

# 探求中国“市民社会”的历史性展望\*

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序言

1989年的天安门事件成为了人们开始热衷于探求中国市民社会(抑或其萌芽)的契机。学者们试图对集结在天安门广场要求“民主化”运动的大众行为进行解析,并把运动的受挫归结于中国市民社会的脆弱。从此便展开了很多关于中国市民社会处于何种发展阶段,应如何历史性地评价其发展潜力的探讨。同年哈贝马斯(Jurgen Habermas)《公共领域的结构转型》一书英文版的出版,愈加激起了关于市民社会这一概念能否适用于中国的争论。

首先根据于尔根·科卡(Jurgen Kocka)的理解,市民社会是处于国家、市场、私人领域之间的社会自主性组织空间,

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亦即结社、团体、人际关系网、非政府组织（NGO）等的活动领域。这个活动领域是就公共事务进行讨论、争论并合作协调的空间，是诸个个人与集团的自主性空间，同时又是充满活力与革新创造的空间，更是人们为了公共福利而奋斗的空间<sup>1</sup>。在此同时要强调的是，这种解释虽然重要，但并不是对市民社会的唯一理解。

关于市民社会、或市民社会的其萌芽在中国这个与西方传统相距甚远的空间中是否存在抑或是否存在过的问题，其争论是以两个不同时期为观察对象而展开的：以 1949 年到 1978 年的“社会主义”时代为界，之前的清末民初期和其后的改革开放、特别是 90 年代以后。一般认为，绝对性专制主义之下的 30 年“社会主义”时期中，社会被国家所压制，并不可能存在市民社会这样一个独立于国家的自主空间（这种看法也许并不妥当，因为即使在这段期间，中国社会也可能是潜息蛰伏，而不是完全窒息的）。

那些想要在东方大国中发现（被认为是）西方历史进程产物的对应物的人们——像社会史学家卢汉超（Hanchao Lu）这样，采取寻找对应物的研究手法（counterpart hunting approach）的学者们<sup>2</sup>——所走的是一条在伦理上、方法论上并不安全的独木桥。那些将西方经验视为普遍真理，并坚信一定能在中国也得以发现的人们（难免被贴上西方中心主义者的标签），与那些相反地期望证实在中国无法找到对应物的人们（可能被称为东方主义者），同时具有进行这种探求的动机。不仅如此，这种追求也根源于一一些中国（或华裔）学者所持有的心理状态，即希望能从逢事便被指为“中国特殊性”的不快中解脱出来，以及至少从观念上想要“追赶”上

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<sup>1</sup> “作为历史问题与约束的市民社会”《思想》第 953 号（2003 年 9 月），40 页。他把这作为市民社会的“狭义概念”。为了提炼更加概括性的概念，他提倡将国家、市场、家庭之间的关系引入概念的形成中。

<sup>2</sup> Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p.40.

（西方）的愿望<sup>3</sup>。也正因为如此，从事这种探求的人必须持有一种高度的平衡感。

清朝末期到民国初期出现的一些征兆性现象，鼓舞了这些怀有“市民社会愿望”的人。比如罗威廉（William T. Rowe）在商业城市汉口所发现的，由商人们发起、负责承担维护治安、消防、救济等职能的“自治组织”的发展<sup>4</sup>，以及报纸、杂志、书籍发行商和发行量的急速扩展，甚至图书馆的扩大<sup>5</sup>。但这些萌芽不仅没能开花结果，甚至都没有实现舒枝展叶。正如魏斐德（Frederic Wakeman）尖锐地批判过的那样，所谓的市民社会萌芽，可能根本就没能从国家的牵制中摆脱出来<sup>6</sup>。

另一方面，在1989年天安门事件之后，尽管中国的各类社会团体看似脱离国家获得了一定的、并且逐渐扩大的自主性，对中国各类社会团体展开了实际调查的人们，也开始注意到社会团体与国家之间的两义性关系，趋向于认为法团主义（corporatism）的概念比市民社会更易于描绘出中国国家与社会的关系。尽管傅尧乐（B. Michael Frolic）所称的“国家主导型市民社会”（state-led civil society）一词看似吊诡，却着实简洁地表达了现今中国社会团体与国家之间的暧昧关系<sup>7</sup>。

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<sup>3</sup> “市民社会愿望”一词借用 Pheng Cheah“普遍性地区——变动中的世界与亚洲研究”《别册 思想》第918号（2000年11月），87页。然而在使用这一词语时，他与笔者不一定是在同一语义上。

<sup>4</sup> William T. Row, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1889* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Qiusha Ma, *Non-Governmental Organizations in Contemporary China: Paving the Way to Civil Society?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Wakeman, Jr., “The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate,” *Modern China*, 19-2 (April 1993), pp. 108-137.

<sup>7</sup> B. Michael Frolic, “State-Led Civil Society,” in Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic eds., *Civil Society in China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 46-67.

于是，那些力求在这个拥有悠久历史的东方大国中挖掘出市民社会征候的历史学家们和现状分析家们往往陷入自相矛盾的展望之中而动弹不得。对他们所观察的对象，用什么样的解释框架才能够进行重新定义呢？而对这种看似“市民社会”萌芽的现象进行重新定义的时候，首先必须明确它究竟是什么，它的发展前景是什么。本文的目的也正在于此。笔者试图对以中国史上两个不同时期为对象的有关市民社会的先行研究进行整合分析，使其从属于一个可行的、崭新的理论框架之下，并在此基础上对中国“市民社会”的发展方向做一定的历史性展望。

本文的论述如同一个不断摸索前行的过程，必不能免于繁冗。笔者一开始先从以中国史上两个不同时期为对象的研究中提炼、整理出关于市民社会的主要论点，然后再对其实施外科手术般的重新组合，从而创出关于中国市民社会发展的四种模式。然后笔者将指出上述每一种模式的不完整性。在对以往的投问方式进行修正之后，对被视中国市民社会萌芽的团体的性质，提出一个完整的假设。在此基础上，参照既存的理论模型，讨论中国“市民社会”未来的发展方向。

## 一、探求中国的“市民社会”

### （一） 清朝末期及民国初期的国家-社会关系

正如韦伯所述，与欧洲城市相比，中国的城市中缺少在法律保证下进行自治的各种团体<sup>8</sup>。确实，从历史上来看中国的城市是官僚居住的场所，很难在那里找出能对应于欧洲史上所出现的、强韧的自治组织。然而继罗威廉之后、冉玫铄（Mary B. Rankin）、斯特朗(David Strand)等人在他们关于清末民初中国城市社会的历

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<sup>8</sup> 韦伯著，木全德雄译《儒教与道教》创文社，1971年，32页。

史学、社会学分析中，先后提出了修正主义的见解<sup>9</sup>。例如罗威廉给我们的启示是这样的。位于长江中游的大城市汉口在 19 世纪末已经存在着由商人自发成立的、以维护治安、保卫、救济、育婴为目的的结社团体，从属于这些团体的人们之间甚至形成了作为汉口市民的认同感（identity）——并在这个基础上形成了内在的凝聚力。不仅如此，他们还显示了逐步脱离国家的倾向。因此可以把这个现象作为市民社会的萌芽加以探讨<sup>10</sup>。

罗威廉的研究出版之前，仁井田陞、根岸佶、橘朴等日本的中国学者们就早已经开始关注中国城市中同乡、同行的行会自治了。但是与欧美学者关注这些团体在多大程度上能从国家获得自主性相比，他们更倾向于关注其如何能成为现代性国家形成的基础。换言之，日本学者往往把中国城市中自发性结社的发展与强有力的现代国家的形成叠加在一起，而不是将其看作对抗国家的空间<sup>11</sup>。我们将在后述中重新回顾日本的中国学者的这种观点。

在脱离国家的自主性问题上，针对韦伯的修正主义看法受到了猛烈的批评。魏斐德是其中最为严厉的批评者。他认为，商人团体的领导人并不独立地拥有权力，而是由官僚所选拔，负有向官僚汇报（甚至贿赂）的义务。一些被认为是自发性的行动，实际上也是来源于掌权者的要求。更进一步说，结社团体之间的合作也是在官僚的主导下进行的。总之，罗威廉所称的脱离国家的自主性空间，实际上不过是由国家保护、受国家操纵、与国家紧

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Row, *Hankow*, pp. 10, 38, 338-339.

<sup>11</sup> 关于日本学者对中国中间团体讨论的源流，请参考岸本美绪“‘市民社会’理论与中国”《历史评论》第 527 号（1994 年 3 月），56-72 页。

密地连结在一起的空间<sup>12</sup>。

这样，在欧美学者之中，对于清末民初中国城市中社会团体跨世纪的发展，呈现出了两种互相矛盾的看法。一种是行会、善堂等主要由商人支持、运营的团体——亦可加上知识分子团体——在其发展过程中能够发现从自立于国家的市民社会萌芽（在此暂且称之为论点 A）。另一种是虽然不至于完全否定那些团体具有基于成员利益与关心事项的一定的自主性，但却强调了其与国家密不可分的关系（暂称之为论点 B）。

后来加入到这场论战的中国的历史学家们，虽然考察的对象不同，却显现出同样的倾向。在对 1902 年成立于上海的商工会议所（商会）的组织和活动的讨论中，一方面，他们认为在选举领导人、筹集资金、日常运营、监察、构建地方组织网络等方面，显现出了独立于国家的自主倾向，另一方面，也指出与国家之间紧密合作的一面<sup>13</sup>。

## （二）90 年代后的国家-社会关系

我们在此也能发现观察家之间并不存在一个明确的、前后一致的看法，相反他们之间因互相矛盾的展望而存在深刻的分裂。假设独立于国家的各种自发性团体相互交织成一张大网，如若认为只有在这张网的网眼之中才能寻求到市民社会的核心内容，那么观察家们理所当然的会把目光转向改革开放之后，中国社会团体令人瞩目的增长势头。但 20 世纪末社会团体的繁荣，并不单纯是国家放松对社会管制后带来的必然结果。国家力图建构更加有效的、间接性的社会统治系统来取代以往的“单位”制度，才产生了这种所谓让社会团体来承包统治权的现象（也许部分地是源

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<sup>12</sup> Wakeman, "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate," pp. 117-128.

