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THE CITY AS A SPACE OF CHANGE:  
IMAGES OF TOKYO IN KODA ROHAN'S *IKKOKU NO SHUTO*  
(ONE NATION'S CAPITAL<sup>1</sup>; 1899)

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1. Introduction

From their beginning cities appear as centers of technical and cultural achievement and of social differentiation, and as places of diversity, change, and fluidity. Le Corbusier mentioned in 1925 that large cities were a new phenomenon of the last 50 years (Le Corbusier 1995:253). Due to the unparalleled growth of cities, industrialization and population that started in Europe as well as in Japan during the 19th century, urban reality was becoming more and more complex and fragmented.

In the West as well as in Japan intellectuals had the feeling of living in a time of transition and crisis.<sup>2</sup> Especially from the latter half of the 19th century on the modern age was characterized by scientific progress and cultural pessimism. Rising nationalism, fear of war, the alienating effects of industrialization and urban growth on daily life, poverty in the cities, the deepening gap between rich and poor – all those factors contributed to the perception of modern, that means mainly urban, life as a condition of fragmentation, discontinuity, and acceleration.

Both in the West and in Japan the description of urban phenomena was (and still is) an important tool for social and political criticism of modernity and of modernization in general. Countless works of art and literature have focused (and still do) on Tōkyō, the political, economic and cultural center of modern Japan, as the evocative symbol for the expression of contemporary conditions and ideas of improvements for the future. Because most of the leading thinkers lived and worked in Tōkyō the discourse on Japan's modernity and future mainly became a discourse on Tōkyō's modernity and future.

1 The title is translated as suggested by SMITH 1978:56, who incidentally gives the year 1898 as the date of publication. But according to the introduction in the Japanese edition used here the text was written and published in 1899. See KŌDA 1993:227.

2 For a general outline of the situation in Europe see HOBBSAWM 1987.

In literature from the 1880s, urban experience in Japan was perceived in a similar way as in Western countries. All kinds of texts depict urban phenomena that are also known from Western contemporary writings on the city. Tōkyō was described as a space of social diversity and rapid changes. Not only in the West but also in Japan the individual's loneliness in the crowd was a common topic, reminding us of Georg Simmel's analysis of the mental condition of the city dweller.<sup>3</sup> In the latter half of the 19th century the image of the city as a melting pot and as a community dominates the discourse on urban features.

The postmodern approach in the West has led to an attempt at rethinking the Enlightenment and abandoning universal concepts. Now one rather speaks of "global modernities" than of one path to modernity.<sup>4</sup> In urban discourse it is emphasized that neither does a definition of the city exist which is independent of its cultural background, nor can a clear-cut method for analyzing the city as an abstract, universal concept be developed.<sup>5</sup> In modern Japan reflection upon the city and on urban matters in general is even more complicated than in the West, because the discourse is polarized between the East and the West on the one hand and between tradition and modernity on the other. In general one has to question if definitions rooted in an American or West-European context can be useful tools for analyzing urban matters in other cultures. For example, Max Weber pointed out in *Economy and Society* (Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft; 1921/22) that in East Asia a city in European terms does not exist (Weber 1976:733-738). This seems to be a harsh statement but it clearly shows that Western ideas of the city have to be carefully applied to the urban situation in Japan. They can be helpful tools but one has to keep their limits in mind. Rather than to use a decontextualized Western

3 In his famous speech *The Metropolis and Mental Life* at the Congress of City Planning in Dresden 1904, Georg Simmel (1858-1918) focused on the urban individual. In contrast to the rural world the density and diversity of the city constantly put the individual in touch with possibilities unknown outside the city. The assumption in Simmel's analysis is that the city dweller is mobile and resourceful. Gliding over the urban landscape, picking and choosing the associations that create a particular, individualized social world, the city dweller belongs to many different groups. See SIMMEL 1957.

4 See for example FEATHERSTONE, LASH and ROBERTSON 1995.

5 MAYER 1971 gives examples of 14 different definitions of the city.

definition of the city to find out how the city is conceptualized in Japan, it seems to be more appropriate to recontextualize and to analyze the way urban features are depicted in texts.

In the following I will investigate Kōda Rohan's (1867-1947) depiction of Tōkyō as revealed in *Ikkoku no shuto* (One Nation's Capital), published in 1899. This text reflects the problem of conceiving the city as an abstract idea. For the Meiji period (1868-1912) this meant that very often pre-Meiji vocabulary and its underlying concepts were not adequate for the explanation of contemporary urban phenomena. Rohan uses terms like *toshi* or *tokai*, both meaning "city", but he mainly describes Tōkyō by using images of diversity, change, and fluidity.

Rohan was not only a celebrated writer of fiction but also an intellectual who was concerned about the problems of his time. *One Nation's Capital* is an appeal to reform Tōkyō. It is not only a unique text in Rohan's work but also in the whole corpus of Meiji literature on urban features.<sup>6</sup> In this treatise of nearly 180 pages, Rohan gives an analysis of Tōkyō's modernization during the Meiji period and of its problems, caused especially by the city's reorganization and by its growth due to tremendous changes in population caused by migration and industrialization.

## 2. Tōkyō's growth and reorganization during the latter half of the 19th century

Unlike Europe, Japan was already from the mid 18th century on economically and culturally determined by urban phenomena. At that time the city of Edo was inhabited by more than one million people – some researchers even estimate a population of more than 1,4 million – and was therefore the largest city in the world. At the beginning of the 19th century no city in Europe had such a large population. The largest Western city at that time was London (850'000 residents), followed by Paris (550'000), Vienna and Moscow (both 250'000). Berlin was inhabited by only 170'000 people.

