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**THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN
JAPAN**

THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN JAPAN

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PREFACE

I AM one of those who believe that Europe and America—even Great Britain itself—may learn something from Japan. I do not necessarily mean anything to copy; for (as may incidentally be inferred from this volume) one nation can seldom with advantage directly copy from another, either laws or other social institutions. Nor do I mean by way of precept or advice, which Japanese are too polite to proffer, and Britons instinctively too prudent to accept. A wise man once warned me never to take advice; but invariably to listen to it, and to take hints. It is hints and suggestions that we can usefully obtain from the supremely interesting experience of Japan. Unfortunately neither Western Europe nor the United States, neither British administrators, nor in particular, those of the Co-operative Movement, are sufficiently receptive to such hints and suggestions as may be derived from Japan.

This imprudent impenetrability to ideas—an old complaint—is partly due to the fact that neither America nor Great Britain knows anything like enough of the interesting development of Japan, during the past half-century, in nearly all departments of social and economic organization. I do not know whether the British and American “captains of industry” or “merchant princes” have paid more attention than the professors of Political Economy to the lessons to be learnt from this development. I suspect not. And whatever the makers of private profit have done in this direction, I feel sure that the thirty or forty millions of Co-operators throughout the world—even the ten thousand principal Co-operative administrators throughout the world—have hitherto been almost entirely ignorant of Japanese Co-operation.

For this reason I commend Mr. Ogata's detailed and comprehensive study of the Co-operative Movement in Japan, not only to Co-operators everywhere, but also to business men and economic students. Any thoughtful person, even if he is in no way interested either in Japan or in Co-operation, ought to be able, from reading this book, to "take hints."

Consider, for instance, the extent—as it seems, greater than in any European country, and immensely greater than in the United States—to which the people of Japan are bound together in spontaneous and voluntary social organization for various economic purposes. Who, in Europe or America, has taken full account of the fact that practically the whole adult male population of Japan—omitting, perhaps, although of this I am not certain, the few tens of thousands of wealthy people—is found enrolled in membership of one or more of the million and three-quarters of separate Co-operative organizations for economic purposes of one sort or another? Leaving out of view for the moment the magnitude, range and results of the economic transactions of these societies, the sociological student cannot fail to be impressed by the amount of "social tissue" that is implied in their extraordinary development. What is the effect of this ubiquitous network of "Mujins" on national life and character? What invaluable strength may it not give to the nation, and what desirable help and protection to the individual, either in the initiation of new enterprises or by way of succour in distress?

Not less suggestive is the fact that the vast majority of these societies, and those most typical of Japan, are of archaic type, of considerable antiquity, perpetually starting up and running their transient courses, unrecognized by law, and unregulated by the government. To the Englishman it is strange to find in the practice of the Japanese "Mujin" or "Ko" a curious resemblance, duly noted by Mr. Ogata, to the practice of a particular form of terminating building society—the Starr Bowkett—itself of spontaneous popular upgrowth, unpatronized either by law or by academic wisdom. This form of Co-operative credit

society, applied to the purchase or erection of houses, spread all over England during one part of the nineteenth century, although it has escaped any systematic study, and, indeed, has, so far as I know, been barely mentioned in either economic or legal literature.

When we turn from the archaic forms of Co-operation in Japan to those more closely resembling the main Co-operative development of the European world, we may be struck by the promptitude with which the Japanese Government saw the advantage of legalizing the ordinary types of Co-operative effort, and also by some remarkable omissions. The Japanese legislators were eager to obtain for the rice cultivators and the independent handicraftsmen of their country the advantages which Co-operative Credit societies had bestowed upon so many parts of Continental Europe. Yet it seems strange to find these enlightened legislators ignoring the extensive and spontaneous development of the "mujin" and the "hotokusha," which lay before their eyes, in order to introduce, with almost slavish exactitude, the legal provisions under which the Raiffeisen and Schulze-Delitzsch Credit Societies had sprung up in Germany. But we, too, know what it is to seek from foreign models what our own indigenous upgrowth might have more aptly supplied!

The increase in Japan of Co-operative Societies of modern type has been remarkable for the exceptional elaboration, not only of the credit society, but also of the marketing, the purchasing and the machinery societies, none of which have found much development in Great Britain. The "Association of Consumers," in the distributive store (subsequently extending to wholesale distribution, to importing, to manufacturing or growing, and even to shipping, banking and insurance), which now dominates British Co-operation, is only just beginning in Japan.

