

Ph.D. Thesis

Name of candidate: Akihiro Sugino

London School of Economics and Political Science

Title of thesis:

Work and the blind identity in Japan with  
reference to the British experience

1997

UMI Number: U109757

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U109757

Published by ProQuest LLC 2014. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346



THESES

F

7494

644984

## Abstract

This thesis explores Japanese employment policy for blind people in the context of the current decline of their traditionally reserved occupations.

The thesis presents an historical analysis of the rise and fall of the occupational guild of the blind since the thirteenth century. The study focuses on blind people's attempts to reinforce their traditionally reserved occupations in the context of the emergence of Japanese social policy in the early twentieth century. Archival research suggests that the government refused to restore blind people's monopoly of massage under the influence of Western medicine and fashionable British integrationist ideas, the latter of which increasingly influenced the postwar policy despite the absence of any significant success in employment of the blind in ordinary industries.

In order to assess the credibility of the government's belief in open employment, the development of British employment policy for the blind is explored. The analysis focuses on blind people's commitment to sheltered workshops, and suggests that the shift to open employment was largely caused by the government's concerns over the financial cost of providing sheltered workshops.

The historical analysis in Japan and Britain demonstrates that protected employment was gradually eroded despite blind people's demand for preferential treatment. It was in this context that some blind people began to seek employment within the sighted world, but, in both countries, the blind identity was maintained in separation from the sighted.

Based on in-depth interviews with 38 blind people and two postal surveys involving 323 blind people in Japan, the second part of the thesis explores why and how the blind identity is generated in the employment field, and how blind people themselves perceive work and equality.

The thesis concludes that whereas the blind identity is generated by separation at work, that separation is not only due to social oppression but also to voluntary disengagement from sighted society and engagement in the blind community.



## List of Tables

Table 0.1	Number of licensed masseurs and acupuncturists between 1960 and 1990 in Japan	p10
Table 0.2	Characteristics of blind people involved in the main interviews	P22
Table 3.1	Comparison of Blind Persons Act and the Tillet Bill in Britain	P138
Table 5.1	Weekly earnings of blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture in 1993	P183
Table 5.2	Weekly earnings of blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by sex	P195
Table 5.3	Weekly earnings of blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by four age groups	P196
Table 5.4	Degree of dependence on disability pensions among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture in 1993	P196
Table 5.5	Degree of dependence on disability pensions among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by sex	P197

Table 5.6	Degree of dependence on disability pensions among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by four age groups	P197
Table 5.7	Preference of employment status among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by current employment status	P200
Table 5.8	Opinions of blind masseurs about the way to protect their employment	P205
Table 6.1	Job satisfaction of blind workers at private firms	P251
Table 6.2	Job satisfaction of blind workers at private firms by the type of work	P252
Table 6.3	Difference between the blind and the sighted recognised by blind workers at private firms	P253
Table 6.4	Aspects of difference between the blind and the sighted recognised by blind workers at private firms by the type of work	P255
Table 7.1	Number of disabled persons in quota employment at private firms between 1961 and 1994 in Japan	P289

## **Acknowledgements**

My thanks are due to the Osaka Prefectural School for the Blind, the Osaka Municipal School for the Blind, and the Japan Light House for making the research possible.

I am indebted to a number of people for help with this study. In particular, I would like to thank my supervisor, Miss Sally Sainsbury, for her consistent support and encouragement. I should also like to thank Professor Jane Lewis, Professor Martin Bulmer and Professor Aubrey McKennell for their advice in the early stages.

However, my warmest thanks must be reserved for blind people who gave so much of their time to tell me about their lives.



## Introduction

The present research project was originally conceived during my five-years experience as one of the teaching staff at a special school for the blind in Japan. The Japanese system of special education of the blind is unique not only in comparison with the British counterpart but also with the special education of other categories of disabled people in Japan. Firstly, unlike other special schools, such as those for deaf, physically disabled and mentally handicapped children, the special schools for the blind give admission not only to visually impaired children but also to adults who are visually impaired in later of life. In that sense, Japanese special schools for the blind play both the role of special schools for visually impaired children and that of rehabilitation institutions for adventitiously visually impaired adults as well. Secondly, compared with other special schools, greater emphasis is placed on vocational education in the case of the blind. About a half of the students and a third of the teaching staff of the special schools for the blind are engaged in the vocational training courses at the schools. Thirdly, the vocational education is predominantly geared to the occupations of "anma", or traditional Japanese massage, and acupuncture. Among seventy special schools for the blind in Japan, there are only seven schools which provide training in occupations other than *anma* massage and acupuncture, such as those of physiotherapists, piano-tuners and music teachers. Finally, all teachers of *anma* massage and acupuncture have themselves graduated from one of these schools for the blind, and therefore, are themselves visually impaired. In 1994, the visually impaired teachers of *anma* and acupuncture formed nearly twenty percent of all teaching staff at the

special schools for the blind.<sup>1</sup>

These unique characteristics of Japanese special schools for the blind have historical origins. During the medieval period, 1192 to 1600, the blind formed their own occupational guild, 'the blind guild', and monopolised particular occupations such as chanting and music entertainment. In the seventeenth century, the Tokugawa military monarch extended the reserved occupations to include "anma" and, to a lesser extent, acupuncture. Since that time the correlation between 'the blind' and 'anma massage' had been so prevalent in Japanese culture that the term "anma" often meant "the blind". However, in 1871, the Meiji government, Japan's first modern State government, introduced free trade to Japan. As a result, the "blind guild" was dissolved, and sighted people were allowed to engage in the occupations of anma massage and acupuncture. Moreover, in accordance with the 'Westernisation-and-modernisation' policy in general, the Meiji government established a health policy based on Western medical science. This endangered the professional status of traditional medical practitioners, including anma masseurs and acupuncturists.

Fearful of both the dissolution of the blind guild and the official recognition of the superiority of Western medicine over traditional Japanese medicine, blind master acupuncturists tried to maintain their prerogatives as much as possible. It was in this context that the schools of anma and acupuncture for the blind were gradually established in the late 19th century by blind master

---

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Education currently provides only the total number of teaching staff at the blind schools, and does not provide any data about visually impaired teachers. However, the number of visually impaired teachers can be roughly estimated from the membership of the Association of Teachers of Anma Massage and Acupuncture (*Rikyōren*). In 1994, the number of teachers at the blind schools were 3,517, and the membership of *Rikyōren* were about 644.

acupuncturists. These were small private schools where the traditional master-apprentice relationship of the blind guild could be maintained under the guise of modern educational institutions. According to the works of Kato [1972, 1991], who studied the development of special education of the blind in Japan, the Japanese special schools for the blind had two different historical origins: charitable schools for blind children and the schools of *anma* and acupuncture for blind young adults. The latter origin must be emphasised because it is the only explanation for the unique characteristics of the Japanese special schools for the blind.

Throughout this thesis, the term 'blind schools' is used for the special schools for the blind in Japan. The term implies that these are "the schools of the blind" which were set up by the blind themselves for their own interests, rather than "the schools for the blind" which were established for the sake of the blind by sighted philanthropists. Based on my own experience at a blind school, I gradually realised that both the traditionally reserved occupations of *anma* and acupuncture and the blind schools provided the blind with the sense of community. Despite the abolition of the blind guild in 1871, *anma* and acupuncture remained as the commonest occupations of visually impaired people. According to the official survey of disabled people in general which was conducted in 1991 by the Ministry of Health and Welfare<sup>2</sup>, 49 percent of visually impaired adults between 18 and 59 years of age were in paid work, and of those 34 percent engaged in *anma* and acupuncture. Thus, the traditionally reserved occupations are still a significant resource for the employment of

---

<sup>2</sup> *Kōseishō Shakaikyoku Kōseika* (Rehabilitation Department, Social Administration Bureau, the Ministry of Health and Welfare), *Nihon no Shintai Shōgaisha: Heisei 3nen Shintai Shōgaisha Jittai Chōsa Hōkoku* (Disabled People in Japan: The Report of the 1991 Survey of Disabled People), 1994, Daiichi Hōki.

visually impaired people. The shared interest in their reserved occupations provide visually impaired people with a group identity as 'blind *anma* masseurs', and consequently, the sense of a 'blind community'. Furthermore, this sense of community has always provided the ground for the political lobbying by visually impaired people for their welfare, especially in relation to education, employment and income. However, the foundation of the 'blind community' has recently become increasingly insecure.

The majority of *anma* masseurs and acupuncturists had always been visually impaired even after the Meiji government allowed sighted people to engage in these occupations in 1871. After the second World War, however, the proportion of visually impaired practitioners among all masseurs and acupuncturists declined steadily because of the growth in the number of sighted practitioners. (See Table 0.1)

Table 0.1 Number of licensed masseurs and acupuncturists between 1960 and 1990 in Japan <sup>3</sup>						
Year	Masseurs			Acupuncturists		
	All	V/I <sup>4</sup>	V/I %	All	V/I	V/I %
1960	49,194	30,295	62%	31,213	14,467	46%
1970	62,923	35,172	56%	35,296	16,368	46%
1979	80,123	39,247	49%	46,341	19,389	42%
1990	91,969	35,144	38%	60,546	18,912	31%

Moreover, during the 1980s, visually impaired practitioners decreased not only proportionately but also in absolute terms. Between 1979 and 1990, the number of visually

<sup>3</sup> Source: Kōseishō (the Ministry of Health and Welfare), *Kōsei Tōkei Yōran* (Annual Health and Welfare Statistics), 1992, Kōsei Tōkei Kyōkai.

<sup>4</sup> Visually impaired practitioners.

impaired masseurs fell by about 4,000, and their proportion among all masseurs was in 1990 less than 40 percent. As to the number and proportion of visually impaired acupuncturists, as in the case of visually impaired masseurs, not only the proportion but also the number decreased in the 1980s. The statistics suggest that visually impaired masseurs and acupuncturists may currently experience tougher competition than before from their sighted counterparts.

As sighted practitioners outnumber blind practitioners, it becomes more and more difficult for the latter to be successful in the field of *anma* and acupuncture. For instance, while blind practitioners normally treat their patients at their own parlours or clinics, sighted practitioners visit the patient's home. As the 'out-reach' treatment of sighted practitioners becomes prevalent, blind practitioners lose their potential clients. The growth in the number of sighted practitioners also makes it difficult for blind people to enter the field of *anma* and acupuncture.

Those who want to practise massage and acupuncture have to take the examination for the licence. In the past, the examination board consisted largely of the teachers of blind schools because the majority of applicants came from the blind schools. Blind applicants, therefore, could often find familiar questions in the examination because it was devised by their teachers. However, the examination board is currently dominated largely by the teachers of sighted schools of massage and acupuncture because the majority of applicants are now sighted. As a consequence, blind applicants have to answer unfamiliar questions in the examination which is devised by the teachers of sighted schools. As the examination for the licence becomes tougher for blind applicants than before, so does the admission to the courses of *anma* and acupuncture at blind schools. The schools currently tend to select students more carefully than before so as to ensure that all of them can be successful in the examination for the licence. For those who are less capable in academic achievement it is

currently more difficult than before to be admitted to the courses of massage and acupuncture.

While the number of blind masseurs and acupuncturists has recently declined, and is likely to continue to decline in the future, the number of students at blind schools has also decreased. The student number doubled from 3,000 to 6,000 between 1924 and 1944. During the 1950s, the number grew further to more than 10,000 in 1960, largely because the government made it mandatory for county councils to provide special education for visually impaired children between six and fifteen years of age. However, the number of students at blind schools has steadily decreased since 1965, and in 1994 there were less than 5,000 students.<sup>5</sup> The decrease of student numbers is largely due to the decrease in the population of visually impaired children. The Ministry of Health and Welfare estimated in 1960 that there were about 18,000 visually impaired children under seventeen years of age. However, the current estimate of the number of those children is less than 4,000.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, with the decrease in student numbers, the blind schools have to meet the increasingly diversified needs of students with a variety of problems. For instance, the proportion of those with additional impairments has increased, and includes blind children with mental handicap, and blind adults with severe diabetes. There are more children with behaviour problems than before. Accordingly, health care and personal care have recently

---

<sup>5</sup> Sources:  
*Monbushō* (The Ministry of Education), *Monbushō Nenpō* (Annual Reports of the Ministry of Education), *Monbushō*.  
*Monbushō*, *Gakkō Kihon Chōsa Hōkokusho* (Annual Reports of School Surveys), *Okurashō Insatsukyoku*.

<sup>6</sup> Source:  
*Kōseishō Shakaikyoku Kōseika* (Rehabilitation Department, Social Administration Bureau, the Ministry of Health and Welfare), *Nihon no Shintai Shōgaisha: Heisei 3nen Shintai Shōgaisha Jittai Chōsa Hōkoku* (Disabled People in Japan: The Report of the 1991 Survey of Disabled People), 1994, *Daiichi Hōki*.

become as important as vocational education at the blind schools. Vocational guidance also has to be adjusted to the diversification of students. In the past, almost all students went through the course of *anma* massage and acupuncture for their future careers. However, partly because of increasing difficulties in passing the examination for the licence of massage and acupuncture, and partly because of the increasing proportion of the students with additional impairments, the schools have to look for alternative occupations. Furthermore, under the influence of the United Nations' campaign for the International Year for Disabled People, in the 1980s the government tried to create more job opportunities for blind people by reinforcing a quota employment scheme<sup>7</sup>. As a consequence, there are currently more students than before who leave blind schools for jobs other than massage and acupuncture.

As the primary emphasis gradually shifts away from the training of *anma* massage and acupuncture, the role of visually impaired teachers at blind schools becomes less significant than before. In the early days of blind schools, visually impaired teachers held the power at school. In 1924, they formed forty percent of all teaching staff.<sup>8</sup> They were trained in the special training course for teachers for the blind which was originally founded in 1903 at the highly-regarded Tokyo National Special School

---

<sup>7</sup> The 1.1 percent employment quota and placement services for disabled people were originally introduced in 1960 by *Shintai Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin-ho*, or the Employment Act for Physically Disabled People. Subsequently in 1976, levies and grants were introduced in order to reinforce the quota employment scheme. The employers who did not fill their quota now had to pay levies while those employing more than their quota received grants. However, until the 1980s, these government measures affected not so much blind people as others, for example, deaf people and those with mobility disabilities. In the 1980s, the Ministry of Labour set targets specifically for the quota employment of blind people, as well as that of mentally handicapped people.

<sup>8</sup> *Monbusho* (The Ministry of Education), *Monbusho Nenpo* (Annual Report of the Ministry of Education), 1925, Monbusho.

for the Blind.<sup>9</sup> Although the proportion of visually impaired teachers of *anma* and acupuncture among the teaching staff of the blind schools has decreased since 1924 largely due to the steady increase of sighted teachers, the authors of a history of special education suggest that these visually impaired teachers had always been "the core and the leaders among the teaching staff of the blind schools" [Arakawa, Ooi & Nakano 1976:78].<sup>10</sup> However, as a result of the current changes in blind schools, visually impaired teachers of *anma* and acupuncture appear to be less powerful than before at school. In 1994 they accounted for only less than 20 percent of the teaching staff of blind schools.

All these recent changes at blind schools, the decrease in student numbers, the diversified needs of students, and the decline in the power of visually impaired teachers, make it difficult to maintain the sense of community at blind schools. The students taking the course of *anma* and acupuncture are predominantly concerned about a tough examination for the professional certificate. Those who do not take the *anma* and acupuncture course are looking for available job opportunities in quota employment. The teachers and parents of those with severe mental handicap

---

<sup>9</sup> After the second World War, in 1950, the training course was attached to the Tokyo University of Education. Later in 1969, it was replaced by the Attached Special College of Teachers of *Anma* Massage and Acupuncture, the Tokyo University of Education. Currently, the College is attached to Tsukuba University, since the Tokyo University of Education was in 1977 reorganized as Tsukuba University. [Tokyo Kyoiku Daigaku Zoushigaya Bunkō 1976:311-2]

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, before the second World War, visually impaired teachers had often been appointed as principals of blind schools. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940:51] After the war, although the senior positions at the blind schools were gradually taken over by sighted teachers, visually impaired teachers formed their own professional association, the Association of Teachers of *Anma* Massage and Acupuncture (*Rikyoren*), which has been the most active and powerful organisation among the postwar pressure groups concerning the special education of the blind and the issues of their employment.



are busy finding places either in sheltered workshops, day care centres or residential homes. It is difficult for visually impaired teachers either to create a cohesive sense of community at the blind schools or to represent the diversified needs of their students. As a result, their professional association, *rikyoren*, became less active than before in terms of political lobbying for the welfare of the blind in the course of the 1980s. The blind school today is no longer a homogeneous community of 'the blind'.

The current decline of traditionally reserved occupations for the blind, accompanied by the decline of the sense of community at blind schools, leads to several questions regarding social policy for the blind in Japan. For example, should the occupations of *anma* massage and acupuncture be reserved for visually impaired people? Is it possible to reserve these occupations? In what ways can they be reserved? Should the sense of community at blind schools be maintained? In what ways can it be maintained? Or, should the blind schools be maintained at all? Is it better to abolish them and integrate the students into sighted schools? The present research aims to explore these questions.

## Method of the Study

Drawing mainly on in-depth interviews with blind people in Japan, the present research considers whether or not it is desirable to maintain the traditionally reserved occupations for the blind. Before investigating blind people's opinions, it is necessary to explore two types of assumptions which tend to discourage any attempt to restore reserved occupations. Indeed, largely because of these assumptions, the issue of blind masseurs has been neglected throughout the postwar period both by the government and the political lobby for blind welfare. Firstly, especially among the leaders of organisations of the blind, there is a pessimistic forecast that it will be impossible to reinforce the reserved occupations because they failed in their all attempts in the past. Between 1905 and 1935, blind people consistently lobbied the Diet for legislation in order to ban sighted *anma* masseurs. Their bill was presented to the Diet three times, in 1914, 1934 and 1935, but on none of these occasions did the bill reach the statute book. It is understandable that the leaders of the blind lobby today are cautious about acting for the reinforcement of the reserved occupations so as not to follow the failure of their precursors. Because of the lack of historical research into the matter, little has been known about the past attempts of the blind to reinforce the reserved occupations. It is crucial, therefore, to discover the reasons why they were unable to achieve their objective in the past in order to assess the possibility of success today in restoring the reserved occupations.

Thus, the present study begins by conducting historical analysis to explain, first, how and why the reserved occupations emerged and developed; second, why and how they declined during the course of the modernisation of Japanese society; and finally, how blind people responded to the decline. Although there are some studies on the origins and development of the blind guild and its reserved occupations, such as those of Nakayama [1934; 1936], Kato

[1970], Ruch [1977] and Hyodo [1985], an absolute dearth of research on the political lobbying of the blind in the early twentieth century makes the present study dependent largely upon primary sources, such as the Diet Papers, and the publications of voluntary organisations for the blind. This archival research has been an essential element in the present study.

Another assumption which needs to be explored is the opinion that the ideal solution to the employment problem of the blind is not reserved occupations but open employment. This assumption prevails especially within the circle of experts and professionals in the field of the rehabilitation of the blind, the majority of whom are sighted. Although there are only a small number of people who specialise in the vocational training of the blind in ordinary industries, these experts often work for the government as consultants, and therefore, they are influential in the development of government policy for the blind. Their belief in open employment derived from the ideas and practices of British specialist charities, such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind. In Japan, as will be shown in Chapter Two, the occupational rehabilitation for the blind was established in the 1930s heavily drawing upon the British model. Since then the idea of open employment has always been a central concern among Japanese rehabilitation professionals and policy makers. However, in practice, vocational training and resettlement services in ordinary industries did not develop in Japan as much as was the case in Britain. Instead of open employment, the vast majority of blind people until recently chose to engage in massage and acupuncture which had more prospects than open employment in terms of earnings and job opportunities. In that sense, the belief in open employment rests not on indigenous empirical evidence for support but relies entirely upon the British experiment. However, in Japan, little has been known about how and why open employment for the blind developed in Britain and how far it has been successful. In order to assess the extent to which the

Japanese belief in open employment can be justified on the basis of the British experience, it is necessary to investigate the British history of blind welfare regarding the issue of employment.

At the initial stage, the present research owed much to the work of Abel [1987] which explored the rise and decline of specific provisions for the blind in Britain. Her study suggested an interesting coincidence between Japan and Britain. In Britain, too, there is a long-standing commitment by the blind to the protection of their work and employment, which in the British case is sheltered workshop employment. Therefore, while investigating how the employment of the blind developed in Britain, the present study focuses on the way in which British blind people tried to protect their work and employment. Although the present research drew upon Abel's study, it was necessary to re-interpret her study and to undertake original archival research in Britain in order to bring into focus the political activities of the blind, especially those of sheltered blind workers.

Based on the historical analysis of employment policies for the blind in Japan and Britain, a brief comparative analysis is undertaken using the "problem by problem" approach, which Jones contrasted with the "systematic comparison" approach. [Jones, C. 1985:185] While the latter approach is in great use for the international analysis of the development of social policy in general, the former approach is useful to uncover the essential nature of the problem concerned through focusing on the common aspects of the problem which exist beyond the national differences. By focusing on the experiences which Japanese and British blind people shared in common despite differences between two countries in the historical background and the social framework within which employment policies developed, the present research aims to define the essential nature of the employment problem of the blind, which will provide a framework for the analysis of the field survey in Japan.

Finally, the present study explores from the viewpoint of blind people whether or not quota employment in ordinary industries is more desirable than reserved occupations. Looking at the long-standing political activity of blind people to safeguard and extend their employment both in Japan and Britain, it can be assumed that blind people have a particular view of employment especially in terms of their relationship with sighted workers. For instance, what is regarded as 'being on an equal footing' by sighted people does not necessarily equate with blind people's conception of 'being equal'. Such a difference in views and values between disabled and non-disabled people has gradually been recognised by recent studies with socio-cultural perspectives.<sup>11</sup> In order to investigate their particular views on work and equality, a field survey was conducted in Japan between July in 1993 and February in 1996.

At the outset of the field survey, I approached ten blind people drawn either from the staff or the ex-pupils at a blind school where I had previously worked in order to ask them to take part in the pilot interviews. It emerged that some people were reluctant to disclose their financial circumstances. Moreover, in the case of young partially sighted single women in particular, they often refused either to take part in the interviews altogether or to give full details of their personal circumstances. In order to overcome these difficulties, I decided to conduct postal surveys which aimed to collect such confidential information as personal income, the receipt of welfare benefits and marital status, so that these sensitive questions could be omitted from in-depth interviews. Furthermore, since there was no previous survey of blind people in paid employment in

---

<sup>11</sup> For example, the existence of 'deaf culture', or the 'sign language community', has already been well recognised by several studies, such as, those of Higgins [1980] and Groce [1985] in the United States, and those of Sainsbury [1986] and Harris [1995] in Britain. Moreover, Campbell & Oliver [1996] suggest that "*disability consciousness and culture*" are crucial means for disabled people in general to take part in disability rights movements.

Japan, it was desirable to collect quantitative, as well as qualitative, data in order to acquire a general picture of these people. During the pilot stage of the survey, I used as consultants five blind people whose experience of employment in the blind world was wide in order to determine the nature of the area covered in the study and the appropriate kind of questions to ask. I conducted intensive interviews with these five people which took as many as three to five sessions of between three and five hours to complete.

After the pilot interviews, two postal surveys were conducted in November 1993 and February 1994. The first postal survey involved 314 people drawn randomly from the list of those who left either of two special schools in Osaka during the period between 1961 and 1992, to whom the questionnaire was sent.<sup>12</sup> It gained 158 returns, of which 100 respondents were currently engaged in the occupations of massage and acupuncture. The response rate (50%) was remarkably high in contrast to an average response rate of postal surveys in Japan which is 20 to 30 percent. More than four fifths (81%) of those engaged in massage and acupuncture were men. This was largely a reflection of the imbalance between men and women in the sampling framework. Seventy percent of those who left these blind schools between 1961 to 1992 were men.<sup>13</sup>

While the first postal survey aimed at acquiring a general picture of those working in traditionally reserved occupations, the second postal survey in 1994 was conducted in order to collect information about those in quota

---

<sup>12</sup> Details of the questionnaire are shown in Appendix.

<sup>13</sup> The imbalance between men and women is found to exist, to a much lesser extent though, among the visually impaired population in general in Japan. According to the national survey conducted in 1991 by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, there were more visually impaired men (53%) than women within the age group between 18 to 59 years, while there were more visually impaired women than men among those above the age of 60 years.

employment at private firms. The latter survey was conducted by *Nihon Raito Hausu* (The Japan Light House), a voluntary organisation for the welfare of the blind, under the auspices of *Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai*, or the Japan Association for the Promotion of Employment of Disabled People (JAPEDP), a quasi-government organisation under the Ministry of Labour. The survey was planned and conducted by a research committee of the Japan Light House, in which I participated as a research consultant. The questionnaire was sent to 580 visually impaired people who had been registered with the JAPEDP. It gained 283 returns, of which 223 people were currently in paid work at private firms.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the male dominance in the reserved occupations, more than a half (53%) of those in quota employment were women. This can be explained by the dominance of "women's occupations", such as telephonists, within the Japanese quota employment of blind people.

After completing two postal surveys, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted between August in 1994 and February in 1996. The interviews involved 38 visually impaired people who were currently, or had been, in paid work. The people were drawn either from those who had left blind schools in Osaka or those who responded to the postal survey conducted by the Japan Light House so as to cover eight sampling categories which were made by three classification criteria: sex, the degree of residual vision, and the type of employment. (Table 0.2) They consisted of 23 men and 15 women. Concerning the degree of residual vision, the interviews involved 15 'partially sighted' people who could read ordinary print with vision aids, and 23 'blind' people who used 'Braille' as a primary means of

---

<sup>14</sup> The report of the survey was published in 1994 by the JAPEDP. *Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai* (the Japan Association for the Promotion of Employment of Disabled People), *Sikaku Shogaisha no Shokuba Teichaku ni kansuru Chosa Kenkyu* (The Report of the Research into the Stability of Employment of Visually Impaired People), 1994, *Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai*.

written communication. Regarding their occupations, 21 people were engaged in the occupations of *anma* and acupuncture, while 17 people worked in quota employment side by side with sighted colleagues.