<sup>13</sup> 代表性研究如，朱英《转型时期的社会与国家——以近代中国商会为主体的历史透视》武汉，华中师范大学出版社，1997 年。

于官僚们欲保证自己“下海”后职位的意图)。

因此，调查这些团体的人们在发现市民社会征候的同时，也发现了法团主义的征候<sup>14</sup>。于1989年10月颁布、1998年9月修改的《社会团体管理条例》，明确的表达了国家通过上层组织来管制社会团体活动的意图。此条例规定，所有团体有义务向政府登记，且处于各自“主管部门”管理之下，以及在一定的行政区域之内不得成立类似团体等等。至于90年代以后社会团体飞跃性的发展，主要应从国家对社会管制的重整-提效的角度来理解。社会团体相对于国家的自主性的增长之论点本身就有局限性。

然而现实的发展偏离了国家的意图。事实上，正如党的机关杂志《求是》所鸣响的警钟，国家无法控制社会团体的增长<sup>15</sup>。想要成立团体的人，通过与政府官员的私人关系就可相对容易地达到目标，而组成非正式团体也并不是非常困难的。一个社会团体也可以设立另一个社会团体——经常是以营利为目的的组织。结果是产生了数量过多的团体，有的地区内甚至出现了好几个类似团体<sup>16</sup>。虽然中国法团主义的社会结构将把具有战略重要性的集团持续地置于国家管制之下，社会团体的增殖也孕育了打破这个结构的可能性。

在此基础上据几项研究表明，中国社会团体的功能中，相对于管制成员的功能，表达成员利益要求开始更加重要。陈佩华（Anita Chan）的研究表明，团体作为一个整体开始由向“上面”

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<sup>14</sup> 例如 Gordon White, Jude Howell, and Shang Xiaoyuan, *In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Jonathan Unger and Anita Chan, "China, Corporatism, and the East Asian Model," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 33 (January 1995).

<sup>15</sup> 余德虎“有关我国社会团体问题的思考”《求是》1991年第17期（9月1日），18-19页。

<sup>16</sup> Yijiang Ding, *Chinese Democracy After Tiananmen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 58.

负责转变为向“下面”负责。也就是说从国家的代理人开始向为成员利益服务的方向转变<sup>17</sup>。于是逐渐地从国家法团主义向社会法团主义蜕变。

此外还有 Christopher E. Nevitt 对天津经营者团体的研究表明，地方政府与当地势力不断进行局部性的联合，形成与中央政府的对立格局<sup>18</sup>。这种现象被视为地方法团主义的兴起，但这个联合也并不总是以“上面”的马首为瞻，反而开始呈现出一种地方性的社会法团主义特征。总而言之，可以同意 Yijiang Ding 的看法，可以说法团主义结构事实上已经碎片化了<sup>19</sup>。

这究竟是不是市民社会形成的一种征兆呢？我们有理由认为正是如此。第一，至少从理论上看来，社会团体自主性更为显著的社会法团主义与市民社会并不必然矛盾；第二，如果说国家法团主义的社会结构已经在事实上开始解体了，那也就意味着中国社会团体从从属于国家的不平等的伙伴关系中解放出来了。但我们也有理由认为并不一定。因为正如裴松梅(Margaret M. Pearson)在分析新兴商业精英的意识和行动方式时所指出的，社会团体在有意欲增强自己自主性的同时，也承认其欲再生产与国家的紧密联系的谋求<sup>20</sup>。这样一来我们好像再次僵立在两个看似无法相容的展望之间了。在此我们仍然按照前面的做法，将承认法团主义社会结构之中市民社会萌芽诞生与逐渐成长的想法称为论点 C，并将另一种，即认为在这个结构中的社会团体的自主性从里外都受到一定的抑制，因此市民社会最多也只能停留在萌芽状态的意见，称作是论点 D。

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<sup>17</sup> Anita Chan, “Revolution or Corporatism?: Workers and Trade Unions in Post-Mao China,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (January 1993), pp. 31-61.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher E. Nevitt, “Private Business Associations in China: Evidence of Civil Society or Local State Power?” *The China Journal*, no. 36 (July 1996), pp. 39-40.

<sup>19</sup> Ding, *Chinese Democracy After Tiananmen*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>20</sup> Margaret M. Pearson, *China's New Business Elite: The Political Consequences of Economic Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 110-115.

## 二、中国“市民社会”历史性发展的四种模式

将以上的论点 A、B 以及 C、D 进行组合，我们可以得出四种关于中国市民社会历史性发展的初步模式或者说是解释框架。第一种是，A-C 的组合中产生的、持续性的（或者说再现的）市民社会发展模式。根据这种解释，在清朝末期到民国初期中国的大城市中，市民社会的萌芽和自发性团体已经出现了。在向市民社会发展的缓慢过程中，不幸由于“社会主义革命”而被中断抑或逆转，但伴随改革开放政策带来的市场经济化而再次出现了。虽然从中国的文化传统来看，这将是一个漫长的历史过程，但却是在不同地点不同条件下重复上演的西欧近代史，反映的是人类史上的一个普遍过程。

第二种是由 A-D 组合而成的权威主义式的发展模式。在这个模式中，20 世纪初中国所出现的，市民社会的确凿性出发点，不幸由于长期的革命及战争夭折，在其后共产党政权无限强化的国家权力之下，市民社会重生的希望又再次破灭。现在成为讨论对象的社会团体，仅仅是强有力的国家根据自身的谋算而给出的自治空间，或者仅仅是由于被委任了一部分的统治权才得以生存的。但基本上他们只能是从属于国家的集团。且这些团体本身在身处国家拘束之下的同时，也尝到某种甜头，并不会自主性地摆脱这种境地。

第三种是 B-C 组合构成的，从 20 世纪末开始向市民社会发展的新倾向。这个模式表明，到 20 世纪中叶，中国还基本不存在能够孕育市民社会的政治、经济、社会、文化基础。但是由于改革开放政策与市场经济化、法治的发展、市民权利的扩大（对后两者自然还不能完全肯定），以及全球化浪潮对中国的冲击，20 世纪末社会集团终于成长起来，它们摆脱了国家的束缚而自立，并与国家保持了紧张的对峙关系。

最后一种是 B-D 组合，即从历史上看中国就是一块市民社会的不毛之地。支持这种解释的人，总体来说是以文化决定论来阐述中国的国家-社会关系。平井清明曾简洁地表述为，“在亚洲，人类的集合是以家庭-族系关系为基础的，所以社会与国家的区别并不明确”<sup>21</sup>。苏珊·奥格登（Suzanne Ogden）则指出，在儒教传统下，人们一方面被要求从属于权威，一方面被要求重视家庭-族系的纽带，因此独立于国家和血缘关系的社会组织在中国的文化环境里原本就难以成长<sup>22</sup>。在这里儒教传统（或用更为暧昧的“亚州文化”一词）被看作是不受社会、经济等客观条件变化的影响，能够渗透它们而顽固延续下去的一种社会心理倾向。20 世纪初和 90 年代以来人们所目睹到的国家-社会关系中的所谓新现象，前者屈从了这种强有力的文化，后者也将最终屈从于它。因此，在中国，市民社会作为与国家分离开来、或者与之对立的空间是不可能成长起来的。

通过重组目前对中国史上两个不同时期的有关市民社会的论述，我们可以抽取四种崭新的解释框架，来瞻望未来市民社会的发展。但是现实中却难以找出排他地支持其中某一种框架的人。尤其针对第二和第三种框架更是如此。因为对于 20 世纪初期和末期的状况，大部分观察家都感受到这两者之间存在着一种难以证明的、共通的特征。但观察家们也并没有倾向于第一或者第四种框架之一，而是在这两者之间逡巡不定。慎重的观察家既不能原封不动地接受其一，也不能抛弃其中一种。一方面，考察中国的国家-社会关系时——不论是过去还是现在——明确地将其划分为两个不同领域的假设本身似乎并不现实也并不合理，从这一点

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<sup>21</sup> 平田清明《市民社会与社会主义》岩波书店，1975 年，171 页。

<sup>22</sup> Suzanne Ogden, *Inklings of Democracy in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), pp. 279-280.

