcher brings personal experience with Japan and a sense of what he or she finds intriguing, but figuring out how the topic can be studied brings current theories and paradigms into play, especially at the dissertation level. This may be less true in programs that are dedicated to Japanese Studies and insulated from other academic disciplines, but it exerts a strong impact on those who study and work within a social science discipline.

By the time the conflict volume came out in 1984, the functionalist paradigm was in decline and modernization theory was no longer very relevant to Japan, even if the harmony model of Japanese society still prevailed. New ways of thinking about Japan emerged that offered more effective ways to deal with conflict. We can understand these new approaches as reflecting changes in other places that affected social science thinking and thus came to influence Japanese Studies, along with changes in the place of Japan in the world that also brought different ideas into play.

The new status of Japan as a major post-industrial country on a par with western democracies led to new comparisons of Japan with European countries, and the application of quite different social science theories that emphasized self-interest and competition in the marketplace. Viewing Japan as a serious

economic competitor led to new questions about how and why Japanese institutions and practices were succeeding when western theories of capitalism said they shouldn't. Pursuing those questions led to deeper exploration of business practices and structural interconnections that went far beyond the simple platitudes of the harmony model, and revealed winners, losers, and unequal bargains. Theories of conflict and competition began to make more sense to explain Japan, even as some of the particular characteristics of Japanese society were held up as models that other societies could emulate.

Also, beginning in the 1970s and gaining momentum during the 1980s and 1990s, there were major social transformations in American and European societies and the parallel development of new social science theories that explored them. I do not want to argue that one particular paradigm came to replace functionalism, certainly not a conflict paradigm. Rather, the dominance of the functionalist paradigm was broken and many new social science theories were available that—partly in direct reaction to functionalism---were much more open to the study of conflict. These theories differ in their particulars, but they generally acknowledge the presence of structural conflict in any society. They tend to view societies as aggregations of social classes and subgroups with different interests, who may not share the same values. And just as my generation was directly influenced by the civil rights and student conflicts of the 1960s, younger scholars in the 1970s and 1980s were influenced by a host of identity movements, particularly the women's movement, but also other social issues that were often claimed as rights by and for particular groups. Social scientists became sensitized to questions of identity and difference, to social problems, to class differences, and to the rising aspirations of oppressed and marginalized groups.

Western-trained scholars in particular brought these questions to the study of Japan, and began pursuing research about women, about minorities and marginalized groups, and about social problems that paralleled those in other societies. With a few notable early exceptions such as the DeVos and Wagatsuma study *Japan's Invisible Race* (deVos and Wagatsuma 1966) that did look at an excluded Japanese minority, these were new topics in Japanese Studies. They are not topics that were encouraged by, or could be pursued very effectively using a functionalist paradigm and the harmony model of Japan. They are also not questions that were actively encouraged or appreciated within Japanese society and

Japanese academics. Some were considered too sensitive to be studied by Japanese scholars even if they were deeply interested in them; others were dismissed as insignificant endeavors about marginal aspects of Japan. There is some truth to that judgment. If one were assessing the nature of Japanese society based solely on the topics covered in the English language literature on Japan since the 1980s, one would think that Japan had much larger minority and foreign resident populations than it actually has. And while the wealth of studies about women in Japan since the 1980s has done much to correct their former academic invisibility, for a time it seemed that men were no longer worthy of study.

The study of social movements has also become a lively field in the social sciences and it is fundamentally about conflicts. Its theoretical tools have become useful ways that Japan specialists can examine social issues, by focusing on the organizations that advocate for change within Japanese society and engage in what is now coming to be called ‘contentious politics,’ meaning all those activities other than the normal interest group and parliamentary politics that political scientists study. In my own work since the conflict project I have used the close and long-term study of a few social movement organizations to examine not only their contentious issues and activities, but their organizational patterns and how the Japanese criminal justice system is applied to them. My students have also learned to use social movements and the materials they produce as vehicles to study a wide range of contentious contemporary issues in Japan.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new paradigm derived from cultural studies appeared in Japanese Studies, and has been expanding in the social sciences as well as in humanities disciplines. It was first introduced to Japanese Studies by University of Chicago historians Tetsuo Najita and Harry Harootunian, and its distinctive jargon was initially derided in the field as “speaking Najitunian.” Over time, however, the ideas seeped into many disciplines and we all came to understand much of the new theoretical language of cultural studies even if we didn’t speak it fluently.