6 Surprisingly, it is very hard to find any Japanese articles on the text. As far as I know, no study of *One Nation's Capital* has yet been published. MAEDA 1983 deals with this text in one short chapter (pp. 164-174). Some notes are also to be found in MIKURIYA 1996:18-23, ŌOKA 1983 3-27, and HAGA 1992:137-184.



During the 19th century Japan's cities grew at first rather slowly compared to major European cities, but then very quickly. The abolition of the *sankin kōtai* (alternate attendance)<sup>7</sup> in 1862 destroyed the foundation of Edo's prosperity, and the transition to a new political and economic system came slowly and after several "false starts". Due to the political and social turmoil in the years around the Meiji Restoration in 1868, more than half of Tōkyō's population left the city and returned to their hometowns. Only 500'000 people remained. It was only in the 1890s that Tōkyō regained the number of population of Edo at its peak. One can imagine that Tōkyō, which from a Western point of view had never looked much like a great capital, must have seemed like a devastated area at the very moment when the emperor moved there and the city became the nation's capital!

In the 1870s and 1880s the economic situation improved and more and more citizens moved back or migrated into the city. Due to an excess of births over deaths and accelerated industrialization, Japan experienced extreme urban growth especially during the 1880s. Tōkyō was affected most by changes due to the modernization policy of the Meiji government because all important political, economic and cultural functions had to be moved from the Kansai area to the Kantō area (Yazaki 1968:418-21). In 1890 Tōkyō was inhabited by more than one million people, and at the turn of the century it already had a population of 1.4 million, which means it had again reached the demographic size of the 18th century when the city was at its cultural prime.

The population of Tōkyō doubled from 1895 to 1923, reaching almost four million on the eve of the 1923 earthquake. Such explosive growth severely strained the already inadequate infrastructure of the city and disrupted familiar patterns of urban space. Although tremendous changes took place during the Meiji and Taishō period (1912-1926), in certain parts of the city premodern buildings and streets remained intact until September

7 A rule of the Tokugawa Shōgunate (1603-1867), whereby *daimyō*, or territorial lords, were required to reside in alternate years at Edo in attendance on the shōgun. This system was devised to maintain control over the more than 260 *daimyō*. They were obliged to attend the shogunal court in Edo at fixed intervals, dividing their time equally between the capital and their domains. To perform this obligation, the *daimyō* had to maintain residential estates (*yashiki*) in Edo, where their wives and children were permanently detained by the shōgunate. The journeys and the upkeep of a *daimyō*'s Edo estates consumed about 70 to 80 percent of his income.

1923, when the earthquake destroyed the historical parts of the city that had been spared by modernization.

In the age of imperialism cities were regarded as symbols of the progress of mankind and of modernity, in short, as the embodiment of modern civilization. Capital cities served as symbols of the power and wealth of the nation-states that were competing with each other. Much as today, they represented the nation. On the one hand they were objects of ambitious city planning, on the other they were targets of social and political criticism. Japan, like Victorian England and Germany, followed the ideology of progress and produced images of historical, and hence cultural continuity in architecture and historiography. Tōkyō's reorganization was a national goal, and the city was to become a symbol of Japan's participation in the competition of the "enlightened", "civilized" nations of the West. The idea of designing Tōkyō as the capital city had important nationalistic implications. It represented Japan as a nation-state. It was regarded as *teito* (imperial capital), an old Nara period term which became popular again from about the time of the Meiji Constitution promulgated in 1889. This term suggests a Tōkyō viewed less as a city than as a symbol of the nation.<sup>8</sup>

During the latter half of the 19th century most of Europe's major cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, Vienna, and Bruxelles, but also non-European capital cities such as Mexico City and Hanoi were modernized.<sup>9</sup> Paris, the so-called "Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (Walter Benjamin), which was newly constructed during the 1860s, became a kind of archetype of city planning. It was grand, permanent, and monumental. It was the model for the new Tōkyō, too.<sup>10</sup> Improvements of Tōkyō's infrastructure were a very urgent problem. From the 1880s on, the city's population suffered from the lack of a sewage system, from overpopulation and diseases, and from the permanent danger of fire. Several plans of

8 SMITH 1978 outlines the idea of Tōkyō as Japan's capital.

9 See *Paris s'exporte: modèle d'architecture ou architectures modèles* (1995).

10 Tōkyō was the only Japanese city that was reorganized after Western models in the Meiji period. It was not until the 1910s that plans were made to reorganize other cities (FUJIMORI 1990:413).

modernizing the city were discussed.<sup>11</sup> Japanese planners even used the expression “Parisation of Tōkyō” (*Tōkyō no Parika*) (Fujimori 1990:444), and tried to adapt important elements of the French model, such as the construction of broad *boulevards* and a sewage system. The government attempted to design the city center following the model of German classicistic and historicist architecture, with the aim of having it represent the nation’s identity and the government’s authority. Under the guidance of foreign architects most of the new institutions such as banks, schools, theatres, libraries, ministries etc. were built in Western style, in order to symbolize Japan’s successful modernization.<sup>12</sup> Monuments such as triumphal arches and memorials were erected after Japan’s victories in two wars (in 1895 against China and in 1905 against Russia) in Tōkyō’s central districts to represent the power of the young nation-state. They constituted a new network of visual orientation in the cityscape. Tōkyō was supposed to be designed on the one hand as a showcase to display the latest fashions and inventions from the West, and on the other as a testing-ground for institutional innovations (Smith 1978:53). However, a plan for the entire city never existed as in Paris and Berlin. There were only plans for the modernization of representative areas such as Hibiya, the new center of administration and government, and the Ginza, the “shop window” of modern Japan. Apart from financial problems Tōkyō’s specific topography and social segregation resisted a complete adaptation to Western models.