Table 0.2 Characteristics of blind people involved in the main interviews					
	Reserved occupations		Quota employment		Total
	Blind	PS <sup>15</sup>	Blind	PS	
Men	6	7	7	3	23
Women	6	2	4	3	15
Total	12	9	11	6	38

The interviews went through two stages: August in 1994 to March in 1995, and August in 1995 to February in 1996. While those engaged in reserved occupations were interviewed at the first stage, those in quota employment were approached at the second stage. Regarding the duration of interviews, on average, they took between three and four hours to complete. In the case of those who had a wide experience of employment, which consisted of about one third of the total number of people involved, the interviews took as many as three sessions of between three and four hours each to complete.

The present study is the first to attempt to explore the views of Japanese blind people about work and employment. The historical survey of their political lobbying both in Japan and Britain shows that blind people developed their particular views on work and equality through their collective identity. The interview survey of Japanese blind people explores in greater depth the crucial relationship between work and the blind identity.

The first chapter analyses the past research, in particular, that concerned with the socio-cultural identity

---

<sup>15</sup> Partially sighted.



of disabled people and their work and employment, from which perspectives were derived which proved useful in the construction of a framework for the rest of the study. Chapter Two gives an historical picture of the blind community in Japan and the political activities of its members. How did the collective identity of the blind develop in Japan based on the long tradition of their occupational guild? In what ways was it maintained even after the abolition of the blind guild in 1871? Why did the blind fail to eliminate sighted masseurs? In the following chapter, Chapter Three, the unique relationship between work and the blind identity in Japan is contrasted with the British experience. How and why did the blind identity emerge in Britain in the nineteenth century? What role did the political lobby for the Blind Persons Act of 1920 play in the development of the collective identity of the blind? How and why did the open employment of the blind develop in Britain? How did blind people in Britain respond to the postwar shift from sheltered to open employment? In Chapter Four, the analysis of aspects of experience which Japanese and British blind people shared in common in the course of the development of employment policies is presented in order to define the essential nature of their employment problem. Is there any experience which Japanese and British blind people shared in common through their political lobbying for the protection of their employment? In what aspects did blind people in two countries share their views on work and equality in common? The following two chapters explore blind people's views on work based on in-depth interviews with 38 blind people and two postal surveys involving 378 blind people in Japan. Chapter Five describes the views of those engaged in traditionally reserved occupations, namely *anma* masseurs and acupuncturists. How and why did they become masseurs and acupuncturists? How far do they enjoy their work, and in what ways? What kind of problems are they currently experiencing at work? Chapter Six describes the opinions of those in 'integrated employment'. Why did they choose integrated employment instead of reserved occupations? In

what ways did they find employment? How far do they enjoy their work? To what extent are they integrated at work? In what ways do they overcome barriers at work? Based on the blind people's views of employment which are substantiated by the previous chapters, Chapter Seven considers policy implications. In general, the research outcome suggests that the current employment policy for blind people may need to refine its assumptions about policy principles, particularly the normalising principle of integration, so as to accommodate blind people's views on work and equality.

Chapter 1 The Context of the Research:  
Disability, Work and Disability Identity

Introduction

Compared with questions concerned with the care of children and elderly people, little attention has been directed to those raised by disability in the fields of social policy and social work. Moreover, even among disability studies, less attention has been paid to problems of work and employment than those of, say, income and personal care. As a result, the literature on the work and employment of disabled people in general is sparse. Based on the limited range of literature, it is the purpose of this chapter to consider what literature there is on these subjects, to draw out the perspectives which are common to previous studies of disability and work, and to seek a relevant framework for the present study.

## 1-1. "Social Creation of Disability" Thesis and its View on Disability and Work

The "social creation of disability" thesis is currently the most prevalent theory in the field of disability studies. The thesis is formulated, in contrast with "personal tragedy theory", by Oliver who emphasises "the view of disability as a social imposition rather than a personal limitation" [1990:15]. In other words, 'disabilities' are not the limitations of particular individuals but the limitations which social environments impose upon certain groups or categories of people. [Oliver 1983:23] This formulation of the "social creation of disability" thesis encourages the shift in social policy and social work for disabled people from the adjustment of impaired individuals to the modification of "disabling" environments. In that sense, the social creation thesis can be regarded as the underpinning of current policy principles, for example, those of integration, normalisation, community care and de-institutionalisation. At the same time, it also provides a theoretical ground for the current disability rights movements. If disabilities are the limitations which social environments impose upon impaired individuals, the disabled people's lobby may well argue that "such disabilities will only be removed by disabled people themselves engaged in active 'struggles'". [Oliver 1983:24] In this way, the social creation thesis encourages the shift of disabled people's movements from "demand" within the framework of existing welfare provisions to the "fight" against able-bodied society at large.

The "social creation of disability" thesis has had a tremendous impact upon the debate about the issues of disability since the 1980s on a world-wide basis. However, it did not emerge suddenly in the early 1980s out of vacuum. The view that society creates and manipulates the category of 'disability' originated from the American sociology of deviance, in particular, labelling theory in the 1960s. For example, the work of Goffman [1961] and that of

Scheff[1966] emphasised the significance of "social factors" in the clinical determination of mental illness. Whereas mentally distressed persons who had a family and higher social status were not necessarily forced to be hospitalised, similar persons without family, income nor employment tended to be in the custody of mental hospitals. Furthermore, these studies suggested that the professionals in mental health services, such as, psychiatrists and nurses, forced their clients to fulfil their expectations, that is, the "sick role". Indeed, it was argued, society may mould 'sane' people into 'insane' roles. This point was further developed by the study of Scott [1969] in the field of blind welfare systems. He argued that rehabilitation institutions for the blind "manufactured" blind roles. They discouraged their clients from engaging in normal employment because it was regarded as 'unrealistic', and blind people were led to 'realistic' occupations, such as , balloon making, which were available in charitable workshops for the blind, regardless of individual abilities.

Although these labelling studies, except for the work of Scott, were little concerned with the improvement of welfare systems, the "social constructionist view of disability" which the labelling studies presented gradually influenced American studies in the 1970s and the 1980s which were more concerned about policy and practice. Those practical studies can be divided into two groups. One is the sociology of rehabilitation, a branch of medical sociology, and another is disability benefits studies. The former, for example Albrecht [1976] insisted on the democratisation of the rehabilitation process by emphasising the social aspects of rehabilitation and the participation of clients in the determination of rehabilitation goals. The sociology of rehabilitation shared with labelling theory the view that it was not impairment but societal reaction that moulds impaired individuals into "disabled roles", but it did not regard impaired individuals as merely passive agents in the rehabilitation process. It saw the

possibility for impaired people both as individuals and as member of groups to change the welfare system and societal reaction through negotiation and bargaining. Although the sociology of rehabilitation, unlike the current radical disability rights movements, did not preclude the positive roles which would be played by professionals and experts in the course of rehabilitation, it provided a critical review of the existing rehabilitation services by emphasising the self-determination of clients. That perspective was employed by some British studies, such as the work of Blaxter [1976], and continued to be developed by recent American studies, such as that of Fine & Asch [1988].

Another group of practical studies which share the "social constructionist" view are disability benefits studies. An example is the work of Stone [1984]. She argued that being 'disabled' meant nothing more than being in receipt of disability-related social security benefits. In other words, it was the disability benefits which created the category of disability, and therefore, the 'disabled' population. Her view that the disabled population includes those who may be otherwise defined as 'unemployed' was shared by British studies, such as, that of Piachaud [1986], and was later refined by such American studies as those of Berkowitz [1987] and Yelin [1992]. Whereas the sociology of rehabilitation looks at the "social construction" of disability mainly in the context of face-to-face interaction between individuals concerned, for example, between a physician and a client, the disability benefits studies look at the social construction of disability in the wider context, such as the social security system, labour market and economy at large.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Oliver's classification [Oliver 1996], these disability benefits studies are regarded as the examples of the "political economy" perspective, which is seen as distinct from the social constructionist perspective. However, it must be noted that the study by Scott [1969], one of the labelling studies, paid considerable attention to the professional and organisational interests of rehabilitation agencies in creating the "demand" for their services, and attributed the social construction of blindness to some extent

Regarding the issue of work, disability benefits studies suggest that disabled people are those who are excluded or displaced from the labour market either because of economic recession or the transformation of industries. [Stone 1984; Yelin 1992] Similarly, the sociology of rehabilitation suggests that disabled people tend to be socialised by rehabilitation professionals so as to be modest about their job aspiration and to accept available jobs despite low wages and poor working conditions. Thus, the social constructionist view of disability provides an explanation for the common situation of disabled people in general, in which many of them give up finding employment while others are doomed to fill the bottom of the occupational ladder.

Taking Britain as an example, some of the social security benefits, such as invalidity benefits, defined the recipients as "incapable to work", and as a result, displaced them permanently from the labour market by imposing financial disincentives upon potential job-seekers with disability. [Topliss 1982:48-50] Moreover, the rehabilitation services, such as Disablement Resettlement Officers, tended to allocate their clients low-profile jobs at their disposal and to expect their clients to be grateful for the jobs offered. [Blaxter 1976:172] Furthermore, the three percent employment quota of disabled workers was implemented not so much in order to encourage employers to take disabled workers as to regulate the number of disabled workers who entered the labour market so that the labour market was not be dislocated by the massive intrusion of cheap labour. [Bolderson 1980]

In the context of these studies which substantiate the "social constructionist view of disability", Oliver goes on to argue that "disabled people are excluded from the

---

to the funding structure of the rehabilitation agencies. In that sense, the boundary between the social constructionist perspective and the political economy perspective is not so clear-cut as Oliver suggests.

workforce not because of their personal or functional limitations, nor simply because of discriminatory attitudes and practices among employers and labour markets but because of the way in which work is organised within the capitalist economy itself" [1996:34]. He writes elsewhere that disability as a category is "culturally produced through the relationship between the mode of production and the central values of society concerned". [Oliver 1990:22-3] He explains this as follows. Disability as a category has always existed from century to century and from society to society. However, the arrival of modern industrial society, together with the rise of capitalism, had a profound impact on the life of disabled people. It excluded them not only from the production process but also from urban life, education, community, and family because the growth of individual wage labour was inevitably accompanied by the individualisation and medicalisation of disability. Based on such arguments, Oliver gives primacy to the economic basis for "creating dependency" among disabled people in the context of modern industrial society, in particular. [Oliver 1990:96]

According to this "social creation of disability" thesis, which is more determinist and materialist than the social constructionist perspective, disabled people are doomed to unemployment in a capitalist society. The most obvious defect of Oliver's thesis is that it fails to explain why some disabled people get employment in a capitalist society. While Oliver provides no theoretically consistent explanation for the existence of disabled workers under a capitalist economy, the work of Walker [1982] sheds some light on disabled workers within the capitalist labour market. According to Walker, mentally handicapped young people are not totally excluded from the labour market but are marginalised within it. He uses the term "underemployment", rather than "unemployment", and employs the concept of "secondary labour market" when he describes the circumstances of those involved in his study. However, although Walker describes more accurately than Oliver the



employment situation of disabled people, he does not explain why disabled people can remain at the margin of the labour market instead of being excluded from the workforce altogether. There are two possible explanations. Firstly, it can be assumed that society may need the disabled workforce at the margin of the labour market. Secondly, it can be also assumed that disabled people cling to employment despite the structural forces of exclusion. In any case, it is crucial to know how disabled people perceive their work and employment.

Little has been known about how disabled people perceive and interpret their working life. Floyd describes the dearth of evidence thus:

"Ultimately the effectiveness of current (employment) policies and provision (for disabled people) must be judged according to their success in enabling disabled people to participate as fully as possible in society and, in particular, their success in enabling them to enjoy all the benefits of employment. In this regard it is important not to lose sight of the fact that this should not only mean that disabled people have jobs but that those jobs are as rewarding, in both a financial and a psychological sense, as those of other people. Unfortunately, there is very little information available that provides any insight into these latter aspects." [Floyd 1991:210]

The paucity of information concerning the nature and quality of the work and employment of disabled people is caused partly by the nature of the perspective which most disability studies have previously employed.

As mentioned above, the social constructionist perspective has been dominant among the socio-political studies of disability since the 1960s. Although it takes the reaction of disabled people into account, its central concern is the question of how society reacts to disability.

The social creation of disability thesis further focuses on the societal reaction to disability in terms of "structural discrimination" and "social oppression". In that sense,

the majority of the socio-political studies of disability have always looked primarily into "able-bodied" people's reaction to disability, and paid less attention to disabled people's reactions and their independent actions.<sup>2</sup>

However, this means neither that the present research challenges the "social creation of disability" thesis, nor that it denies the existence of structural forces which preclude disabled people from the centre of labour market. Instead, the present research tries to draw attention to what disabled people are doing at the margin of the labour market. It is an attempt to look into the other side of the matter in order to get a full picture of the issue of disability and work.

---

<sup>2</sup> Curiously, this is even the case with the studies undertaken by disabled researchers. Except for some autobiographical essays, for example, Barnes [1996], disabled researchers have much more to say about how able-bodied people perceive disability and how able-bodied society treats disabled people rather than how disabled people perceive themselves and react to able-bodied society.

## 1-2. Three Aspects of Disability Identity

In order to look into disabled people's own perception of work, it is necessary to take their identity into account. Firstly, the question how disabled people perceive their work and employment can be regarded as part of the wider question of their self-identity. Secondly, work is one of the major sources of self-identity. Finally, most important of all, assuming that disabled people may have their particular views on work and employment which are distinct from those of able-bodied people, such views should derive from their own identity, that is, their "disability identity". This section describes how previous studies have approached to the issue of disabled people's identity.

There appear to be three aspects of the "disability identity" which have been investigated by previous studies. First, there is the notion that it has been in some way "implanted". The "social constructionist" studies, as we have seen, emphasise that the category of "disability" is predominantly created by able-bodied society. In that sense, the disability identity can be regarded as consisting of the "disabled role" which is implanted in and internalised by impaired individuals. For example, such labelling studies as those of Goffman [1961], Scheff [1966] and Scott [1969] suggest that disabled people are forced to play those "disabled role" which is expected by able-bodied people in general. Moreover, the disability identity is implanted not only by the general expectations of the able-bodied dominant culture but also by the administrative identification of disability. For instance, Stone argues that the claimants to disability-related benefits and services come to recognise and present themselves as disabled through the administrative procedures of identification and registration. [Stone 1984:145-8]

However, the disability identity is not simply the creation of the able-bodied society. It is constructed

through the process of interaction between the able-bodied society and impaired individuals. When the disability identity is implanted either by administrative authorities or able-bodied society in general, impaired individuals normally react to the attempt at implantation. The reactions of disabled people to the implanted aspect of disability identity construct its second aspect, namely, the "interactive" aspect. Individual reactions vary from acceptance to rejection. Classic studies of the rehabilitation process observe the changes in individual reaction, and present a "developmental stage model" which consists of a sequence of reactions from rejection to acceptance. However, as Albrecht argues, even this model is too simplistic. [Albrecht 1976:23]

There are at least two other models of disabled people's reactions. One is an "instrumental" model, and another is a "conflict" model. The former model was, for example, observed by Blaxter [1976] as follows. "People were found to react to their categorization as 'disabled for work' in an *instrumental* way. --- If, as a formal category, it offered any advantages they would accept it, but they resented its extension into areas of life where they did not necessarily accept that they were disabled." [Blaxter 1976:181] The "instrumental" model of disabled people's reactions can be found in the works of Goffman, too. In his early study [Goffman 1961], he observed that mental hospital patients adjusted themselves to the "patient role", whereas he discovered in his later study [Goffman 1963] that people with disability tried to conceal their disability so as to pass as 'normal'. In both cases, he explained disabled people's reactions in terms of their individual interests. The mental hospital inpatients behaved according to the expected "patient role" in order to win the favour of the hospital staff, while those concealing their disabilities did so because they had to pass as 'normal' in order to survive in the able-bodied 'normal' society. Recently, this "instrumental model" was further substantiated by the study of Sainsbury [1993] which

explored the "disabled but normal" identity among disabled war pensioners and industrially injured people in Britain.

While little attention has been paid to the instrumental reactions of disabled people, the "conflict model" has increasingly attracted attention since the late 1970s. The conflict model focuses on disabled people's rejection of the "implanted disability identity". Such denial was already observable in early disability studies. For example, Scott [1969] recognised the fact that a minority of blind people in the U.S. disliked the "blind rôle", especially in so far as it required them to undertake the occupations available at charitable workshops, and instead, preferred to maintain themselves as 'blind beggars'. Similarly, Miller & Gwynne [1972] observed British residential homes for physically disabled people where people were discontented with their "dependent" roles and fought against the paternalist attitudes of the staff. Such "rebellious" activities by disabled people were gradually recognised in the context of "oppression" and "discrimination" against disabled people, as their "rebellion" was increasingly organised through the disability rights movements in the late 1970s and 1980s both in the U.S. and Britain. Disabled people increasingly found their collective identity based on their common experiences of and their political struggles against discrimination and oppression. [Oliver 1984; Abberley 1987]

However, some questions have been raised concerning the conflict model of disability identity even within the disability rights movement. For instance, Peters, a female disabled activist, writes as follows.

*"Until recently, I viewed disability through the lenses of social injustice and social oppression. I committed myself to a disability rights movement in the U.S. that demanded unity and strength, derived from collective identities and promoted in the common experiences of oppression. --- however, I have felt that something was missing \_ my sense*

*of self. --- the positive personal identity is a precondition for political identity.*" [Peters 1996:215]

She suggests that the political identity of disability, or the conflict model of disability identity, provides disabled people with strong collective identity but not with personal self-confidence.

French, another female activist, writes as follows.

*"While I agree with the basic tenets of this model, (Oliver's 'social creation of disability' thesis) --- I believe that some of the most profound problems experienced by people with certain impairments are difficult to solve by social manipulation."* [French 1993:17]

She suggests that the "social creation of disability" thesis ignores personal and inter-personal problems of disabled people, for example, physical pain, and difficulties in communicating with non-disabled people.

There seem to be two crucial problems with the conflict model of disability identity. Firstly, it provides only political identity, so that disabled people can have a positive self-identity only within the political arena. Secondly, the political identity of disability is defined by external factors, such as oppression, discrimination, and prejudice. In that sense, although it aims at creating a positive identity for disabled people as 'social reformers', the conflict model still regards disabled people as passive objects by definition, for example, as the "victims of oppression". As both Peters and French admit, disability is in many aspects imposed by social oppression, and the common experiences of oppression may be the only source for the collective identity of a wide variety of disabled people. However, the conflict model of disability identity does not account for the whole range of disability identity.

Whether it is the adjustment model, the instrumental model, or the conflict model, the "interactive aspect" of disability identity is created by the interactions between disabled people and able-bodied society. In contrast, the

third aspect of disability identity, namely, the "indigenous aspect", is constructed by interactions among disabled people. What is missing from the conflict model of disability identity is, as French suggests, "something in between" the personal limitations and the socially imposed limitations. In other words, there can be "intermediary" group identities among those sharing unique needs, such as sign-language users, Braille users, and wheelchair users.

It is 'indigenous' in a sense that the collective identities are defined not by external factors, such as social oppression, but by internal factors within a group of people with a particular impairment. Moreover, it is 'indigenous' because these collective identities are created primarily through the unique way of life of disabled people.

The best known example of such indigenous disability identities is a deaf community, or the world of sign-language users. For instance, in the United States, Higgins [1980] suggests that deaf people using sign language maintain their unique identity and feel alienated both from hearing people and deaf people using speech and lip-reading.

In Britain, too, Sainsbury [1986] discovered that deaf people achieve 'normality' in their life through the deaf community rather than through integration with hearing people. Some may argue that the communication gap between deaf and hearing people is a matter of technicality, rather than that of identity or culture, and it can be resolved if hearing people could use sign-language.<sup>3</sup> However, Harris [1993] observes in Britain that 'native' deaf signers, or congenitally deaf people, never regard hearing signers as part of their community.

Apart from deaf studies, there has been almost no study

---

<sup>3</sup> For instance, an American medical anthropologist, Groce [1985], discovered that there had been until the early twentieth century a "sign-language community" on Martha's Vineyard island where hearing people can sign because of the high prevalence rate of hereditary deafness, and therefore, hearing and deaf people can communicate with each other without difficulties.

which explores the indigenous aspect of the disability identity. However, there are a few studies which imply such an aspect among other groups of disabled people. For example, although he failed to discern among blind Israelis a sense of identity parallel to that of the deaf community, Deshen found occasions on which mutuality developed among blind people taking part in sports designed specifically for the blind.<sup>4</sup> [Deshen 1992:124] Furthermore, American anthropologists, such as Frank [1988] and Murphy et. al. [1988], suggest that physically disabled people tend to find special companionship with their 'peers', through which they develop self-confidence in their physical appearance.<sup>5</sup>

It may be argued, then, that the disability identity is a mixture of these three aspects: the stereotypes implanted by able-bodied society, the reactions of disabled people to the stereotypes, and their unique way of life. Assuming the indigenous aspect of disability identity which is established on a basis of the shared unique way of life among those with particular impairments, it is possible to presuppose their peculiar values and norms. Based on this presupposition the present research aims at an 'indigenous' interpretation of the work and employment of blind people in Japan.

---

<sup>4</sup> Together with Braille and the occupations of massage and acupuncture, special sports for the blind is one of the crucial foundations of the blind community in Japan. There are several sports which are designed for the blind, for example, blind baseball, blind volleyball, and blind table tennis. Although some people prefer to play sport with sighted people, many blind people like blind sports because they prefer the experience of team sport which they can enjoy only with other blind people in specially designed sports.

<sup>5</sup> This unique companionship among physically disabled people has increasingly been organised in the form of "peer counselling" in the context of Independent Living movements in the U.S. and Japan.



### 1-3. Disabled People's Perception of the Meaning of Work

The purpose of this section is to use previous studies to illustrate how disabled people's own views on work and employment can be interpreted differently depending on which assumptions about the disability identity are adopted.

Studies of disabled workers often find that the level of their job aspirations is not very high. For instance, Walker describes mentally handicapped young people as follows.

*"Rather than finding unrealistically high ambitions it was the low level of aspirations of the majority of the handicapped compared to the non-handicapped that was remarkable and contrary to expectations."* [Walker 1982:68]

Sainsbury also writes about disabled war pensioners and industrially injured people as follows.

*"Once in a job, people tended to cling tenaciously to it, however inappropriate the work was for the disability involved, and whatever the hours and the pay. Most people (three-fifths) had been in their present job for at least four years and few showed any enthusiasm for change. Indeed, a little more than half of those at work considered that their current job was the best one they had had: wage levels were usually of little consideration in such assessments."* [Sainsbury 1993:100]

Walker attributes such a low level of aspirations to "the social construction of the work setting and opportunity structure" [Walker 1982:72]. He argues that mentally handicapped young people are discouraged from aspiring higher in vocational terms by their parents, peers, and in particular, teachers at special schools. This is an explanation based on the assumption of the "implanted disability identity". Able-bodied society at large, including disabled person's own family and the professionals who work in the services provided for them, set a ceiling over disabled people's aspirations based on their judgements

about the abilities of disabled people. Disabled people internalise these able-bodied people's low expectations for their abilities.

However, this is only one side of the story. There is an alternative explanation based on the assumption of the "indigenous disability identity". If disabled people had "unique goals and aims" in their work and employment which were distinct from those of ordinary able-bodied people, it is understandable that their job aspirations are regarded as 'low' according to the able-bodied standard although disabled people in fact aspire to something other than what able-bodied people normally want. It has been suggested that disabled people are concerned as much about the social aspect of work as its economic aspect. Sainsbury writes; "It was not the availability of light work, an easy journey, safety, high wages, and the prospect of promotion to which people attached the highest importance, but good relationships at work, reasonable working hours and, to a lesser extent, freedom from direct supervision." [Sainsbury 1993:99] Walker also recognises that mentally handicapped young people are predominantly concerned about the quality of social contact at work in contrast to their non-handicapped counterparts who are more concerned about a job's training opportunities. [Walker 1982:56] However, Walker tends to interpret such a predominant concern for the quality of social contact at work among handicapped people in terms of their marginality in the labour market. He implies that since there is little to expect from work in economic terms handicapped people tend to have an "instrumental orientation towards work", and therefore, find their main interest outside work, for example, in social contact. In contrast, Sainsbury suggests another interpretation based on disabled people's unique goal in employment, namely, the achievement of 'normal life'. She argues that the ultimate purpose of employment for disabled people is "confirmation of normality". [Sainsbury 1993:107] In that sense, whatever the job, having a job is the most important aim for disabled people. If they want to cling

to the job as long as possible, it is necessary to establish good personal relationships at work to offset their handicaps, for example, any restriction on their abilities, communication problems, or frequent absence for sickness. It can be assumed that because of their particular circumstances disabled workers are more concerned than their able-bodied counterparts about their personal relationships with employers and workmates.

If disabled people have their "unique aspirations" in work, it must be the case in particular with deaf people who have their own clear identity based on sign language. For instance, Sainsbury observes that deaf people prefer particular jobs above others not for higher social and skill status but for the friendly atmosphere, marginally better pay, and a particularly benevolent boss. [Sainsbury 1986:262] This is largely because deaf people are primarily concerned about communication problems at work with hearing people. Furthermore, Harris explores the ways in which deaf workers manage their "linguistic isolation" at work. Some deaf people "choose" to work within noisy environments in which clear speech and lip-reading must be employed by all workers, thereby "normalising" their deafness. Others seek out "deaf environments" where sign language is used by both deaf and hearing staff. [Harris 1995:104] Although such settings may offer little attraction to non-disabled people, it may be desirable for deaf people to work in the "normalising" or "deaf" environments provided by very noisy factories, or small workshops employing a number of deaf workers, because it may be more important for deaf people to manage linguistic barriers at work rather than to engage in occupations with better wages and higher status. However, this does not mean that deaf workers are not interested in promotion. Both Sainsbury and Harris suggest that some deaf workers are dissatisfied at work because they feel they are treated unfairly in terms of wages, working hours and promotion. However, it must be noted that "promotion" may have a different meaning, or at least, an additional effect, for

deaf workers. In certain circumstances, for instance, in a small factory, promotion to foreman or supervisor may mean that a deaf worker can acquire the power to "educate" hearing workers to understand him so that he can reduce the linguistic barriers at work. While Harris [1995:103-4] shows an account of a deaf man who successfully educated his hearing workmates, Arthur [1952:63-4] refers to a deaf foreman who managed perfectly his hearing workers by using written instructions which were understood by his workers without mistakes in contrast to normal verbal instructions.