The cluster of theories used by cultural studies scholars in the social sciences emphasizes the study of subcultures within their larger social context, and points to the use of cultural forms as ways of expressing conflict. With their close attention to visual features and to the uses of the body, these theories

have added a significant new dimension to Japanese Studies. More broadly, the influence of cultural studies ideas can also be seen in the tremendous surge of academic interest in Japanese popular culture. It is not simply that Japanese popular culture is now a global phenomenon with broad economic and social impact and therefore worthy of social science study. Studying Japanese popular culture through the lens of cultural studies theories highlights its role in the cultural expression of conflict, and connects it to particular subgroups in Japanese society that simultaneously enact and are defined by those cultural expressions. This new paradigm has transformed not only the subjects of research, but our methods and research materials as well, placing new demands on libraries and institutional resources.

I do not want to imply that the entire stimulus for studying Japan comes from external theories, independent of what is going on inside the society. Certainly since the mid-1990s the effects of the bursting of the economic bubble and the protracted economic recession, coupled with the introduction of neoliberal and neoconservative economic, political, and social reforms, have led to the widespread perception that some of the institutions that provided economic security and social stability in Japan are now broken. Since the late 1990s much more social science attention has been focused on decreases in employment security, problems in the education system, and a broken school to work mechanism—all elements that previously were touted as the foundation of Japan's success. Once again we must go back to the drawing boards, asking new questions and looking for new answers to old ones. I think we do have the tools to examine these issues now, in perspectives that come from both the competition paradigm and the cultural studies paradigm, but they once again require sensitivity to issues of conflict.

I said earlier that participating in the conflict project had transformed how I think about Japan. When I first began teaching my course on Japanese society, I built it initially as my own mentors Robert Bellah and Ezra Vogel had done, using a basically functionalist approach. The conflict project forced me to rethink that approach in a very fundamental way, by asking questions about conflict in every topic I presented. The conflict project itself focused on the use of particular theories of social conflict to explicate research findings. However, I came away from the project understanding the study of conflict not as a matter of particular theories, but rather as a habit of mind. It is the constant asking of basic

questions about conflict that should inform all of our studies of Japan, no matter what the topic or the conceptual framework of the research. Where is the conflict in this institution or this situation? If it isn't visible, where did it go? Has it been displaced somewhere else, or is it hiding under the surface? How is it being expressed or suppressed?

I think the transformation I experienced is also what has happened more generally to the social science study of conflict in Japan since 1984. People are studying all sorts of different phenomena, using a wide array of theories shaped by several different intellectual paradigms. They are not usually applying a particular theory of conflict or conflict resolution, though they might also be doing that. Rather, the habit of asking conflict questions has become normal. It infuses our research in a way that was simply unimaginable prior to the conflict project and our breaking away from the functionalist paradigm and the harmony model of Japan.

Up to this point I have been offering very loose descriptions of research Before *Conflict in Japan* and After *Conflict in Japan*. In my recent study of the current state of Japanese Studies in the United States and Canada I presented some evidence of these general trends. To prepare for this talk I have done some very quick and dirty research to try to cast these trends a bit more broadly. The numbers I would like to present are very rough indicators, because they are based on just the sorts of keyword searches that I teach my students NOT to do because of all the garbage that they generate. Still, with some effort to neutralize and compensate for that garbage, these rough findings can help us see what has been going on. I used three different sources, all available online through the University of Hawaii library system. The first was the *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, selected because it purports to cover Asian Studies publications across all disciplines and in all western languages.