来说很难谈论市民社会在中国的持续性发展。然而另一方面，他们又确信不能断言中国是市民社会的荒芜之地。因为看似坚固的法团主义结构，实际上却根本不完整，反而脆弱得在建成伊始就面临着崩溃。谁能够断言说，这个社会结构并不是中国国家-社会关系中一个过渡性现象，而是最优化的、稳定的终点呢？反过来，谁又能断言，法团主义的社会结构无法成为市民社会的摇篮呢？这样观察家们虽无法赞成第一或第四种解释框架，也不能排除其中一种。这种进退维谷的境地，实际上反映出了我们对于市民社会在权威主义体制下如何能够诞生、发展（或复活），这一命题的知识的贫乏。

那么我们如何才能够从僵陷于第一和第四两个矛盾的历史性展望的窘态中脱身，前进一步呢？我们可以跟从众多观察家的直觉，假定 20 世纪初到 20 世纪末也许存在一个长期贯穿的、持续的历史倾向，对于现在我们目睹的国家-社会关系，并不视为是僵化的结果，而要努力将它理解为变化着的现象——这些可以成为我们进行考察时的重要指针，却仍还不充分。笔者认为，对以往关于中国国家-社会关系的设问方式进行修正，将有助于进一步加深我们的理解。

### 三、探求中国“市民社会”的新展望

#### （一）修正设问以及提出新假说

学者们论证中国市民社会萌芽时，通常以特定的社会团体为焦点，考察它们在人员、活动的各种资源、规制、实际活动等方面从国家能获得（或获得了）多大程度的自主性。这样的设问方式正照应了在文章开头提到的，千叶真的所谓作为“公共领域”的市民社会模型<sup>23</sup>，即市民社会是社会自主性组织独立于国家的自

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<sup>23</sup> 千叶真“市民社会理论的现在”《思想》第 924 号（2001 年 5 月），2-3 页。

主空间的定义方式。且这个设问方式首先假设了国家相对于社会总是处于相对强有力的地位，自发性结社有时需要通过国家的斗争，有时需要通过协商，还有时要通过计谋才能够赢得自主性。

然而如果假设市民社会的缺席、不成熟、软弱与国家的脆弱具有相关性又会如何呢？实际上，一部分学者在论述 20 世纪初中国社会团体相对于国家的从属地位时，就同时指出了国家的脆弱性，并暗示这两者之间存在着关联。白吉尔 (Marie-Claire Bergere) 指出了，1920 年代的“黄金期”中，新兴资本家们之所以未能把逐渐增强活力的社会组织发展成市民社会，一方面由于他们脆弱的阶级性纽带，另一方面也是由于国家的脆弱<sup>24</sup>。就是说，社会组织在保持了与国家的紧张对立关系——这非常重要——即将成长为多元主义桥头堡的时刻，国家却是软弱的。

国家的脆弱与市民社会的不成熟之间的关联性，在 90 年代后的中国也有显现。已有很多人为了中央政府的行政命令贯彻不力、行政效率低下、动员能力的减弱、腐败的蔓延而鸣响了警钟。除了这些所谓的“行政失灵”或者“软政权化”现象，还应指出在财政方面中央政府相对于地方政府的弱化<sup>25</sup>。另一方面，地方政府组织在逐渐肥大化。这如同现代城市中，中心部空洞化，周边地区却不规则扩散的现象 (sprawl)，从这一点来说，可以称之为国家的“蔓延化” (state sprawl)<sup>26</sup>。而这就是现代中国促成“市民

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<sup>24</sup> Marie-Claire Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 121-125.

<sup>25</sup> Minxin Pei, “China’s Governance Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs*, 81-5 (September/October, 2002), p. 105; Yongnian Zheng, *Will China Become Democratic?* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2004), p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> D.Davis 使用了“国家蔓延化” (state sprawl) 一词。Deborah S. Davis, “Introduction: Urban China,” in Deborah S. Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 15.

社会”发展的政治语境。

这样考虑的话，市民社会是在与“强”国家间一种紧张的相互作用之下才能够诞生、成长、坚固的。而这样的强国家恐怕至少要具有凝聚力、高效率、以及抗拒外部干扰的能力。相反，欠缺凝聚力、低效率、容易被外部干扰的国家（“弱”国家），如一盘散沙，缺少自主性，碰到与国家过分亲密的社会（“弱”社会），可能就会相互导致进一步的弱化。那么我们在探讨社会在多大程度上独立于国家这一问题之前，首先应探讨现实中的国家-社会关系在多大程度上，是建立在上述的“强”国家的基础上的。白吉尔从 1920 年代的国家-社会关系中发现的，恐怕正是互相导致弱化的国家与社会之间的循环作用，而 90 年代以后我们所目睹的，也许是带有同样特性的国家-社会关系。

对设问的方式进行上述修改之后，导出的是如下的假设：即在中国观察到的、获得了一定自主性的社会组织，可能是在权威主义国家退缩、“蔓延化”的局面下——在这一点上 20 年代与 90 年代有着一致性——丧失凝聚力的国家的残片面对缺乏水平性纽带的社会时，与社会的残片进行了垂直的、局部的结合而产生的<sup>27</sup>。

## （二）中国“市民社会”的基础

若暂且将以上各种团体构成的空间称之为中国的“市民社会”（与文章开头定义的市民社会有明显的差距，因此是带引号的市民社会），那么为什么在中国易于产生这样的“市民社会”呢？其政治、社会、文化基础又是什么呢？是由于国家政策欠缺配套性，官僚制度的不完善和低效率，官僚个人的能力低下和堕落吗？这些虽不能忽视，但可能并不是决定性的因素。

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<sup>27</sup> 这个假说从下面的文献中得到了灵感：Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 43-53.

研究中国的学者之间——不论从事政治、经济、社会哪一个领域的研究——都有一个在相当程度上可以共通的参照系：那就是固执于一元统治原则的国家与实际上自由行动的社会的对比。因此学者们比较容易接受白鲁询（Lucian Pye）所指出的，中国人政治文化的特征之一，就是他们可以容易地与认知不协调共存，且不介意现实的表象同现实之间所存在的隔阂<sup>28</sup>。也许地方政府（或者地方官员）与当地权势者的结合体的产生，也加深了这样的国家意志与社会现实之间的鸿沟。但另一方面，这种非“官”非“民”的结合体，在缺少民主主义体系和高效率的官僚体系时，一定程度上仍能中央的政策适用到广大并且多样的地方现实中去，因此一定程度上得到社会的认同。从这个意义上，这个结合体是体系中发挥必要功能的“装置”，也可以说具有某种合理性（但由于当地官员和权势者的结合，经常伴有后者的寻租行为和前者腐败的代价）。严井茂树依据中国财政系统的历史研究做出如下判断：

“不论现在还是过去，对于位于在空间上和数量上超乎寻常的庞大社会之上的国家来说，抛开其政治体系与财政体系不论，国家的法令和计划能够渗透到各个角落从而实现一元性的集权理念，这本身就是不可能的。国家只能是由集权的中核以及分散且具有很高自主性的末梢的复合体来构成的”<sup>29</sup>。

从这种观点看来，很难说中国“市民社会”就必然是国家-社会关系的“落后”、“扭曲”、“不健全”的征候。

并且中国中间团体的历史性特征也可能是一个重要因素。以宗族及同乡的联合为基础的组织，在一定程度上是强韧的联合体。

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<sup>28</sup> Lucian Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1988), pp. 80-89.

<sup>29</sup> 岩井茂树《中国近世财政史研究》京都大学学术出版会，2004年，479页。

然而它们并没有像欧洲历史上各种封建、特权团体那样——自治城市、特权行会、享有禁入权的寺院等等——发挥抵抗国家权力的强有力的防洪坝作用。对于官僚们的恣意干涉它们不仅常常是无力的，而且有机会它们也愿意与官僚粘连在一起。中间团体的这种行动方式，既根源于可同时包容官民双方的同乡联合的性质，也是前述“弱”国家的一个结果，同时又是其一个原因。中间团体易于贴近“上面”的倾向，抑或与国家粘连的倾向性——或者说难于形成横向的纽带，反而易于形成纵向的结合——与先前叙述的、统治体系中的暧昧领域的媒介功能相互强化，促进了国家与地方权势者的局部性结合。

如果说这样的观点正确，那么傅尧乐（B. Michael Frolic）所称的“国家主导型市民社会”就不一定适当了。即使其起始点果真是由国家赋予的，中国“市民社会”的发展过程也肯定将超过国家的构想，打乱国家的计划。一是通过国家并不期望的从国家法团主义向社会法团主义的渐次转变，二是通过对立于上级国家机关及同级的其他国家机关而形成的具有保护主义性质的地方法团主义。无论以哪一个途径为主，“市民社会”发展过程中，国家（尤其是中央政府）只不过是有限的时期和局面中掌控主导权而已。

笔者也不认同黄宗智（Philip C. C. Huang）所提倡的，由国家与社会双方参与而生成的“第三领域”概念<sup>30</sup>。提出这个概念，确实可以避免类似罗威廉在清末汉口观察到的，到底是商人自发性结社还是国家的代理人，这样的单纯的二选一的疑问，同时还易于理解社会团体独立性的增长与国家影响力强化为什么能够并存。但是应构建一幅更为动态的图像。问题在于“第三领域”并

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<sup>30</sup> Philip C. C. Huang, “Public Sphere/ Civil Society in China?: The Third Realm between State and Society,” *Modern China*, 19-2 (April 1993), pp. 216-239.