The second remarkable feature in the patronage accorded to Co-operation by the Japanese Government is the complete omission from its legislation of the very form that has been, in England, France and Italy, the favoured darling of statesmen, of philanthropists and (until this generation)

of economists. The Japanese Co-operative Law deliberately abstains from legalizing the "self-governing workshop" or Association of Producers, which some good people, thinking themselves educated, still fondly imagine to be the Co-operative ideal. I fear that I must not compliment the Japanese Government of 1899 on its uncanny prescience in refusing legislative sanction to a form of Co-operation which, wherever it has been tried, has almost invariably ended either in abandonment of its principles or in commercial failure. I am afraid that the refusal was due to the entirely mistaken assumption that the "self-governing workshop," for three-quarters of a century the favourite of European philanthropists, was a revolutionary device, or at any rate likely to be the progenitor of "dangerous thoughts"—much as old ladies of property in the Britain of 1923 deem the Labour Party to be "Bolshevic," and the Trade Union "a form of Communism." At any rate, whatever may be the cause, there seems to be, amid all the infinite variety of Japanese Co-operation, no representative of the self-governing workshop.

But there is much more in Mr. Ogata's interesting and suggestive volume; and it ought to find a place in every economic as well as every Co-operative library.

This thesis has been approved for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of London.

SIDNEY WEBB.

August, 1923.

INTRODUCTION

My primary object in writing this book is to place in the hands of European students of economics in general and of Co-operation in particular, the first complete record* of the Co-operative Movement in Japan.† In order to familiarize the reader with those factors, which have made possible the enormous development of Co-operation in Japan, I give a detailed description of two forerunners of modern Co-operation, viz., the Mujin or Kō, and the Hōtokusha.

* Perhaps the first account of modern Co-operation in Japan, ever published in English, is a small pamphlet, entitled *The Co-operative Societies of Japan*, issued by the Bureau of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, 1921. However, this pamphlet only gives a short summary of Japanese Co-operation, or it would be better to say, of Japanese Co-operative Law, and no mention is made of the Mujin and the Hōtokusha. It must also be remembered that it was written from the standpoint of the Government, whereas in the following pages, I endeavour impartially to survey the movement from a disinterested standpoint.

Mention must also be made of Mr. K. Kuwata, a well-known economist in Japan, who wrote a brief outline entitled, "Die Genossenschaftsbewegung in Japan" (The Co-operative Movement in Japan), which appeared in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Vol. 48, No. 3, (pp. 731-747), Tübingen, December, 1921. In this article, besides giving an outline of the modern movement, a description is also given of the Hōtokusha (credit societies) and the Minamisansha (silk-marketing societies), as types of Co-operation of purely Japanese origin. No mention is made, however, by Mr. Kuwata of the Mujin, or of any of the other co-operative and quasi-co-operative organizations treated in the present work.

Earlier and crude forms of Japanese Co-operation did not fail to attract the attention of foreign writers. One may find in Mr. Crosthwaite's book, entitled *Co-operative Studies and the Central Provinces System*, 1916, a very short account of the Hōtokusha system; and also Mr. Nicholson, in his pamphlet entitled *Notes on Agriculture in Japan*, 1907, speaks very highly of the genius of the Japanese people in forming fishery associations and other co-operative organizations long before the advent of modern co-operation.

† My observation is confined to Japan *proper*, and does not extend to Taiwan (Formosa), Karafuto (Saghalien), or Chosen (Korea). Although no doubt the Co-operative Movement is spreading in these territories, there is not sufficient material from which to give a trustworthy account of the movement there, nor is there any mention made, in the Report of the Co-operative Union, of these territories.

These two movements, which are entirely native in origin, helped to mould public opinion, so that, when in 1899 the first Co-operative Law was passed, its application was rendered easier and the ground was, as it were, already well prepared for the reception of what was, to all intents and purposes, an alien importation. In the following pages, I will show how Co-operation, as it stands to-day, was imported *in toto* from Germany; German models were employed to evolve this Co-operative Law, mentioned above, and had it not been that, even in the remotest country districts, crude forms of Co-operation had been well known and had been employed for centuries, the modern Co-operative Movement could never have taken such a hold on the Japanese imagination, nor have become the life force which it is to-day.

My interest in Co-operation was first aroused when, as a young student at the Tokio Higher Commercial School, now the Tokio University of Commerce, a book, written by Miss Beatrice Potter, now Mrs. Sidney Webb, entitled, *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain* (first published in 1891), was recommended to me by Dr. Teijirō Ueda, Professor of Economics at the said University. I studied this book and I must gratefully acknowledge that to it I attribute the deep interest which decided me to make a special study of Co-operation.