Searching on "Japan and conflict" together produced a total of 577 items over the time period from 1945 to 2008. That is across all disciplines and all historical time periods, but with a number of other limitations in that the database has no books listed since 1992. This database contains just bibliographic citations and also lists the countries covered in the item, so the search is limited to items

that actually had “conflict” in the title. About a fifth (20.8%) of the items were published between 1945 and 1983, and the rest (79.2%) since 1984. (Figure 1.) Of course we know that the field has grown

Figure 1. Distribution of Conflict and Japan Items in Bibliography of Asian Studies, 1945-2008
Source: Bibliography of Asian Studies Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008

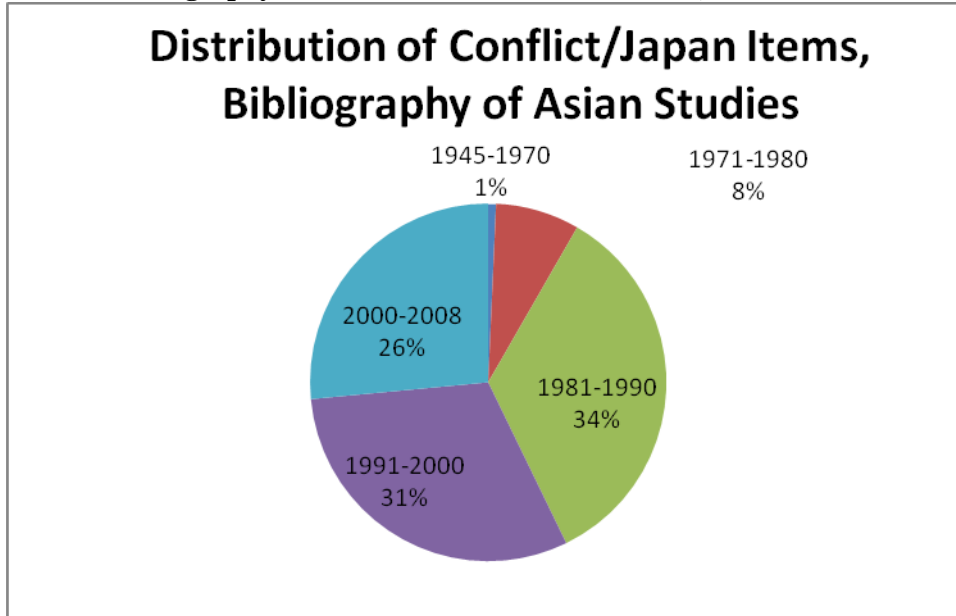


Figure 2. Percent of Japan Items on Conflict in the Bibliography of Asian Studies, 1945-2008
Source: Bibliography of Asian Studies Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008

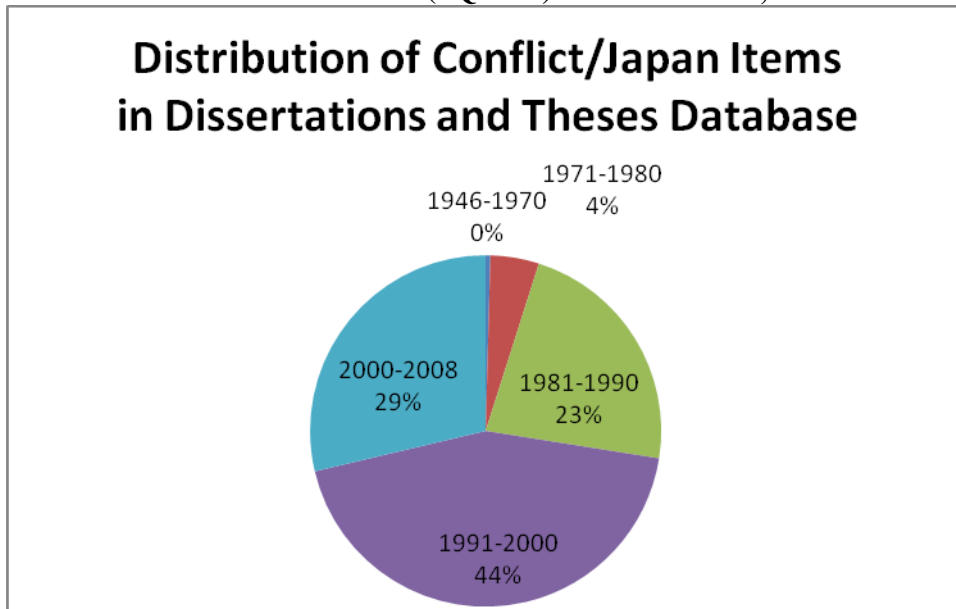


tremendously over that time period, and this crude comparison doesn't tell us about the relative importance of work related to conflict. I tried to correct for this by searching just on the keyword “Japan,”