As deaf people seek work and employment according to their unique aims and goals, this may also be the case with blind people. The study of blind job-seekers in Britain, which was undertaken by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), shows that blind people are as much concerned about the social aspects of work as wage levels. For instance, more than a quarter of 318 people involved in the study were unable to determine the minimum wage for which they would consider to work. The authors of the study infer that "they just did not know current rates of pay in the labour market". [Whaley, Mattison, Dodd & Mullins 1986:16] However, this also implies that blind job-seekers were not primarily interested in the wages. Moreover, in general, blind job-seekers appeared to have no clear idea about the type of work which they wanted. Indeed, many people "indicated their willingness to try many things or anything". [Whaley, Mattison, Dodd & Mullins 1986:21] In contrast, it was clear from the study that blind people wanted to work at an "ordinary workplace outside home for an employer". They disliked sheltered workshop employment, self-employment and work at home, although the majority were ready to accept sheltered employment when there was no alternative. Regarding reasons for wanting paid work, more than forty percent of the people mentioned social contact and a sense of purpose, as well as earning money.

On the whole, the survey results seem to suggest that blind people had a number of aims and goals in work other

than money. Among these were to be independent, to be useful to others, to help somebody else, to be like anyone else, to gain personal achievement and self-confidence, and so on. According to previous studies on disability, it seems likely that disabled people in general primarily wish to be "independent" and "normal". What is unique to blind people in particular is their willingness to "help others". The authors of the RNIB study emphasise the pursuit of "a sense of purpose" among the blind job-seekers. They write that "they (blind people) saw working as making them useful to their families or the country". [Whaley, Mattison, Dodd & Mullins 1986:14] Such a view is not common among the studies dealing with other categories of disabled people. If blind people have a particular interest in helping others, why is it so? The answer may lie in the unique identity of blind people.

## Summary

The socio-political studies of disability have often employed the social constructionist view of disability. This perspective tends to focus on the ways in which the able-bodied society looks at and reacts to disability. As a result, it has been assumed that disabled people are either marginalised in or excluded from the labour market. However, a few studies, in particular, those concerned with the deaf community, suggest that disabled people may have their own views on work and employment based on their unique identity. It seems crucial to explore the "indigenous" views of work among blind people in order to balance two sides of the picture of their employment problems.

## Chapter 2      The Tradition of Reserved Occupations for                   the Blind and the Blind Identity in Japan

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the collective identity of blind people grew in Japan based on the long tradition of their occupational guild and why the blind failed to restore their traditionally reserved occupations after the abolition of the blind guild in 1871. Particular attention is paid to the political lobby of blind masseurs for the reservation of their occupation in the early twentieth century. In the first section, a brief analysis of the blind guild from its origin to its abolition in 1871 is presented based on recent historical research. The next section considers the impact of social reform in the late nineteenth century upon the blind community and their reaction to the reform. The third section focuses on the first "Bill to Protect the Blind" of 1914 which aimed to eliminate sighted masseurs. Drawing on Diet papers, the arguments both for and against the bill are explored. The next section deals with the period between 1915 and 1925 during which the popular movements for democracy and socialism arose in Japan. It observes the ways in which the Social Administration Bureau, Japan's first government agency for social policy, was established at the Ministry of the Interior, and the ways in which the blind lobby achieved their rights to education and the vote. The fifth section focuses on the second attempt of the blind lobby to eliminate sighted masseurs by law in 1934 and 1935. The next section investigates how a British model was adopted for the rehabilitation of the war blind under the auspices of the Social Administration Bureau and the new leadership within the blind lobby during the period between 1937 and 1944. The last two sections deal respectively with the postwar development of social policy for disabled people in general and the postwar changes in the fields of anma and acupuncture, focusing particularly on the impact upon the work and employment of blind people.

## 2-1. The Origin and Development of the Blind Guild in Japan before 1871

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the occupational guild of the blind was originally established in Japan during the medieval period, the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and in what ways the blind guild organised its internal structure during the Edo period, 1600 to 1868, based on such privileges as reserved occupations, tax exemption, and the collection of alms.

The sense of community among Japanese blind people historically originated in their national occupational guild which was established in the fourteenth century. The establishment of the national blind guild was largely due to the growth of performing arts in medieval Japan. At the end of the ancient period, around the eleventh century, blind men had earned their living as *Mōsō*, or 'blind priests', by chanting Buddhist scriptures. Those blind priests already had their small local guilds under the guardianship of local Buddhist temples so as to monopolise their occupation in their locality. However, throughout the medieval period, as the blind gradually changed their occupation from religious chanting to performing arts, these small local guilds had to be replaced by the national blind guild as the performing arts developed on a national scale.

Historians have established that between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the performing arts proliferated in Japan. This phenomenon was closely related to the social changes of the period. It was during this time that aristocrats gradually lost their political and economic power, while newly powerful social classes emerged. These were the military elite, the craftsmen, the manufacturers and the merchants. The shift in political and economic power also broke the aristocratic domination of culture and the arts. Although the newly formed medieval social elite were literate and devoted followers of the ancient aristocratic culture, it seems to have been more



convenient for them to listen to narratives rather than read written texts as a means of consuming the literary arts. Here was the origin of the increasing demands for the vocalization of written texts in medieval Japan. Ruch termed it "vocal literature", and saw it as a key to understanding Japanese medieval culture. [Ruch 1977, 1990] Ruch suggested that the vocal literature was performed mainly by two types of "medieval jongleurs". The first type were "the *etoki* or 'picture explainers', men and women who used paintings and illustrated texts as visual props". The second type were the *biwa hōshi* or 'lute-playing priests' and the *goze* or 'blind female singers', blind men and women who narrated the stories of losers in political and military battles. Thus, Japanese blind men and women played a crucial role in the medieval period to develop "Japan's first body of truly national literature and to spread it throughout the country". [Ruch 1977:286-8] In the sixteenth century, for ordinary people, the public image of "the blind" became identified with these "cultural media". Their appearance was familiar to contemporaries and their figures can be found often on the medieval *emaki* or 'picture scrolls'.

As the demand for the vocal literature increasingly expanded, the blind needed to re-organise their local occupational guilds. In the fourteenth century, the national blind guild, *tōdō-za*, was established at Kyoto, the then capital city. It was the guild of blind lute-playing narrative singers, *biwa-hōshi*, and was founded by a blind lute-playing priest, named *Kakuichi*, who completed the *Kakuichi's* libretto of the *Tale of the Héiké*, the most popular piece in medieval Japanese literature. The first national blind guild was originally set up in order to protect the copyright of the *Kakuichi's* libretto, which was the most popular version of the *Tale of the Héiké*. Thus, the use of this libretto was restricted exclusively to the

members of the guild in return for the membership fees.<sup>1</sup> During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, more and more blind men started to earn their living by performing the Kakuichi's libretto. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the national blind guild, *tōdō-za*, covered the whole country except for peripheries and formed a highly hierarchical organisational structure.

During the *Edo* period, 1600 to 1868, the nature of the blind guild, *tōdō-za*, began to change from an 'artistic guild' to that of a 'socio-economic caste'. Nakayama [1934,1936] and Katō [1974] have accounted for this organisational change and identified its causes. Firstly, in the seventeenth century, narrative performance accompanied by the lute could no longer be a main occupation for blind men. The blind lute-playing priests who performed the Kakuichi's libretto of the Tale of the Héiké became less popular than before, partly because of its outdated aristocratic literary taste and partly because of the proliferation of more exciting and newer forms of entertainments, such as puppet shows, ballet and opera. Accordingly, in the seventeenth century, the blind had to find other occupations. Some blind men specialised in singing or instrumental music and worked in the pits of the puppet and opera theatres. Others began to take up new occupations, masseurs, acupuncturists and money lenders, for example. Consequently, the blind guild now became a social organisation which was led by economically and politically powerful blind men, rather than an artistic guild which was led by outstanding blind artists.

Secondly, the economic privileges of the blind guild became significant for its members in the seventeenth century. Although the new occupations were open to a few

---

<sup>1</sup> The *tōdō-za* was the sole national guild of *biwa-hōshi*, blind lute-playing priests, and therefore, it consisted solely of blind men. Blind female singers, *gozé*, seem to have had their own guild, but so far much less has been learned of their history than that of blind men.

blind men with special talents, the majority of blind men still continued chanting Buddhist scriptures or playing their lutes in front of people's houses for small amounts of money. Even before the seventeenth century, wealthy families had been accustomed to giving alms to the blind living in their locality on particular occasions, such as weddings, funerals and child birth. In the seventeenth century, *tōdō-za*, the blind guild, authorised its members to collect the alms and assigned them the territories within which they could make these collections. Consequently, any blind person outside the blind guild could no longer earn, or even beg for money. Despite the decline in the performance of the lute-playing priests, the guild expanded continuously in the seventeenth century. Katō suggested that the number of the guild members increased from 445 in 1534 to 2,051 in 1657. [Katō 1974:159]

Thirdly, as the size of the guild expanded, the internal structure of the guild became more hierarchical than before. From its origin, the blind guild, *tōdōza*, consisted of four ranks: *kengyō*, *bettō*, *kōtō* and *zatō*. The incomes of the guild from its membership fees had been redistributed to the members according to rank. Originally, the ranks represented the levels of artistic skill. However, in the seventeenth century, as the performance of the lute-player had become outdated, the rank system had gradually lost all connection with the artistic skill of the blind. Now, they started to "buy" the ranks. Rich blind men paid money for higher ranks in the guild, such as *kéngyō*, and these moneys were pooled and distributed to the members of upper ranks, such as *kéngyō*, *béttō* and *kōtō*. In the seventeenth century, while lay blind men had gradually come to rely upon the alms which were collected from ordinary people, the upper members of the blind guild began to live on the contributions which the lower members had to make when they rose up the social ladder within the blind guild. Thus, during the *Edo* period, 1600 to 1867, the blind increasingly relied upon the economic privileges

and benefits of the blind guild rather than their own individual abilities and occupations.

However, this was not only the case for the blind but also for all members of that society. Duus observed that the Japanese society in the *Edo* period was "highly hierarchical, stressing the prerogatives of rank, sex, and age". [Duus 1976:10] The *Tokugawa* military monarchy during the *Edo* period "had no monopoly of state power as the territorial monarchs of early modern Europe did". [Duus 1976:26] It divided the country into more than 250 fragmented domains, which were ruled by feudal military lords who declared their loyalty to the *Tokugawa* monarch. Furthermore, it ruled the people through the class status system which consisted of four main classes and several outcast groups. The main four classes were warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants. Each class had its own hierarchical structure within the class. The first rank of each class ruled their own class. Moreover, except for the warrior class, the first rank of each class collected taxes on behalf of the military monarch and lords. The military monarch and lords distributed the taxes to their warriors according to military rank. As this feudal rule became fully established in the seventeenth century, the *Tokugawa* monarch gradually began to rule in a similar way vagrants who had not belonged to any of main four classes. Although they were classified as outcast categories, the vagrants including hunters, peddlers, minstrels, prostitutes and paupers were important for the military monarch in terms of military information and tactics. The monarch assigned a headman to rule each outcast group, and, in return for their loyalty to the monarch, gave them privileges, such as tax exemptions and monopolies of occupation. Although the blind were not stigmatised as outcast, the ruling class treated the blind guild economically and politically in the same manner in which they treated the outcast groups. The monarch appointed a head *kengyō* to rule the blind and allowed such prerogatives as he gave to the outcast groups;

for example, tax exemptions, monopolies on occupation, and formal permission to collect alms. Thus, during the *Edo* period, the "rule by class" encouraged a "collectivity ethic" and "social harmony" within each social class, including outcast groups and the blind guild. In this context, the blind guild gradually became incorporated into the *Tokugawa* class-status system as a minority social class.

As any social class in the *Edo* period was more or less a separate social world, the blind guild was a segregated world of the blind with some prerogatives and a certain degree of autonomy.

In short, the blind guild was originally established in the fourteenth century by blind lute-playing singers so as to reserve the right to perform the *Kakuichi's* libretto of the *Tale of Heike*. In the seventeenth century, in the context of the *Tokugawa's* "rule by class", the blind guild was gradually transformed into a social institution which was organised on the basis of economic privileges. As the blind guild began to provide an economic basis for its members, it strengthened the sense of community among those members.

2-2. The Abolition of the Blind Guild in 1871 and the Regulations to Practice Anma Massage of 1911: Forty Years of Struggles to Rebuild the Blind Guild

The subject of this section is the extent to which blind people were affected by the social reforms in the late nineteenth century and their response to those reforms.

Partly because of external threat from Western imperialism, especially that of Britain, Russia and America, and partly because of internal stresses which were created by the growth of a market economy, the impoverishment of the warrior class and the emergence of new social classes, such as rich peasants and merchants, the Tokugawa monarch was overthrown in 1868 by anti-Tokugawa activists, many of whom came from the lower ranks of the warrior class. After the overthrow, the power of the Japanese Meiji emperor was restored, and his imperial government was filled by those anti-Tokugawa activists. Despite conflicts in the leadership of the Meiji oligarchy, a policy of building a "rich country and strong army in order to meet the Western challenge" became a consensus of the new government. [Duus 1976:73] In this regard, centralisation of power and control was a crucial issue. Accordingly, the new Meiji government reduced provincial autonomy, as well as the autonomy of the social classes, which the Tokugawa feudal monarchy had left and which had remained intact for two and a half centuries. In 1871, the government abolished the domains of feudal military lords and divided the country into prefectures. This was the "end of administrative localism". [Duus 1976:77] The abolition of the domains was accompanied by freedom of occupation for all, freedom of travel and residence, and freedom of commercial transactions. This was the end of class autonomy as well. The merchant class lost their protected markets and the security of monopolies under the guardianship of feudal lords. The artisan class lost the protection and prerogatives of their guilds.

Simultaneously in 1871, the government abolished the blind guild. At the same time, it emancipated outcast groups, such as *éta*, or "the dirty", and *hinin*, or the "non-human". This was not for humanitarian but for political reasons. During the previous Edo period, as mentioned above, the blind and the outcasts had enjoyed the highest degree of class autonomy. They had judged and punished their peers according to their own law and order. They had made their own absolute rulers, such as *head kengyō* and *head hinin*, who had been in a sense 'the king of the blind' and 'the king of the outcasts' respectively. Both the blind and the outcasts had monopolised particular occupations, and moreover, they had collected doles from the normal. In practice, the doles had been almost compulsory, and therefore, they had been in the nature of local taxes for ordinary people. The blind, as well as the outcasts, had redistributed the incomes from their occupations and the doles within their own class. In short, during the Edo period, the blind and the outcasts had lived in "outside worlds" which were segregated and protected from the majority in society. The Meiji emperor's government which wanted to have direct control over the nation and the population in order to establish the "Modern State" could never allow such autonomy to remain to these two minority social classes.

As the life of the outcasts did not change immediately after the Emancipation Edict in 1871 [Cornell 1967:340], neither did the life of the blind. In the case of the blind, social reforms in the early Meiji period rather worsened their living. The outcasts in practice still kept their traditional privileges, and their communities "offered a refuge against the bewilderment of freedom". [Cornell 1967:340] However, as a result of complex social and economic changes, the blind guild had already in the late Edo period ceased to function and many blind people had been impoverished. [Katō 1974:440-2] Furthermore, in 1874, the Meiji government introduced a licence to practice medicine. Since the government restricted licences to those who

trained in and practised Western medicine, practitioners of Japanese traditional medicine, including acupuncturists and masseurs, had to work under those practitioners. This was the policy, but in practice, the traditional medical practitioners, including blind acupuncturists, opposed the government policy, and nine years later, in 1883, the acupuncturists attained official permission for their independent practice. However, new entry in the field of traditional medicine was restricted to some extent. Thus, the social reforms of 'modernisation' in the late nineteenth century made a devastating impact on the lives of the blind. An uniform procedure of tax collection deprived the blind of their traditional privileges of collecting alms and tax exemptions. Freedom of occupation for all forced the blind to compete with the sighted, and consequently, expelled the blind from their traditional trades in the entertainment business. The official adoption of Western medicine endangered the last chance for the blind to make their living by acupuncture and *anma* massage.

While the *Meiji* oligarchies and early capitalists made all possible efforts to introduce the market economy and industrialisation from the West, they tended to see European democracy and social legislation as 'foreign evils'. Dore observed that early Japanese industrialists who were pioneers of Western industrial techniques in Japan employed 'nationalist' arguments when they accused Japanese factory legislation of "blind imitation from the West". [Dore 1969:448-9] In the late nineteenth century, as Dore observed, Japan was in an ambivalent position between the desire to imitate Western material techniques and the desire to preserve Japan's moral superiority over the West. In contrast with economic policy, which 'copied' that of the West, the *Meiji* government continued the Confucianist ethos of the Tokugawa monarchy in terms of social policy. Their first social legislation, 'the regulations for poor relief' of 1874, was neither a modern innovation nor an imitation from the West. It merely acknowledged and encouraged the existing traditional customs of community mutual-help which



had been developed through the influence of Confucianism under the Tokugawa monarchy.<sup>2</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, the early Meiji government terminated traditional protection for the blind, but made no welfare provisions for them.

The first reaction of the blind to the modernisation policy of the early Meiji government was to establish 'the schools of acupuncture and anma massage for the blind'. In 1875, immediately after the official adoption of western medicine, a blind masseur living in *Fukui* prefecture asked the local authority for official permission to establish a private school of acupuncture and anma massage for the blind. Similar attempts were made at many places in Japan in the late 1870s. [Katō 1991:174-5] The idea of "the school of acupuncture and anma massage for the blind" became popular among blind master masseurs and acupuncturists since the school was seen as an excellent substitute for the blind guild. The school could preserve a traditional master-trainee relationship in which a master acupuncturist could exploit his trainees. Moreover, if the government would officially acknowledge such schools of acupuncture and anma massage, it would be de facto acknowledgement of their right to practice acupuncture and anma massage despite the restrictions in the medical regulations of 1874. Furthermore, the idea of 'the school for the blind' accorded with government policy. The education policy was an exceptional area of early Meiji social policy. Despite their lack of interest in Western welfare measures the government was keen to import the public education and school system from the West, including special education. Examples of special education in Europe were employed by Japanese Meiji bureaucrats when they argued for compulsory education and the Western education system against the Japan's traditional education system. For example, a

---

<sup>2</sup> It took more than sixty years for Japan to establish modern welfare legislation, *Kyugo-ho* or the Poor Relief Act of 1929, which admitted for the first time in Japan that the state should be responsible for the worst cases of acute poverty.

Japanese government official of high rank who had visited shipyards at Glasgow and met deaf workers reported to the government that European modern methods of education could make even 'useless' deaf people productive. As early as 1871, he suggested that the government should build a special school for the blind and the deaf in Japan. [Katō 1991:144-5] Thus, there were no grounds on which the Meiji government could object to the blind building their own schools.

In the late nineteenth century, the blind tried to preserve their traditional privileges of the blind guild under the guise of 'the special schools for the blind'. In 1900, the Ministry of Education formally recognised eleven special schools for the blind in Japan. Moreover, apart from these eleven schools, there were many small informal schools for the blind which were not recognised by the Ministry. By integrating these small schools, the number of the recognised special schools for the blind grew rapidly to fifty seven in 1912. Katō suggests that there were two characteristics which distinguished Japanese special schools for the blind from those of European countries. Firstly, they were established not only by sighted philanthropists but also by the blind themselves. Secondly, they were often developed from the schools of acupuncture and anma massage. [Katō 1972:32]

Another reaction of the blind to the changes which had taken place was to engage in political lobbying for a monopoly over anma massage. Largely under pressure from the Popular Rights movement which demanded democratic representative government, the Meiji Constitution was "given" by the emperor in 1889, and subsequently in 1890, the first elective national assembly, the Diet, was held. Into the twentieth century, as political parties grew in the Diet, ordinary people, including the blind, began to form political lobbies based on their shared interests. The main purpose of the blind lobby was to regain the monopoly of anma massage. During the Edo period, although the blind

had not fully monopolised anma massage, sighted masseurs had been limited to an absolute minority because of feudal restrictions on freedom of occupation. Partly, these restrictions on residence and occupation were due to the feudal social order which glued people to the land. In order to have modern industry, the Meiji government got people off the land by introducing freedom of residence and occupation. However, before modern industry was fully established, a large number of people moved into towns, thus increasing urban unemployment. Poor peasants who lost their lands moved to cities, where the lower ranks of the former warriors, artisans and merchants were also seeking jobs. Anma massage, together with pulling rickshaws, was an easily available job for those seeking work in cities in the early Meiji period. At the end of the nineteenth century, blind anma masseurs began to see the increasing number of sighted practitioners as a threat. In the early 1900s, blind acupuncturists and anma masseurs established their local associations in the main cities. In 1905, their first national conference was held in Tokyo, and submitted their proposition to the Diet.

'The Proposal to Protect the Blind', a proposition that the occupations of acupuncture and anma massage should be reserved for the blind, was presented in 1905 to *Shugiin* or the House of Commons by Ichijirō Okuno, a member of the Popular Rights movement. In his motion for the proposition, Okuno employed rather conservative 'pro-Tokugawa' arguments.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, he implied that 'benevolent' Tokugawa monarchs had protected the blind while 'harsh' Meiji oligarchies introduced free market competition which impoverished the blind. Moreover, he referred to the origin of sighted anma masseuses as follows. "In the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Tokugawa monarchy was in crisis, many warriors of low rank rushed to

---

<sup>3</sup> Regarding Okuno's arguments for the proposition, see Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Giji Sokkiroku Meiji 38nendo (Proceedings of the House of Commons, the Year of 1905), 1980, Tokyo University Press, Vol.20, pp.278-9.

Edo (Tokyo) from remote domains in order to cause political trouble. It was they who encouraged sighted women to become anma masseuses. In fact, they took prostitutes into the Tokyo branch offices of their feudal lords under the guise of 'anma masseuses'. As sighted anma masseuses increased, the blind petitioned the Tokugawa monarch to regulate them. The monarch allowed sighted masseurs and masseuses to practice only at their own parlours, and prohibited them from out-reach services at clients' homes." Here, Okuno deliberately made a striking contrast between the "thoughtful and civilised" Tokugawa monarch who had protected the blind and "thoughtless and uncivilised" warriors of low ranks coming from remote domains who had broken not only the traditional feudal social order but also damaged the life of the blind. The latter, the warriors of low rank, obviously referred to the current rulers, the Meiji oligarchies. Thus, Okuno, in the first instance, addressed the issue of the blind from a conservative perspective, by arguing that "we used to cater well for the blind in the good old days".

Secondly, Okuno employed nationalist arguments as well. He maintained that the benevolent policy of the Tokugawa monarchy for the blind had been comparable, or even superior, to the Western virtue of humanism and charity. "Unlike Western countries, Japanese blind people had been able to make their living through acupuncture and anma massage without depending on poor relief provided by society or the state." Extreme nationalists, such as Kanichi Otaké, who were rigorously opposed to the Peace Treaty of 1905 with Russia, supported the proposition for the blind. Finally, Okuno employed modern universal arguments in promoting the proposal. His following arguments may remind us of "the Theory of Justice" by John Rawls. "We are not trying to discriminate in favour of the blind. The free market competition between blind and sighted masseurs is not fair. In terms of out-reach services and client-marketing, blind masseurs are obviously disadvantaged and handicapped. In order to make the market fair, the

government needs to protect blind masseurs."

In response to Okuno's arguments, the Ministry of the Interior rejected the proposal by maintaining that they were not ready to introduce such legislation and they needed to undertake appropriate research into the matter. Subsequently, in 1909, the Petition to Protect the Blind was submitted to the Diet. A government official from the Ministry of the Interior, Seitaro Kubota, counter-argued against the petition on the basis of the following four points. Firstly, a monopoly over a particular occupation was not in accord with freedom of occupation. Secondly, such a monopoly would discourage the development of an occupation, such as the medical application of acupuncture and massage. Thirdly, there had already been certain numbers of sighted acupuncturists and masseurs, and therefore, the government could not ignore their vested interest. Finally, even if the legislation was passed, it would be practically impossible for the government to eliminate 'unlawful' sighted acupuncturists and masseurs.<sup>4</sup> In the Diet debate which followed, these governmental arguments were criticised by the supporters of the blind lobby. For example, regarding the drawback of the monopoly to the development of acupuncture and massage, it was argued that the technique of acupuncture and anma massage had originally been developed by the blind without competition from the sighted. Similarly, concerning the vested rights of sighted acupuncturists and masseurs, it was argued that the government could preserve their vested interests because the blind lobby demanded not to eliminate the existing sighted acupuncturists and masseurs but to prohibit sighted people from entering these occupations.

The majority of the members of *Sugiin* or the House of Commons were on the side of the blind lobby. This was firstly because the blind were seen as "victims of the

---

<sup>4</sup> See Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Meiji 42nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1909), 1989, Tokyo University Press, Vol.51, p.119.

social reforms of the Meiji oligarchy". The House of Commons was occupied largely by the former popular rights activists. Although they were influenced by Western liberals, such as Locke, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau and Bentham, their activities were primarily motivated by their antipathy towards the Meiji oligarchy and their social reforms. The democratic movement in the late nineteenth century, in reality, largely consisted of the former established class, such as the warriors of middle rank, wealthy farmers and local notables whose traditional status and authority had been reduced by the political centralisation policies of the Meiji government. The blind who were badly treated by the Meiji government could be seen as a symbol of anti-oligarchical sentiments.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, naive sympathy with the blind overwhelmed the Japanese Diet.