Not only the city’s outer shape but also its internal structure was reformed. The local government system of 1888 as applied to Tōkyō was revealing in two respects. First, Tōkyō (along with Ōsaka and Kyōto) was granted less autonomy than ordinary cities through a special law, which was abolished in the face of local protests in 1898. Since then Tōkyō’s mayor has been elected by the municipal council and not by the central

11 Most of the discussions centered on the question of which major functions Tōkyō should fulfil, e.g. trade city, harbour city, or imperial city. All of them together were subsumed as *Shiku kaisei* (Reorganization of the City Boroughs). See FUJIMORI 1990:3-205 and 425-453.

12 It is worth mentioning that Japan did not only adapt the latest style in architecture but also rather ‘old-fashioned’ styles. For example, as late as 1910 the Akasaka Palace was built in a style reminiscent of Versailles. At that time, nobody in Europe would have built a representative building in a style of the 16th or 17th century.

government as before (Mikuriya 1996:23). Second, local municipal administration extended only as far down as the new "borough" (*ku*), leaving unattended the neighborhood level (*chō*), which had been so closely regulated in Edo. The city was thus identified with the state at the top but left to its own devices at the bottom (Smith 1978:53).

From the Meiji Restoration until around 1900 the dominant concept of Tōkyō was that of a passive entity, an object, to be viewed from the outside. Most of the people who were involved in the modernization projects had a mechanistic view of the city. The emphasis was on the construction of a representative capital through monumental architecture, broad avenues, and public spaces. Tōkyō's modernization was a challenge to be met with modern technology. The question of the citizen's function within the process of social reorganization which accompanied the rebuilding of the city did not appear in the considerations at all.

One reason for this may be that Tōkyō's ruling elite mostly came from the western part of Japan and therefore had no personal link with the history and culture of the city. It was therefore quite easy for them to regard the city as an object for reform.

### 3. Rohan's *One Nation's Capital*

Rohan belongs to the generation of Meiji intellectuals who were the last to grow up under the traditional education system, and the first to confront the full impact of the modern ideas. He was born into an Edo family of craftsmen and combined both eagerness for progressive change and strong hostility towards the migrated samurais, who often had no love for Tōkyō but used it for the advancement of personal ambitions (Smith 1978:56). Rohan condemns the antiurban attitude of contemporary writers who often criticized the city as the source of all evil and praised the village as "paradise on earth" (Kōda 1993:11). In general he regards Tōkyō positively and postulates that the intellectuals' most important task should be the development of a method for the city's improvement (12).

Rohan argues against two positions: On the one hand he criticizes the conservative sentimentalists who longed for old Edo and concentrated on the evocation of the past instead of creating a vision of Tōkyō's future. At the end of the 1880s and into the 1890s there was a revival of Edo culture

and literature.<sup>13</sup> In a series of magazines issued in the 1890s nostalgic reminiscences and reprinted sources on Edo history were offered in an antiquated mode and rather sentimental spirit (Smith 1978:56). On the other hand Rohan's treatise is a harsh criticism of the government's technocratic policy for Tōkyō's reorganization.

Surprisingly, in *One Nation's Capital* there are no descriptions of architecture or streets. Rohan's concern is Tōkyō's social modernization. Therefore he focuses on the people who live in Tōkyō and make up the urban community. He perceives the city as a living subject. He sees every part of it as connected with the other parts and all parts as dependent on each other similar to an organism. On the basis of this image he creates a correlation of state, capital city, and citizen. Thus his criticism encompasses not only Tōkyō but the whole nation.

Rohan's reflections on Tōkyō are set in the context of the contemporary Western ideas that were transmitted to Japan during the Meiji period, and in the Japanese and Chinese thought forming the epistemological background of the reception of these Western ideas. When a Japanese thinker was using Western or Chinese ideas it should never be taken for granted that they had the same meaning as in their original context. Modern Japanese ideas are usually a mixture of indigenous Japanese and Japanese-interpreted Western ideas.

Rohan's mode of thought is basically shaped by the principles of Confucian ethics. His image of Tōkyō's contemporary condition – chaos – originates from Taoism. His evaluation of Tōkyō's condition is based on Confucian moral thought, and his conceptualization of time and his view of the future share important elements with the Western 19th century idea of progress. This amalgamation of ideas rooted in different cultures reflects the general circumstances of Meiji intellectual discourse. The intellectuals perceived their period as a time of transition and had to conceptually cope with tremendous change and diversity in social and cultural terms. Therefore, in Rohan's treatise the images of Tōkyō as chaos and organism appear as appropriate means to perceive the city which was the space where most of these changes took place.

Apart from the convincing modernity of Rohan's ideas of progress, change, and movement, his way of presenting his arguments, their

13 See KORNICKI 1981 und LANE 1968.



structure and moralizing diction, remind one of classical Chinese rhetorics such as those used in *Daxue* (jap.: *Daigaku*; The Great Learning). Rohan not only often points out the positive results that will be attained if his advice is followed but also explains the negative things that will happen if it is not (Kōda 1993:48).