and then calculating what percentage of all the work on Japan was retrieved using “Japan and conflict.” In this source the overall volume of bibliographic items about Japan increased from 1,055 in the 1945 to 1970 period, to over 30,000 items for the 1980s and the 1990s, and over 23,000 since 2000. Although the percentage of material identified as being about conflict is miniscule within that huge body of bibliographic items, it did, as predicted, double from about 0.3% prior to 1970 and in the 1980s, to about 0.6% thereafter. (Figure 2.)

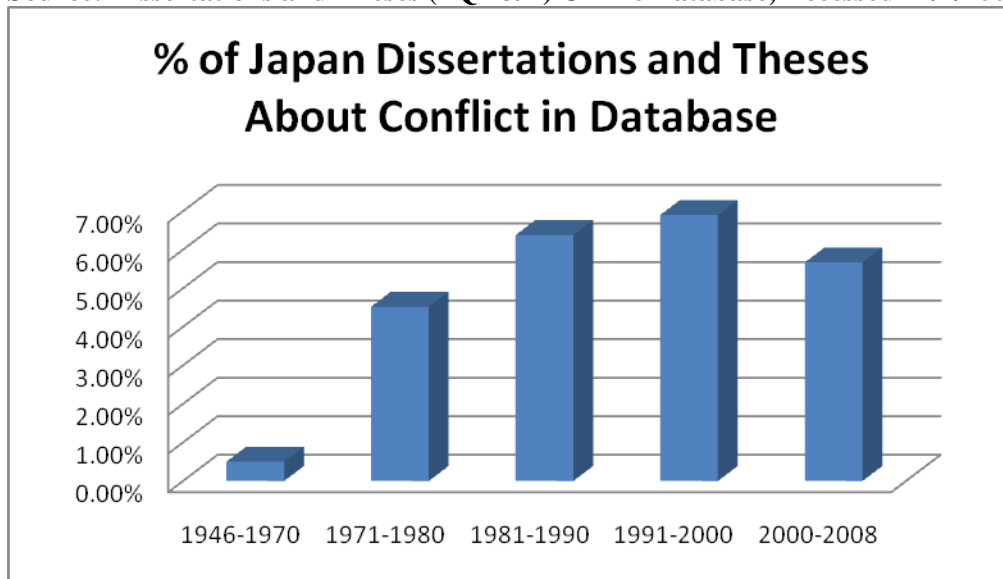
Next, I looked at the database of *Dissertations and Theses* that began with University Microfilms and later became the Proquest database. It now covers both dissertations and master’s theses across a wide range of countries, and has very high coverage in the United States, where submission is mandatory at many institutions. The database contains both titles and abstracts, so the search terms could have appeared in either: more junk, but possibly also more of the actual content. Between 1946 and 2008, the keyword “Japan” turned up 7,859 theses and dissertations, while a search on “Japan and conflict” together turned up 470. Note that this search turned up nearly as many dissertations and theses under conflict and Japan as the *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, which is supposed to cover a much wider array of publications.

Figure 3. Distribution of Conflict and Japan Dissertations and Theses, 1946-2008
Source: Dissertations and Theses (PQD&T)Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008



The cutting point for this database was slightly different because of the search system's constraints, but the results were quite dramatic. Just under 5 percent of the 470 items relating to conflict were produced between 1946 and 1980, while 95 percent were produced since 1980. (Figure 3) Again, the volume of work on Japan has increased overall, so to control for that I looked at the percentage of all items related to conflict against the base of all items on Japan. Overall, 6% of the Japan items were retrieved using conflict as a second keyword. This correction changes the picture slightly by time period, but shows the same general trend. Only half of one percent of theses and dissertations on Japan in this database from 1946 to 1970 related to conflict. This increased to 4.5% for the 1971 to 1980 period, and then jumped to 6.4% in the 1980s, and 6.9% in the 1990s. It is slightly lower since 2000 at 5.7%, but the results for the current decade are of course still incomplete. (Figure 4.)