A member of the Diet argued as follows. "There is no greater cause of unhappiness than blindness. Even the insane may be happier than the sane blind. There is nobody who deserves our sympathy so much as the blind do. If we could not protect even the blind, how can we as statesmen protect our people?" In responding to this speech, the government was forced to express their deep sympathy for the blind.<sup>6</sup>

Eventually, in 1911, the Ministry of the Interior established the "Regulations to Practice Acupuncture and Anma Massage", which introduced licences to practice these two skills. The licence to practice anma massage was

---

<sup>5</sup> In general, early social legislation in Japan, such as the factory legislation of 1911, was promoted not only by modernisation forces but also by conservative sentiments, the ideological grounds of which were nationalism, traditionalism and Confucianism. Regarding the establishment of Japanese factory legislation, Dore observed that "the line of thought represented by Lord Shaftesbury in England was present in Japan, despite the differences between Confucianism and High Toryism and despite the distortions of the late-developer's situation". [Dore 1969:448]

<sup>6</sup> See Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Meiji 42nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1909), 1989, Tokyo University Press, Vol.51, p.120.

divided into two classes, Classes A and B. Class B required less qualifications than Class A, but only the blind could apply for Class B. The licences for acupuncture and "Class A" anma massage were given to all applicants on an equal basis regardless of their degree of visual acuity. Although the government had originally wanted to handle the issue of the blind within the general framework of poor relief together with the frail elderly, the sick, the disabled, and orphans, they reluctantly introduced specific measures for the blind, in which the blind attained easier access to the occupation of anma massage than the sighted. This was partly because the tradition of the blind guild led the blind as a unique group to form their own political lobby, partly because the blind achieved overwhelming support in the Diet, and partly because the Meiji government could not afford any welfare provisions for the blind, such as pensions, special education and occupational rehabilitation, other than minimum poor relief provided under the extremely residualist statute, "Regulations of Poor Relief of 1874".

To sum up, the radical social reforms which were implemented by the Meiji government in the late nineteenth century had a devastating impact upon the traditional blind guild. However, the blind succeeded in maintaining some part of their traditional privileges, together with their sense of community, through newly established blind schools and traditionally reserved occupations by acquiring a wider support from the Popular Rights movement which was opposed to the social reforms. As a result, compared with other groups of disabled people, the blind occupied a unique status in modern Japanese social policy.

### 2-3 A "Watershed": The 1914 Bill to Protect the Blind

This section focuses on the 1914 "Bill to Protect the Blind" which was the first attempt to legislate for reserving the occupation of anma massage exclusively for the blind. Drawing heavily on Diet Papers, an attempt is made to explain why the bill was presented at the Diet in 1914 and why it failed to become law.

Immediately after the Ministry of the Interior established the Regulations to Practice Anma Massage in 1911, the blind lobby began to criticise the government. As mentioned in the previous section, the 1911 regulations divided the licence to practice anma massage into two classes: 'Class B' solely for blind applicants and 'Class A' for both blind and sighted applicants. As a result, sighted applicants had to take a qualifying examination for 'Class A' licence which was more difficult than the examination for 'Class B'. Consequently, blind people felt themselves recognised as intellectually inferior to sighted people. At the Diet in 1912, *Masatoshi Takagi*, a blind member of the Diet, repeatedly submitted a petition which demanded the reinstatement of the monopoly over anma massage by the blind. In support of his petition, *Takagi* argued at the Diet that although the blind agreed to the introduction of a qualifying examination for the licence to practice anma massage they were not happy with the government's idea that the blind should take an easier examination than that for the sighted.<sup>7</sup> Answering on behalf of the government, *Ichita Kobashi*, a high-ranking civil servant in the Ministry of the Interior, reiterated government opposition to the idea of a reserved occupation for the blind in terms of support for freedom of occupation, concern for the development of the skill, and protection of the vested rights of sighted masseurs.

---

<sup>7</sup> See *Teikoku Gikai Shuugiin Iinkai Giroku Meiji 45nendo* (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1912), 1989, Tokyo University Press, Vol. 69, p.275.



Thus, Kobashi's arguments replicated those which Kubota, a predecessor of his at the Ministry of the Interior, had put forward at the Diet in 1909. While in 1909 the blind lobby sought to counter the government's arguments for the development of the skill and the vested rights of sighted masseurs, in 1912, Takagi focused on the argument concerning freedom of occupation:

"The government has already placed several limitations on the freedom of occupation. The police have limited the number of public baths and haircut salons in order to supervise their business. They allow only one public bath and one haircut salon within each district of a town. Such restrictions have not been harmful to the general economy. I believe that the monopoly of anma massage by the blind will never disturb the general economy. ---- The government is using the term 'freedom of occupation' just as an 'excuse'."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the blind lobby criticised all the major points in the argument which the Ministry of the Interior had advanced against the idea of reserved occupations for the blind.

Subsequently in 1914, the blind lobby presented to the Diet not a petition but a "Bill to Protect the Blind". This was the first attempt at social legislation for the blind in Japan. Against the bill which aimed at ensuring the monopoly of the blind over anma massage, the government stressed the drawback of the monopoly by the blind in terms of the medical use of massage. A medical officer of the Ministry of the Interior, *Tadahiro Noda*, argued at the Diet that it was impossible to distinguish 'Western medical massage' from 'Japanese traditional anma massage'. He suggested that blind masseurs were not appropriate for the Western medical massage, firstly, because it was inconvenient for medical doctors to supervise sightless masseurs, secondly because sightless masseurs could neither

---

<sup>8</sup> See *Teikoku Gikai Shuugiin Iinkai Giroku Meiji 45nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1912)*, 1989, Tokyo University Press, Vol. 69, p.278.

see the movements of a joint nor deal with medical instruments, and finally because they were not able to conduct clinical research in orthopaedics.<sup>9</sup> At the Diet in 1914, the government neither mentioned the freedom of occupation nor the vested rights of sighted masseurs. Eventually, the bill was passed through *Shugiin*, the House of Commons, to *Kizokuin*, the House of Lords. At the House of Lords, *Shigorou Sugiyama*, the director of the Public Health Bureau in the Ministry of the Interior, made it clear that the government was totally against the bill firstly because the blind had already been catered for well enough by the 1911 Regulation to Practice Anma Massage, secondly because sighted masseurs were necessary for the medical use of massage particularly in the field of orthopaedics, and finally, because there were other jobs which were suitable for the blind.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the House of Lords rejected the bill. It was neither the freedom of occupation nor the vested rights of sighted masseurs but the medical aspects of anma massage that prevented the bill from becoming a law. This may imply that the strongest criticisms against the monopoly of anma massage by the blind arose not from sighted masseurs but from specialist orthopaedists.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> See *Teikoku Gikai Shuugiin Iinkai Giroku Taisho 3nendo* (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1914), 1981, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten, Vol. 4, p.355-6.

<sup>10</sup> See *Teikoku Gikai Kizokuin Iinkai Giroku Taisho 3nendo* (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Lords, the year of 1914), 1981, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten, Vol. 3, p.1104-6.

<sup>11</sup> Specialist orthopaedists have persistently prevented until recently blind masseurs from engaging in para-medical practice. For example, in 1965, when the government established the 'Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist Act', the scientific societies of orthopaedics insisted that blind people should be disqualified from being physiotherapists. [Tokyo Kyoiku Daigaku Kyoikugakubu Zoushigaya Bunkou 1976: 178-181] Although the Act did not restrain blind people from becoming physiotherapists, in reality, physiotherapy in Japan has not been open to blind persons. Today, three special schools for 'the blind' run courses in physiotherapy but only 'partially sighted' students with good residual vision can be admitted.

Thus, mainly because of the opposition of orthopaedists, the 'Bill to Protect the Blind' of 1914 failed to become law. However, the bill made a crucial impact on the future of blind welfare. Firstly, it became clear that the government was decisively opposed to the blind monopoly of anma massage. As a result, the blind lobby had to change their strategy after 1914. They began to demand not only a monopoly over anma massage but also education, vocational training and welfare services. Secondly, when Sugiyama argued on behalf of the government against the bill at the House of Lords in 1914, he mentioned for the first time, as a representative of the government, possible alternative occupations for the blind to anma massage and acupuncture. Subsequently, in the 1920s and 1930s, the government which wanted to deflect the political pressure of the blind lobby, gradually began to undertake research and experiments in order to find alternative jobs for the blind. Finally, although the blind failed in their attempt at legislation in this instance, the experience generated an interest in political activities in general, and, twenty years later, in 1934, they laid the same bill once more before the Diet.

In short, the 1914 Bill to Protect the Blind can be seen as a "watershed". On the one hand it ended the early political lobbying of the blind which aimed at re-establishing the traditional prerogatives of the blind guild. On the other, it was the beginning of a new phase of lobbying for social legislation which was concerned not only with a monopoly over anma massage but also education and the social rights of the blind.

#### 2-4 The Rise of Democratic Movements and the Emergence of Social Administration: 1915 to 1925

During the period between 1915 and 1925, the movements toward democracy and socialism arose in Japan. In response to social unrest the Japanese government began to contemplate social administration and social amelioration. In this context, the blind lobby achieved the public provision of special education for the blind and the recognition of votes written in Braille.

Soon after the bill to protect the blind was rejected by the House of Lords, the first World War broke out. The War had a number of crucial, if indirect, effects upon Japanese society. Firstly, the war brought a tremendous economic boom in Japan. Between 1914 and 1919, "the GNP rose by more than a third and the output of mining and manufacture rose by nearly a half". [Duus 1976:174] Secondly, the sharp increase in demand for skilled labour in heavy industries under the wartime boom provided for the first time in Japan the ground on which trade unions could develop. "In 1914 there had been only 49 labour unions in Japan, but by 1919 there were 187, with a total membership of 100,000". [Duus & Scheiner 1988:683] Thirdly, the wartime boom produced steep inflation, which led to social unrest such as the 1918 rice riots and the intensification of the labour and peasant movements. Moreover, the onset of the postwar recession in 1919 further intensified labour militancy. In 1919, the Japan Federation of Labour promulgated a new program that included demands for the legalization of trade unions, the establishment of a minimum wage, and the passage of universal manhood suffrage. [Duus & Scheiner 1988:689]

Above all, the triumph of the democratic powers in the first World War confirmed the trend toward democracy in Japan.

Although the first election for *Shūgiin*, the House of Commons, had been held in 1890, "suffrage had been limited

to those (males) who had paid over fifteen yen in direct taxes, a limitation that had excluded all but 400,000, or about 1 percent of the population in 1890". [Duus 1976:115] In the late 1890s upper and middle-class intellectuals such as politicians, academics and journalists had begun to advocate universal manhood suffrage. [Sumiya 1974:174] The movement peaked in 1900, and the Diet responded with the Public Police Peace Act of 1900 in order to oppress the democratic as well as the labour movements. However, in the mid 1910s, democratic liberals once more began to advocate universal manhood suffrage. They argued that Japan had to participate in the "world trend" toward democracy in order to make the nation stronger. The triumph of the democratic powers in the First World War, and the collapse of autocratic regimes in Germany and Austria-Hungary, provided the case for the arguments of Japanese democrats and encouraged their movements for universal manhood suffrage.<sup>12</sup>

In response to the social unrest of the late 1910s, the government established in 1920 *Shakaikyoku*, or the 'Social Administration Bureau', in the Ministry of the Interior. It was the first statutory agency in Japan which aimed specifically at intervening with regard to 'social problems' not with the intention of 'social control' but 'social amelioration'. The idea of 'social amelioration', or "*shakai-kairyo*" in Japanese, did not become current among Japanese politicians and bureaucrats until the end of the nineteenth century. The first two decades of the Meiji period, 1870 to 1890, were years in which "modernisers dominated the Japanese political and intellectual worlds". [Dore 1969: 435] Although there were a number of diverse categories among 'the modernisers', 'modernisation' meant 'Westernisation' to the contemporary Japanese, in particular, the policy makers of the early Meiji government who were influenced by libertarian ideas. The libertarian

---

<sup>12</sup> Concerning the democratic liberalism in Japan in the mid 1910s, see Duus & Scheiner [1988:673-81].

ideas of John Stuart Mill and others had been introduced to Japan soon after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and many high-ranking civil servants had been sent in the second half of the 19th century to educational institutions under the influence of libertarian ideas in Europe and America, such as University College, London, for further education. Such libertarian influence on the civil servants can be clearly discerned in the government's argument for freedom of occupation against the reserved occupation for the blind, as we have seen. Thus, it can be said that Japanese governments in the Meiji period, 1868 to 1912, had adopted a general policy of *laissez faire*. However, as Crawcour [1988:448] observed, such libertarian ideas "did not take root" in Japan.

Certainly, as Dore [1967:129-31] has observed, the Western idea of Self-Help had a counterpart in Japanese traditional culture, that is, the idea of '*rishin shusse*', "raise yourself and make your way in the world". However, the idea of '*rishin shusse*' had been prevalent only among the warrior class during the previous regimes. In traditional Japan, the society at large had been organised according to the principle of Mutual-Help and 'shared responsibilities'. It had been the privilege for the ruling warrior class to be able to have individual aspirations to raise themselves and make their way in the world on their own. Although the Meiji Restoration of 1868 provided the wider population with greater opportunities for '*rishin shusse*', or Self-Help, few could utilise those opportunities successfully. At the turn of the century, the majority, the peasants and labourers, who could not take advantage of the opportunities of Self-Help, increasingly began to blame the government for the impoverishment of society. In this context, early Japanese socialism emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the socialist movements "passionately indicted the moral failings and cultural decadence of their society". [Duus & Scheiner 1988:659] The early Japanese socialists, as Duus and Scheiner have observed, were concerned more about

'social harmony' and 'the moral bonds of society' than Marxist theory relating to class conflict, historical materialism, and the revolution of the proletariat. In that sense, they shared values and ideas with such regressive political forces as conservative traditionalists and nationalist patriots who called for a return to the Confucian morality of benevolence and loyalty. Both socialists and traditionalists hated the excessive growth of capitalism and individualism, wanted to maintain the traditional moral bonds of society, and were in favour of state intervention.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the political forces which opposed a laissez faire policy increasingly grew across a wide range of the population during the first decade of the twentieth century.

In response to the criticisms, the government gradually began to review policy. By the late 1890s, the German idea of 'sozialpolitik' had already been introduced by a group of law professors at Tokyo University. In 1898, they organised *shakai seisaku gakkai*, the Social Policy Association, to discuss the social problems associated with industrialisation. [Duus & Scheiner 1988:658] In 1900, in cooperation with the Social Policy Association, high-ranking civil servants in the Ministry of the Interior set up a research group on the matter of the paupers. Subsequently in 1908, the Ministry of the Interior launched *kanka kyusai jigyo*, the social program for the moral enrichment and the practical relief of the paupers, while establishing *Chuō Jizen Kyōkai* (Central Association of Charities) which aimed at reorganising centrally the existing charitable organisations for poor relief under the influence of the British Charity Organisation Society. [Doi, Y. 1977:196] In 1911, the Diet enacted Japan's first social legislation, the Factory Act, which came into effect in 1916. The Factory Act established "a precedent for other legislation and created a body of reform-minded officials in the Home

---

<sup>13</sup> Concerning traditionalist attitudes toward state intervention, see Dore [1969:448].

Ministry (the Ministry of the Interior) to administer it". [Duus 1976:181] In 1920, as a consequence of the gradual policy shift from *laissez faire* to 'social amelioration', *Shakaikyoku*, the Social Administration Bureau, was established at the Ministry of the Interior. Later, in 1938, the Bureau became a new government department, the Ministry of Health & Welfare, *kōseishyō*.

Under the circumstances of economic recession, social unrest and political upheaval around 1920, it was the main task for the Social Administration Bureau to attain cooperation between capitalists and labour in order to achieve 'social harmony' and 'social amelioration'. In 1920, Takejiro Tokonami, the Minister of the Interior, made a speech which was entitled "On the Principle of Social Work". He said;

"When a mosquito stings your left hand, the discomfort which the mosquito causes does not remain at your left hand. The rest of your body must work together in order to remove the discomfort of your left hand. This is the rule of nature and that of human society. We call it the idea of 'social harmony', which is the basis of social work." [Yoshida, K. 1977:217]

The director of the Social Administration Bureau, Kazutami Tako, wrote in 1922 that "social work was based on the idea of social harmony, and aimed at social amelioration".

[Yoshida, K. 1977:217] In the 1920s and 1930s, the Social Administration Bureau (S.A.B.) played a crucial role in producing a steady trickle of social legislation, for example, a health insurance act (1920), a labour exchange act (1921), a children and young people's act (1922), a poor relief act (1929), an act for the prevention of cruelty to children (1932), and an act for the protection of mothers and children (1937). It was in this context that the S.A.B. took an initiative in introducing social legislation for the blind in the late 1920s and 1930s, which will be observed in the next section.

With regard to the political activities of the blind



during the period between 1915 and 1925, these were mainly directed at enlarging social rights, for example, through the public provision of education, and the acceptance of the validity of votes written in Braille. [Yamada 1987:84-5]

As to special education, as mentioned in the previous section, there were fifty seven special schools for the blind in 1912. Most of these were small local schools which were privately funded by local notables. Originally, the majority of the schools were established as schools of anma massage and acupuncture by blind masters. The rest were established both for the blind and the deaf by philanthropists and professionals, such as, medical doctors, school masters, local civil servants, and ex-servicemen, some of whom were themselves visually impaired. In order to acquire public funds, in 1920 all these private schools held in 1920 a national conference at which they demanded '*Mōa Kyōikurei*', an ordinance for the education of the blind and the deaf, from the government. The significance of the pressure which the blind were able to exert became apparent when their success in achieving the establishment of blind schools was contrasted with the lack of educational provision for the other groups of disabled people. Consequently, in 1923, the government, by ordinance, made it mandatory for local prefectural authorities to maintain within their prefectures at least one special school for the blind and the deaf. As a result of this ordinance, the majority of the existing private special schools were transferred to the prefectural authorities, while those which remained as private could get public grants. By 1939, the number of the special schools for the blind had increased to ninety two. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940:28]

Furthermore, partly because of the ordinance, and partly because of the opinions of the professionals in the special education system, the schools which had combined blind and deaf children gradually separated the two types of pupils and provided distinctive specialist education for each category.

The question of the validity of the votes written in

Braille became another political issue in 1920. Braille was introduced to Japan in 1875 by a government officer who had visited a special school for the blind in the United States. Since there had been no practical means for the blind in Japan to read and write, Braille was gradually accepted by specialist teachers for the blind. In 1890, Tokyo Special School for the Blind established Japanese Braille based on the work of Kuraji Ishikawa, a teacher at the school. Subsequently in 1901, the Ministry of Education formally recognised Japanese Braille as the standard means for teaching the blind to read and write.

[Tokyo Kyoiku Daigaku Zōshigaya Bunkō 1976:23] After the Ministry of Education formally recognised Japanese Braille, Masatoshi Takagi, a blind member of the Diet, introduced a petition in 1909. The subject of his concern was the contradictory position in which blind people now found themselves with regard to voting and other legal rights. While Braille was now formally recognised as a medium of education, its legal position remained in question.

Masatoshi Takagi explained;

"Although the adventitiously blind can sign their own name in ordinary letters, the congenitally blind are not be able to write their own signature. As a result, they can neither make a legal bond nor exercise the vote. There are many cases in which the blind fail to exercise their legal rights because they cannot write by themselves. If the blind are members of our society, I believe it necessary for the legal authority to recognise Japanese Braille as a 'letter'."<sup>14</sup> The 1889 *Shugiin Senkyo-hō*, the franchise act which established the electoral basis of the House of Commons on a narrow franchise consisting of male high taxpayers, excluded among others those who were illiterate. Since the government did not recognise Japanese Braille as a method of written communication, the vote of the blind of all classes was in practice rejected together with that of the illiterate.

---

<sup>14</sup> See *Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Meiji 42nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1909)*, 1989, Tokyo University Press, Vol.51, p.131.

In the first half of the 1910s, while demanding the monopoly of anma massage, the blind lobby became interested in the issues of legal and political rights as well. In 1913, a blind master of music wrote his vote in Japanese Braille at a local election of Okayama city. Although his vote was recognised as invalid, local newspapers made an issue of the event. [Shimoda 1991:151] In 1917, the blind lobby acquired a reduction in postal charges for Braille letters and books. [Yamada 1987:841] Subsequently, in 1920, when social movements pressing for universal adult male suffrage reached a peak, the blind lobby took advantage of this political climate of upheaval. Partly because the question of the franchise became an acute political issue in the wider society, and partly because agitation for the monopoly over anma massage failed in 1914, the blind lobby, particularly, blind intellectuals, took up the issue of the electoral rights of the blind. In 1920, Tetsutaro Kumagai, a blind Christian clergyman, established *Tokyo Mōjin Bunka Kyōkai*, the Tokyo Cultural Association for the Blind, and demanded the legal recognition of Braille. [Yamada 1987:85] Subsequently, in 1924, the blind lobby petitioned the Diet. Kira, a member of the Diet, argued on behalf of the blind that the votes written in Braille should be considered valid because the blind were highly intellectual and because the government had already validated votes written in Roman letters.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, in 1925, *Shugiin Senkyo-hō*, a franchise act of the House of Commons, was amended so as to extend the franchise to all adult men and to validate votes written in Braille.

Thus, in the context of democratic movements and the increasing concerns of the government for social amelioration during a decade between 1915 and 1925, the blind political lobby acquired the government's ordinance which ensured the public maintenance of a blind school in

---

<sup>15</sup> See *Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Taisho 13nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1924)*, 1986, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten, Vol.39, p.635.

each prefecture and the government's acknowledgement of the right of blind people to vote in Braille. It was also during this period that the government established in the Ministry of the Interior the Social Administration Bureau which played a crucial role in the late 1920s and 1930s in promoting specific services for the blind.

2-5 The Social Administration Bureau and the Bills  
to Protect the Blind of 1934 and 1935

This section considers the activities of the Social Administration Bureau (S.A.B.) which encouraged the blind lobby to present a bill to reserve the occupation of anma massage to the Diet again in 1934 and 1935.

When in 1920 the government established within the Ministry of the Interior the Social Administration Bureau, it also strengthened *Chuō Jizen Kyōkai*, or the Central Association of Charities, a quasi non-governmental organisation, which had originally been founded in 1908 as a copy of the British Charity Organisation Society. *Chuō Jizen Kyōkai* was now in 1920 renamed *Chuō Shakai Jigyō Kyōkai*, or the Central Association of Social Work, and was expected to work in close cooperation with the newly established Social Administration Bureau. The Central Association of Social Work (C.A.S.W) organised through its local branches the front-line social workers, such as unpaid poor-relief officers and the managers of charitable residential institutions, including those for orphans, those for juvenile offenders, and those for aged and disabled paupers. While the role of the Social Administration Bureau (S.A.B.) was research and preparation for social legislation, the C.A.S.W. and the local branches provided the S.A.B. with information and evidence on the administration of social legislation. Furthermore, the C.A.S.W. worked as an intermediary between the government and the political pressure groups in the field of social problems. For example, the C.A.S.W. established in 1925 a special branch for the amelioration of *buraku*, the outcast, which was called *Chuō Yuwa Jigyō Kyōkai*, the Central Association for Social Harmony (C.A.S.H.). The C.A.S.H. negotiated with the political pressure groups for the outcast, and in 1927, united them under its auspices in order to prevent the political movements of the outcast inclining toward Marxism. [Akisada 1984:123-7]

During the 1920s, apart from the amelioration of the outcast, the S.A.B. and the C.A.S.W. concentrated their efforts mainly on the enactment of *kyugohō*, Japan's first poor relief act. In fact, around the turn of the century, the Ministry of the Interior had already produced several drafts of a poor relief act, which drew heavily on the ideas of the British New Poor Law of 1834. Although these drafts had never become law, the Ministry of the Interior and the S.A.B. had already in the mid 1920s accumulated information about poor relief practices in Western countries, including Britain, and statistics of paupers in Japan. In the context of the profound economic recession in the 1920s, the Diet eventually in 1929 enacted *kyugohō*, the Japanese Poor Law, which recognised for the first time state responsibility for the relief of the paupers and made state provisions, though minimum, of indoor relief for orphans, the frail elderly and the severely sick.

After they had prepared remedies for the problem of the outcast and of starving peasants and labourers, the S.A.B. and the C.A.S.W. took up the issue of the blind. In 1929, when the Diet enacted the Japanese Poor Law, the C.A.S.W. established a special branch for the blind, *Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai*, or the Central Association for the Welfare of the Blind (C.A.W.B.). Aiming at coordinating local organisations for the welfare of the blind, the C.A.W.B. consisted of local ophthalmologists, school masters of blind schools, representatives of local organisations of the blind, and managers of charitable organisations for the blind, such as Braille publishers and libraries, and residential institutions. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940: Appendix p.1] Until the 1920s, there had been dozens of local groups of the blind who had separately lobbied for the improvements in their welfare. The government unified through the C.A.W.B. all these pressure groups, and the S.A.B. took the initiative in promoting social legislation for the blind.

In order to devise social legislation for the blind, the S.A.B. employed the same method as in the case of the 1929 Japanese Poor Law. As the S.A.B. studied the British New Poor Law of 1834, they took the British Blind Persons Act of 1920 as a model for legislation. British practices in the field of education and social services for the blind had already been popularised in Japan since the beginning of the twentieth century by Japanese blind intellectuals, such as, Tadasu Yoshimoto [1906]. Takeo Iwahashi reported in 1929 on the provisions of the Blind Persons Act of 1920 and its administration, as well as the works of the National Institute for the Blind, for a monthly journal which was published by the Osaka Branch of the C.A.S.W. [Iwahashi 1932:4] Persuaded by the work of Yoshimoto and Iwahashi, the C.A.W.B. adopted the British approach toward social legislation for the blind.