不仅仅存在于国家和社会两个领域之间，它还可以改变国家和社会的面貌。黄用父母之间产下的孩子作比，将“第三领域”的发展叙述为离开父母独自发展的孩子，却忽视了孩子的诞生和成长也有可能改变父母自身的生活方式。

### （三）中国“市民社会”的发展方向

假设上述对中国“市民社会”的生成和源起做出的解释是妥当的，那么它具有何种发展潜力呢？讨论这一点时我们必须同时考虑实践与规范两个不同的维度。

在讨论中我们已经明确，在“公共领域”这个模型下论述中国“市民社会”的现实时，总是不得不用否定的、或者矛盾的表现来阐述。如，它还没有足够独立；对于国家还不具有实质性抵抗能力；在现阶段，它还不能使国家与社会间的力量均衡变得对后者有利，并成为切断权威主义体制根基的据点；它还不是能够对国家、展开合理性-批判性讨论的场所；社会组织满足于依赖国家的从属性自治的现状等等。这样参照“公共领域”模型考虑中国“市民社会”现状时，我们就只能陷入死胡同。另外需要补充的是，大多数中国人——不论知识分子、企业家、还是工人、农民——并不把与国家对峙的，将成为民主化据点的市民社会当作一种价值规范来看待。

然而市民社会的模型并不是仅此一个。如果我们脱离市民社会的“公共领域”模型，采用“复数性领域”模型，又当如何呢<sup>31</sup>？根据这个模型，市民社会可以理解为沃尔泽（Michael Walzer）所说的“由各种结构组成的结构”，即同时包含几种，建立在不同意识形态基础上的生活方式，但又并不赋予其中某一种以特权地位的包容性结构<sup>32</sup>。根据这种理解，不管政治体制是民主主义的还是

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<sup>31</sup> “复数性领域”模型一词也源于千叶真。千叶真“市民社会理论的现在”，2-3页。

<sup>32</sup> 沃尔泽“市民社会理论”《思想》867号（1996年9月），174页。

权威主义的，只要能够保障法治、私人所有权、市民的自由（集会、结社的自由、表达的自由、良心的自由等）、人们能够自由地追求各自所向往的生活构想，并不会为了单一的国家目标而被全体动员，那么就可以认为存在市民社会（也就是说这种模型中市民社会与民主主义和权威主义可以共存）。当然，这其中也包括一定的规范性含义：即市民社会应当是反对单一性及排他性的。

关于中国社会组织交织成的空间的规范与现实，与这个模型又在多大程度上相符呢？如果说这个模型与“公共领域”模型不同，并没有把脱离权威主义体制作为潜在的目标，再如果说像余项科所说的，带着差异实现的联合，“以私人性调和为公”的构想原本就反映了儒学的精髓，那么这种“由各种结构组成的结构”是有可能被中国知识分子作为规范来接纳的<sup>33</sup>。然而现实是，像 1919 年五四运动所象征的，以及 2005 年春天的涉日游行所象征的，中国社会组织相互作用的空间也许是一种倾向于单一性和排他性的东西。这种倾向也许可以理解为，对这个空间一方面促进社会与国家局部性的融合，另一方面又斩碎这两者而产生的反作用。倘若如此，那么中国“市民社会”在现实中的行动方式也将超过以这个模型作为参考系时在意义论上可以承受的容忍程度。

考虑中国“市民社会”时，也许我们应构建另外一个模型。即亦可称之为“权威主义的”模型。这种模型既不是托克维尔-弗格森系谱的继承，也不是黑格尔-马克思系谱的继承，而是与 20 世纪末中国知识分子，以及二战之前日本的中国学者的看法有接近的地方。这个市民社会，一言以蔽之，是为了强化国家——在这一点上，这个模型也带有强烈的规范性——自发性的结社进行协调合作的空间。自发性结社从国家获得一定的自主性，但却将对公共的定义委托给国家，并为了强化国家而自发地与国家积极

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<sup>33</sup> 余项科《中国文明与近代的秩序形成》朋友出版社，2004 年，11 页。

联手。它并不反对单一性及排他性，反而倾向于为此来动员人们，因此不能说是自由主义的社会结构，却与民族主义具有亲和性。以邓正来为代表的 90 年代以后的中国知识分子们，主张构筑“强国家-强社会”之间的“良性互动关系”，给市民社会赋予了其实现国家强化工具的性质，应当被视为这个模型的主导者<sup>34</sup>。并且这个模型与战前日本中国学者的看法也有共鸣之处，他们的构想之中强有力的现代国家有时出现在同乡、同业行会组织直接的、无媒介性的扩大之后，有时又出现它们之间合作的未来<sup>35</sup>。市民社会的“权威主义”模型与上述两个模型有所差异，却是现实中不少中国人引以为目标的模型。

构筑“强国家-强社会”的“良性互动关系”被作为目标固定下来时，市民社会的成长在与国家的相互关系中被重新定位，而这一点与前述笔者的理解相近。但笔者主张的是，如果套用黄的比喻来表达，那么为了孩子（市民社会）长大成人后具有足够的独立性，必须要经历如“抵抗期(rebellious stage)”那样典型的、与“强势”父母（国家）之间孕育的紧张对立关系，而不应以增强父母的力量为目的。

然则将目光从市民社会的规范性侧面转移到实践性侧面时，可能会发现现实的中国“市民社会”也脱离了“权威主义”模型，或者有抵抗这种模型的行为（可以理解为正是为此强化国家的规范性主张才会出现）。第一，扩展到法团主义结构外围的未经认可团体所组成的广阔的领域——广大到还没有人能弄清其全貌——其本身对强化国家不感兴趣。正如怀特黑得（Laurence Whitehead）所警告的，不平等、不均质、分段的社会中，当自发性团体的成

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<sup>34</sup> 岸本“‘市民社会’理论与中国”，65-66 页。

<sup>35</sup> 国家与社会之间“良性互动关系”的用法，请参照邓正来《国家与社会——中国市民社会研究》成都，四川人民出版社，2001 年，12-13 页。

立不再受限制时，反而容易产生很多本身违反“市民性”的奇特集团<sup>36</sup>。第二，在国家退缩、“蔓延化”局面下出现的国家残片，与社会的一部分联手，可能会与残存的国家保持某种潜在的或表面化的紧张对立关系。这可能会进一步破坏国家的凝聚力，加速其弱化程度。第三，社会中的一部分超越其他部分，以牺牲水平性纽带为代价，与国家的一部分进行垂直性的联合，这可能会进一步促进社会的碎片化。总而言之，这个“市民社会”不仅不是“强国家-强社会”之间的“良性互动关系”，甚至有可能陷入国家与社会同时被斩碎、弱化的连锁反应的漩涡之中。如果不存在作为国家对立面的社会性自主组织的结构，也就没有能够保证多元性的自由主义社会结构，那么一旦产生这样的反应过程，我们将无法描绘中国政体的未来，究竟是权威主义的还是民主主义的。笔者所能想象到的情景，是在中国共产党统治之下无秩序性的状况亢进发展，平时虽是非政治性的，但偶而可能会陷入过度政治化的大众发起的过激性运动波浪中（其中大多数可能是爱国主义的）。

## 结语

尽管市民社会的概念起源于西方，同其他非西方的地域研究相同，在中国史研究领域，它也同样具有适用价值。它是一个可以把各种表面上没有关联性的政治、经济、社会、文化的个别研究的成果相互联结起来，用以整理历史叙述的灵活框架。但是市民社会既存的模型却并不能很好地说明中国社会组织诞生、发展及行动。在 20 世纪初期与末期的中国，国家中的一部分与社会中的一部分相结合，当我们关注这个宛如病变而产生的结合体的

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<sup>36</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 87-89.

一个侧面时，会发现它具有一定的脱离国家的自主性——相反也同时具有依赖性——虽可以称之为“市民社会的萌芽”，但无论用“公共领域”模型还是“复数性领域”模型都无法很好解释它的行为方式。“权威主义”模型虽然与中国知识分子们在国家-社会关系上的规范意识相一致，但我们看到的中国“市民社会”的实践却与这样的规范背道而驰。

然而 20 年代与 90 年虽相似却并不完全相同。如果假定上述由国家的残片与社会的残片形成的独特结合体是超历史性的，那可能会犯下重大过失。应当承认中国“市民社会”中包含了向多元方向自我嬗变的潜力。因特网、传真、手机等等新技术的应用，也应有助于培育人们之间的水平性纽带。逐渐扩大的志愿者活动、企业进行的慈善活动、消费者运动等也会起到同样的作用。起源于西方的非政府组织（NGO），由于西方各种 NGO 在中国展开的活动，其理念及实践逐渐成为谋求在中国成立同类组织的人们参考的模型。在这些新条件下，在社团主义社会结构渐次解体的同时，社会组织自主性事实上的增长——不论公认的还是非公认的——不一定只单纯地孕育出能同时斩碎国家与社会的“市民社会”。当然其发展方向也是与人们意志密切相关的。

# **In Search of a Historical Perspective on "Civil Society" China<sup>\*</sup>**

Nobuo Takahashi

Introduction

I. Quest for "civil society" in China

1. On state-society relations in late Qing and early Republic China
2. On state-society relations in the 1990s onwards

II. Four scenarios concerning the historical development of "civil society" in China

III. In search of a new perspective on "civil society" in China

1. Revising the questioning and proposing a hypothesis
2. What are the bases of "civil society" in China?
3. On the direction of the development of "civil society" in China

Conclusion

## **Introduction**

The Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 served as the impetus for the quest for civil society (or its precursor) in China. Scholars who dissected the "pro-democracy movement" led by those who gathered at Tiananmen Square blamed the weakness of civil society in China for the failure of the movement. That conclusion sparked a string of lively debate as to which phase of development civil society in China was at, and how its potential should be measured from a historical

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\* This is a translated version of my contribution to Chiharu Takenaka, Nobuo Takahashi, Nobuto Yamamoto, eds., *Gendai Ajia Kenkyu2-Shimin Shakai* (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2008), pp. 35-56.

point of view. The publication of the English edition of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* by Jürgen Habermas coincided with that very year, adding fresh fuel to the debate over the applicability of the civil society concept to China.