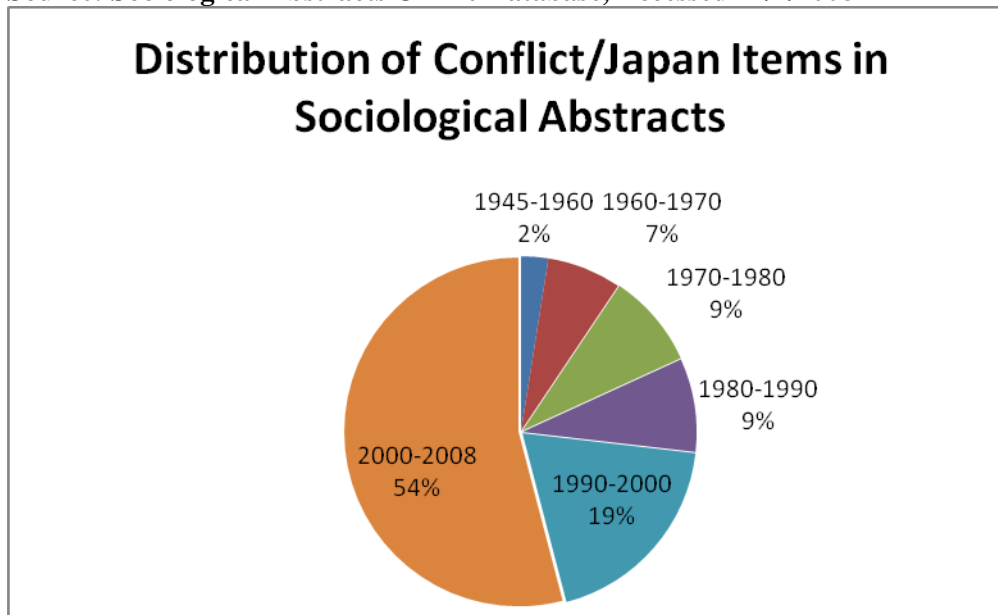
Figure 4. Percent of Japan Dissertations and Theses in Database About Conflict, 1946-2008
Source: Dissertations and Theses (PQD&T) Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008



Both of these databases are far broader than just the social sciences, and therefore also contain a fairly high proportion of materials that are not about postwar or contemporary Japan. To try to get a bit closer to our own frame of reference I checked out *Abstracts in Anthropology*, which contained a relatively small number of entries on Japan (344) and hardly turned up anything at all on conflict and Japan. I then turned to *Sociological Abstracts*, a database that indexes a very broad range of books and

journals in the social sciences, including *Shakaigaku Hyōron (Japanese Sociological Review)*, as well as papers presented at American Sociological Association annual meetings. Searches are based on title and abstract, but also can turn up a fair amount of junk based on the institutional address of a co-author. I used the number for “total publications” for all searches. Overall, this search turned up 14,349 items related to

Figure 5. Distribution of Conflict and Japan Items in Sociological Abstracts, 1945-2008
Source: Sociological Abstracts Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008