Although at first my interest was restricted to co-operative stores, naturally the wider field in which the same principles were applied fired my imagination and enlarged the sphere of my investigations. I turned my attention to the co-operative marketing societies, and in this field I made extensive personal investigations, encouraged by Professor Ueda. I made two tours, through Gumma and Nagano Prefectures, visiting the headquarters of all the principal silk-marketing societies, interviewing directors and other officials, and the result of my research on the first tour was published in *Kokumin-Keizai-Zasshi* (The Economic Journal) in 1918.

I had also made enquiries into the system of Co-operative Rice-Granaries, visiting Yamagata and Kumamoto Pre-

fectures (the stronghold of rice-granaries), and in 1917 submitted to the said University a report of these investigations, entitled, *An enquiry into Beiken-Sōko (or the rice-granary) system in Yamagata and Kumamoto Prefectures, with an outline of a unique method of speculation in rice in Kumamoto as an appendix.*

Ever since I first took up the study of Co-operation, I have kept in constant touch with the leading Japanese economists whose interests lay in the same direction and with officials of the Co-operative Union of Japan, and I have studied both the history and the contemporary literature of Co-operation in the principal European countries.

The difficulty of collecting trustworthy data for this book can only be understood by anyone who has himself undertaken the task of writing a treatise in a foreign country, far from the natural sources of information open to the investigator at home. I can conscientiously say that I have not left unexplored any channel, through which material for my work could be gathered. To a great extent, I had to resort to the mass of data, which I had brought with me from Japan, while the most valuable additions to the facts were supplied to me by the Co-operative Union of Japan through the courtesy of Mr. K. Sengoku. I am also indebted to Mr. B. M. Headicar, Librarian of the London School of Economics, for the special facilities for the use of the library and for his sympathetic help on all occasions.

The author is fully aware of the fact that, as a rule, overloading with statistics and figures tends to make a book dry. Notwithstanding this, every effort has been made to include detailed statistics wherever possible, in order to furnish European readers with actual figures and facts, from which alone, in my opinion, a sound conclusion may be drawn. When we realize that so far no complete treatise on Japanese Co-operation has ever been published, this course becomes almost imperative. Further, the prevalent custom of combining together various co-operative activities in one society, often makes repetition both in description and in statistics unavoidable. Throughout this book I have endeavoured to show, by means of footnotes and other

references, the various points of difference in similar movements in other countries; limited space and the lack of sufficient time have made it impossible for me to enlarge and amplify these further.

In particular did I find most helpful the following books, pamphlets and reports, etc. :—

R. Ikeda: *Mujin no Jissai to Gakusetsu*, 1918 (The Practice and Theory of the Mujin); T. Yoshimoto: *A Peasant Sage of Japan*, 1912; O. Hashimoto: *Hōtokushugi oyobi Hōtokusha no Kenkyū* (The Principle of the Hōtoku and the Hōtokusha); K. Satō: *Shinyō-Kumiai Ron*, 1918 (Credit Societies); The Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce: *The Co-operative Societies of Japan*, 1921; *Sangyō-Kumiai Yōran*, 1922 (Statistics of Co-operative Societies); The Co-operative Union: *Yūryō Sangyō-Kumiai Jirei*, 1920 (Examples of Efficient Societies); S. Motoida: *Shōhi-Kumiai Undōron*, 1921 (The Co-operative Store Movement); The Ōhara Institute of Social Research: *Nippon Rōdō Nenkan*, 1921 (The Japanese Labour Year Book), etc.

Most of all do I wish to express my deep gratitude to Mr. Sidney Webb, whose invaluable help and counsel have made possible the production of this book, and to whom I am more indebted than I can say. Mrs. Webb's sympathetic interest and advice have also been a great spur to me in undertaking this work. My gratitude in no less a measure goes out to Professor Ueda, whom I have already mentioned, and who inspired my earliest efforts. His limitless patience and encouragement are the forces that inspired me and made me strive to become a worthy disciple.

KIYOSHI OGATA.

LONDON, *January*, 1923.

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THE following list of books, pamphlets and reports in English on Japanese Co-operation is confined to those which have furnished the author with direct material for this treatise. One may find an abundance of general works dealing with Japan. However, hardly any mention is made of Japanese co-operative societies in their various forms, or if they are mentioned, they are passed over with a few words. The list of books, pamphlets and reports in Japanese includes not only those which have given direct help to the author, but an effort has been made to include all works of any value to students of Japanese Co-operation. However, I do not claim that this list is, by any means, complete.

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(b) CREDIT SOCIETIES.

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(d) AGRICULTURAL WAREHOUSING AND RICE-MARKETING SOCIETIES.