In 1931, the C.A.W.B. held a national conference where they decided on a definition of blindness. Those who could not identify the number of fingers at a distance of one metre were considered to be 'blind', while those unable to do it at a distance of two metres were 'semi-blind'. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940:34] Based on this definition of blindness, the C.A.W.B. in cooperation with the S.A.B. conducted at the end of the same year, 1931, the first national survey of the blind in Japan. According to the survey results, there were 76,260 blind people, including the 'semi-blind', who formed 0.1 percent of the population. As many as 18 percent of the blind people were in need for poor relief. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940:32-7]

Furthermore, in 1931, the C.A.W.B. set up the Standing Committee for the Protection of the Blind (S.C.P.B.), in order to discuss social legislation for the blind. The committee consisted of 37 members, including two experts in ophthalmology, five civil servants from the Ministry of the Interior (including three from the S.A.B.), two from the Ministry of Education, three from Tokyo

Municipal Government, four representatives from the organisations of the blind, and twelve head masters or teachers from blind schools, most of whom were themselves visually impaired teachers of anma massage and acupuncture. In 1934, the standing committee drew up and presented to the Diet a "Bill to Protect the Blind" which sought a monopoly of anma massage for licensed blind masseurs and the exclusion of sighted masseurs. At the same time, they drew up a proposition concerning the education of the blind suggesting that all schools for the blind should be boarding schools. Moreover, it proposed that the blind schools which were run by central or local governments should provide pupils with free boarding if necessary, and that one half of the total cost of the blind schools run by local governments should be borne by central government. Thus the standing committee's bill and proposition together may be summarised as an attempt to protect the traditional employment of the blind, and establish a public duty to provide education for the blind and maintenance for blind children and youths at school. There was considerable similarity between these demands of the S.C.P.B. in Japan and those of the blind lobby in Britain during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, it seems clear that the Japanese blind lobby in the 1930s used the work of the British blind lobby as a model.

As far as education was concerned, the blind lobby wanted to make it compulsory. Although the proportion of blind children who went to school had steadily increased since the Ministry of Education's ordinance for the education of the blind and the deaf, those who went to school in 1935 still accounted for less than half (42%) of all blind children. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940:44-5] This was largely because many parents could not bear the cost of boarding. Unlike British governments, the Ministry of Education in Japan did not establish special classes for blind children at ordinary local elementary schools, because special education for the blind was developed on the basis



of the existing private schools of anma massage and acupuncture for the blind which had derived from the tradition of the blind guild. Thus, because of the tradition of the blind guild, Japanese special education in this area became more segregative than the British counterpart. Since it was one of the major tasks for the Japanese government in the early twentieth century to provide education for all 'able-bodied' children, the Ministry of Education had to consider to some extent the education of blind children, too. Although it was in 1948 that the Ministry of education formally admitted their full responsibility for providing education to all blind children, the Japanese blind lobby had already in the 1930s acquired free boarding at the blind schools.

While the blind lobby could successfully persuade the government to provide education and maintenance for blind children, it was more difficult for them to ensure the public provision of work for blind adults and the public relief of blind paupers. In 1927, the blind lobby began to petition the Diet once more to devise a law to reserve the occupation of anma massage exclusively for the blind. They argued that it should be one of the main aims of *Shakai Seisaku*, or 'social policy', to protect blind masseurs from the pressure of sighted masseurs. With the rise of government's concerns with social policy and administration in the 1920s, the blind lobby raised again the issue of a monopoly of anma massage. Insisting that blind masseurs had already been protected well enough by the 1911 Regulation of Anma Massage, the Ministry of the Interior responded to the petition in a same manner as they had done in 1914 when a Bill to Protect the Blind had been presented at the Diet.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, in 1929, the blind lobby petitioned the Diet again to enact the blind law. They argued this time that although the 1911 Regulation might

---

<sup>16</sup> See Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Showa 2nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1927), 1986, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten, microfiche: reel 1, p.615.

protect 'ordinary' blind masseurs, it did nothing for the relief of 'blind paupers'. Referring to the pensions for the blind in Britain, they implied that a monopoly of anma massage would give blind paupers a chance of maintaining themselves.<sup>17</sup>

As a consequence of the efforts which the blind lobby, particularly, the C.A.W.B., made from 1929, it was possible for the Bill to Protect the Blind to be presented once more at the Diet in 1934. The Bill was exactly same as that which had been presented in the 1914 session. It was intended to ensure the blind a monopoly of anma massage. Since there was not enough time to discuss the bill in the 1934 session, the discussion took place at a special committee of *Shugiin*, or 'the House of Commons', in the following session in 1935.<sup>18</sup> At the special committee, Yoshikazu Omori, a vice Minister of the Interior, argued against the bill, firstly, that there were not enough numbers of blind masseurs to meet the demand, and secondly, that sighted masseurs were more competent than blind masseurs. Omori announced on behalf of the government that "despite our hearty sympathy for the blind the government could not agree with this particular bill". Compared with those who had supported the bill for the blind in 1914, the politicians working on behalf of the blind lobby in 1935 appeared to be rather faint-hearted and little positive opposition was offered to Omori's arguments.

At the special committee of the Diet in 1935 there were four members who supported the bill. Three of those

---

<sup>17</sup> See Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Showa 4nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1929), 1986, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten, microfiche: reel 3, p.927.

<sup>18</sup> The following arguments and debates about the "Bill to Protect the Blind" which took place at the special committee of the House of Commons in the 1935 session are quoted from Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku Showa 10nendo (Proceedings of Committees, the House of Commons, the year of 1935), 1990, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten, microfiche: reel 18, pp.192-8.

belonged to nationalist political parties which increasingly gained power in the Japanese politics as the country was involved in a conflict of international interests in China. These nationalist parties believed in the idea of military State socialism and called for tough government control over the economic market in order to concentrate national power on military activities. In this context, they worked enthusiastically in the 1935 session for the enactment of *Hyakkaten-hō*, or the 'Department Stores Act', which aimed to regulate large department stores so as to protect small retailers, and the act was a major breakthrough in the policy shift in the late 1930s from a market economy to a command economy. In the case of the legislation for the blind, however, despite the general policy of the nationalist parties for strong state intervention in the economic market, they did not argue at the Diet for a blind persons' monopoly of anma massage. Instead, they argued for alternative remedies for the blind, for example, aids for their transportation, free ophthalmological treatment, housing benefits, and free radio receivers.

The last of those four members who supported the bill was *Tsunejirō Matsuyama* who belonged to *Jiyu-tō*, or the 'Liberal Party', which had originally been based on the Popular Rights movement of the late nineteenth century. In essence, the origin of the Japanese 'Liberal Party' lay in the democratic movements against the Meiji oligarchy, and it had been based not on 'economic liberalism' but 'political liberalism'. Indeed, the Liberal Party had opposed the *laissez faire* policy of the Meiji oligarchy. Matsuyama, in 1935, drawing on the tradition of anti-oligarchy movements, argued that the blind were the victims of economic liberalism which had been introduced by the Meiji oligarchies after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Although the Bill to Protect the Blind passed through the special committee, it did so on the final day of the session in 1935. There was no time for the House of Commons to enact the bill. Thus, the blind lobby failed again in 1935 to establish the monopoly of anma massage, as they had failed

twenty years before in 1914.

Several crucial points emerged from the discussion at the special committee in 1935. Firstly, compared with the debates in the 1914 session, the overall atmosphere of the Diet seemed less sympathetic to the bill. While in 1914 the idea of reserved occupation for the blind had received support from the majority of the House of Commons, nobody, except Matsuyama, argued in 1935 for the monopoly in anma massage. Moreover, although Matsuyama argued that the occupation of anma massage should be reserved exclusively for the blind, he admitted at the same time that sighted people could engage either in *ketsueki-junkan-ryōhō* (blood-circulation therapy) or *shiatsu* (finger-pressure therapy). While the 'blood-circulation therapy' meant American massage, or 'chiropractic', the 'finger-pressure therapy' was part of the skills involved in anma massage. In so far as sighted people could engage in those therapies, it could not be said that the occupation of anma massage was reserved 'exclusively' for the blind. In that sense, Matsuyama seemed either muddled or faint-hearted in his argument for the monopoly of anma massage. In any case, what he proposed in his argument was in practice more modest than the original demand of the blind lobby.

Secondly, the discussion at the Diet in 1935 made it clear that the government opposed the bill not because the monopoly of anma massage would be inconsistent with free trade but because they found blind masseurs inferior to their sighted counterparts. During the discussion, a member from the ruling party, *Seiyukai*, asked whether or not the bill was consistent with the right to pursue trade freely. The vice Minister of the Interior, Omori, responded to the question as follows.

"I consider that if we reserve the occupation of anma massage exclusively for blind masseurs who are inferior to sighted masseurs it may become an obstacle to the advancement of anma massage. The advancement of anma massage is in the general interest of society. In that

sense, the current bill seems to be inconsistent with the interests of society at large. I believe that we do not need to discuss whether the bill is inconsistent with the right to pursue trade freely".

Omori specified neither in what sense blind masseurs are inferior to sighted ones nor what is the general interest of society. However, it is important to note that the Ministry of the Interior appeared to consider anma masseurs as an important source for health care manpower. Some members of the special committee of the Diet in the 1935 session implied the general concern over the absence of preventive medicine and primary health care in Japan. For example, the vice Minister of the Interior, Omori, stated that the government intended to increase the number of masseurs in general. Jirō Nogata, the director of a blind school, while supporting the bill, also mentioned the blind masseurs who wished to undertake the role of front-line workers in the field of primary health care.

Indeed, the interwar period, the 1920s and the 1930s, was the era of health policy in Japan. Since the middle of the nineteenth century when Western powers had forced her to abandon her seclusion policy, Japan had experienced cyclical epidemics of such infectious diseases as cholera, dysentery and small pox. However, for lack of resources and political concern, the government had done little until the 1920s other than segregate the infected patients. After the first World War, with the rise of interest in social administration, the Ministry of the Interior began to introduce publicly provided health services, for example, health insurance for the employees of heavy industries (1922), and the establishment of local public health centres for infants (1926). It was also during the 1920s that voluntary hospitals introduced visiting nurses and community midwives. Influenced by military concerns, health policy in the interwar period was mainly interested in three issues: the prevention of tuberculosis, the lowering of the infant death rate, and the improvement in the physical condition of military recruits.

In the 1920s, Japan's infant death rate was outstandingly high among industrial countries. Moreover, the rate of military recruits who were physically fit for the services decreased from 72 percent in 1925 to 52 percent in 1935.

[Ikeda 1994:169]

Subsequently, around 1930, the government began to develop propaganda regarding health care. Tanaka, S. [1994] found that exhibitions of health care were held in large cities in the late 1920s and the 1930s in order to educate people in primary health care. In 1938, mainly because of the demand from military forces which started a war against China in the previous year, the Social Administration Bureau and the Public Health Bureau were transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to a new ministry, *Kōseishō*, the Ministry of Health and Welfare. In order to improve the physical condition of Japanese people, the Ministry of Health and Welfare introduced national health insurance and began to bring health services under state control. Thus, there was a steady shift to state control of health services during the 1930s. [Kawakami 1967:426-37; 1992:4-6]

It was in this context that the government opposed the bill which attempted to reserve the occupation of anma massage exclusively for the blind. In order to establish preventive medical services on a national scale, the government needed a vast amount of manpower in health services. However, it was prohibitively costly for them to train a sufficient number of medical doctors and nurses. Instead, they attempted to utilise for the purpose of primary health care and public hygiene the existing manpower in the field of Japanese traditional health services, for example, anma massage, acupuncture, *sanba-jutsu*<sup>19</sup>, and *judō-seifuku-jutsu*<sup>20</sup>. This appears to be the reason why the

---

<sup>19</sup> Japanese traditional midwifery.

<sup>20</sup> Japanese traditional orthopaedics deriving from the treatment of injured *judō* players.

government intended to increase the number of anma masseurs in the mid 1930s. From the government's viewpoint, a monopoly over anma massage by the blind would have been an obstacle to the efficient use of the potential manpower in public health. The military concern for public health also explains the ambivalent attitude of the nationalist parties toward the bill to protect the blind. Although they initially supported the bill to eliminate sighted masseurs because of their general policy of state control over an economic market, they withdrew their support as the discussion at the Diet touched on the military concern for public health.

Moreover, 'the advancement of anma massage', which Omori, the vice Minister of the Interior, emphasised from a viewpoint of 'the general interest of society', meant not only the quantitative growth in the number of anma masseurs but also the qualitative development of the profession in keeping with the development of preventive 'social' medicine. The government had already required a minimum basic knowledge in hygiene from the applicants for the license to practise anma massage since the introduction of the licensing system in 1911. Therefore, in the mid 1930s, it was likely that the government expected anma masseurs would undertake simple tasks of public hygiene in the community in addition to their ordinary jobs. It appears that the government found blind masseurs 'inferior' to their sighted counterparts in the sense that sightless masseurs were perceived as lacking the competence necessary for undertaking additional tasks in the community public hygiene arena.

To sum up, in the context of the growth of social policy during the interwar period, the S.A.B. established in 1929 the Central Association for the Welfare of the Blind (C.A.W.B.), a quasi non-governmental organisation, which was expected to reconcile the conflict between the government and the blind. By studying the British Blind Persons Act of 1920 and by using surveys to identify the number of blind

people in need, the C.A.W.B. prepared to introduce specific social legislation for the blind. Moreover, because of the shift in economic policy from a free market to state control in the 1930s, the inconsistency between the reserved occupation of the blind and free trade in general appeared to be less problematic in 1935 than it had been in 1914. In that sense, in terms of socio-economic factors, the political climate in the mid 1930s seemed favourable for the bill which attempted to reserve the occupation of anma massage exclusively for the blind. However, in terms of medical factors, the prospects for the bill were less hopeful than in 1914. Even in 1914, the orthopaedic use of massage had been an obstacle to the blind lobby. With the growth of state intervention regarding public health during the interwar period, the medical aspects of anma masseurs became increasingly important for the government. Although the socio-economic concerns of the government encouraged the blind lobby to demand a monopoly over anma massage, the 'socio-medical' concerns of the government led to the rejection of those demands.



2-6 The New Strategy of the Blind Lobby and the Wartime  
Growth of the Services for the War Blind: 1937-1944

The concern in this section is to show how and why a new faction within the blind lobby gradually emerged after 1914 and took over its leadership in the late 1930s in the context of the wartime growth of services for the war blind.

As mentioned in the previous sections, members of the blind lobby gradually changed their strategy after 1914 when the government decisively rejected their monopoly over anma massage. While they had sought until 1914 to promote their status primarily through the recovery of the blind guild and their traditional prerogatives, such as a monopoly in anma massage, during the 1920s and 1930s they began to seek the promotion of the welfare of the blind through 'social participation'. An example was the movement for Braille voting through which the blind lobby advocated their potential ability to 'participate' in the wider society. Such a strategy was developed by a new generation, who eventually took over the leadership of the lobby after 1935 when the older generation failed yet again to persuade the Diet to grant a monopoly in anma massage.

The leadership of the new generation of the blind lobby consisted of such blind intellectuals as *Tadasu Yoshimoto*, a wealthy trader, *Tetsutaro Kumagai*, a Protestant clergyman, and *Takeo Iwahashi*, an university lecturer in English literature. To them, 'social participation' meant the public advertisement of the contribution of the blind toward the wider society. In the past, if a small minority of the elite blind, such as great music masters and skilful acupuncturists, had successfully served their powerful feudal patrons, the blind as a whole had been protected by these patrons. However, as society was gradually democratised after 1868, such a traditional strategy by which the blind guild had attained the favour of powerful patrons became less applicable. The new generation of the blind lobby recognised that the blind as a whole, not only

the blind elite, needed to show their potential for making a 'significant' contribution to the wider society. Although the majority of the blind had already contributed as anma masseurs to the wider society, anma massage had never been regarded as 'important' because it had been seen as an unskilled job. It was in this context that the new leaders of the blind lobby were attracted by the British model of blind welfare. Especially, they were fascinated by the British rehabilitation and resettlement services, such as the service provisions of the National Institute for the Blind and St. Dunstan's, which enabled blind persons to work in many industries.<sup>21</sup> They saw the British rehabilitation services for the blind as the best means for publicising the 'significant' contribution which the blind as a whole could make to the wider society.

The British influence on the Japanese blind lobby was increased in the 1930s by the initiative of the Central Association for the Welfare of the Blind (C.A.W.B.) the members of which included a number of high-ranking civil servants who were seeking a European model of social policy and administration. Although the C.A.W.B. had been considerably influenced until 1935 by the traditional section of the blind lobby, the tendency toward the British model was reinforced after the new generation took control of the blind lobby's strategy in 1935. Under the new leadership within the blind lobby, the C.A.W.B. in the second half of the 1930s drew up new plans which included the introduction of blind home teachers, a blind register and blind pensions. [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyokai 1940:83] Most of these plans were borrowed from Britain. In 1939, the C.A.W.B. drafted a new "Bill to Protect the Blind", which was totally different from the previous bills. Instead of the monopoly in anma massage, the new Bill was an

---

<sup>21</sup> The new generation of the Japanese blind lobby had a personal link to Britain and British charities for the blind, such as the National Institute for the Blind. For instance, Yosimoto, a blind businessman, had often visited London on business, and Iwahashi, a blind university teacher, had been to Edinburgh for a postgraduate course in English literature.

attempt to provide services on the British model. Although the bill was not presented at the Diet because of the intensification of the war against China, the British model of blind welfare was, in practice, introduced in the field of the services for the war blind in the late 1930s when wartime concern for the war disabled in general rapidly grew.

Public relief for the war disabled was the oldest public provision of specific services for disabled people in Japan. The Military Pensions Act of 1890 included a specific pension for the war disabled. In 1906, the government established *haihei-in*, 'a residential institution for the war disabled'. However, these provisions were not enough to meet the needs of the war disabled and their families. During the first World War, they, together with the families of the war dead, carried out a national survey of their own households. The survey showed the evidence of hardship they experienced. As a result, in 1917, the Military Relief Act was enacted so as to raise the level of the pensions for the war disabled and the families of the war dead. [Yamada 1987:58-61]

While the war disabled concentrated their efforts on acquiring Japan's first 'disability pension', the industrially injured played a crucial role in introducing rehabilitation services to Japan. Although the Factory Act of 1911 made provision of an allowance for the industrially injured, the amount involved was never sufficient for their maintenance. Therefore, the industrially injured needed occupational rehabilitation. One of the earliest examples of occupational rehabilitation in Japan was that for injured railwaymen. In 1926, the injured railwaymen organised a 'self-help group' called *Tetsudō Kōshōsha Kumiai*, or the 'Union of Injured Railwaymen'. At the request of the Union, the government established in 1932 *Tetsudō Kōsai-kai*, or the 'Cooperative Society for Injured and Retired Railwaymen', which ran newspaper stands at railway stations where disabled railwaymen could work. [Yamada 1987:78-9]

Moreover, Western orthopaedics had gradually been introduced to Japan since 1906 when the department of orthopaedics had been founded at Tokyo University. In the 1920s, Japanese orthopaedists became interested not only in medical treatment but also occupational rehabilitation. Borrowing from Germany the idea of *Kruppelheim*, or 'the land of cripples', in 1934 an orthopaedist, *Kenji Takagi*, made a plan of a comprehensive rehabilitation centre for physically disabled people. [Yamada 1987:81-3] When in 1937 the government reconsidered the relief of the war disabled, they made much of the idea of rehabilitation which had originally been introduced by the industrially injured and orthopaedists.

In 1937, when the war against China was declared, the government established a special committee on the welfare of the war disabled. The government expected war to increase the number of the war disabled and therefore the financial cost of their relief. Government training for the war disabled in industrial occupations was desirable not only because it would reduce the cost of relief but also because the war disabled working in military industries would encourage the spirit of ordinary people in the war effort. In 1938, as a result of the report of the special committee, the Ministry of Health and Welfare established *Shōhei Hogo-in*, or the 'Department for the Welfare of the War Disabled', which provided a comprehensive scheme of rehabilitation services, including medical services, counselling and vocational training. The pension for the war disabled was administered, together with those for the war veterans and the war dead, by *Gunji Engo-bu*, or the 'Military Assistance Bureau'. In 1939, as the problems of the war disabled, the war dead and the war veterans rapidly grew, the Ministry of Health and Welfare combined these two bureaux into a new office, *Gunji Hogo-in*, or the 'Military Welfare Department', which provided comprehensive welfare services for the war disabled, including income maintenance, health services, residential care, and employment services.

Although the Military Welfare Department dealt with all issues concerning ex-servicemen and the families of the war dead, the welfare of the war disabled continued to be a central concern of their administration. [Nakagawara 1990:153]

The growing concern for the war disabled in the late 1930s made an impact on the blind lobby. They saw that the issue of the war blind was the best opportunity for them to make a 'contribution' to the wider society. In 1935, Takeo Iwahashi, who was the most prominent figure in the blind lobby in the 1930s and early 1940s, resigned his university lecturership and established Japan's first specialist charity for the blind, the Japan Light House, in Osaka. In 1938, he wrote that "the war was not only the father of tragedy but also the mother of invention". He meant that the services for the blind had developed in European countries on a basis of the services for the war blind. Therefore, he insisted that the blind lobby should concentrate their efforts on the issue of the war blind not only on behalf of the war blind but also the blind in general. Moreover, he emphasised that the blind should not be segregated from the wider society, but they should return to their previous workplace and their own homes and communities after rehabilitation. [Iwahashi 1938] His Japan Light House started home teaching for the war blind in 1939, and subsequently in 1943, opened a workshop of light engineering where twenty three blind ex-servicemen manufactured munitions, including the parts of wireless telephones. [Nihon Raito Hausu 1962:37] Moreover, Iwahashi launched in 1940 a fund raising campaign for a military aircraft which was named *Aikoku Mōjin-gō*, or "Blind Patriots", in order to impress on the sighted the contribution which the blind could make to the war effort.

In Tokyo, the Central Association for the Welfare of the Blind had already begun in 1937 to teach Braille to the war blind. Subsequently in 1938, the C.A.W.B. recommended

the Department for the Welfare of the War Disabled to establish *Shitsumeï Gunjin-ryō*, or the 'Home of Recovery for the War Blind', which established for the first time in Japan vocational training in alternative occupations to those of anma massage and acupuncture, such as poultry farming, handicrafts, light engineering and telephony, in emulation of the British experience. Moreover, the C.A.W.B. published a book about 'St. Dunstan's' and introduced 'guide dogs' from Germany. Partly because of these activities of the C.A.W.B., and partly because of the increasing expectation of rehabilitation, the Military Welfare Department adopted the British model of blind welfare as the rehabilitation scheme for the war blind.

Thus, in the second half of the 1930s, the blind lobby stressed the 'social contribution' of the blind through the war blind not only in the sense that they contributed to the care of the war blind but also that the war blind themselves could contribute to a variety of industries, even munitions. Despite these efforts, however, the employment of the blind in open industry did not grow as fast in Japan as in Britain. The Military Welfare Department (M.W.D.) intended to return the war disabled to their previous jobs as far as possible. Although it proved to be possible for those who had residual sight, this was not the case with the 'totally' blind. For the latter, the M.W.D. provided two types of vocational retraining, one for blind ex-officers and another for blind ex-soldiers. While the blind ex-officers were expected to become teachers at special schools for the blind, the blind ex-soldiers were expected to work in open industry. However, the majority of the blind ex-soldiers refused the offers of retraining in industrial occupations, and wanted to be anma masseurs. In order to maintain themselves effectively the occupation of anma massage seemed to them more feasible than industrial occupations. Because of the demand from these ex-servicemen, the M.W.D. rather reluctantly established an additional training course in massage and acupuncture. [Nihon Raito Hausu 1972:693]

Thus, it was during the war years between 1937 and 1944, that a unified system of services for the war disabled emerged in Japan. The new system was firmly based on the idea of rehabilitation. Under this comprehensive scheme of rehabilitation services, the specific services for the war blind gradually emerged. Although the services were designed according to the British model, represented by St. Dunstan's, the vocational training depended heavily on the traditional occupations of the blind, namely anma massage.

2-7 The Postwar Development of Social Policy for  
Disabled People:  
Expansion and Unification of Provisions

This section analyses the ways in which social policy for disabled people in general developed in postwar Japan. Initially developments proceeded rather patchily according to the type and the cause of disability, but unified framework for provisions gradually emerged in the context of postwar economic growth.

After the second World War, the Japanese government gradually expanded social welfare provisions in general in response to the increasing demands of people who became aware of their rights to welfare in the context of the postwar growth of democracy in Japan. Moreover, the remarkable economic growth in the 1960s encouraged people to demand their fair share from the government. In the context of the general growth of welfare expenditure, the provisions for disabled people increased steadily. The postwar development of provision for disabled people began in 1949 when the government extended the rehabilitation services for the war disabled to disabled civilians. However, this was due neither to the demand from disabled civilians nor to the humanitarian concern of the government.

It was because the postwar Japanese government simply wanted to reinstate the prewar provisions for the war disabled which had been abolished immediately after the war by the Allied Forces.

In 1945, as soon as they occupied Japan, the General Head Quarters (G.H.Q.) of the Allied Forces disarmed the Japanese forces and abolished all military welfare services.

As a result, the war disabled lost their pensions, as well as the rehabilitation services. The G.H.Q. did not admit any welfare services aiming specifically at war veterans including the war disabled. Therefore, in order to maintain the hospitals and the residential institutions which had previously been run by the Military Welfare



Department, the Ministry of Health and Welfare had to open these institutions to disabled civilians as well. In 1949, the Diet enacted *Shintai Shōgaisha Fukushi-hō*, or the 'Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People', which provided the rehabilitation services for physically disabled people in general, including the blind and the deaf, regardless the cause of disability. However, although the Act made provisions for disabled civilians, it aimed primarily at maintaining the wartime rehabilitation services for the war disabled. [Kimura 1978:31-2] In that sense, the postwar framework of social policy for disabled people maintained the main characteristics of the wartime rehabilitation scheme, for example, the emphasis on vocational training for those with less severe physical disabilities who were employable.