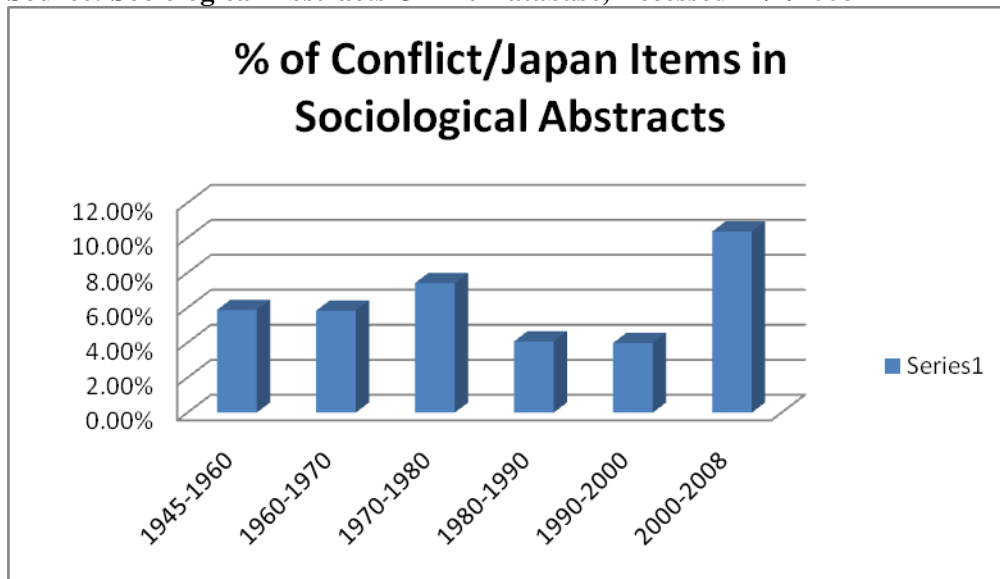


Japan, 6.5% (943) of which also fit the keyword “conflict.” Less than one fifth (17.4%) of the conflict items appeared in the 1945-1980 period, with four-fifths (82%) appearing from 1980 to the present. (Figure 5) The findings by decade are a bit strange: 5% of the Japan items concerned conflict up to 1970 and almost 7.5% from 1970 to 1980, but the percentage dropped to around 4% in the 1980s and 1990s, only to suddenly swell to over 10 percent from 2000 to the present. In fact, more than half of all the items on conflict and Japan have appeared since 2000. The number of all items related to Japan increased earlier, with a big jump in the 1990s, but items on conflict did not spike until the next decade. (Figure 6)

I also used the *Sociological Abstracts* database as a convenient way to see what has happened to the study of conflict within mainstream Japanese sociology within Japan. *Sociological Abstracts* has

indexed the English abstracts in *Shakaigaku Hyōron*, the official journal of the Japan Sociological Society, from 1955 on. The listing appears to be complete. I performed the same two searches just on the journal's abstracts within *Sociological Abstracts*. This search also contains a lot of junk, because apparently

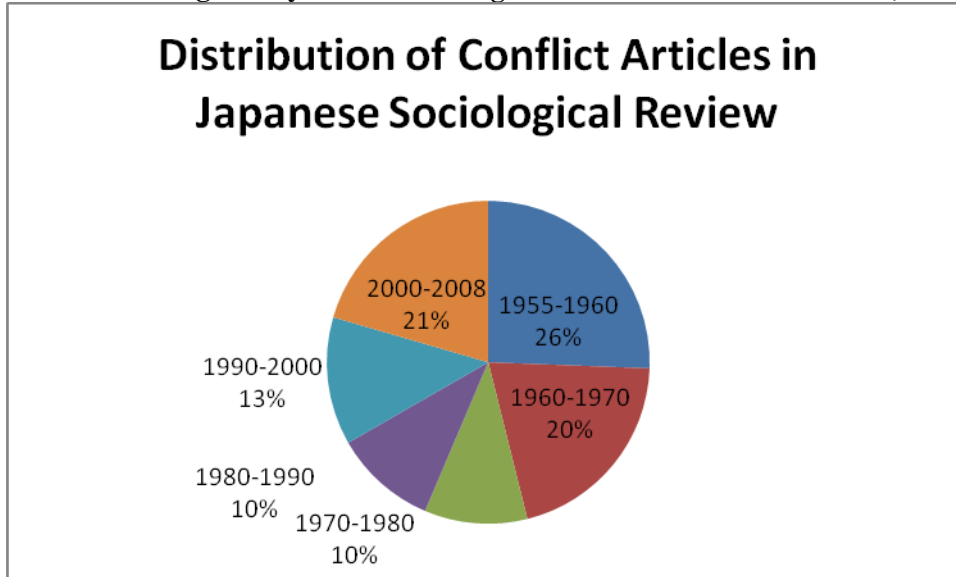
Figure 6. Percent of Japan Items About Conflict in Sociological Abstracts, 1946-2008
Source: Sociological Abstracts Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008