How does Rohan approach the problem of rebuilding Tōkyō as Japan's capital city? He divides the urban space into two spheres: "material" or "visible" (*yūkei*) and "immaterial" or "invisible" (*mukei*). He states that, compared to Edo, astonishing progress has been achieved in a lot of "things" (*jibutsu*), and that customs and public morals have tremendously changed. He points out that there is "progress" (*shinpo*) in the material but "decline" (*suiraku*) in the immaterial sphere (Kōda 1993:15-16). Rohan is in search for a new spirit, a teleology, for Tōkyō's and Japan's future in order to compensate for the losses modernization has especially brought to the mental life of Tōkyō's citizens and their attitude towards the city. These losses are the reason for the unorganized condition of the city. Rohan's ideas concentrate on individuals and their responsibility for Tōkyō's condition and future. He especially emphasizes the question of how each citizen can be brought to participate in the creation of an urban community based on solidarity.

Although *One Nation's Capital* is not divided into chapters, three related parts can be made out:

1. In the first part of the text Rohan asks which terms are suitable for describing Tōkyō's condition. What constitutes a city in general? And what should be the basis for the citizen's relationship to the city? Here Rohan's thoughts focus on the future and reflect Western ideas such as those of the individual, community, and society. The terms he uses to express these ideas are neologisms coined during the Meiji period, such as *shakai* (society), or categories of premodern Japanese thought such as *jikaku* (self-awareness), originally a Buddhist term which during the Meiji period came to be the word for discussing the Western idea of the individual. Rohan's thoughts on the urban community show similarities to those of contemporary social thinkers in the East and West, such as Kang Youwei, Ebenezer Howard, and Ferdinand Tönnies. It appears that Rohan was familiar with the contemporary urban discourse in the West, and he had probably read some Western treatises on urban problems and general social questions.

2. In the middle part of the text Rohan describes new elements of the city's infrastructure such as the organisation of waste removal and a sewage system. He thinks both to be necessary for Tōkyō's functioning as Japan's capital city in terms of hygiene and representation (Kōda 1993:88-94). His considerations for communal institutions such as public parks and kindergartens show his concern for the needs of the inhabitants.

3. The last part of *One Nation's Capital* differs in important aspects from the other parts. Here Rohan outlines the history of Edo's pleasure districts and its prospering popular culture and he states that they caused Edo's decline. He points to the negative influence on the inhabitant's morals caused by Edo's popular culture and the pleasure districts that spread all over the city. Thus, the history of Edo becomes a history of moral decline. This judgement forms the background of his whole criticism. From this vantage point he warns that Tōkyō might decline like Edo did, and he attempts to make proposals about how the decline could be averted, and how Tōkyō's history could become a history of success and prosperity. Here no obvious connections with modern Western thought can be found. Rohan's ideas and language seem to belong to the past. He is talking about Tōkyō's future which is determined by a past regarded as immoral.

Rohan's criticism is based on the construction of a polarity between Edo and Tōkyō. He seems to perceive Edo and Tōkyō as two different cities and emphasizes the discontinuities caused by the Meiji reforms. In the Japanese paradigm of criticism of modernity it is a common feature to use the split in Tōkyō's history as an instrument for criticizing the changes which the Meiji reforms had brought against the background of its past. Edo serves as a mirror of Tōkyō's modernity. In contrast to Rohan, authors like Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) and Nagai Kafū (1879-1959), who also based their criticism on this polarity, depicted Edo's pleasure districts being synonymous with Edo's popular culture and life style and described them as a harmonious, homogenous urban space. In their works this part of Edo serves as a counterworld to modern Tōkyō, which they described as a place of fragmentation, disrapture and uncontrolled dynamics. Rohan, on the other hand, used the polarity Edo-Tōkyō for his criticism of modern Tōkyō in a completely different way. In his criticism the history of Edo is a history of moral decline and Edo serves as the negative model for Tōkyō's future.



It is astonishing how one-dimensional Rohan's argumentation is in this part of the text. His image of history is deterministic and inflexible. Rohan's study of history primarily seems to be a study in the service of ethics. The events of the past were only interesting to him in so far as they provided concrete examples of the way in which the moral principles enshrined in the classics had worked out in practice. For Rohan, Tōkyō's golden age lay at the beginning of the 17th century, when Edo was founded under Tokugawa Ieyasu and the urban community was well organized (Kōda 1993:139). He seems not to show the slightest interest in all the factors that determined politics towards the end of the Edo period, for instance, the tremendous social problems or the pressure from outside. According to Rohan Edo declined because of its pleasure districts. He regards Edo's popular culture, which considerably contributed to the city's fame, as harmful to the citizens' morality. This negative judgement of premodern popular culture is a modern view that shares elements with Confucianist and Protestant ideas about morals.

#### 4. Images of Tōkyō in Rohan's *One Nation's Capital*

##### 4. 1. Tōkyō as chaos

For Rohan Tōkyō is in every respect in a state of "chaos" (*konton*) and looks like an "unfinished product" (*miseihin*) (Kōda 1993:14). This is due to the fact that even the idea of what the capital city should be is "chaotic and without shape" (*konton mushō*) (51). In Rohan's thought chaos is the means for describing Tōkyō's state and serves as the image of crisis. Here crisis is to be understood as a situation where nothing yet has been decided and everything is open to change. In Taoist thought "chaos" (chin.: *hundun*; jap.: *konton*) is a central term and means a condition "that has its own internal principles of organization, change, order, and life" (Girardot 1983:59). It shares similarities with the current discourse on chaos theory in natural sciences and in city planning.<sup>14</sup> The image of *konton* is Rohan's tool to depict the city as being in a state of permanent change and flux. Actually, one of Tōkyō's most urgent problems at that time was that the

14 See ZIBELL 1995.

city's borders had not yet been defined. It was not clear where the city ended and where the countryside began (Kōda 1993:69-71).