As a result of the peace treaty of 1951 with the United States, Japan's sovereignty was restored. In 1952, the Diet re-established pensions for war veterans and the survivors of the war dead, and by 1953, the wartime privileges of war veterans were almost wholly reinstated. In the 1950s, while the government treated the war veterans and their families generously, they curtailed expenditure on welfare benefits in general, for example, *seikatsu hogo*, or 'public assistance', which had originally been introduced in 1945 by the initiative of the G.H.Q. The increasing inequity between the services for war veterans and those for civilians encouraged civilians in need to organise pressure groups which demanded the improvement of social services. The examples were the organisations of unemployed workers, lone mothers, disabled people, tuberculosis patients. Their activities were supported by labour unions and the organisations of residential social workers. [Kawai 1981:98-100]

Partly because of the pressure from the working class during the 1950s and partly because of the prospect of economic growth in the late 1950s, in 1958 the Diet enacted *Kokumin Kenkō Hoken-hō*, or the 'National Health Insurance

Act', and in 1959 *Kokumin Nenkin-hō*, or the 'National Pensions Act'. Although various social insurance schemes had already been established since the 1920s, these schemes had insured only a particular part of the population, such as military officers, civil servants, school teachers, sailors, workers in public services, and employees of large firms. In the late 1950s, about thirty percent of the population were not insured against sickness. The 1958 National Health Insurance Act provided those people with health insurance. Similarly, the 1959 National Pensions Act provided 'contributory' old age, disability, and survivors' pensions for those who had not previously been insured against retirement, disability, and the death of bread-winners. The National Pensions Act also provided for 'means-tested' non-contributory pensions, *fukushi nenkin*, or 'welfare pensions', at the lower rate of about a half of the contributory pensions. While those who became disabled in their adulthood received the contributory disability pension, the congenitally disabled received the non-contributory 'welfare pension'.

Thus, in 1961, when the National Pensions Act was implemented, there were three types of disability pensions: the pension for the war disabled, the contributory pension, and the means-tested non-contributory pension. While the first was the most generous in terms of the amount of pension, the last was the least. Furthermore, since the National Pensions Act used a narrow definition of disability, it excluded those with less severe disabilities, mental illness and mental handicap. The mentally handicapped and the mentally ill were not covered by the pensions provisions, partly because of the difficulty in defining 'mental handicap' and 'mental illness', and partly because the expected number of people in these categories was so great that the financial cost would have been formidable. [Yamada 1987:119]

For those who were disabled but unable to receive disability pensions, the government provided services in

kind instead of cash benefit. For example, for those who were not so severely disabled as to receive disability pensions, the government provided a measure to promote their employment. In 1960, the Diet enacted *Shintai Shōgaisha Koyō Sokushin-hō*, or the 'Employment Act for Physically Disabled People', which introduced a quota scheme and placement services for physically disabled people. Under the act, any employer of more than 91 persons was required to "make an effort" to take up to 1.1 percent<sup>22</sup> of his staff from registered physically disabled persons. Although employers firmly opposed the quota, the Ministry of Labour persuaded them to accept it largely on the grounds that it was made by the International Labour Office in 1955 in order to promote occupational rehabilitation of disabled people. [Wakabayashi 1993:55-8] Moreover, the idea of an employment quota was familiar to the Japanese government because they had once considered introducing a employment quota for the war disabled during the Second World War. [Yamada 1987:113-7] However, because of the opposition from employers, the government failed to make the quota compulsory. The act did not have any legal means of enforcement. Moreover, like the 1949 Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People, the act excluded those with mental handicap and mental illness.

In the same year, 1960, the Diet enacted *Seishin Hakujakusha Fukushi-hō*, or the 'Welfare Act for Mentally Handicapped People', which promoted rehabilitation services and residential care for mentally handicapped adults. It was a counterpart of the 1949 Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People. As far as those with mental illness were concerned, there were no service provisions except hospital care under the 1950 Mental Health Act which made public grants towards the medical treatment of mentally ill patients. In the field of services for disabled children,

---

<sup>22</sup> The employment quota was raised in 1968 from 1.1% to 1.3%, and subsequently in 1976, it was raised to 1.5%. In 1988, it was raised again to 1.6%.

*Jidō Fukushi-hō*, or the 'Children's Welfare Act', of 1947 provided cash benefits and residential care for disabled children in general, including mentally handicapped children. However, in the field of special education, while all blind and deaf children were entitled to primary education in 1949 and secondary education in 1959, it was only in 1979 that those with severe disabilities, mental handicap and chronic sickness were entitled to primary and secondary education.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1960s, the postwar government provided social services for all categories of disabled people. However, the framework of the services was not unified. Until 1960, the postwar social policy for disabled people seemed to be based firmly on differentiation by type and cause of disability. Subsequently, in the context of rapid economic growth in the 1960s, the government gradually expanded their services for disabled people, and adopted a broader definition of disability. For example, in 1964, the National Pensions Act was amended so as to provide disability pensions for the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill. It was the first legislation which defined the term 'disability' so as to include mental handicap and mental illness. In the mid 1960s, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (M.H.W.) began to consider providing services for those who could not enjoy the provisions under the 1949 Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People and the 1960 Welfare Act for Mentally Handicapped People. Those concerned were people who were so severely disabled as to be refused admission to the rehabilitation centres and residential homes which were provided under these two acts. For severely mentally handicapped adults, responding to the demands of their parents, the M.H.W. attempted to provide large-scale residential institutions, on the one hand, while on the other, responding to the demands of those with severe physical disabilities who were termed 'unemployable', the Ministry of Health and Welfare introduced community-based services, such as, home-helps and housing services.

In the late 1960s, because of the growth of a variety of services for disabled people, the government began to consider reorganising the existing services under an unified framework. In 1970, the Diet enacted *Shinshin Shōgaisha Kihon-hō*, or the 'Disabled People's Act', which defined the boundaries between the areas of services, as well as the responsibilities of the ministries. Like the 1964 amended National Pensions Act, the 1970 Disabled People's Act used a broad definition of disability so as to include mental handicap and mental illness. Furthermore, in 1976, the Employment Act for Physically Disabled People was amended so as to introduce a levy/grant system and to extend its provisions to mentally handicapped people; it was renamed the "Employment Act for Disabled People", the removal of the adjective "Physically" implying a broader definition of disability.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, in the 1970s, a broad definition of 'disability' became more and more prevalent in the field of social policy for disabled people. In 1960, mentally handicapped people had been separated from 'disabled people', that is, the blind, the deaf, and the physically disabled. The former had been treated less generously than the latter. However, in the context of the economic growth in the 1960s and the early 1970s, mentally handicapped people gradually acquired the same benefits and services which had been enjoyed by the blind, the deaf, and the physically disabled. Accordingly, the legislation in the 1970s reflected the idea that the term 'disability' should cover mental, as well as physical impairments.

---

<sup>23</sup> Despite the lack of legal means of enforcement the Japanese quota legislation had been rather successful because small-scale manufacturers were willing to employ less severely disabled people as 'cheap labour' in the context of economic growth and labour shortage in the 1960s. The levy/grant system was introduced in 1976 in order to promote quota employment in large-scale firms, as well as to provide employment opportunities for those who had previously been regarded as 'unfit' for open employment, for example, mentally handicapped people, totally blind people and those with severe physical disability.

Furthermore, the definition of 'physical disability' also became progressively wider in the same period through amendments of the 1949 Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People. The act was amended in 1967 so as to provide the services for those with 'heart disease' and 'respiratory disease'. Subsequently, the provisions under this act were extended to those with nephrosis in 1972, and later in the 1980s, those who had impairments of the rectum and small intestine. In the 1970s, Japanese social policy for disabled people gradually shifted toward a generic approach in which the services were provided for a broad category of disabled people in general regardless the type and the cause of disability.

The 1981 International Year for Disabled People reinforced the policy shift to 'genericism'. In 1981, the Ministry of Health and Welfare published their annual "White Paper" which emphasised the idea of 'normalisation' as a principle of their policy for disabled people, as well as old people. Partly because radical movements of physically disabled people in the 1970s fiercely criticised residential institutions as 'segregating', and partly because the government was concerned about the future increase in the number of the frail elderly, as well as the expected growth in the financial cost of residential care for those people, the Ministry of Health and Welfare turned the emphasis from institution-based services to community-based services. In 1988, the Diet enacted the new Mental Health Act, which provided mentally ill people for the first time with services other than hospital care, such as day-care centres and home-help. Subsequently in 1990, the Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People and the Welfare Act for Mentally Handicapped People were amended so as to develop community-based services, such as home-help services, and the day-care and short-term stay services at residential homes under these acts. Moreover, the Employment Act for Disabled People was amended in 1987 so as to extend its placement services to mentally ill people.

In short, the postwar development of Japanese social policy for disabled people can be divided into three periods. In the second half of the 1940s and the 1950s, the wartime military welfare services for the war disabled were gradually extended to disabled civilians. However, the policy was still based on a specific approach in which the services were provided according to the type and the cause of disability. In the 1960s and the 1970s, equity in the allocation of provisions between different groups of disabled people became an important issue. In the context of economic growth during this period, the government responded to the demands of those who had been previously treated less generously, for example, those with mental handicap, and severe physical disabilities. Because of the growth of specific services for various categories of disabled people, the government began to consider reorganising these services under an unified framework. In the 1980s and after, influenced by the International Year for Disabled People, the government gradually reorganised these existing services based on such 'new' principles as 'normalisation', 'community care', and 'integration'. Although Japan does not yet have an unified legislative framework for the provisions for disabled people, there is a steady policy shift toward a 'generic approach' in which the same benefits and services are expected to be provided for all kinds of disabled people regardless of the type and the cause of disability. Accordingly, the definition of 'disability' has steadily expanded throughout the postwar years. Originally, the term meant blindness, deafness, and physical disabilities. In the 1960s and the 1970s, it gradually came to include mental handicap. Finally, in the 1980s, mental illness became a category of disability as well.

## 2-8 The Postwar Changes in the Blind World

How far were blind people influenced by the postwar policy shift toward a generic approach to the problems of disability? It is argued here that the postwar policy development did not affect blind people as much as did the changes in the field of anma and acupuncture.

Despite the postwar development of social policy for disabled people in general, blind people retained their position as an unique group within that population until recently. Under the 1949 Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People, specific rehabilitation services for blind people were provided at about thirty rehabilitation centres in Japan. Among these centres, five institutions originated in the wartime military residential institutions for the war blind, and after the war, they were run by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The rest were managed either by local authorities or voluntary organisations. Since blind children were trained largely at special schools for the blind in the necessary skills of daily living, such as Braille and the use of the long cane, the rehabilitation centres provided under the 1949 act were largely for those who became blind in the middle of life. However, since there were only fifteen rehabilitation centres which provided vocational training, a considerable number of adults who acquired blindness went to the special schools for the blind in order to take courses in anma massage and acupuncture. Thus, the provisions under the 1949 Welfare Act for Physically Disabled People did not change the prewar framework of blind welfare in which the special schools for the blind had been main providers of rehabilitation and vocational training for blind adults as well as children.

Furthermore, the postwar employment policy for disabled people in general had not until recently had any considerable impact upon blind people. Although the 1949 Act enabled a few rehabilitation centres to provide training courses in such occupations as telephony, light engineering,



typing and computer programming, the majority of the rehabilitation centres provided the courses in anma massage and acupuncture. In the early 1960s, the Ministry of Education attempted to provide at the special schools for the blind a variety of vocational training courses, including handicrafts, poultry farming, gardening and piano tuning, but only two special schools established the course in piano tuning. The introduction of the employment quota under the 1960 Employment Act for Physically Disabled People encouraged only those with good residual vision to enter open employment. Although the introduction of a levy/grant system in 1976 helped a few totally blind women to become telephonists, the vast majority of employable blind people still worked as anma masseurs and acupuncturists. Thus in the field of employment, too, the postwar provisions for disabled people in general did not have so much influence as to transfer the blind workforce from traditional occupations to open industry until recently. In that sense, it can be said that the postwar growth of social services for disabled people in general, other than disability pensions, had little impact upon blind people.

Rather, it was developments in the world of anma massage and acupuncture which were crucial in changing the experiences of blind people. After the second World War there were three important events for blind masseurs and acupuncturists. Firstly, in 1947, the 1911 Regulations of Anma Massage and Acupuncture were superseded by a new law, the Act of Anma Massage, Acupuncture and *Judō Orthopaedics*<sup>24</sup>. The new act abolished the 'second class' licence to practice anma massage which had previously been given only to blind applicants who had failed to meet the qualifications for a 'first class' licence. Thus, the blind lost their special status. Moreover, the 1947 act required the improvement of vocational education on the basis of Western medical science. It encouraged postwar Japanese traditional

---

<sup>24</sup> Japanese traditional orthopaedics developed by *judō* players.

medicine to apply its theories and skills to Western medical science. In the context of Westernisation and modernisation in the field of traditional medicine, blind masseurs and acupuncturists were left behind by their sighted counterparts.

Secondly, in 1955, the 1947 act was amended so as to include *shiatsu* (finger-pressure therapy) in the category of anma massage. As a result, the finger-pressure therapists who were sighted became 'anma masseurs' for the purposes of the Act. Thus, the 1955 amendment allowed a large number of sighted practitioners to enter into the business of anma massage. In the 1960s, these sighted anma masseurs extended the use of anma massage to a variety of new fields, including, orthopaedic treatments at hospitals and medical clinics; refreshing services at public sauna baths; and beautifying services at beauty salons. While the sighted masseurs contributed toward the modernisation of anma massage on the one hand, on the other they gradually invaded the traditional territory of the blind masseurs.

Finally, in 1988, the Act controlling anma massage and acupuncture was further amended so as to centralise the licence system and raise the level of qualification for the licence. Although the blind had already lost their privileged status as licence holders, in practice they could receive 'generous consideration' at the examination for the licence. Before 1988 the examination for the licence were conducted locally by the prefectural boards of examination which consisted of teachers of local vocational schools of traditional medicine, including special schools for the blind. Since the schools for sighted masseurs and acupuncturists were located in urban areas, the boards of examination in rural areas consisted only of the teachers from the blind schools. These boards of examination in rural prefectures set easier examinations than did urban prefectures, and admitted entrants to the examination from other prefectures so long as the applicant was visually impaired. Therefore, before 1988, while a sighted

applicant could take an examination for the licence only in the prefecture where he resided, usually urban prefectures, a blind applicant had the option of being examined in the prefecture where he or she resided as well as other rural prefectures. Normally to reduce risk of failure, blind schools took the precaution of entering blind candidates for examination in a number of rural prefectures. The licence, wherever it was granted, allowed him to practice anywhere in Japan. The 1988 amendment abolished this 'de-facto' privilege of the blind. Currently, the examination is conducted by a 'national' board of examination which is dominated by Western medical doctors and sighted teachers of anma massage and acupuncture who teach at the vocational schools for the sighted. Blind applicants enter the examination on an exactly equal basis with sighted applicants. Moreover, the current examination for the licence shows less consideration for the handicaps of visually impaired applicants. For example, no extension of examination time is allowed to visually impaired applicants.<sup>25</sup>

The reaction of the blind lobby to these postwar legislative changes in the field of anma massage and acupuncture were complex. The postwar blind lobby consisted largely of three organisations of the blind: *Riryōka Kyōin Renmei (Rikyōren)*, the 'Association of Teachers of Anma Massage and Acupuncture'; *Zenkoku Shinkyushi-kai Renmei (Zenshinren)*, the 'National Association of Blind Acupuncturists and Masseurs'; and *Nihon Mōjin-kai Rengō (Nichimōren)*, the 'Japanese Association of the Blind'. These three organisations have not necessarily shared the same interests.

The *Rikyōren* was established in 1952 by blind

---

<sup>25</sup> In contrast, visually impaired applicants for university are allowed an 30 to 50 percent extension of the examination time for the entrance examination.

teachers of anma massage and acupuncture at special schools for the blind. Since the 1920s the blind teachers of anma massage and acupuncture had played an important role in the blind lobby, and after the second World War they recognised the significance of pressure group activity through their lobbying for the 1947 Act of anma massage and acupuncture which secured blind acupuncturists against American criticism. Immediately after the second World War, the General Head Quarters of the Allied Forces (G.H.Q.) threw doubt on the qualifications of the practitioners in Japanese traditional medicine in general. Particularly, they had doubts as to the qualification and the ability of blind acupuncturists. In fact, both in Korea and Taiwan, the American occupation army disqualified the blind for acupuncture immediately after the war, although the blind in both countries had previously been trained in acupuncture and anma massage during the period of Japanese occupation. American doubts about the qualification of blind acupuncturists shocked the Japanese blind world in 1947. In order to secure their employment, blind acupuncturists, particularly, the blind teachers of acupuncture, lobbied jointly with sighted practitioners of traditional medicine in order to demand legislative protection of anma massage, acupuncture, and judō orthopaedics. The Japanese government required them to present 'scientific' proof of the virtue of traditional medicine and the ability of blind acupuncturists. Responding to the government, the blind lobby showed that the virtue of acupuncture had been recognised by the contemporary medical science even in Europe and America, and insisted that since the practice of acupuncture was based on clinical diagnosis by touch the blind were suitable for the job. Moreover, the blind, as well as the sighted, in the field of traditional medicine, agreed with the government as to the idea that the qualifications for the practice of traditional medicine, as well as the vocational education system, should be improved along the lines of 'Western' medical science. [Shimada 1955:27-53] Based on this agreement, the government persuaded the G.H.Q. to allow the practices of traditional

medicine in general, including the practice of blind acupuncturists.

Because of this bitter experience, the blind lobby, particularly, blind teachers of acupuncture, recognised that they had to adopt Western medical science in order to secure their occupations. This drift towards Western medical science created a certain ambivalence among the blind teachers of acupuncture. On the one hand, they had to protect the market for anma massage and acupuncture from sighted practitioners. On the other, in order to modernise the practices of anma massage and acupuncture, they had to rely on the sighted practitioners who had easier access than the blind to Western medicine which relied to a greater extent than oriental medicine on visual cues. As a result, the political attitudes of the *Rikyōren* have always been ambivalent.

However, in general, the *Rikyōren* seemed to be more concerned with the promotion of anma massage and acupuncture than the protection of blind practitioners. For example, in 1955, they supported the amendment of the Act regulating the practice of anma massage which enabled sighted 'finger-pressure' therapists to become anma masseurs. Originally, the finger-pressure therapists, together with other kinds of 'non-certificated' physiotherapists, such as 'chiropractors', sought to establish their own legal position separately from that of anma massage. The departments of orthopaedics at famous medical schools, such as, Tokyo University and Osaka University, supported the physiotherapists and the 'physiotherapy bill'. The *Rikyōren* worried that anma massage and acupuncture would be left behind by the growth of 'physiotherapy' in the field of health services. Therefore, while opposing the legislation on physiotherapy, the *Rikyōren* tried to integrate physiotherapy into the ranks of anma masseurs and acupuncturists. [Rikyōren 1973:165,169]

Another section of the postwar blind lobby, *Zenshinren*, the 'association of blind masseurs and acupuncturists', decisively insisted on the abolition of physiotherapy, since physiotherapists, particularly, 'finger-pressure' therapists and 'chiropractors', competed for clients with anma masseurs and acupuncturists. However, the political climate of 1955 isolated the *Zenshinren*, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare forced them to accept the amendment which integrated the finger-pressure therapy into anma massage. The Ministry intimidated the *Zenshinren* by implying that if they disagreed with the amendment separate legislation would be passed to give legal status to physiotherapy. [Shimada 1955:108-9]

After 1955 the *Zenshinren* shifted toward coexistence with sighted practitioners in order to contract for service with health insurance schemes. Although health insurance had been introduced to Japan in the 1920s, it was at the end of the 1950s that all Japanese people were insured. Accompanied by the growth of health insurance schemes in the 1950s, Western medicine became prevalent for the first time among the rural population and the urban working class. Under the influence of Western medicine, the postwar practitioners of Japanese traditional medicine as well as the physiotherapists, whether sighted or blind, had to apply their skills in accordance with Western medicine. Furthermore, in order to contract for service with the health insurance schemes, blind practitioners had to cooperate with sighted counterparts who had a closer relationship than the blind with physicians of Western medicine.

This was also the case with the blind teachers of anma massage and acupuncture. Under the dominance of Western medical science, the theories and skills of anma massage and acupuncture had to be Westernised and modernised. As a result, the curriculum of the postwar

vocational schools of traditional medicine, whether the schools for the blind or those for the sighted, included more and more knowledge of Western medical science, such as anatomy, physiology and hygiene, rather than traditional theories of Japanese medicine. The 1964 act concerning 'certificated paramedical physiotherapists' further encouraged the *Rikyōren* to improve the education system along the lines of Western medicine. Apart from the political lobbying of the early 'non-certificated' physiotherapists, such as chiropractors, the orthopaedists at medical schools demanded that government grants legal recognition to 'certificated paramedical physiotherapists' who were trained at medical schools and would work at hospitals as paramedical staff under the supervision of orthopaedists. Since many partially sighted masseurs who were trained at special schools for the blind already worked at hospitals as paramedical staff, the *Rikyōren* lobbied the government to include the blind among the 'certificated physiotherapists'. Because of strong opposition from the orthopaedists, only three special schools for the blind were allowed to establish a training course for 'certificated physiotherapy' provided that the admission was given only to 'partially sighted' students with good residual vision. Because of this experience, the *Rikyōren* recognised that the blind would be left behind the postwar development of paramedical practices unless they raised the level of vocational education.

In the 1970s, an elite minority of the blind teachers of anma massage and acupuncture took an 'academic' doctorate in medicine by undertaking clinical research on the virtues of acupuncture. This elite band wanted to establish a three-year paramedical college of acupuncture and physiotherapy for the blind. This was largely because the vocational schools of traditional medicine for the sighted were planning to establish the three-year college courses or four-year polytechnic courses. In the context of the postwar growth of higher education in Japan, while the level of vocational education for sighted masseurs and

acupuncturists rose steadily, the vocational education for the blind was left behind. The three-year paramedical college for the blind was established in 1987 as an attached college of Tsukuba University, the former Tokyo University of Education. It was in this context that the *Rikyōren* agreed to the 1988 amendment of the act of anma massage and acupuncture. Although they were concerned about the loss of the 'de-facto' privileges of blind applicants for licences which had previously been given by local examinations, they agreed to the centralisation of examination for the licence because the new national examination was expected to raise the level of qualification for anma masseurs and acupuncturists.

The third section of the blind lobby, *Nichimōren*, the 'Japan Association of the Blind', was an organisation created to promote the general welfare of the blind. Although they cooperated with the *Rikyōren* and the *Zenshinren* on issues concerning blind masseurs and acupuncturists, they concentrated their greatest efforts in the 1960s and 1970s on raising the level of disability pensions for the blind. During the 1980s, the *Nichimōren*, acting on behalf of blind masseurs and acupuncturists, attempted to coordinate a number of organisations in the field of massage and acupuncture in making contractual arrangements with health insurance schemes.

In short, it was not the postwar development of social services for disabled people but the postwar reorganisation of health services that integrated the blind into the sighted world. As the practices of anma massage and acupuncture were increasingly integrated into other paramedical practices under the hegemony of Western medicine, blind masseurs and acupuncturists were gradually absorbed into the world of paramedical practices in which sighted practitioners formed an absolute majority. In the course of becoming integrated into the field of paramedical practices, the blind masseurs and acupuncturists lost not



only their traditional prerogatives to their occupation but also their earnings and opportunities to work.

## Summary

From the twelfth century, the blind in Japan steadily developed their sense of community based on reserved occupations. In the eighteenth century, under the Tokugawa's "rule by class" regime, the blind ruled their own class and made their world separate from the rest of society. Within the blind world, obligations and loyalty were required while various economic privileges were given to its members. One of the privileges was a monopoly of *anma* and acupuncture.

In order to modernise Japan, the 1868 Meiji Restoration swept away the Tokugawa feudal class system, including the barrier between the blind and the sighted. The Meiji government abolished the blind guild and opened the occupations of *anma* and acupuncture to the sighted. In the first half of the twentieth century, the blind organised a political lobby to restore their reserved occupations. However, they failed to eliminate sighted masseurs because both the government and physicians expected sighted masseurs to play a significant role in modern medicine as para-medical staff. As a consequence of the experience in political activity, a new faction within the blind lobby gradually emerged in the late 1910s. In contrast to the traditional leadership of the blind lobby, the new faction was led by highly educated blind men who argued for removing the barrier between the blind and sighted worlds instead of reestablishing it. Although their ideas were partly implemented by the introduction of open-employment schemes for the war blind in the late 1930s, the blind in general still relied heavily on the traditionally reserved occupations.

After the second World War, a comprehensive framework of provisions for disabled people in general gradually emerged. Rehabilitation and employment services were provided in order to help them to work in open industry.

However, in contrast to other groups of disabled people, the blind remained until recently as a separate group because of their unique history, and they continued to engage in the traditionally reserved occupations rather than open employment.

Thus, in the early twentieth century, the government refused to give the blind a monopoly over anma massage because of its medical aspect and the opposition from physicians. After the second World War, as anma massage was increasingly incorporated into Western medicine under the hegemony of physicians, largely due to the postwar expansion of health insurance schemes, blind masseurs experienced tough competition from their sighted counterparts. However, given the postwar growth of many para-medical professions in general, it is no longer expected that anma masseurs should play a para-medical role.

In particular, after the government introduced in 1964 the licence system for "qualified physiotherapists" who specialised in co-medical physiotherapy, including medical massage, there are no grounds for either the government or physicians to prevent the blind from restoring a monopoly over anma massage because sighted qualified physiotherapists can practice medical massage as part of physiotherapy while allowing the blind a monopoly over non-medical "anma" massage. Therefore, despite the failure at their past attempts, there is still a possibility that the blind could reinforce their hold over traditionally reserved occupations. Let us now consider another assumption which is in conflict with the idea of reserved occupations, that is, the belief in open employment.

## Chapter 3      The Development of Employment of the Blind and                     Their Collective Identity in Britain

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, in order to assess the extent to which the belief in open employment among Japanese rehabilitation professionals can be justified, it is necessary to investigate how and why open employment for the blind originally developed in Britain. Secondly, it is also useful to explore the relationship between work and the blind identity in Britain as a foil against which to measure the Japanese experience.