While emphasizing that this is an important yet merely one of the perceptions of civil society, for the time being, we will adopt the perception by Jürgen Kocka, and view civil society as a space of social self-organization in among the state, market, and the private sphere; in other words, the sphere of activities such as various associations, circles, networks, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This sphere is a space of public debate, disputes, and cooperation. It is a space of independence for individuals and groups. It is also a sphere of vitality and innovation, and a place where people work for the welfare of the public<sup>1</sup>.

The debate as to whether civil society or at least its precursor exists or had existed in China, being so extremely removed geographically from the tradition in the West, has come to develop concerning two separate periods in history. One is from the late Qing to the early Republican period, and the other is the reform and opening-up period, particularly the 1990s onwards. The "socialist" period from 1949 to 1978 comes between these two periods. The 30 years of the "socialist" period during which an absolute dictator ruled China is generally

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Kocka, "Civil Society as a Historical Problem and a Promise," *Shiso*, no.953 (September 2003), p. 40. He calls this a "narrow concept" of civil society. What Kocka advocates in order to devise a more comprehensive concept is to include its relationship with the state, market, and families in the formation of the concept.

regarded as when society was being oppressed by the state, and thus deemed out of question, as not affording any possibility for civil society (This view, however, is not necessarily valid. While Chinese society did remain quiet during this period, it had not completely died down).

Those who look for the Eastern counterparts of things Western in the course of history, as referred to by the social historian Hanchao Lu as those taking the counterpart-hunting approach<sup>2</sup>, end up crossing a shaky bridge from an ethical as well as methodological point of view. There are those who firmly believe that experience in the West is of universal nature, and thus the equivalent must surely be found in China. In this case, they risk being labeled ethnocentrists. There are also those who seek to prove themselves that Chinese counterparts of things Western cannot be found. In this case, they risk being called orientalist. Both types of people are equally motivated for their quest. Furthermore, there are still others, namely scholars who are Chinese themselves or of Chinese descent. Their intellectual attempts are typically fuelled by their "desire for civil society." Frustrated with being reminded of the "Chinese peculiarity" at every opportunity, they are out to fulfill their desire "to catch up with the rest of the world" at least in theory<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, maintaining the subtle sense of balance is essential in this intellectual quest.

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<sup>2</sup> Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase, "desire for civil society" was borrowed from Pheng Cheah, "Universal Regions - Research on the Changing World and Asia," *Bessatsu Shiso*, no. 918 (November 2000), p.87. However, he does not necessarily use this phrase in the way meant by the present writer.

The first sign that would encourage those with the "desire for civil society" was already manifest in the late Qing to the early Chinese Republic period. The development of numerous "self-governing organizations" formed by merchants and bore the functions such as the maintenance of public order, fire fighting, and relief of the poor as discovered by William T. Rowe in the commercial city Hankow is a fine example<sup>4</sup>. There is also the rapid expansion of publishing houses for newspapers, magazines, and books as well as their circulation figures accompanied by an increase in the number of libraries<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, these precursors of civil society were far from blossoming; rather, they could not even function to their full potential. Furthermore, as severely criticized by Frederic Wakeman, Jr., what had been regarded as the precursor of civil society could have been totally under the thumb of the state in reality<sup>6</sup>.

In the meantime, after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, those examining the actual conditions of various social organizations in China were starting to notice the ambiguous relationship between these social organizations and the state, although on the outside it looked as if the social organizations were gaining an increasing amount of independence from the state. Having noticed this relationship, many concluded that corporatism, rather than civil society, was the better concept in defining the state-society relations in

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<sup>4</sup> William T. Row, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1889* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Qiusha Ma, *Non-Governmental Organizations in Contemporary China: Paving the Way to Civil Society?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Wakeman, Jr., "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate," *Modern China*, 19-2 (April 1993), pp. 108-137.

China. The phrase "state-led civil society" by B. Michael Frolic, however contradictory in terms it may seem, concisely summarizes the ambiguous relationship between social organizations and the state in today's China<sup>7</sup>.

Similarly, both historians and analysts of current conditions alike, many of them tend to become completely helpless between two contradicting perspectives in their attempts to find a sign of civil society in this Eastern superstate with a long history. Within what kind of framework can they redefine what they have observed? Needless to say, such redefining should be done in a manner as to reveal what it is that seems like a precursor of "civil society," and what kind of potential it has for future development. That is precisely the purpose of this essay. The present writer will attempt to link the results of the observation on civil society from two separate periods in Chinese history, and then subsume them into a new viable framework, and at the same time provide a certain level of historical perspective to the direction of the development of "civil society" in China.

Nevertheless, it must be mentioned in advance that the debate here will not be clear cut, rather, it will progress more like the repetition of cut-and-try methods. First of all, I will organize the theories concerning civil society that have been constructed for separate periods in Chinese history, and then retie those various factors by putting them through a "surgical procedure" of a kind, thereby

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<sup>7</sup> B. Michael Frolic, "State-Led Civil Society," in Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic eds., *Civil Society in China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 46-67.

creating four new types of theories concerning the development of civil society in China. However, I will assert that none of the theories are satisfactory. Then, having revised the conventional method of questioning, I will propose a hypothesis on the nature of the organizations regarded as the precursor of civil society in China. Once it is achieved, I will go on to discuss which direction the development of "civil society" in China could take by comparing it to the existing civil society models.

## **I. Quest for "civil society" in China**

### **1. On state-society relations in late Qing and early Republic China**

According to the words of Weber, in contrast to cities in Europe, cities in China lacked legally guaranteed self-governing organizations<sup>8</sup>. It is true that, historically, Chinese cities were where bureaucrats resided, and thus it seems unlikely that we would find any counterparts to strong self-governing organizations seen in European history. However, William T. Rowe, Mary B. Rankin, and David Strand put forward a revisionistic view in their historical and sociological analysis of urban society in late Qing and early Republic China<sup>9</sup>. For example, Rowe wrote about Hankow, a large city located in the Middle Yangtze region at the end of the nineteenth century where autonomic associations mainly consisting of merchants existed for the purposes such as maintenance of public order, defense, relief of

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<sup>8</sup> Max Weber, trans. by Tokuo Kimata, *Confucianism and Taoism* (Sobunsha, 1971), p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

the poor, and childcare. He suggested that those who belonged to the associations came to acquire an identity as citizens of Hankow, and thus an internal bond. His suggestion continued that these associations displayed a tendency to gradually become more independent from the state, and this tendency can be regarded as a precursor of civil society<sup>10</sup>.

Long before Rowe's book was published, Japanese scholars on China such as Noboru Niida, Tadashi Negishi, and Shiraki Tachibana were also examining the autonomous functions of guilds in Chinese cities that were constituted along lines of common provincial origin as well as common occupation. It is true that, rather than questioning how much independence these organizations acquired from the state as did the scholars in the West, they tended to question how these organizations could serve as the foundation for the unification of the modern state. In other words, Japanese theorists often took the growth of autonomic associations in Chinese cities as part of the growth of the powerful modern state, and not as the growth of the sphere against the state. (In the first place, local-origin guilds were formed by both the government and private sectors.)<sup>11</sup> This viewpoint held by the Japanese scholars on China will be revisited at a later stage.

As for the issue on the degree of independence from the state, the revisionistic view opposing Weber came to be in the center of

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<sup>10</sup> Row, *Hankow*, pp. 10, 38, 338-339.

<sup>11</sup> For the outline of the debate surrounding intermediary organizations in China by Japanese scholars, refer to Mio Kishimoto, "Shimin Shakai Ron to Chugoku" *Rekishii Hyoron*, no. 527 (March 1994), pp. 56-72.

criticism. In the opinion of the harshest critic F. Wakeman, the leaders of the groups organized by merchants were far from having independent power. They were selected by bureaucrats, and were obliged to report, and offer bribes, to the bureaucrats. Moreover, activities that were thought to be autonomic also could have been at the request of the authorities in reality. Furthermore, cooperation among the associations was also dictated by bureaucrats. In essence, what Rowe and the others considered as a sphere independent from the state was in reality protected and manipulated by the state, and was no more than a sphere attached firmly to the state<sup>12</sup>.

In this manner, Western scholars have been entertaining two contradicting theories concerning the growth of social organizations in Chinese cities across two centuries from the late Qing to the early Republican period. One theory observes the organizations chiefly maintained and operated by merchants such as guilds and philanthropic organizations - as well as the organizations run by the intellectuals - and finds in their development process the precursor of civil society as a sphere independent of the state. We will call it Theory A for the time being. The other theory does not completely deny that such organizations had a certain amount of independence based on the profits and interests of their membership, but it does emphasize that the organizations were inextricably linked to the state. We will call it Theory B for the time being.

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<sup>12</sup> Wakeman, "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate," pp. 117-128.