everything in the journal turns up under the keyword “Japan,” even if the article is about sociological theory unrelated to Japan. However, it still gives us a measure of how often conflict appears in that journal's materials, and the results are illuminating. (Figure 7) A quarter of the items related to conflict appeared between 1955 and 1960, and another 20% between 1960 and 1970. That dropped to 10% in each of the next two decades, and about a third of the items related to conflict have appeared in *Shakaigaku Hyōron* since 1990. This suggests to me that in the first period *Shakaigaku Hyōron* reflected more of the Marxist orientation that had characterized the discipline of sociology earlier in Japan's history, but that functionalism then infused the field and persisted over the next three decades.

Calculating conflict-related entries against the base of all articles retrieved on the keyword of Japan allows us to control for the variation in the number of items published each year, which is also a rough control for increases in the number of sociologists publishing in the journal (I believe that only members of the society may publish in the journal). By that measure, only 2.3% of all the articles in

Figure 7. Distribution of Conflict Articles in Japanese Sociological Review, 1955-2008
 Source: Shakaigaku Hyōron in Sociological Abstracts Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008



Shakaigaku Hyōron since 1955 have been related to conflict. (Figure 8) The percentage was highest in the first period from 1955 to 1970 at 7.1%. It dropped to 5.7% from 1960-1970, and then dipped further and never recovered.

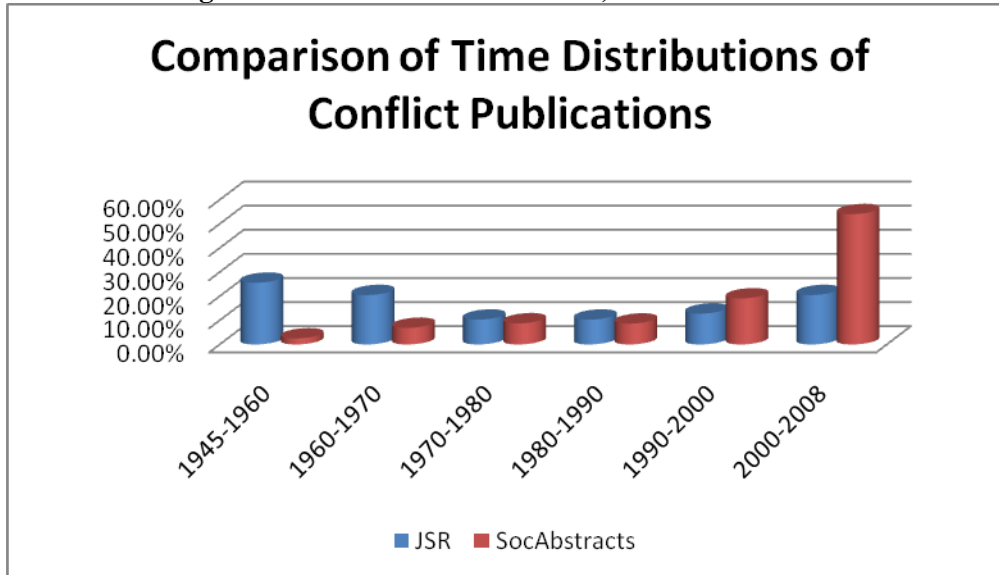
Figure 8. Percent of Articles About Conflict Published in Japanese Sociological Review, 1955-2008
 Source: Shakaigaku Hyōron in Sociological Abstracts Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008



Although the measures I have used are far too crude to say anything definitive, I would suggest that the difference between the pattern in *Shakaigaku Hyōron*, as opposed to the sharp increase in