In the first section of this chapter, the question of how and why the blind identity emerged in Britain is explored in the context of the development of specialist charities for the blind in the nineteenth century. The second section analyses the way in which the collective identity emerged among sheltered blind workers through their political activities for direct statutory provisions and their independence from charitable provisions. In the third section, the reasons why sheltered blind workers were increasingly isolated from the policy debates after 1920 are explored. In the final section, the question of how and why the postwar shift from sheltered to open employment of the blind occurred is discussed.

### 3-1. The Emergence of the Blind Identity: The Origin and Development of Blind Charity in the Nineteenth Century

Why and how did specialist charities for the blind emerge and develop in nineteenth century Britain? How important was this development to the creation of the blind identity? To what extent, and in what way, did blind people themselves contribute to the establishment of the blind identity?

The late eighteenth century is often identified as the beginning of organised provision for the blind, mainly because the early institutional care and training of the blind was introduced in the 1790s, first in Liverpool and then in Bristol, Edinburgh, and London. As Owen suggests, however, "some of the funds for their relief, such as the pensions administered by City Companies, might be of considerable antiquity". [Owen 1964: 172-3, 490] Furthermore, well into the nineteenth century, and even in the early twentieth century, cash relief was still a main tool of the blind charities. For instance, at the annual Trade Union congress in 1912, Ben Purse implied that at least nearly half of the annual income of £120,000 of blind charities went on charitable pensions and the cost of its administration.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it must be emphasised that the well-known pioneering developments in charitable work for the blind from the late eighteenth into the mid nineteenth century, such as the establishment of training institutions, Gilbert's workshop, home teaching societies, and schools for the blind, represented a break with the past but remained a minority approach in the field of blind welfare. Before the Blind Persons Act of 1920 which introduced premature statutory old age pensions for blind people over 50 years of age, cash relief had always been a major use of charitable funds for the blind.

Although many blind elderly people seemed to have

---

<sup>1</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1912, p.164.

received cash relief through provision for the poor in general well before the nineteenth century, it was in the first half of the nineteenth century that specialist charities for the blind, such as blind pension societies, increasingly emerged. Why did such specialisation occur in the first half of the nineteenth century? Part of the explanation may lie in the increasingly specialist approach to the causes of poverty. However, it seems to be the case that such an approach to poverty became more evident after 1850, while many voluntary agencies exclusively for the blind were established in the first half of the century.

The emergence of blind charities seems to be related to the changes in the way charities were funded in the eighteenth century. Since the medieval period, their charitable funds had been set up by the rich in their wills. A large capital sum financed an endowment for purposes which were often only vaguely defined. Consequently, the funds were used for a variety of objectives, from municipal buildings to poor relief. During the eighteenth century, this type of charitable trust based on large individual capital endowments were increasingly used for the public benefit rather than for the benefit of the poor. Furthermore, such charitable endowments themselves were increasingly regarded as "a threat to property", and the Mortmain Act of 1736 protected "the perceived natural rights of the heir from the capriciously benevolent whims of the testator". [Williams 1989:18,21] It was in this context that testators in the nineteenth century, such as Charles Day and Henry Gardner, who wanted to determine precisely that their endowments should be used for poor relief, perhaps even rather old fashioned pious causes, became so cautious in making their wills as to mention the specific use of their benefaction. Moreover, by the nineteenth century, such large capital endowments by the testator became only one of the sources for the charities. Accompanied by the increased involvement of the middle-class in private charity, relatively small amounts of subscriptions from large numbers of the moderately rich

became more and more popular as a means of fund raising during the nineteenth century. The specific purpose of the charity, such as to help the blind, had a considerable appeal to the mass of subscribers.

Thus, in the first half of the nineteenth century, more monies became available for charitable use specifically for the blind. Although large amounts were dispersed as cash relief, several new ventures, such as training institutions and home visiting, were launched under the influence of the Victorian philanthropic ideologies of self-help and pragmatism. However, such services were still far from efficient, scientific and systematic. More specific attention had been paid to the blind not because of the realisation of their particular needs but because of their apparent appeal to public sympathy. The blind pensions were indiscriminately dispersed and sometimes overlapped each other. The training institutions were set up on the grounds of the contemporary faith in self-help, but no blind person could become self-supporting after training in a trade. Evangelicals visited blind people at their own homes, first, to read the Bible for them, and then, to teach them to read it. However, in the mid nineteenth century, there were twenty different systems of written communication, nor had any adequate system for teaching the blind to write yet been devised. Even if they learned to read, the limited embossed literature for the blind was mainly religious and as a consequence did not lead to employment. Instead, blind people sometimes used reading the bible in the street as an aid to begging.

Although some of those running blind charities had been aware of the problems relating to lack of employment opportunities after training and the need for a standard system of written communication in the early years of the nineteenth century<sup>2</sup>, it was only in the second half of that century that the defects of blind charities began to attract

---

<sup>2</sup> See, Ritchie [1930:73].

serious attention. For instance, the Charity Organisation Society (C.O.S.) set up in 1876 a special committee on the welfare for the blind, and insisted on the need for educational and industrial provisions and co-ordination among blind charities. They were firstly critical of the overlap between Poor Law outdoor relief and blind charity pensions; secondly, they were suspicious of the possibility of fraudulent claims by blind pensioners; and thirdly, they were concerned for those for whom there were no provisions. The committee's report led to the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb in 1885, and initiated state involvement in the field of blind welfare. [Owen 1964:235]

However, it was not only through government intervention but also through Gardner's Trust that the C.O.S. influenced blind charities. Originally, the endowment of £300,000 was left in 1880 for the blind with particular concern for their education and training, in the will of Henry Gardner. His son, Richard Gardner, "proposed to use the money to found a music school for the blind at Windsor". [Thomas 1959:20] This proposal conflicted with the British and Foreign Blind Society, the former name of the N.I.B., which had already opened in 1872 the Royal Normal College for music instruction for the blind. Armitage, the chairman of the N.I.B., interviewed Richard Gardner. This conflict induced the Court of Chancery to step into the affair, and the trustees appealed to C.S. Loch, a leading member of the C.O.S., for his suggestions. Loch concluded that "the situation called (rather in consonance with C.O.S. philosophy) for an agency which would take as its major task that of adjusting the inequalities, supplementing the resources, and co-ordinating the efforts of other charities". [Owen 1964:491] Gardner's Trust was the best opportunity for the C.O.S. to realise their zeal for 'the systematically organized and scientifically administered charity'. Eventually, the Trust was to be used partly for scholarships to blind students of music, partly for charity pensions for the needy blind, and partly



for educational grants including grants for printing books for the blind. As a result, the Trust became a leading blind charity pensions society on a national scale because of the size of its fund, and became the basis for a national register of blind charity pensioners. At the same time, by its educational, and later, industrial grants, it became a funding agency for many local educational institutions for the blind. Because it became a funding body rather than a provider of services, the Gardner's Trust was in a position to resolve the conflicting interests of different blind charities and encourage co-ordination between them.

The criticism and the pressure for changes came not only from the circle of progressive sighted philanthropists, but also from the recipients of charities, the blind. While the progressive sighted philanthropists tended to be concerned with the effectiveness of provisions and the moral value of self-help, the notion of "the client's needs" came largely from the activities of blind philanthropists, such as Armitage, Elizabeth Gilbert, and William Hanks Levy, who was "the faithful partner" in Gilbert's enterprise. These blind philanthropists also played a crucial role in introducing changes in blind charities in the late nineteenth century, and later, encouraging state involvement in blind welfare.

Although blind philanthropists were working within the blind charities, they seemed to be essentially different from their sighted counterparts in that they identified themselves as service users rather than "benevolent givers". This might be more often the case with Armitage rather than Gilbert, but both of them were more or less doubtful as to how far sighted people were suitable for work with the blind. For instance, Gilbert "was always adamant that they (teachers in her home work schemes) should be blind on the grounds that they alone knew the needs of the blind". [Young & Ashton 1956:187] Similarly, Armitage also expressed his doubt that "work for the blind was too much in the hands of philanthropists possessed of sight who, however well

intentioned, had often failed to understand the real wants of the blind". [Rose 1970:18] These ideas paved the way for the development of a system of blind home teachers and visitors.

Gilbert and Levy launched the first home worker's scheme in 1854 in order to fill the gap in the existing system of blind charities, which "educated, trained and then washed their hands of further responsibility". [Ritchie 1930:77] Armitage also advocated the need for 'after-care' for those who were educated and trained by the existing institutions. At the same time, he was interested in "more general employment", in other words, more open employment, which was more likely than traditional trades in the institutions to ensure the financial independence of the blind. He established the Royal Normal College in 1873, and opened up to the blind such occupations as teachers of music, church organists, and pianoforte tuners. The serious concern with employment and financial independence of the blind among such blind philanthropists contrasts with the lay view among sighted philanthropists. Most sighted philanthropists would have been satisfied, if they could give the helpless blind a pleasant youth, and they were unconcerned about whether the blind would become self-supporting after education and training.<sup>3</sup> This appeared to be a popular and persistent view among sighted philanthropists until the early twentieth century. In this context, those blind philanthropists brought the client's view into the blind charities which were dominated by the sighted. This point can be illustrated by looking at the process which led to the adoption of Braille and Armitage's activities in support of this development.

---

<sup>3</sup> At a conference in 1883, Armitage quoted the following comment of a leading member of the committee of one of the institutions.

"Most of our pupils, when they leave us, are supported at home by their friends, or, what I think is far better, go to the workhouse; they have had four or five happy, bright years at school, which they will always look back to with pleasure, so that the education they have received has not been thrown away." See, Purse [1925:28].

The initial reason for Armitage setting up his own organisation, the British and Foreign Society for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind, was to promote a Braille system as a uniform system of written communication for the blind. Because of this primary concern, the membership of the Executive Council of the Society had been limited until 1887 to the intellectual blind, the users of several kinds of embossed type. [Thomas 1957:13] However, this objective was so challenging at that time as to generate much hostility from the existing blind charities. Firstly, the attempt to adopt a uniform system of written communication touched on the potential conflicts between the existing institutions and home teaching societies which had already adopted their own systems. Secondly, Braille was least popular among those interested in teaching the blind to read, because the sighted could not read it although they could have learned it with little effort. Moreover, among those concerned with the blind was there an ideological predisposition to the view that "the embossed letter (for the blind) had to resemble the printed one (for the sighted)". Indeed, even its inventor, Louis Braille, "had the greatest difficulty in securing its adoption even by his own school". [Pritchard 1963:50] The superiority of the Braille over the existing systems based on variations of the Roman alphabet could be determined only from the user's perspective.

In order to achieve the adoption of Braille as the standard medium of written communication for British blind people, Armitage involved the government. It must have been clear to Armitage that his supporters were a minority within the blind charities which were dominated by sighted philanthropists and professionals. He needed support from outside. Armitage established a close relationship with the C.O.S., but the C.O.S. did not have enough power to ensure that all blind charities adopted Braille. It was educational public grants for blind children that forced all blind institutions to adopt a single uniform system of embossed type. After the introduction of a national system

of elementary education in 1870, the government needed to sort out the issues of special education for handicapped children. Some urban school boards had already started to provide elementary education for a few blind and deaf children of their own accord often in special classes in ordinary board schools. [Pritchard 1964:76-81] The Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb recommended in 1889 that local authorities cover the cost of elementary and technical education of the blind from the age of five to sixteen. The subsequent Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 implemented this recommendation. As a result, an annual grant for each blind child was paid to the educational institutions for the blind, at the expense of opening themselves to state inspection. This public grant to the institutions forced them into a decisive shift towards the adoption of Braille. For instance, although the institutions for the blind had been established as independent private ventures, now they were required by the inspectors to achieve a specific standard of educational provision, including teaching materials. In terms of general education, the superiority of Braille over the other systems of embossed type was clear because it alone could be easily written by the blind. At the end of the nineteenth century, educational institutions for the blind increasingly began to adopt Braille as a standard system of written communication.

Thus, it was difficult to persuade individual blind charities to agree to abandon their previous systems of written communication in favour of Braille. But even among Braille users there was conflict concerning which form of Braille to adopt: "the arrangements of the Braille dots aroused a intensity of feeling" among educational institutions for the blind. At a national conference which was held in 1902 by Gardner's Trust, the recommendations of the British and Foreign Blind Association concerning the standardisation of English Braille "came under heavy fire of criticism". However, at the next Edinburgh conference in 1905, British Braille was at last established as 'a uniform

language for the British blind'. [Thomas 1957:27-8]

Braille was a system of written characters totally different from that used by the sighted. Therefore, the adoption of Braille brought for the blind not merely a uniform system of written communication but also helped to develop a specific blind culture, through which specialist needs emerged. In contrast to Braille, sign language has only recently been acknowledged as the basis of the culture of the deaf because of the strong preference for the 'oral' system among those providing special education for the deaf.

Sign language had to survive for a long time as 'the subterranean culture of the deaf'. This seems to account partly for the relative lack of concern for the particular needs of the deaf. In that sense, Armitage's campaign for Braille can be seen as the earliest political lobbying by the blind for the acknowledgement of their unique need and identity.<sup>4</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth century, specialist charities for the blind gradually emerged largely because the benefactors began to specify the use to which their donations were to be put. Subsequently, in the latter half of the century, blind charities were encouraged to co-ordinate under the influence of the "scientific" philanthropy of the Charity Organisation Society. By selecting systematically particular clients for their services, the specialist blind charities created a distinct category of recipients, that is, "the blind". In that sense, as Scott [1969] argued in the case of the blind in the United States, the blind identity in Britain was "manufactured" by the providers of specific services for the blind. However, the blind identity in Britain was not entirely a consequence of social imposition. The blind themselves also participated in the creation of the blind identity through their unique need for written

---

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the political identity of deaf people has recently developed based on the use of sign language. See, Harris [1995].

communication. In particular, Armitage's activity which led all British institutions for the blind to adopt Braille as an uniform system for written communication could be regarded as a crucial step toward the establishment of the "indigenous" aspect of the blind identity, as well as the earliest example of political lobbying by the blind based on a sense of collectivity.

### 3-2. The Rise of Collective Identity, 1904 to 1920:

#### The National League of the Blind and the Blind Persons Act 1920

This section is concerned with the way in which the collective identity of the blind developed through their political participation in the legislative process leading to the Blind Persons Act 1920. The focus is on the activity of the National League of the Blind, a trade union of blind employees at sheltered workshops, through whom a sense of collective identity developed among the working-class blind.

At the turn of the century, the collective identity of the blind began to take shape through the establishment of their own organisation which confined its membership to the blind alone. The National League of the Blind was established around 1893 as an association of blind workers, mainly London workshop employees. [Ritchie 1930:130] The league was registered in 1899 as a trade union, and affiliated to the Trade Union Congress in 1902. [Abel 1987:100-2] As a result, from 1904 to 1917, resolutions concerning the blind were carried by the T.U.C annual general meetings every year, except the 41st meeting in 1908. Using these successive resolutions as a basis, Labour Members of Parliament presented their Blind Aid Bills to the House ten times from 1906 to 1920. Although the final government sponsored Blind Persons Act was very different from the original Labour Bill, this continuous support for action played a crucial role in achieving legislation.

The advocates of the current disability rights movement in Britain often refer to the National League of the Blind when they consider the origin of organisations controlled by disabled people themselves. [Barnes 1991:6; Campbell & Oliver 1996:46-8] However, it appears that there were at least three crucial preconditions for the establishment of the National League of the Blind which are ignored by

current advocates of the disability rights movement. Firstly, since it was an organisation the membership of which was confined largely to blind workers in sheltered workshops, the growth of sheltered workshops for the blind was a prerequisite for the establishment of the trade union.

In that sense, the growth of specialised charities for the blind in the nineteenth century provided the blind with an opportunity to develop their sense of collectivity based on their common experiences of charitable institutions.

Secondly, it was also a prerequisite for the establishment of the National League that the blind had already developed in the nineteenth century their own identity separate from that of the sighted majority. Antipathy towards the sighted majority grew among the blind in the nineteenth century. For instance, Martin, a Victorian biographer of Elizabeth Gilbert, discovered numerous letters which had been written to Gilbert by many blind people urging her to fight against the sighted. Martin described these voices of blind people as "the cries out of the dark", which identified the sighted majority as 'enemy'. [Martin 1891:116-8] It was in this context that Gilbert appointed only blind people as managers and instructors at her workshop. Similarly, Armitage thought that blind people alone could properly understand the needs of the blind, and therefore, the executive council of his organisation, the N.I.B., was confined to blind persons during Armitage's era.

In that sense, it could be argued that the ventures of such blind philanthropists as Gilbert and Armitage in the nineteenth century were important to the development of organisations of blind people. Finally, it seemed to be crucial for the blind to have already acquired in the nineteenth century a uniform system of written communication, Braille. In order to establish a democratic organisation representing the blind on a national scale, written communication was necessary to hold together a membership scattered throughout the whole of Britain. If individual educational institutions for the blind had taught their own idiosyncratic systems of reading, as had been the case until the late nineteenth century, it would have been



extremely difficult for the blind to exchange ideas with each other. Thus, the National League of the Blind could have not emerged without the developments of the blind world in the nineteenth century, including the growth of specialist blind charities, the reaction of the blind to the ways in which they were treated by those charities, their antipathy to the sighted, and an "indigenous" method of written communication.

Since its inception, the National League had continuously lobbied for statutory provisions for the blind.

Prior to the Blind Persons Act 1920, eleven bills in total had been presented to Parliament since 1906. Those bills can be classified into five types. Firstly, from 1906 to 1909, the same bill was presented every year by Steadman, the then secretary of the Trade Union Congress. This was the original Labour Bill, which I call "Steadman's Bill". Secondly, in 1910, the bill slightly amended form was presented by Clynes. Thirdly, in 1911 and 1912, another amended bill was presented twice by Bowerman, the then secretary of the T.U.C. Fourthly, in the year of 1912, in addition to "Bowerman's Bill", another bill was presented in competition by Burgoyne and supported by the Conservatives. Finally, in 1914, a compromise was made between the "Bowerman" and "Burgoyne" bills, and the amended Conservatives' Bill was presented again by Burgoyne, and supported by all parties. This amended Burgoyne's Bill of 1914 is often referred as "No.2 Bill", but a better term is the "All-Parties Bill" in order to distinguish it from the original Burgoyne's Bill of 1912, formally entitled "the Blind (No.2) Bill". This All-Parties Bill was updated and presented again in 1919 by Stephen Walsh and supported by all parties. In the next year, 1920, the same bill was presented by Tillet, but this time, supported only by Labour members.

The first Steadman Bill reflected most obviously the demands of the National League of the Blind. The bill required county and borough councils to establish, equip,

and maintain technical schools and workshops for the blind, and to provide either home work or pensions for those who could not work at workshops. There was no mention of the existing blind charities. The blind charities saw the bill as a set of "confiscatory measures" [Ritchie 1930:132], because if it succeeded they might lose their *raison d'etre*.

Indeed, the National League had originally wanted to see the current voluntary provisions totally replaced by statutory provisions. While persuading the opposition in Parliament to object to Steadman's bill, the blind charities reluctantly stepped into the issue of employment by setting up a special committee at the Edinburgh Conference in 1905 to sort out a response to the fierce attack from 'their wards', blind workers in their own workshops.

Soon after the presentation of the first Steadman's Bill in 1906, the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. and Labour Members of Parliament realised that they could not get a bill through Parliament without working out a compromise with the opposition from the voluntary sector. In December 1910, the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. met a special committee of the institutions to discuss the matter. [Ritchie 1930:132] Based on this discussion, Labour's third bill was drafted and presented in May 1911 by Bowerman. The Bowerman Bill was a compromise between the pleas of the National League and the vested interests of the existing institutions. While the Bill admitted public grants to the existing institutions, it required these institutions to pay a minimum wage to their blind workers and to include representatives from local councils on their management. However, the Bowerman Bill was not acceptable to the charities. At their national conference in 1911, while rejecting the Bowerman Bill, the blind charities appeared to recognize for the first time rather reluctantly that they were really going to have to present in competition their own bill requiring public grants for workshops, which would necessarily induce public inspection and destroy the private nature of charity.

Because of the failure of gaining the agreement of the institutions, the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. was driven to a further compromise. In July 1912, the Parliamentary Committee convened a conference between the National League and the Employment Committee of the charities "for the purpose of considering the question of amalgamating the two Bills". At the conference, the Employment Committee explained their Bill and asked the League to accept it. Ben Purse opposed the Bill because there was nothing about a legal minimum wage; because it omitted pensions for the incapable blind; and because "it had not been approved by the blind workers themselves but by the directors of the institutions, who were anxious to uphold the existing voluntary system."<sup>5</sup> An agreement could not be made, and eventually, the institutions' Bill was presented to Parliament in October 1912 by Burgoyne.

After the introduction of this Burgoyne Bill, there was no way forward for the National League other than dropping their Bill. In 1913, the National League was finally forced to drop their Bowerman Bill, after securing monthly grants for the incapable blind and omitting the discretion of the charitable institutions to use the public grants for their workshops so that the grants could be paid to each blind worker as wage subsidies. In September 1913, Ben Purse announced at the annual meeting of the T.U.C. that "all the organisation for the relief and maintenance of the blind have now come into line", and that the National League are "perfectly satisfied" with the agreement.<sup>6</sup> Based on this agreement, in the next year, 1914, Wardle's resolution was moved and carried in the House of Commons in March. Then, in May, the government moved towards legislation by establishing an inter-departmental committee in order to make "due and proper inquiries" for legislation, regarding, for example, the definition of blindness; the number of the

---

<sup>5</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1912, pp.88-9.

<sup>6</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1913, p.276.

blind; the number of those who have already benefited either by the existing charities or the public measures, such as old age pensions; and the use of charitable funds.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, in July, the All-Parties Bill was presented for the first time. However, the fair wind suddenly turned against the legislation after the outbreak of the First World War.

In 1917, the report of the departmental committee on the welfare of the blind was published. Its recommendations included state intervention in order to co-ordinate centrally the existing voluntary agencies. In 1919, the Ministry of Health was established, and issued its Circular 7BD in August. Instead of new legislation, the government was trying to fulfil their promises to the blind by administrative improvements. The Board of Education had already increased the grants for training the blind during the war. The Circular 7BD set up the grants for registration, workshops, and home work schemes. However, these government proposals did not satisfy the National League. The League insisted on the enactment of the All-Parties Bill at their deputation to the Ministry of Health in July 1919. The updated "All-Parties Bill" was presented to Parliament in November 1919 by all parties, and again, in February 1920, but this time, only by the Labour party. In March 1920, the National League held a national march of blind workers to obtain public support for Labour's Tillet Bill of 1920. Pearson pressured the government to introduce a special Bill for the blind "instead of legislation for the blind being embodied in a Poor Law reform measure". [Thomas 1957:36] Although the Tillet Bill was discarded, the government eventually presented their own bill, the Addison Bill, which became the Blind Persons Act in August.

By observing the whole political process leading toward the enactment of the Blind Persons Act 1920, several

---

<sup>7</sup> Hansard, 11 March 1914, column 1352-3.

questions can be raised regarding the political identity of the National League of the Blind. What was their aim? Why were they so persistently opposed to blind charities? Were they really regarded as a trade union? What was the nature of the National League after all?

First of all, what did the National League have to achieve by legislation? Originally, the League had wanted to see the existing blind charities superseded by statutory provisions. After they realised that the blind charities were going to survive through State aid, the League seemed to shift to a campaign for public control of the charities. During the period of negotiation with the voluntary sector between 1909 and 1913, the League intensified their attack on the voluntary sector. At the annual meeting of the T.U.C. in 1910, Ben Purse mentioned their "miserably inadequate" wages in the charitable workshops, and, in 1912, insisted that the large portion of the charitable money did not go to the blind but was wasted maintaining "a large and unnecessary army of officials" in the blind charities.<sup>8</sup> The seconders for the League's resolution pointed to the existence of "the exploitation of the blind by the (charitable) institutions". This can be seen as a part of the campaign for the public control over the voluntary sector which continued even after the League made an agreement in 1913 with the voluntary sector for legislation.

It appeared that the National League aimed to reduce the discretionary power of blind charities through state intervention. This can be understood from the viewpoint of blind employees in charitable sheltered workshops. At workshops, sighted philanthropists, managers and instructors were in charge of administration, management and supervision. Since the nature of workshops was charitable rather than industrial, there was no ground for blind workers to demand their workmen's rights. From their

---

<sup>8</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1910, p.131, and Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1912, p.164.

"employer's" viewpoint, the blind were never "workers" but "wards" dependent on the paternal guardianship of philanthropy. In this context, the reduction in power of the voluntary sector simply meant a relative gain by the blind in their power relationship with their sighted "guards", such as managers of the workshops.

The issue of wages illustrates this point. Minimum wages had always been an essential part of the demand of the National League throughout their lobbying for legislation. According to an investigation undertaken in the mid 1910s by a Departmental Committee on the welfare of the blind, blind workers received "their earnings according to work done, calculated at the piece-work rates paid under the normal trade union agreements applicable to sighted workers in the trade concerned, plus 'augmentation', which was regarded as a charitable payment".<sup>9</sup> However, the calculation of these augmentation payments varied widely according to individual workshops, and even the "earnings" were sometimes determined at the discretion of individual workshops. Thus, the income of sheltered blind workers was in practice dependent on the benevolence and discretion of the blind charities. Therefore, they came to an agreement in 1913 with the voluntary sector for legislation provided that the proposed legislation would prescribe that public grants for blind workshops should be used for wage subsidies of each blind worker. These would have reduced the discretionary power of blind charities over the income of the blind, while the blind workers would have increased their independence from the paternalism of sighted philanthropists.