*Konton* is etymologically related to the notion of water (Girardot 1983:95). Rohan's opinion that Tōkyō is "flooded" (*hanran*) by people who migrate from all over the country into the city (Kōda 1993:72), and is therefore getting filled with "people that are in flux" (*ryūdō no sei aru mono*) (79), is reflected in the image of *konton*. Furthermore, *konton* implies a cycle of creation and destruction and is linked to the idea of a perfect society (Girardot 1983:69). Rohan makes an allusion to a very famous passage in *Zhuang Zi* which most of his contemporary readers were probably familiar with:

Is not the reason for this that Tōkyō is in a "chaotic" (*konton*) condition but has not yet got the "seven holes" (*shichikyō*)? (Kōda 1993:14)

"Seven holes" is a quotation from the story of "Emperor Hundun (jap.: *konton*) of the Center" in *Zhuang Zi* and means the seven openings of the senses: two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and the mouth. The story of Emperor Hundun may throw light on the theme of "returning to the beginning" and on one of Rohan's intentions in describing Tōkyō as "chaos":

The Emperor of the South was called Shu. The Emperor of the North was called Hu. And the Emperor of the Center was called Hundun. Shu and Hu at times mutually came together and met in Hundun's territory. Hundun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu, then, discussed how they could reciprocate Hundun's virtue saying: "Men all have 'seven openings' (jap.: *shichikyō*) in order to see, hear, eat, and breathe. He alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some." Each day they bored one hole, and on the seventh day Hundun died. (Girardot 1983:81)

Various interpretations of this passage exist but one of the most convincing with regard to Rohan's statement is Marcel Granet's. Granet stresses the significance and prestige of becoming completely human or civilized by having the seven openings of the senses that give one a face (Girardot 1983:83-84).

During the Meiji period *konton* and the metaphor of *shichikyō* (seven holes) not only had a Taoist connotation but were also important terms in the discourse on civilization which was deeply influenced by the Western theory of progress, by positivism and Social Darwinism. There *konton* has

a completely different meaning than in Taoism. It means primitive chaos and points to the lowest stage of barbarism.<sup>15</sup> In Katō Hiroyuki's (1836-1916) treatise "On Civilization" (*Bunmei kaikai*; 1874) the idea that the senses or *shichikyō* are an asset of civilization is also stated. There Katō writes that

even if the head is not a tenth of the whole body it must be viewed as the most important part, as ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, all important things, are arranged there. The idea that the human soul is located in the head is an interesting idea. In former times it was said to be found in the breast. [...] There is nothing as important [in the human body] as the head. (Quoted in Iyama 1996:10)

Applied to Tōkyō's condition as depicted in *One Nation's Capital* the Taoist meaning of the word *konton*, as well as its meaning in the Meiji discourse on civilization, describe a similar situation: not yet "civilized". Through this double-bound quotation Rohan criticizes the government's policy of 'civilization' of which Tōkyō's reorganization is an important target. Although in Rohan's view Tōkyō is "not yet civilized", which means that the government's policy of modernization has not yet shown satisfying results, he regards the condition of *konton* positively. Tōkyō was still in a state of chaos. It had not yet been formed. But what should be formed?

#### 4. 2. Tōkyō as an organism

To depict the city in writing the author must first create analogies and metaphors for constructing its reality. Rohan sees Tōkyō as an organism. In contrast to the image of chaos that serves to describe Tōkyō's condition, the image of an organism forms the matrix of his discussion of the central functions that in his opinion the capital city has to fulfil. Rohan mainly focuses on the function of the city as a social organism. On account of this image the citizen and the community become the focus of his criticism.

In Japan a variety of texts dealing with urban topics exists, but as far as I know none of them presents the city as a community in social or

15 See BLACKER 1964:34-35. For example, Carmen Blacker points out that Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901) divided the lower stages of barbarism into four 'kinds', the lowest called *konton*. According to Fukuzawa the aborigines of Australia and New Guinea belong to this group.

political terms as Rohan's. Thus, his image of the city as an organism seems to be a novelty. Conceiving the city by making analogies to the proportions of the human body has a long tradition in European urban thought.<sup>16</sup> But it seems that especially during the 19th and 20th centuries the image of the city as organism gained new meaning. Due to important inventions in the 19th century in the natural sciences and due to the central position of streams of thought such as biologism, organicism, and Darwinism the organism became a common metaphor for the conceptualization of the city and society. To imagine the city as an organism makes it possible to use a whole set of categories to describe various kinds of urban phenomena. On account of the tremendous growth in population the cities' size then lost every link to anthropometrical proportions. A city conceived of as an organism no longer meant to design it on the basis of human proportions, but rather seeing it as a living being and applying characteristics to the city such as movement, fluidity, and diversity in order to cope conceptually with its growing size and changing structure.

In the 19th century discourse on urban improvement, hygienic and medical aspects of city life were essential topics. Thus, the metaphor of illness often appears in descriptions of the living conditions in the cities and it was common to talk about the "disease of civilization" (*bun-meibyō*)<sup>17</sup>. The city was not only a source of diseases for its population but also ill itself and longing for a cure. Furthermore, the image of the city as an organism was a useful tool to discuss the city in social and political terms both in the West and in Japan. It implies the correlation between

16 For example, the 15th century architect Filarete was the first to introduce anthropometrical proportions into the construction of cities and to depict the city as a human body. This image became the reference system of Renaissance architecture (KRUFT 1991:58). Francesco di Giorgio Martini, an early Renaissance theorist of architecture, relates the analogy between city and house, as postulated by Alberti, to the proportions of man who himself contains the cosmic order (KRUFT 1991:63). This correlation between earth, man, and cosmos is also characteristic for traditional Chinese thought. In the Middle Ages the European city was supposed to be a faithful copy of the human beings' inner structure and their thoughts (TAUT 1995:93). Due to scientific progress in biology and physiology during the 18th century the city (SENNETT 1994:255-270), for example Paris, was usually described in biological terms (LEES 1984:70). This tradition of perceiving the city as an organism continues into the 20th century.