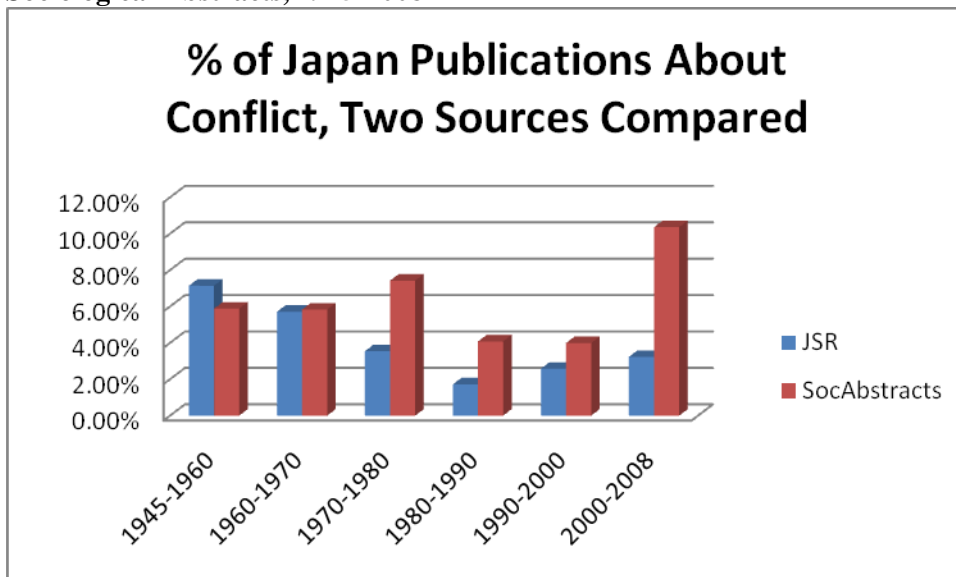
conflict-related items in *Sociological Abstracts* in general, reflects the impact of precisely the sorts of research questions that western-trained social scientists have been bringing to the study of Japan based on

Figure 9. Distribution of Conflict Publications in Japanese Sociological Review 1955-2008 and All Japan Items in Sociological Abstracts, 1946-2008
 Source: Sociological Abstracts Online Database, Accessed 11/2/2008



intellectual currents outside of Japan. The difference in the two sources can be seen when they are compared directly. We first compare the distributions, which shows both sources increasing from the

Figure 10. Percent of Japan Publications About Conflict, Japanese Sociological Review and Sociological Abstracts, 1945-2008



1990s. (Figure 9) When the data are controlled for changes in the overall number of Japan publications, the percentage calculations show even sharper differences. (Figure 10)

There is one more convenient place to look for evidence about how the study of conflict in Japan has changed since 1984, and that is the program of this meeting. A glance through the program reveals the wide range of topics that you are now studying, and the many different perspectives you are using to make sense of those topics. I see papers clearly informed by a cultural studies perspective, papers reflecting the sorts of economic and institutional issues that emerged in the 1980s, and still others traceable to your sensitivity to identity movements and marginalized groups. Some papers are about conflict or conflict resolution as a topic, while others bring conflict as a habit of mind to bear on a subject that is not intrinsically about conflict. While my quick and dirty efforts to see how much research about Japan can be pulled up using conflict as a keyword might suggest that it is still a very small part of all research on Japan, we must remember that this narrow measure does not pick up most of what I have described today in tracing how the study of conflict in Japan has changed since 1984. It is not so much conflict as a specific topic, or conflict as a theory applied to a topic, but rather the habit of mind—the asking of fundamental questions about conflict whatever the topic at hand—that has now become normal in the study of Japan.

I am quite confident that this genie cannot be put back into the bottle. Once people have learned to ask questions about conflict in Japan, and have become accustomed to find discussions about conflict in what is written about Japan on virtually any topic, then it doesn't really matter what new paradigms and theories emerge in the future to shape social science research on Japan. As long as people continue to be sensitive to the existence of conflict, to read about it in the literature on Japan, to expect it in their research settings, and to be curious about how it gets expressed and managed, then they will not be able to go back to a harmony model that ignores it. They will have to find theories and ways of understanding Japan that can take conflict into account in their explanations. I expect that we will all continue to study conflict in Japan for the foreseeable future.

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