Chinese historians who later joined in this discussion displayed a similar tendency although the organizations they studied were not the same as above. In their study of the organization and activities of the chambers of commerce which originated in Shanghai in 1902, they assert, on the one hand, that the chambers of commerce were showing a tendency toward independence from the state in aspects such as the selection of leaders, fundraising, day-to-day operations, auditing, and formation of local organizational networks; however, they also point out that, on the other hand, the chambers of commerce were running in close cooperation with the state on other aspects<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. On state-society relations in the 1990s onwards

In this period, we again find observers split between contradicting perspectives rather than holding a clear, consistent perspective. If the core of civil society is found in the mesh of interactions between various autonomic organizations that have become independent from the state, it came as no surprise that the interests of the observers were directed toward Chinese social organizations that have been increasing at an astonishing speed ever since the start of the reforms and open-door policies. The luxuriant growth of social organizations in the late twentieth century was not merely a necessary consequence of the state loosening up its controlling hand over society, but it was also a phenomenon caused by the state scheming to build a more efficient

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<sup>13</sup> A notable example of this research is, ZhuYing, *zhuan xin shiqi de shehui yu guojia yijindai ZhongGuo shanghui wei zhuti de lishi toushi* [*Turning point for the Society and State: focusing on the historical perspective of modern Chinese Chamber of commerce*], Wuhan: Huazhong Normal Unibersity Press, 1997

indirect social control system in place of the conventional "unit" system, and in so doing attempting to outsource its governance to social organizations. Furthermore, some of the scheming might have come from bureaucrats who tried to secure their destination for a "future lucrative post in the private sector."

For this reason, while those who surveyed these organizations each found a dawn of civil society there, they also came across a sign of corporatism at the same time<sup>14</sup>. The state's intention to control the activities of social organizations through peak organizations was publicly announced in October 1989, and further clarified in the "Social Organization Registration Management Act" revised in September 1998. This act, while making it mandatory for all social organizations to register with the government, stipulates that each organization is to be managed through the "main division," and that the founding of similar organizations within the specific administrative district is not permitted. Considering the above, the astonishing growth of social organizations in the 1990s onwards should be mostly viewed from the perspective that the state was reorganizing and improving the efficiency of its social control. Interpreting it as the increase of social organizations' independence from the state seems limiting in itself.

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Gordon White, Jude Howell, and Shang Xiaoyuan, *In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Jonathan Unger and Anita Chan, "China, Corporatism, and the East Asian Model," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 33 (January 1995).

However, the reality is far from what the state intended. In practice, as warned by the Communist party organ *Qiushi*, the state is not controlling the increase of social organizations successfully<sup>15</sup>. That attributes to the fact that those wishing to found an organization can do so relatively easily through their personal connections with bureaucrats. Founding an unofficial organization can also be done without much difficulty. Furthermore, it is also possible for a social organization to found another social organization. This is often done for profit-making purposes. Consequently, too many organizations have come into existence; some regions have a number of similar organizations emerging within the same region<sup>16</sup>. Although the state keeps the groups with strategic importance under its control, the corporatist framework in China carries the risk of being eventually pulled down by the proliferation of social organizations.

In addition, some research results on social organizations in China show that the functions to produce profit for their members are beginning to play a more important role than the functions to control the members. As shown by the research on trade unions by Anita Chan, organizations in China on the whole are beginning to look "downward" rather than "upward." In other words, they seem to be more inclined to serve their members' interests than serve as

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<sup>15</sup> Yu Dehu, "Youguan woguo shehuituanti wenti de sikao"[Reflections on Chinese Social Group Issues] *Qiushi* Vol.17,(September 1) 1991, pp. 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> Yijiang Ding, *Chinese Democracy After Tiananmen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 58.

representatives of the state<sup>17</sup>. In this manner, a gradual shift from state corporatism to social corporatism is taking place.

Furthermore, as told by Christopher E. Nevitt in his analysis of private business associations in Tianjin, more regional governments and local influential figures today are uniting locally sometimes in rivalry with the central government<sup>18</sup>. This is a phenomenon regarded as the rise of local corporatism; nonetheless, these alliances are not necessarily looking "upward" constantly. It seems the formation of social corporatism is also beginning on the regional level. In any case, Yijiang Ding's view on the virtual fragmentation of corporatist framework seems viable<sup>19</sup>.

The above trend could be interpreted as a sign of the formation of civil society. Firstly, at least in theory, social corporatism in which the independence of social organizations has become prominent does not necessarily contradict civil society. Secondly, if the framework for state corporatism is virtually falling apart, that means the liberation of social organizations in China from the unfair partnership destined for subjection to the state. Nevertheless, the above theory may not be applicable in every case. As commented by Margaret M. Pearson on the mindset and behavior pattern of new business elites, there is evidence that social organizations display both the desire to take the initiative to rebuild their connections with the state and the desire for

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<sup>17</sup> Anita Chan, "Revolution or Corporatism?: Workers and Trade Unions in Post-Mao China," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (January 1993), pp. 31-61.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher E. Nevitt, "Private Business Associations in China: Evidence of Civil Society or Local State Power?" *The China Journal*, no. 36 (July 1996), pp. 39-40.

<sup>19</sup> Ding, *Chinese Democracy After Tiananmen*, pp. 60-62.

more independence at the same time<sup>20</sup>. Thus, we are again at a loss between two perspectives that are seemingly in conflict. At this point, as before, the argument that a precursor of civil society has emerged and is growing within the corporatist framework will be called Theory C for the time being. The argument that a certain amount of external and internal brakes are being put on the independence of social organizations within the framework, and that civil society would remain in its germinal stage at the very most will be called Theory D for the time being.

## **II. Four scenarios concerning the historical development of "civil society" in China**

By combining the above Theories A, B, C, and D, we can structure four basic scenarios or interpretive frameworks concerning the historical development of civil society in China. The first is a scenario of the development of a sustained (or recurrent) civil society resulting from the A-C combination. According to these theories, autonomic organizations regarded as a precursor of civil society had already emerged in large cities in late Qing and early Republic China. The slow process toward the growth of civil society was unfortunately stopped or reversed by the "socialist revolution"; however, it resumed with the market-oriented economic reform that came with the reforms and open-door policies. Considering the cultural tradition in China, this process will go on for some time; nevertheless, this is nothing

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<sup>20</sup> Margaret M. Pearson, *China's New Business Elite: The Political Consequences of Economic Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 110-115.

other than the modern European history being replayed in a different place under different conditions, and thus a universal process in human history.

The second is a scenario of the authoritarian development resulting from the A-D combination. In this scenario, the clear beginning of civil society in early twentieth-century China was unfortunately lost due to the prolonged revolution and war. Any remaining hope of its comeback dissipated under the state power made extremely strong by the subsequent communist regime. Today, the social organizations in question are left with self-governing functions only to the extent allowed by the powerful state according to its own calculations, or to the extent the state has assigned part of its governance. Nevertheless, they are basically nothing more than the groups subject to the state. Moreover, these organizations feel in a way comfortable with the straitjacket which the state put on them, and it is highly unlikely that they would ever take it off on their own initiative.

The third is a scenario of the growth of civil society as a new trend beginning in the late twentieth century, resulting from the B-C combination. According to this scenario, China in the first half of the twentieth century scarcely had any political, economic, social, or cultural infrastructure from which civil society could emerge. However, the late twentieth century brought the reforms and open-door policies accompanied by the market-oriented economic reform, the advancement of the rule of law, and the expansion of civil rights (needless to say, the latter two cannot be praised without some

concern). These changes influenced China with a wave of globalization. As a result, social organizations which are independent of the state and able to hold out against the state by maintaining tensions at last began to grow.

And the last is a scenario of China as a barren land for civil society from a historical point of view, resulting from the B-D combination. Those who support this scenario would generally view the development of state-society relations in China through cultural determinism. Kiyooki Hirata once simply stated, "in Asia, the familial formation of human sets dictates that there is no clear distinction between society and state."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as Suzanne Ogden commented, the Confucian tradition urges people to be subject to authority on one hand, and to value family ties on the other hand. In summary, the culture which makes the growth of social organizations independent of the state and blood relatives difficult has always existed in China<sup>22</sup>. In this context, the Confucian tradition (or, more broadly, "Asian culture") is regarded as a persistent social and psychological trend which endures through changes in various objective conditions that are social and economic in nature. The seemingly new trends concerning state-society relations witnessed in the early twentieth century and again in the 1990s onwards gave in to such a powerful culture, or will give in to such a culture in the end. Therefore, it is impossible to speak of the growth of civil society in China as a sphere distinguished from, and holding out against, the state.

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<sup>21</sup> Kiyooki Hirata, *Shimin Shakai to Shakai Shugi* (Iwanami Shoten, 1975), p. 171.

<sup>22</sup> Suzanne Ogden, *Inklings of Democracy in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), pp. 279-280.

As we have done so far, by reconstructing the previous theories concerning civil society for the two separate periods in Chinese history, we are able to derive four new interpretive frameworks concerning the long-term perspective of the development of civil society in this part of the world. However, in practice, hardly anyone will support one framework over the other exclusively. In particular, it is highly unlikely to find an observer who is satisfied with the second or the third framework. The reason being that most observers sense a certain commonality between the circumstances in the early twentieth century and the late twentieth century in China, though it is difficult to prove. Nevertheless, instead of leaning toward either the first or the fourth framework, the observers vacillate between the two. No careful observer can accept either the first or the fourth framework on an "as is" basis, or discard one or the other altogether. On one hand, in considering state-society relations in China - either past or present - it seems difficult to speak of any sustained growth of civil society in China to the extent it seems impossible to assume two clearly distinguishable realms. However, on the other hand, they are not able to assert with certainty that China is a barren land for civil society. The reason is that the framework for corporatism that was supposed to have been built to exacting standards is not at all complete in reality; moreover, it looks like something fragile that would start tumbling down as soon as it is built. How could we possibly assert that this framework is the optimized, and thus stable goal of state-society relations in China, and not merely a transit point? Although paradoxical, who can say with assurance that the corporatist framework will not become a cradle for a "genuine" civil society?