17 See GLUCK 1985:161 and 177 and LOFTUS 1985:191.

city, urban society, and nation.<sup>18</sup> How does Rohan use the image of the organism? In *One Nation's Capital* he writes:

One nation's "capital" (*shuto*) is like the head of a human being. It is equipped with all kinds of high-grade facilities and is the place from which all activities arise and to which they return. Therefore, because the capital city's influence on the whole country is exceedingly strong, the good or bad situation in the capital city becomes instantly the good or bad situation in the whole country. This is the same as the fact that the good or bad situation of the head becomes instantly the good or bad situation of the whole body. (Kōda 1993:9)

*Shuto* literally means "head-capital". It is an old Chinese term for the capital and was introduced as a term for the capital city in the Meiji period. The usage of *shuto* reflects an important shift that had taken place in the 19th century in Western thought. Instead of the heart the brain was now regarded as the most important part of the body and it became a central metaphor in social and political thought. This metaphor is directly connected to the Meiji expression for the capital (Iyama 1996:9-12).

Rohan correlates the capital, the nation, and the citizen through the image of the organism. Thus Tōkyō is part of the network that creates the nation. It serves not only as a model for the whole country but it also leads it in everything. If it is in bad shape, the rest of the country is, too. On the basis of this analogy Rohan constructs a network of correlations of all parts of society. According to Rohan, every event that takes place in Tōkyō influences the whole country. The capital city transmits to the periphery not only material novelties but also changes in the mental world:

Also it is obvious that the capital city has a great influence on language and public morals of the people of the nation, on their ideas and customs, and on the system. (Kōda 1993:9)

18 In his famous treatise *Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft* (Community and Society; 1887) Tönnies described the city, urban life and society in biological terms and defined the city as a "social organism" (TÖNNIES 1995:126). Johann Kaspar Bluntschli (1808-1881), a specialist in public law whose writings were known in Japan, developed in *Allgemeines Staatsrecht* (General Constitutional Law; 1872) the idea that the order of the state is comparable to that of the human organism. The German architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) referred to premodern city planning in a critique of classical city planning and used the expression "state organism" (*Staatsorganismus*) (SCHUMANN 1995:96).



Thus no hierarchy exists between the capital city and the periphery. Their "relationship is mutual" (*sōgō no kankei*) (Kōda 1993:10), that means it is organized horizontally, not vertically, as would be typical for Confucian thought. Through this correlation Rohan's criticism refers to the whole nation. Because of this tight mutual relationship, a "rich" (*furyoku*) country has "virtue" (*tokuryoku*) and "knowledge" (*chiryoku*), and therefore will never have a "bad" capital city:

Therefore, one can also say that the capital city is an instrument for inspecting the state of health of the people. That is to say that the capital city represents the people. (Kōda 1993:10)

Rohan describes Tōkyō's condition mainly on the basis of aesthetic categories that are deeply rooted in Confucian thought. The city is not a machine that can be reformed merely through modern technology. It is an organism that has to become "good" from the inside. The binary terms "good" (*zen/zenbi*) and "bad" (*aku*) are Rohan's means of judging Tōkyō's state in aesthetic, moral and hygienic terms (Kōda 1993:12-13). In his opinion the city is "bad" at present and requires the "good" for its future. In Confucian thought the "good" (*zen*) means shape, system, order, and harmony.

It is interesting to note that in the propaganda of the hygienic movement in Europe during the 19th century "good" meant hygienic as well as moral cleanliness (Berndt 1987:143) and social engineers intended to replace moral with hygiene (Sennett 1994:256). This equation of ethical with ontological principles is typical for Confucian thinking and was also common in 19th century Western social thought, which was influenced by Protestantism and Puritanism. These streams of thought share common characteristics and contributed important elements to Meiji discourse on urban reform.

For Rohan cleanliness is similar to order. He talks about "the way of hygiene" (*eisei no michi*) and thus integrates hygienic matters into the Confucian order of society. Apart from the abstract connotation of "clean" as morally good Rohan makes concrete suggestions of how the hygienic situation in Tōkyō could be improved, as for example through the construction of a sewage system and the organisation of waste removal (Kōda 1993:88-94). Even if in Rohan's opinion the situation of Tōkyō has become better in hygienic and aesthetic terms, there is still a lot to do in order to achieve real progress (93-94).

An important aspect of the image of the city as an organism is the implication that it is a subject which is able to act. According to Rohan Tōkyō is comparable to an organism that urgently needs reform because there is a lack of “purposeful movement” (*mokuteki aru undō*). Only “purposeful movement” will create a “capital city that is alive” (*seimei aru shuto*) and make it prosper more from day to day (Kōda 1993:48). Edo serves here as the negative model:

When Edo was moving with purpose, it was prospering. But when it slowed down in the “activity that desired the good” (*zenbi o yoku suru no undō eisaku*), “it soon declined” (*tsuini horobiru*). (Kōda 1993:48)

The idea of “purposeful movement” relates to the idea of progress. Accordingly, Rohan perceives the city as something that is not static but permanently moving. This image of movement is quite unusual for Meiji texts about Tōkyō.<sup>19</sup> But in fact Tōkyō was not able to act independently, because at the turn of the century it was still ruled by the central government. The mayor was elected by the city council only from 1898 on. The image of an organism probably expresses the city’s population’s wish for administrative autonomy.