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TABLE SHOWING THE POSITION OF CO-OPERATIVE

| Prefecture. | Credit Societies. | Marketing Societies. | Purchasing Societies. | Machinery Societies. | Marketing and Purchasing Societies. | Marketing and Machinery Societies. | Purchasing and Machinery Societies. | Marketing, Purchasing and Machinery Societies. | Credit and Marketing Societies. |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Hokkaido. | 82(1) | 8 | 19 | 0 | 28 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 11 |
| 2. Tokio . . . | 26 | 1 | 27 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| 3. Kyoto . . . | 54 | 4 | 19 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 4. Osaka . . . | 18(1) | 2 | 23(2) | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 5. Kanagawa . . | 31 | 4 | 18 | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 12(1) |
| 6. Hyogo . . . | 156(1) | 13(1) | 8(1) | 1 | 20(2) | 35 | 0 | 8 | 1 |
| 7. Nagasaki . . | 27 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 8. Niigata . . . | 173(2) | 4 | 13 | 9 | 13 | 11 | 0 | 6(1) | 6 |
| 9. Saitama . . . | 70(1) | 9(1) | 4 | 1 | 3(8) | 41 | 0 | 5 | 10 |
| 10. Gumma . . . | 55(1) | 2 | 14 | 26 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 94(3) |
| 11. Chiba . . . | 181(2) | 2 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 17 | 5 |
| 12. Ibaragi . . . | 51(1) | 3 | 13 | 0 | 12(3) | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 13. Tochiki . . . | 33(1) | 2 | 14 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| 14. Nara . . . | 74(1) | 0 | 5 | 1 | 2(1) | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 15. Mie . . . | 42(2) | 0 | 6 | 2 | 13(1) | 1 | 1 | 20 | 1 |
| 16. Aichi . . . | 72(1) | 16 | 25(6) | 5 | 13(6) | 2 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| 17. Shizuoka . . | 78 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| 18. Yamaguchi . | 47(1) | 1 | 7(1) | 0 | 3(1) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 19. Shiga . . . | 12 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6(4) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 20. Gifu . . . | 45(1) | 15 | 11 | 2 | 13(2) | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 21. Nagano . . . | 27(1) | 29(2) | 19(1) | 5 | 9 | 21 | 2 | 6 | 27 |
| 22. Miyagi . . . | 39(1) | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 23. Fukushima . . | 97(1) | 1 | 12(2) | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 6 |
| 24. Iwate . . . | 65(1) | 5 | 9(1) | 0 | 17 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| 25. Aomori . . . | 101(1) | 0 | 9 | 0 | 22 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 1 |
| 26. Yamagata . . | 72(1) | 3 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 1 |
| 27. Akita . . . | 84 | 3 | 12 | 3 | 6(1) | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 28. Fukui . . . | 29 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 29. Ishikawa . . | 13(1) | 7 | 2 | 1 | 6(1) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| 30. Toyama . . . | 33(1) | 4 | 4(1) | 0 | 9(4) | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 31. Tottori . . . | 45 | 16 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 32. Shimane . . . | 169 | 7 | 10 | 1 | 12 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| 33. Okayama . . . | 63(1) | 4 | 3 | 3 | 10(4) | 3 | 0 | 11 | 6 |
| 34. Hiroshima . . | 46 | 9 | 11 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| 35. Yamaguchi . . | 36(1) | 1 | 3(2) | 0 | 13(6) | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| 36. Wakayama . . | 42(1) | 19(1) | 18(4) | 2 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| 37. Tokushima . . | 14(1) | 1 | 2(1) | 0 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 38. Kagawa . . . | 44 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| 39. Ehime . . . | 19(1) | 2 | 5(3) | 0 | 4(3) | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| 40. Kochi . . . | 43 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| 41. Fukuoka . . . | 42(1) | 4 | 22(4) | 8 | 4(3) | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 42. Oita . . . | 12(1) | 4 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 43. Saga . . . | 16(1) | 1(1) | 1 | 1 | 3(2) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 44. Kumamoto . . | 21 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 3 |
| 45. Miyazaki . . . | 23(1) | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3(1) | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| 46. Kagoshima . . | 4 | 8 | 4 | 18 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| 47. Okinawa . . . | 9 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Total . . . | 2535(34) | 251(6) | 436(29) | 107 | 380(53) | 175 | 38 | 194(1) | 232(4) |

Note 1.—This table is quoted from *Co-operation*, issued in May, 1922, by the Co-operative Union of Japan.

Note 3.—This table does not include figures for the Mujins or Hōtokushas.

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