Consequently, the observers cannot side with either the first or the fourth interpretive framework, nor can they eliminate either of the frameworks instead. This dilemma is also a reflection of our inadequate knowledge concerning as to how civil society can emerge and then grow (or be restored) under the authoritarian system.

Now, how do we break free from the state of being stuck between the two contradicting historical perspectives of the first and the fourth theories, and take a step toward understanding? There are important guidelines in carrying out the necessary survey. We should follow the intuition of many observers and hypothesize that there has been a historical trend that has remained consistent over a long period of time from the early twentieth century to the late twentieth century. That is not to say that we should view the state-society relations we are witnessing today as something fixed, rather, we should endeavor to understand them as part of a changing phase. Nonetheless, these guidelines on their own are not sufficient. It seems to me beneficial to add some revision to how our conventional questioning is done concerning state-society relations in China.

### **III. In search of a new perspective on "civil society" in China**

#### **1. Revising the questioning and proposing a hypothesis**

Up to now, in discussing a precursor of civil society in China, scholars have generally focused on specific social organizations, and have questioned the degree of independence they acquired from the state in aspects such as the number of members, resources for

activities, rules, and actual activities. This type of questioning exactly corresponds to the way civil society is defined at the beginning of this essay, as a sphere of social self-organization independent from the state - the "public realm" model of civil society as referred to by Shin Chiba<sup>23</sup>. In addition, this type of questioning comes from the assumption that the state is always relatively powerful compared to society, and thus autonomic associations must win independence in some cases through fighting, in other cases through negotiation, and at times through creative scheming.

However, what if the lack, immaturity, or weakness of civil society is related to the weakness of the state? As a matter of fact, some theorists point out the weakening of the state as they speak of the subsidiary position of social organizations to the state in the early twentieth-century China, and go on to suggest that there was a correlation between them. Marie-Claire Bergere states that, in the "golden age" for the Chinese bourgeoisie in the 1920s, the reason why emerging capitalists failed to develop the strengthening autonomy of social organizations into a vibrant civil society lies in the weakness of their class solidarity as well as the weakness of the state<sup>24</sup>. In other words, she is suggesting that, at the time social organizations should have grown as a pluralistic bridgehead by maintaining - this is important - tensions with the state, the state was weak.

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<sup>23</sup> Shin Chiba, "Shimin Shakai Ron no Genzai," *Shiso*, no. 924 (May 2001), pp. 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> Marie-Claire Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 121-125.

The comment that relates the weakness of the state with the immaturity of civil society may also apply to China in the 1990s onwards. Many people are already raising an alarm over the central government's diminishing abilities for accomplishing administrative orders, for administrative efficiency, for mobilization, as well as its rampant corruption. In addition to this so-called "governmental failing" or "governmental weakening" phenomenon, upon comparing the central government and the regional government in terms of their financial abilities, the relative decline of the former has been pointed out<sup>25</sup>. In the meantime, regional governments are expanding systematically. To the extent the central area is hollowing out as the surrounding areas expand irregularly just like many cities of today, this could perhaps be called "state sprawl"<sup>26</sup>. This is exactly the political context that is facilitating the growth of "civil society" in today's China.

Having come thus far in our survey, it starts to seem more likely that civil society can only emerge, grow, and become strong as a result of interactions involving tensions with a certain type of "strong" state. In my estimation, such a state is equipped at least with cohesiveness, efficiency, and the ability to resist external manipulation. In contrast, the state which lacks cohesiveness, efficiency, and resistance to external manipulation (the "weak" state) is unorganized and lacks

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<sup>25</sup> Minxin Pei, "China's Governance Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, 81-5 (September/October, 2002), p. 105; Yongnian Zheng, *Will China Become Democratic?* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2004), p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> The phrase "state sprawl" is used by D. Davis. Deborah S. Davis, "Introduction: Urban China," in Deborah S. Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 15.

independence. When such a weak state encounters society which is over-familiar (the "weak" society), they will potentially weaken each other further. If that is the case, before we question the degree to which the society has become independent from the state, we should question the degree to which the actual state-society relations are being supported by the "strong" state in the above sense. What Bergere found in China in the 1920s was probably the circulatory effect of the state and society weakening each other, and what we are witnessing in China in the 1990s onwards is perhaps the state-society relations of a similar nature.

Having revised how the questioning is carried out in the above manner, the basic hypothesis that comes to surface is this. In essence, social organizations that seem to have acquired a certain amount of independence from the state in China emerged as follows: The authoritarian state declined and state sprawl followed as a result - this seems to be the commonality between the 1920s and the 1990s - and when the fragments of the state that had lost cohesiveness encountered society that had poor horizontal solidarity, the fragments of the state connected with the fragments of society vertically and locally, and the social organizations in question emerged as a result<sup>27</sup>.

## 2. What are the bases of "civil society" in China?

If the sphere formed by the above-mentioned organizations is called

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<sup>27</sup> The idea of this hypothesis came from the following book: Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 43-53.

"civil society" in China for the time being (written with quotation marks because this definition is clearly far from our earlier definition of civil society), then why does China have a tendency for such a form of "civil society"? Where do we find its political, social, and cultural bases? Is the reason related to the lack of the state's political consistency, the bureaucracy's inadequacy and inefficiency, or individual bureaucrats' low ability and corruption? Although these are probably some of the main factors that cannot be ignored, they may not be the decisive factors.

It is fair to say that the contrast between the state which insists on the official stance of centralized rule and the society which behaves in an unruly manner in reality is a frame of reference which is shared to a large extent by scholars on China, whether engaged in the political, economic, or social research field. Therefore, scholars readily accept the comment made by Lucian Pye that one of the characteristics of the Chinese political culture is the fact the Chinese can easily live with cognitive dissonance, and that they are indifferent to the gap between the representation of reality and the reality itself<sup>28</sup>. Presumably, the associations formed by local governments (or local bureaucrats) and local influential figures have contributed to causing such a gap between what the state intends and the reality of society. However, on the other hand, these associations which are halfway between "public" and "private" had a certain useful function. With the lack of both the democratic system and the efficient bureaucracy in this vast country

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<sup>28</sup> Lucian Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1988), pp. 80-89.

with great diversity, these associations enabled the policies of the central government to be adapted to a wide range of regional situations to a degree, thereby fulfilling a function of procuring a certain level of approval from society. In that sense, it could be said that these associations played the role of a "device" to fulfill a necessary function in the system, and were practical to that extent (although that practicality often came with a price: Regional bureaucrats tied up with local influential figures, and the tie-up encouraged the latter's rentseeking and bred the former's corruption at the same time). Shigeki Iwai, upon researching the history of the financial system in China, wrote as follows:

"The state has under it an extraordinarily enormous society both spatially and quantitatively. For such a state, whether in the past or today, and regardless of its government system or financial system, it is altogether impossible to successfully implement the single-dimensional and centralized approach of enforcing its laws and plans in every corner of its domain. The state had no alternative but to be formed as a combination of the central unit with a collection of dispersed and highly independent units"<sup>29</sup>.

From such a perspective, "civil society" in China cannot necessarily be referred to as an "outdated," "distorted," and "unsound" sign of state-society relations.

In addition, the historical nature of intermediary organizations in China may also be an important point. The organizations based on

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<sup>29</sup> Shigeki Iwai, *Chugoku Kinsei Zaiseishi no Kenkyu* (Kyoto Daigaku Gakujutsu Shuppan Kai, 2004), p. 479.

religious and local unity were associations with a certain degree of strength. However, they did not function as a powerful breakwater to withstand the power of the state like various feudal and privileged organizations as seen in European history - such as municipal boroughs, privileged guilds, and sacred buildings with right to deny entry. These intermediary organizations in China were not only frequently powerless in the face of arbitrary intervention by bureaucrats, but chose to have cozy relations with bureaucrats when they could. Presumably, such behavior pattern of intermediary organizations was due to the nature of local-origin guilds in which both the government and private sectors were involved. This was also a result of the previously-mentioned "weak" state, and at the same time one of the factors that caused the weak state. The tendency of the intermediary organizations to inch their way upward, or a strong possibility of collusive links with the state - may be better described as their tendency to link vertically because of their inability to link horizontally - and the above-mentioned intermediary function using ambiguous realms necessary in the system of governance would have strengthened each other, and facilitated the association of the state and local influential figures on the local level.

If such an image is correct, the name "state-led civil society" given by B. Michael Frolic does not necessarily seem suitable. The reason being that, although its starting point might have been provided by the state, China's "civil society" in its growing process would already step out of the state's intended plan and upset its expectations. One cause would be the unintentional gradual shift from state corporatism to

social corporatism. The other cause would be the rise of protectionist local corporatism formed in rivalry with upper-level state organs and other state organs of the same level. Whichever may be the main cause, in the development process of "civil society," the state (at least the central government) can maintain a clear lead only for a limited time and in limited aspects.

Moreover, I feel that I cannot endorse the concept of "the third realm" that results from the participation of both the state and society as proposed by Philip C. C. Huang<sup>30</sup>. It is true that, using this concept, one can avoid the simple choice between the two options of whether what William T. Rowe found in Hankow in the late Qing period were autonomic association by merchants or agents of the state. In addition, the idea that the increasing of social organizations' independence and the strengthening of the state's influential power can occur at the same time can become easier to understand. However, a more dynamic image may be suitable. The problem is the point that this "third realm" does not merely exist between the two realms called the state and society, but it changes the appearance of the state and society at the same time. Huang uses a metaphor of a child born between parents, and speaks of the development of "the third realm" as an existence similar to that of a child who completes his unique development away from his father and mother; however, this concept overlooks the fact that the birth and growth of a child have the potential to change how the parents live.