Another important aspect of Rohan’s use of the image of Tōkyō as an organism is that Tōkyō becomes an object of love. In Rohan’s view there are two reasons for the “decline of the city” (*tofu no suiraku*): the citizen’s passive attitude towards the city and egoism that does not care for anything but personal matters (Kōda 1993:62). He regards it as the duty of the “empire’s people” (*teikoku no tami*) to contribute to the city’s good and to reform the bad. Tōkyō’s prosperity and moral and aesthetic conditions rest not only upon the buildings that are made by its people. They also depend on the people’s emotions for the city (13). In order to improve, Tōkyō needs its citizens’ “love” (*ai*) (12-14). *Ai* is a central term in Confucian thought. Rohan requires a close-knit relationship between Tōkyō and its citizens. In this respect, he makes the city a beloved object through anthropomorphization and thus reduces the emotional distance between city and citizens.

19 See for comparison the documents of the discussion of *shiku kaisei* (Reorganization of the City Boroughs) in FUJIMORI 1990:3-205.



## 4. 3. Community and citizen

The image of the city as an organism implies the notion of movement and circulation (Stierle 1993:280). Because of this biological character its basic condition is first growth and then decline. Chaos and organism share common characteristics: Their condition is never fixed and they are always in flux. Rohan applies the image of flux and permanent movement to his description of Tōkyō's community. On account of migration into the city and the evolution of new social structures after the abolishment of the feudal system, Tōkyō's citizens were a mixture of people who had lived there before and people who had come from all over the country.

He compares Tōkyō's situation to that of Edo. Due to the *sankin-kōtai*-system<sup>20</sup> Edo's population was, like that of Tōkyō, very diverse. But according to Rohan all of these people became "natives of Edo" (*Edokko*) after having settled there for a while. He suggests that the same will happen with Tōkyō's population: it will soon become the "people of Tōkyō" (*Tōkyō no tami*). He expects that in Tōkyō like in Edo, in this "huge melting pot" (*ichidai rutsubo*), all these different people will fuse together to form the "capital city's people" (*shuto no tami*) (Kōda 1993:45).

Rohan regards the diversity of Tōkyō's population in a very positive light: The city is a place where individuals have countless possibilities for contact with each other. Therefore Tōkyō's people will "reach many things in common and many different things" and the amalgamation of their thoughts will create a new consciousness of the city (Kōda 1993:48-49). He stresses that it is important for Tōkyō's prosperity that its citizens think in different ways.<sup>21</sup> In Rohan's opinion it is the citizen who creates the city:

There is no need to discuss the fact that the question of whether the city is beautiful or not, or whether it is good or not, also depends on the awareness of the single individual towards the "city" (*tofu*). Therefore each self is a particle

20 See footnote 7.

21 This reminds us of Richard Sennett's dictum that the city is a "culture of difference". *The Conscience of the Eye. The Design and Social Life of Cities*, the title of a publication by Sennett, is translated in German as "Civitas: Die Großstadt und die Kultur des Unterschieds" (Civitas: The Metropolis and the Culture of Difference). See SENNETT 1991.

of the capital city, and the acts, words, and thoughts of each self influence and greatly stimulate the outer shape and the inner content of the city. To develop consciousness of the things that make the city ugly or beautiful, is it not true that someone has to live there and have enough spare time to sing of the city in a not profit oriented emotional and poetic way? Following the light of self-awareness the self should discover a number of dark points that are mistakes of past times and then develop the feeling that these must be corrected and reformed as fast as possible and, following this, it could busy itself with the realization. [...] The "people of the city" (*tomin*) are its owners. The city is a huge tassel composed of many fine threads. Whether the city shines or not depends on whether each single person in the city possesses light or not. Whether the city is clean or not depends on whether every single person loves cleanliness or not. The selves and the city are like one body [...]. (Kōda 1993:37-39)

The Western idea of the autonomous individual had an enormous impact on the Meiji discourse on civilization. Rohan's call for "self-awakened" and "self-aware", independent and moral citizens fits into the mainstream of Meiji intellectual thought. *One Nation's Capital* can be regarded as Rohan's contribution to the discussion of the new citizen. Special to his considerations is the fact that he extends the idea of the individual to the urban citizen who is equipped with a sense of responsibility towards the community where he lives. From Rohan's point of view the people of Tōkyō are in a state of diversity and flux and therefore the consciousness of building a community has not yet evolved. The city struggles with a lack of "love" (*ai*) and its citizens feel no identity as citizens of Tōkyō. Its future depends on the development of the ideal citizen who should also serve as a model for the nation.

The question of what individuals should be and how their relationship to the state was supposed to be was one of the most discussed topics in Meiji intellectual discourse and can be found in nearly every text on society, culture, and philosophy. Especially after the introduction of the writings of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Social Darwinist thought the idea of the individual and the new citizen, in general, the search for an "Ethics for the New Society" (Havens 1970:141), became a central topic in the works of thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), Meiji Japan's leading interpreters of English liberalism, and Katō Hiroyuki, who was deeply involved in the study of Social Darwinism. All were major members of the *Meirokeisha* (Meiji 6 Society), founded in 1874. This group was dedicated to drastically

reforming the character of the Japanese people.<sup>22</sup> The shared assumption of all members of the society was that radical reform of the morals and spirit of the Japanese people was the first essential task for Japan's modernization. They were in search of a new "spirit of civilization". For instance, one of Fukuzawa's central ideas was that Japan needed a new kind of citizen with a new set of values rather than new armies, technology, industries, institutions, or laws. "Civilization" was not a matter of material things, but of the way people thought. In 1872 Fukuzawa wrote in *Gakumon no Susume* (An Encouragement of Learning):