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<sup>30</sup> Philip C. C. Huang, "Public Sphere/Civil Society in China?: The Third Realm between State and Society," *Modern China*, 19-2 (April 1993), pp. 216-239.

### 3. On the direction of the development of "civil society" in China

Assuming that the description concerning the formation and origin of the above-mentioned "civil society" in China is valid, what potential does it have for further development? In discussing this point, we must include in our perspective both the practical and normative dimensions of the people surrounding state-society relations.

As it is already clear from the discussion so far, when we speak of the reality of "civil society" in China with the "public realm" model in mind, at any time, we can only speak by using negation or using expressions that contain contradiction. In other words, it has not sufficiently become independent from the state. It is not a political realm with the substantial ability to resist the state. So far, it has not appeared as if it is going to become the beachhead that would shift the balance of power held by the state and society to make it more advantageous for the latter, and break down the foundation of the authoritarian system. It does not seem like the place from where the rational and critical debate against the state is born and spread. In addition, social organizations are content to have autonomy in subjection to the state, so to speak. Therefore, if we attempt to consider the reality of "civil society" in China in light of the "public realm" model, we will only run into a dead end. Furthermore, it must be added that it is highly unlikely that many Chinese - whether intellectuals, entrepreneurs, laborers, or farmers - would envision the civil society which will face off against the state, and in turn become the beachhead for democratization as the model of a kind.

However, that is not the only model of civil society. What if we distanced ourselves from the "public realm" model of civil society, and took up the "pluralistic realm" model?<sup>31</sup> According to this model, civil society is "a framework consisting of a variety of frameworks" as stated by Michael Walzer. In other words, it is understood to be a liberal framework which, although including every framework of the life based on several ideologies concerning the good life, does not grant a privileged status to any of these<sup>32</sup>. According to this understanding, regardless of whether the government system is democratic or authoritarian, as long as the rule of law, private ownership, civil liberties (freedom of meeting and association, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience etc.) are guaranteed, and people can pursue their diverse ideas of good life without being completely mobilized for the singular goal of the state, civil society is deemed to have been established. In other words, civil society can coexist with either the democratic or authoritarian government in this model. Needless to say, a certain amount of normative meaning is also implied here. In other words, civil society should work against singularity and exclusiveness.

How much do the norms and reality surrounding the sphere created by social organizations in China conform to this model? If this model is different from the "public realm" model, and does not place upon itself the unspoken goal of escaping from the authoritarian system, and if Confucianism had originally carried the concept which aimed

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<sup>31</sup> The phrase, the "pluralistic realm" model also came from Shin Chiba. Chiba, "Shimin Shakai Ron no Genzai," pp. 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Walzer, "Shimin Shakai Ron", *Shiso*, no. 867 (September 1996), p. 174.

for "public life as a harmonious phase of private life" by achieving solidarity while allowing differences as described by Koka Yu, "a framework consisting of a variety of frameworks" can be accepted as the norm by Chinese intellectuals<sup>33</sup>. However, in reality, the sphere of interactions by social organizations in China may even aim for singularity and exclusiveness as symbolized by the May Fourth Movement in 1919 and the anti-Japan demonstration in the spring of 2005. Such an inclination can perhaps be understood as a reaction against the fact that this sphere facilitates local integration of society and the state on one hand, and chops up both on the other hand. If that is so, the actual behavior pattern of "civil society" in China will again exceed its semantically acceptable level even when this model is chosen as a frame of reference.

In considering "civil society" in China, perhaps we are better off building yet another model. That may be called the "authoritarian" model. This model has nothing to do with Tocqueville-Ferguson or Hegel-Marx. Rather, it has links with the perspectives of Chinese intellectuals in the late twentieth century and Japanese scholars on China in the prewar period. This civil society, put simply, will become the sphere where autonomic associations will collaborate to strengthen the state - on this point, this model also has the strong normative nature. Although the autonomic associations would acquire a certain amount of independence from the state, they would let the state define what is public, and take initiative to link with the state to strengthen the state. They will not be against singularity or exclusiveness; rather,

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<sup>33</sup> Koka Yo, *Chugoku Bunmei to Kindaiteki Chitsujo Keisei* (Hoyu Shuppan, 2004), p. 11.

they will work to mobilize people toward them. Therefore, that framework can hardly be called liberal. It will have an affinity to nationalism. The intellectuals in China represented by Deng Zhenglai who emerged in the 1990s onwards and advocated the building of "good mutual relations" between "the strong state-strong society" and tried to endow civil society with the instrumental nature to strengthen the state can safely be regarded as the advocates of this model<sup>34</sup>. In addition, this model corresponds with the perspective of the pre-war Japanese scholars on China who studied organizations such as guilds constituted along lines of common provincial origin as well as common occupation, and envisaged a powerful modern state; in some cases as a result of the direct and unmediated expansion of these guilds, and in other cases as a result of the cooperation of the guilds<sup>35</sup>. The "authoritarian" model of civil society is different from the above-mentioned two models, and it is a model which has become the goal of more than a few intellectuals in China in reality.

The formulation of the goal of building "good mutual relations" between "the strong state-strong society" is similar to the above-mentioned my understanding to the extent it repositions the growth of civil society in a certain amount of interactions with the state. Nevertheless, my argument is that, if a metaphor of the parent-child relationship is used like Huang did, for the child (civil society) to grow into an existence with sufficient independence, there is a need for a relationship involving tensions with a certain "strong"

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<sup>34</sup> Kishimoto, "Shimin Shakai Ron to Chugoku," pp. 65-66.

<sup>35</sup> For the expression, "good mutual relations" between the state and society, refer to Deng zhenglai, *Guojia yu shehui: ZhongGuo shiminshenhui yanjiu* [State and Society: Study of Chinese Civil Society] Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe (2001,) pp. 12-13.

parent (the state) as typically seen in the "rebellious phase" of a human child, and making the parent strong is not the purpose of the relationship.

Nevertheless, if we shift our focus from the normative aspect to the practical aspect of civil society, the actual "civil society" in China may be operating away from, or against the "authoritarian" model (it can also be understood that the strengthening of the state is being pushed as imperative precisely for this reason). Firstly, the realm consisting of unofficial organizations spread beyond the corporatist framework - the vast realm of which nobody has revealed the full extent - is not interested in strengthening the state in the first place. Rather, as warned by Laurence Whitehead, what tend to emerge once the restriction on the association of autonomic organizations is lifted in the unjust, inconsistent, and segmented society are many dubious organizations that are opposed to "citizenship" itself<sup>36</sup>. Secondly, the fragments of the state that emerge as a result of the decline of the state and state sprawl will have relations involving tensions potentially or explicitly with what is left of the state by linking with a part of society. This could potentially lead to further loss of the state's cohesiveness, accelerating its weakening process. Thirdly, due to a part of society stealing a march on the rest and linking vertically with a part of the state by sacrificing the horizontal solidarity, further fragmentation of society could occur. In essence, far from a "good mutual relationship" between "the strong state-strong society," this "civil society" could cause a spiral of chain reaction that would weaken both the state and

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<sup>36</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 87-89.

society by chopping them up. If such a process took place where there was neither the framework as social self-organizations facing off against the state nor the liberal framework that guarantees pluralism, it would be difficult for us to draw a picture of the authoritarian future or the democratic future of the government in China. What the I envisage is a scenario in which anarchic conditions rise while the governance by the Chinese Communist Party still continues, and society is hit by the enormous waves of the radical movement led by the normally nonpolitical, but sometimes overpolitical mass (many of them will be of a patriotic nature).

### **Conclusion**

The concept of civil society, even if it has its origin in the West, can also be valuable for the research of Chinese history as well as the research on other non-Western regions of the world. It can become a flexible framework in order to organize the portrayal of history by mutually linking the results of various individual research efforts concerning politics, economy, society, and culture that seemingly have little to do with each other. However, with the existing model of civil society, the birth, growth, and behavior of social organizations in China cannot be described adequately. The associations in question were born like warm-eaten holes when a part of the state linked with a part of society in the early and late twentieth-century China. If we focus on their certain aspects, they could be called a precursor of "civil society" to the extent a certain amount of independence from the state - together with the dependency thereon - is revealed.

Nevertheless, their behavior pattern cannot be understood adequately either through the "public realm" model or the "pluralistic realm" model. While the "authoritarian" model conforms to normative consciousness of Chinese intellectuals engaged in state-society relations, the practice of "civil society" in China again seems to take the opposite direction to such a norm in this case.

However, while China in the 1920s and the 1990s might have looked similar to each other, they are not exactly the same. If we assume the unique associations formed by the fragments of the state and the fragments of society such as mentioned above as something transhistorical, we could make a serious mistake. We should acknowledge that "civil society" in China carries the potential for self reform toward a multiple of directions. The new technologies such as the Internet, fax, and cellular phones will be useful in nurturing the people's horizontal solidarity if they are used well. Gradually spreading volunteer activities, company-led charitable activities, consumers' movements and the like will also fulfill a similar function. The philosophy and practice of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which originated in the West are becoming a model for the people who seek similar organizations for China just through various western NGOs working in China. Under these new conditions, the combination of the gradual dismantling of the corporatist framework and the actual increase of social organizations with more independence - whether official or unofficial - may not merely produce "civil society" which would chop up both the state and society. Needless to say, the direction of its development also depends on the intention of people.

## 探求中国“市民社会”的历史性展望

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## In Search of a Historical Perspective on “Civil Society” China

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