Schools, industries, armies and navies are the mere external forms of civilisation. They are not difficult to produce. All that is needed is the money to pay for them. Yet there remains something immaterial, something that cannot be seen or heard, bought or sold, lent or borrowed. It pervades the whole nation and its influence is so strong that without it none of the schools or the other external forms would be of the slightest use. This supremely important thing we must call the spirit of civilisation.<sup>23</sup>

In 1898 Fukuzawa reflected on the relationship between "independence and self-respect" (*dokuritsu jison*) and "the independence of a nation" (Huang 1972:91). He was of the opinion that to acquire national dignity the Japanese must adopt a new set of morals patterned on that of England. This statement reflects the influence of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859), a small but important book translated by Nakamura Masanao and published in 1871, which most successfully propagated Victorian morality (Huang 1972:91). Katō Hiroyuki postulated that modern national power stemmed from the energies of Western individuals and societies and that a representative government must be built upon certain definite qualities of the people (Huang 1972:90). The source of the immense power of modern nation-states lay for him in the unification of state and society. Representative institutions were dependent on the existence of a politically conscious and active body of citizens. The secret of Western power and progress lay in the distinctive character of Western individuals.

22 Intellectual society founded 1 February 1874 for the purpose of "promoting civilization and enlightenment". Through its journal, the *Meiroke zasshi* (Meiji 6 journal) and public lectures, the society played a leading role in introducing and popularizing Western ideas during the early Meiji period. Its 33 members included some of Japan's most eminent educators, bureaucrats, and thinkers.

23 Quoted from BLACKER 1964:31. For the original see FUKUZAWA 1959:58.

These ideas form the background of Rohan's thoughts on the modern citizen. In *One Nation's Capital* Rohan stresses the idea of self-cultivation. Individuals must cultivate physical, moral and intellectual strength. They should possess the desire for improvement. Therefore the three "powers" that make up the country, the "power of wealth" (*furyoku*), the "power of virtue" (*tokuryoku*), and the "power of knowledge" (*chiryoku*) (Kōda 1993:10), can also be regarded as the main characteristics of the new citizens. They must cultivate a capacity for acting as members of the community by developing a national consciousness and a regard for public welfare. Rohan summarizes the predominant characteristics of the new citizen with the term *jikaku* ([self-]awareness or [self-]awakening). For Rohan *jikaku* means "real knowledge, real morality, and real emotion" (31). *Jikaku* is related to the whole social world – science, morality, and art – and appears as the magic formula for Tōkyō's social reorganization. According to Rohan, *jikaku* creates "ideals" (*risō*) and "faith" (*shinkō*) (47). Both combine to form a "purposeful movement", the telos, that "facing the light [will] advance" (*kōmei ni mukatte o susumuru*) (47-48). The aim of such movement is a "capital city that is alive" (*inochi aru shuto*) and changing day by day (48).

## 5. Conclusion

Rohan wrote this treatise at a time when problems connected with Japan's modernization reached a peak, in particular industrialization, urbanization, and the quest for national identity, that already showed signs of incipient nationalism. Tōkyō became a symbol for Japan's modernization after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Due to the diversity of intellectual trends at the turn of the century, Rohan's text is an amalgamation of contemporary Western and Japanese ideas about the "hard city", its architecture and infrastructure, i.e. the city one can locate in maps and statistics, as well as of the "soft city", the city of illusion and aspiration.<sup>24</sup>

Rohan's proposals for the modernization of Tōkyō were unique and radical. He advocated a total rebuilding of the city instead of the show-case reforms of the government. His ideal was not a *teito* (imperial capital) but

24 The expressions of "soft city" and "hard city" were originally used by RABAN 1988:10.

rather a *taito* (great capital) (Smith 1978:56). Viewed from the present day, Rohan's ideas also have nationalistic implications, but in the context of his time nationalism was a common feature.

Rohan's broad perception of the problem of Tōkyō's modernization is narrowed again at the end of his treatise. The autonomous individual disappears from his thoughts. His view of history follows the pattern of a 'history of decline' which is rooted in Chinese thought. In this respect *One Nation's Capital* is not a universal treatise on the modern city. In line with Confucianism, Rohan refers to the real and to the concrete, namely Tōkyō, the city where he lives.

Rohan's idea of the individual and his emphasis on self-cultivation probably is a reaction against the kind of 'selfish person' created by industrialization. *One Nation's Capital* can be read as Rohan's attempt to overcome the alienation Japan's modernization had caused the individual with the help of the idea of a new urban community. In this respect he criticizes the government's mechanical view of the city and its policy of treating Tōkyō as an object. The image of the city as chaos, organism, and community are Rohan's tools to conceptualize the city and its problems. It is interesting to notice that recently Western city planning has adopted elements of chaos theory in order to break through the all too rigid norms of modern architecture and city planning. The postmodern use of chaos theory resembles Rohan's idea of chaos to a certain extent.

Furthermore, *One Nation's Capital* can also be regarded as a manifest of Confucian thinking in the modern age. Probably Rohan wanted to show that categories such as "love" (*ai* or *aijō*), "virtue" (*toku*) and "knowledge" (*chi*), which stem from Chinese thought, are not only still valid both for the description of modern phenomena and for the conception of the future of the capital city, but that they gain importance in the face of the alienations modern urban society has to cope with. Viewed from the present, Rohan's treatise convincingly shows that cities are not only made up of buildings, streets, and other infrastructures but also of the people who live there. In this sense modern urban society does not only need more new technologies in order to cope with its problems but first and foremost a new idea of community.



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