The second question which can be raised regarding the political identity of the National League is whether they could be regarded as part of the trade union movement. In fact, blind workshop employees were different from ordinary workers in the labour market. Their earnings from their work were only part of their income, while the substantial

---

<sup>9</sup> See, Ministry of Labour (U.K.), Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, 1962, HMSO, p.2.

part of their income derived from charitable funds. Their work was affected not only by economic cycles but the benevolence of society at large. It seems to be dubious how far the National League could be regarded as a full member of the Trade Union Congress. Indeed, despite their concern with the right to work and cynicism against the upper and middle class culture of charity, the attitudes of the T.U.C. toward the blind had always been emotional, humanitarian, and ironically, "charitable".<sup>10</sup> In general, while the National League begged support from the T.U.C., the latter always expressed their sympathy. Defiant and fierce debates were not unusual among ordinary trade unions at their annual meetings. However, the National League had never had an opportunity to lead such a contentious debate.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> The "philanthropic mentality" of the T.U.C. can be illustrated, for example, by a seconder who used the term "pious resolution" referring to the League's resolution. See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1913, p.276.

<sup>11</sup> The debate at the annual meeting of the T.U.C. in 1920 illustrates this "ritualistic" relationship between the National League and the Trade Union Congress. In this year, being desperately disappointed by the outcome of the legislation which did not meet their demand, the National League put down a motion which declared for a down tools policy. The President of the Congress rejected their motion while expressing his sympathy as follows.

"I am quite sure it requires no words of mine to assure our friend, the blind delegate, of our sympathy and anxiety to do anything we can to help them. They, on the other hand, will clearly understand that you can not deliberately violate either the Congress procedure or the Standing Orders. They themselves put down a motion which was out of order, inasmuch as it definitely declared for a 'down tools' policy."

In response, the then president of the National league, Dixon Smith, while expressing his gratitude to the sympathy of the T.U.C., criticised the indifference of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. toward their demand as follows.

"We of the National League of the Blind claimed, and still claim, that the Tillet Bill --- represented but the minimum of our requirements. We are, therefore, profoundly dissatisfied with the Act which becomes law on Friday next. Year after year this Congress has passed resolutions declaring that the care of the blind should be undertaken by the State ---. We blind people believed that in passing these resolutions you meant business, and were not merely expressing that sympathy with our class that we all know you possess. I am here to-day ask you \_\_\_ in spite of the fact that you yesterday turned down our official resolution \_\_\_ what action

Even their allies, the T.U.C., regarded the relationship between blind workers and their employers in sheltered workshops as that between charity and beneficiary, not employer and employee in an industrial context. Neither did the rest of society. In Parliament, statutory provisions for the blind were discussed not in terms of the rights of the blind but the good will of society. In the debate on Wardle's resolution at the House of Commons in 1914, all participants in the debate neither opposed nor responded properly to Wardle's motion. While the motion was based on the arguments which Ben Purse had developed logically in terms of the rights of the blind at the Trade Union Congress since 1910, each debater in Parliament was primarily concerned with expressing emotionally his heartfelt sympathy with the blind. Two Conservative members, J.D. Rees and F. Banbury, objected to the resolution, but they also had to express their sympathy with the blind. At the end of the debate, Banbury rightly observed that "hon. Members will be able to pose as being extremely philanthropic people who are going to do all sorts of things with somebody else's money".<sup>12</sup> In contrast to other disabled people who were expected to return to open industry, Bolderson observed that "the blind were not expected to enter the employment field proper and the workshops were viewed as largely charitable or welfare

---

you are going to take to enforce the demand for the State maintenance of the blind which you have made for the last 15 years? I appeal to you to instruct the Parliamentary Committee to carry on with the good work and to take such steps as will ensure that the demand of the six million organised workers affiliated to this Congress is given effect to, and that you will not rest until you have secured for the blind of this country that right which you claim for yourselves — the right to live!"

The rather patronising tone which the T.U.C. adopted towards the blind evident in the above exchange may indicate that the National League had never been assured of full membership within the T.U.C., and that they had never been regarded as an "equal partner" by other trade unions. See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1920, pp.246-7,395.

<sup>12</sup> Hansard, 11 March 1914, column 1355.



institutions". [Bolderson 1991:68] The Blind Persons Act 1920 reflected this general view on the work of the blind and discarded the demand of the National League as to the right to work. It was only the National League that regarded sheltered workshop employment as equal to ordinary employment. Any other section of society, including the T.U.C., did not regard it as equal. This gap between the blind and the sighted majority in terms of the interpretation of sheltered employment made the National League isolated within the political lobby for legislative change.

It was in this context that the National League collaborated after 1914 with the National Institute for the Blind despite their antipathy to charity. Ben Purse, in 1916, "resigned from his paid post and took up employment with the National Institute for the Blind". [Abel 1987:175] In the same year of 1916, Dixon Smith, the successor to Ben Purse, asked for financial support from the T.U.C. on behalf of the National Institute.<sup>13</sup> The collaboration between these two organisations toward legislation for the blind became possible because both shared a unique identity in that both of them were representing the views of the blind. Although the N.I.B. later became a service provider themselves and a national funding body for local blind charities, its organisational origin was as a pressure group for promoting embossed literature from the user's perspective. This organisational strategy as a pressure group seems to remain intact today. [Butler & Wilson 1990:93-4] In a sense, just as the National League of the Blind did not perfectly fit in the common definition of trade union, the National Institute for the Blind was rather peculiar among blind charities. What made them distinct from their allies was their unique identity as the organisation representing the blind.

On the basis of the development of the blind identity

---

<sup>13</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1916, p.395.

in the nineteenth century, sheltered blind workers organised their own trade union, the National League of the Blind. Through their political participation in the legislative process leading to the Blind Persons Act 1920, the National League created the political grounds on which the collective identity of the blind could take shape. Their collective identity was strengthened partly by the outcome of their political lobbying, that is, the Act itself. At the same time, through their negotiations and compromises with the sighted majority, the blind found themselves isolated in the sighted world. Interaction with the sighted world ironically encouraged the blind to maintain their identity in separation from the sighted world. In the next section, it will become clear that the continuous struggle of the National League for independence from charity in the 1920s and 1930s further clarified the gap between the blind and the sighted worlds.

### 3-3. The Fight against the Statutory and Voluntary Partnership, 1920-1938.

This section focuses on the political role of the National League of the Blind after 1920. It is argued that the National League was further isolated from the rest of the political lobby for the blind during the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, a discussion arose within the blind community regarding the interpretation of the nature of equality at work.

After the enactment of the Blind Persons Act 1920, the National League of the Blind continued their fight against sighted philanthropists. At the T.U.C. annual meeting in 1921, they pressed to amend the Act and to apply the principles of Labour Tillet Bill of 1920 which they had wanted to see on the Statute Book.<sup>14</sup> Table 3-1 shows the main differences between the Blind Persons Act 1920 and the Tillet Bill. From the viewpoint of the National League, they had gained nothing from the 1920 Act but the premature old age pension for the blind over 50 year of age. It meant for the National League that blind charities would keep control over blind persons until they reached the age of 50 years. After leaving school, a blind person had to beg for a place at a charity workshop. If he was regarded as incapable for work, he had to beg for a charity pension. Even if he could secure the place at workshop, his wages were at the discretion of the manager. It was only after he reached 50 years of age that he could receive a statutory pension, and therefore, could be independent from charity for the first time in his life. Clydesdale, the delegate of the National League to the T.U.C. meeting in 1921, criticized the Act as "a betrayal of the blind people" and suggested that the Act was promoted "largely at the instigation of persons acting on behalf of charitable

---

<sup>14</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1921, p.344.

institutions."<sup>15</sup>

Table 3.1 Comparison of Blind Persons Act and Tillet's Bill		
Items	Blind Persons Act	Tillet's Bill
Duty of Local Authorities	Promote the welfare of blind persons — workshops, hostels, homes	Provide training, employment and maintenance of all blind persons over 16 years of age
Income maintenance	Pensions for blind persons over 50 years of age	Grants for the maintenance of the "incapable blind". Grants for the augmentation of the wages earned by the working blind.
Public control of charities	Registration under the War Charities Act	Statement of accounts to be made for the LAs. One half of the members of the governing bodies to be drawn from the LAs.

In the 1920s, the National League and the T.U.C. identified two main problems in the administration of the Blind Persons Act. Firstly, in the early 1920s, they were dubious about how far Section 2 of the Act, the promotion of the welfare of the blind, would be implemented. They tried to impose responsibility for the blind on local authorities by urging the Minister of Health, as well as the local bodies of Labour and Trade Unions, to take an initiative in the matter.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, the statutory provisions for the blind, in some cases, made the blind more dependent on the sighted philanthropists than before. Many local authorities provided services for the blind through the voluntary sector rather than making direct provisions of their own. The public grants for the blind charities extended many specific services for the blind, while

---

<sup>15</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1921, pp.344-5.

<sup>16</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1922, pp.62-3, and Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1923, pp.75-6.

simultaneously, strengthening the power of the blind charities. In fact, a considerable amount of the public money went to the sighted rather than the blind. At the T.U.C. meeting in 1927, the National League maintained that the charitable organisations which provided the blind home worker schemes received a grant of 20 pounds per blind home worker, but they usually handed the blind man 13 pounds and kept 7 pounds for themselves.<sup>17</sup> The blind saw that their paternalistic "sighted guards" had secured more power than before to dominate their "blind wards" by the introduction of the State Assistance which the blind themselves had fought for. Thus, the National League and the T.U.C. were concerned about the public money which fell into the hands of the voluntary sector and its sighted workers. The T.U.C. mounted attacks on the voluntary agencies for the blind at their annual meeting in 1923:

"The charity-mongers, who in the main are the exploiters of the blind, will be able to dictate their terms."

"We want the blind absolutely out of the area of charity."

"The sightless workers ought to become the adopted children of the State."<sup>18</sup>

In the next year, 1924, Labour members presented to the House of Commons for the first time "A Bill to Amend the Blind Persons Act, 1920". The Bill proposed the introduction of pensions for blind persons over 30 year of age and exemption of local authorities from involvement in the voluntary sector. The aim of the amendment was to secure direct statutory provisions by the local authorities.

From 1924 to 1929 Labour members presented this Amendment Bill five times with minor modifications. However, the Advisory Committee to the Minister of Health opposed the Amendment Bills each time. When the first Labour Amendment Bill was presented in 1924, the Advisory Committee emphasized in its Annual Report how seriously the voluntary

---

<sup>17</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1927, p.290.

<sup>18</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1923, pp.76-7.

agencies had made efforts "to cope with the increased demands that are being made upon them for workshop accommodation". [Rooff 1957:222] When Labour took up the issue of the unemployed blind in 1925, the Committee responded in its annual report of 1926 with an account of the provisions made for the unemployable blind. The average range of payments for unemployed blind men was between 15 to 25 shillings. [Rooff 1957:209] The committee considered that the unemployed blind were well catered for by the voluntary sector and that the amendment of the Act was not necessary. However, the Labour members continued to present their Amendment Bills in 1926, 1928, and 1929, demanding 25 shillings and later 27 shillings and 6 pence per week for every unemployed blind adult. Finally, in 1929, the Advisory Committee reported "with regret" that "in some quarters, so much attention is concentrated on the financial assistance of the blind and the elimination of voluntary effort". They considered that the Labour Amendment Bill would "rob the blind of incentive and undermine their morale". [Rooff 1957:222]

The Advisory Committee on the Welfare of the Blind was originally set up in 1918, on the suggestion of the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Welfare of the Blind which was published in 1917. The Advisory Committee was expected to "advise on improving the facilities of the blind", particularly, the administration of blind charities. [Abel 1987:139] The Advisory Committee seems to have played a crucial role during the 1920s in securing the "voluntary and statutory partnership" in the field of blind welfare, in order to implement the provisions of the Blind Persons Act of 1920. [Rooff 1957:221-2] Membership of the Committee had originally been drawn largely from those "closely connected with well-known voluntary organisations". Throughout the 1920s, the Committee was gradually enlarged so as to include representatives from local authorities and organisations of the blind, such as the National League of the Blind. However, Rooff observed, "these administrative changes do not seem to have affected the policy of the

Advisory Committee which continued to exert its influence towards the co-operation of statutory and voluntary agencies". [Rooff 1957:228] It seems that the Advisory Committee had always been concerned with keeping the institutional interests of voluntary agencies in general. This was, from their viewpoint, because it was the best possible way to develop blind welfare. However, it seems likely that in the eyes of opposing factions such as the National League and the T.U.C., the Advisory Committee appeared to represent the interests of sighted philanthropist "charity mongers".

The continuous efforts of the National League and the anti-charity trade unionists throughout the 1920s influenced to some extent the Local Government Bill of 1929. By lifting the unemployed blind from the responsibility of the Boards of Guardians, local authorities were now expected to gain more powers to care for the blind directly without assistance from blind charities. The Advisory Committee, Rooff noted, "did its best to urge the Minister to do all he could to avoid imperilling the position of the voluntary agencies". [Rooff 1957:222] After the enactment of the Local Government Act of 1929, "voluntary agencies found that they were to be generously treated", although the Act encouraged some local authorities in large towns to provide direct services for the blind. [Rooff 1957:211,222] By the end of the 1920s, despite the demands which the National League and the T.U.C. made for direct statutory provisions and the elimination of blind charities, the co-operative partnership between statutory and voluntary agencies had generally been well established. In the 1930s, there was no way for the National League to eliminate the domination of blind charities. Although the National League of the Blind kept arguing in the T.U.C. meetings during the 1930s for State responsibility and against charities, their pleas were more or less ignored by the Parliamentary Labour Party and the trade union leadership. The inactivity of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. in the 1930s made a striking contrast to their activities on the matter of the blind in

the previous decade. Thus, by the end of the 1920s, the National League had lost to the charity side.

However, in order to understand fully the blind identity in the 1920s and 1930s, it is important to look into the activities of another organisation representing the blind, the National Institute for the Blind. In fact, during the 1920s, while the National League was losing its battle against blind charities, the N.I.B. was increasingly gaining control over the local blind charities. In the late 1910s, because of Arthur Pearson's "amazing success as a money-raiser", the N.I.B. had already become the sole agency appealing to the public for subscriptions on a national scale. In 1920, the N.I.B. convened a meeting with local blind charities to discuss how the money collected by the N.I.B. should be distributed to each local charity. [Thomas 1957:38-9] Many old established blind charities, which had previously been so self-confident as to be reluctant to listen to the N.I.B. call for co-ordination, now had to beg the N.I.B. for grants. In the 1920s, partly because of the expansion in power of the N.I.B. and partly because of the introduction of statutory provisions, old-established local charities for the blind lost their discretionary powers to a considerable extent.

The rise in power of the N.I.B. in the 1920s may not be interpreted as a "victory of the blind over the sighted philanthropists" since the organisational identity of the N.I.B. was always dubious. The N.I.B. represented the interests of blind charities as well as those of the blind, and it could never be regarded as a "democratic organisation totally controlled by the blind". However, the N.I.B. certainly represented the opinions and interests of, at least, a particular group of blind people, that is, the middle-class blind with higher education. In that sense, the N.I.B. was based partly on the collective identity of some blind people. Thus, the development of the N.I.B. in the 1920s and thereafter may indicate the growth in power of this particular group of the blind in comparison to the



gradual decline of the constituency of the National League. It seems important to explore how these newly-emerging educated blind people viewed the issue of work and employment of the blind.

A book called "*The Blind in Industry*", which was distributed in 1925 by the N.I.B. and the National Union of the Blind, appeared to reflect the views of this newly-emerging class of the blind. The book was written by Ben Purse, the former secretary for the National League of the Blind. The move of Purse in 1914 from the National League to the N.I.B. poses us a difficult question. As mentioned in the previous section, his move could superficially be understood in the context of the temporary collaboration between these two organisations in the 1910s which was achieved on the basis of the broad collective identity of the blind in general under pressing circumstances before the enactment of Blind Persons Act. However, in terms of ideology, with his move to the N.I.B., Purse changed his political position totally from trade unionism to private philanthropy. His book gave some explanations for the reasons why he changed his ideas, and those explanations appeared to reflect to some extent the ideas of the newly-emerging class of the blind.<sup>19</sup>

In his book, Purse explained his conversion as follows. The issue of sheltered blind workers was not a matter for industrial action but one of philanthropy because the productive capacity of the average blind worker was too low to be entitled to the trade union status. For instance, the withdrawal of labour by blind workers had no "serious consequences, either to the employer or to the purchasing or consuming public". Therefore, the ultimate instrument of industrial action was not applicable to blind

---

<sup>19</sup> By explaining the reasons of his conversion from trade unionism to private philanthropy, Purse aimed to encourage the conversion of blind trade unionists. However, at the same time, his book was aimed at those with higher education. For instance, the last chapter of his book discussed the employment problems of blind candidates for professional jobs.

workers. The inapplicability of trade unionism to sheltered blind workers became clear when Purse discussed the issue of wages at blind workshops.

In theory, in the context of the trade union movement, it could not be legitimate for the blind to demand more than the current piece-work wage rates in the industries in which they were engaged. [Purse 1925:57-8] However, as Purse admitted in his evidence to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1909, since the average blind worker could only work at about one-third the speed of the average sighted worker, the blind could never live on the current piecework wage rates.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, at blind workshops, the wages consisted of two parts: "earnings" upon the current piecework rates, and "augmentation allowances" which supposedly covered "the difference between actual earnings as a blind person and the 'able-bodied' rate for the job". [Bolderson 1991:68] While the "earnings" part of their wages could be regarded as their due reward for the value of their work, the "augmentation" part was by nature a charitable 'gift'. The National League disliked this charitable aspect of their wages and wanted to have their whole recompense, including the "augmentation" part, as the due reward. In other words, through the trade union movement, the National League demanded the "sighted-rate of wages" for the "blind-rate of work". It was apparent that this was illogical and unreasonable from the economic and industrial viewpoint.

Purse, therefore, in his book urged the blind to increase their productive capacity as much as possible if they wanted to demand wages and status equal to the sighted.

In order to increase the economic value of the output of blind workshops, he made several recommendations; for example, a careful selection of efficient workers; a clear boundary between the economic and charitable aspects at work; and a method of remuneration which would give more

---

<sup>20</sup> See, Report of Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, Cmd 4755, 1909, HMSO, Appendix Vol.3, p.165.

incentives to efficient workers.<sup>21</sup> [Purse 1925:82-3] Thus, Purse argued for 'equality at work' purely on an economic basis, that is, "equal value for equal output". Although his view on the 'equality at work' appeared to be common sense to the sighted majority, it was a completely new idea within the blind world in those days.

To the blind, 'equality at work' had simply meant wages equal to those of their sighted counterparts regardless of their productive capacity. For instance, Martin, in his biography of Elizabeth Gilbert, states that "it was inexpedient to pay (blind) workers as wages that was in reality a gift" because "for many years (they) considered the large sums paid as wages to be really their due".

[Martin 1891:87-8] Indeed, as Purse, and later the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, too, argued, the distinction between the "earnings" and "augmentation" parts of wages were never clarified until the early 1960s. The boundary between the economic and charitable aspects of the payments for blind workers was more or less arbitrarily drawn by each workshop manager. Therefore, it was highly probable that ordinary blind workers were indifferent to, and even ignorant of, the boundary between economy and charity at their workshops. Thus, before the Second World War, sheltered blind workers had no idea that they had to be able to compete with the sighted in terms of productive capacity in order to receive equal wages. The National League demanded that an average blind worker should receive a wage equal to an average sighted worker engaged in the same industry regardless of the difference in productive capacity. This was blind people's view on 'equality at work'.

Against this "blind view", Purse presented to the blind world a different view which was common and acceptable in the sighted world. In his book of 1925, Purse urged the

---

<sup>21</sup> About forty years later, in 1962, the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind made exactly the same recommendations, which were eventually implemented in the 1960s and 1970s.

blind to change their mind, and in particular, to acquire the "sighted viewpoint".

"A little introspection and sober reflectiveness permits us 'to see ourselves as others see us', and thus one is led to face the facts of life with courage and equanimity."

[Purse 1925:75]

Purse played a crucial role in introducing to the blind world the "sighted view" which enabled the blind to consider how they looked in the eyes of the sighted majority and made them aware of the difference in productive capacity between the blind and the sighted. It appeared that this "sighted view" on work and equality gradually became prevalent among the newly-emerging class of the blind. Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s, conflict within the blind world emerged out of differences in opinion regarding 'equality at work', and this conflict considerably affected the political activity of the National League during this period.

In short, even after 1920 when the first Blind Persons Act was implemented, the National League of the Blind continued to demand the eradication of charities and direct statutory provisions for the blind. However, as a result of the implementation of the Blind Persons Act 1920, the statutory and voluntary partnership had become so firmly established by the end of the 1920s that it was no longer likely that the National League's voice would prevail. Moreover, during this period, a new view of 'equality at work' emerged among blind people with higher education. Unlike the members of the National League, this new class of the blind wished not only to achieve equality in incomes but also to be "accepted as equal by the sighted majority"\_\_\_ a view which gradually came to prevail in the blind world in the context of the postwar Welfare State.

### 3-4. The State and the Blind: The Issues of Employment after 1944

Let us now consider how far the collective identity of the blind was changed through the introduction of the postwar British Welfare State, and in particular, the impact of the changes in postwar employment policy upon the blind identity.

During the 1940s, new ideas of social policy were gradually put into practice and the foundations of the Welfare State were established. In general, the State took more direct responsibility and initiative than ever to provide benefits and services for the needy. As a result of the growth in statutory provisions which were universal and comprehensive, the specific provisions which the blind had attained since 1920 were gradually eroded. Abel examined the process by which the registered blind gradually lost their relatively advantageous position of the pre-war welfare regime. [Abel 1987:chap.7] Since the collective identity of the blind had mainly emerged from the context of sheltered workshops for the blind, the issues of employment, particularly the shift from "sheltered" to "open" employment, had a crucial impact upon the blind identity.

Although the idea of open employment for the blind originated in Armitage's attempt in the late nineteenth century to open up to the blind such new well-paid occupations as teachers of music, church organists, and pianoforte tuners, in practice, before the Second World War, those engaged in open employment had been an absolute minority and a "meritocracy" of top blind people who were "destined for good jobs in the professions" in contrast to blind workers in the workshops. [Rose 1970:29,55-7,62] The situation changed immediately after the outbreak of the second World War. The National Institute for the Blind declared in 1939 that "new fields of employment are bound to open, as the call for man-power grows". [Thomas 1957:107] During the war time, many blind people went into new

occupations, such as machine operations, shorthand-typing, and telephony. The National Institute and St. Dunstan's provided placement services through their Employment Officers. In 1941, the number of blind persons in ordinary employment of all kinds in Great Britain was about 3,000, while the number of those working in workshops or at home was about 6,200. More than thirty percent of the employed blind were employed in open industry.<sup>22</sup>

In the context of wartime demand for manpower, a large number of disabled people, including the blind, were successfully employed in ordinary industry. Based on these experiences, the Tomlinson Report proposed in 1943 a new employment policy for the disabled in general which was in favour of open employment. Subsequently, the 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act provided a "quota scheme" in order to encourage employers in open industry to take on the disabled but "employable" workforce. In general, the Tomlinson Report and the 1944 Act were largely affected by "a belief in the efficacy of rehabilitation and the potential of all disabled people to contribute positively to the economy and the war effort, and indeed, in their obligation to do so". [Sainsbury 1993:85] However, the Committee was also affected by the anxiety of employers and trade unions about the possible consequences of the open employment of disabled people. Whereas employers were worried over the economic burden which they might have to bear by employing unproductive workers, the trade unions feared that unfit disabled workers in open industry might pose a threat of 'cheap labour'. Therefore, in order to persuade both employers and trade unions to agree with the new employment schemes for disabled people, the Tomlinson Committee divided the disabled population into two categories: "those fully rehabilitated and able to take their place independently in open employment"; and those who were too severely disabled to enter open employment. The provision of sheltered employment was an alternative arrangement for the latter

---

<sup>22</sup> See, Ministry of Labour (U.K.), Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, 1962, HMSO, p.56.

group of disabled people. [Bolderson 1991:109]

Together with those suffering from cardiac disease, pulmonary tuberculosis, and mental problems, the blind were expected to be difficult in terms of the Committee's aims. Although the Tomlinson Committee recognised the possibility of open employment for the blind and favoured it wherever possible, they concluded that the majority of the employable blind would not be permanently absorbed in ordinary employment and the need for employment under sheltered conditions would therefore remain.<sup>23</sup> Based on traditional assumptions on the employment of the blind, the Tomlinson Committee did not expect the majority of the blind to be able to enter the employment field in competition with able-bodied workers, and therefore, they intended to keep the blind in sheltered employment while expecting other disabled people to return to open employment.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, although the 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act provided sheltered employment for the sighted disabled, the workshops for the blind remained a part of the "welfare" services of local authorities under the Blind Persons Act which, in 1948, was repealed and replaced by the National Assistance Act. As a result, the Ministry of Labour, though having paid grants towards local authority expenditure in respect of workshops for the blind since 1948, left the existing blind workshops in the hands of voluntary organisations and local authorities as it had been, keeping their "welfare" nature intact. In the immediate post-war period, the blind, again, occupied an unique position in employment policy for disabled people in general. This helps to explain why the Ministry of Labour set up on two occasions,

---

<sup>23</sup> See, Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Disabled Persons, 1943, pp.5-6,37.

<sup>24</sup> In the context of the Tomlinson Report, the distinction between open and sheltered employment was vital because sheltered employment "was not intended to provide a stepping-stone to open employment" but to protect "industry from disabled people who would not be productive". See, Bolderson [1991:109-10]

in 1948 and 1960, a special working party with reference only to the employment of the blind.

However, despite the pessimism of the Tomlinson Committee, "the placing of the blind in ordinary industry had developed to an extent not foreseen by the Tomlinson Committee".<sup>25</sup> The proportion of the blind working in open industry among the employed blind rose from 30 percent in 1941 to nearly 60 percent in 1960. During the same period, the proportion of the employed blind among the working-age blind population also increased from 22 percent to 33 percent.<sup>26</sup> Employment rates of blind people in 1960 were higher than 1941 and were also more likely to be in open industry. However, it is important to note that within blind welfare circles open employment appeared in the 1940s to be considered largely as an alternative for those who were neither capable nor suitable for traditional trades in workshops. For example, open employment during the war years was seen as suitable for newly blinded adults and even those who "had hitherto been officially classified as unemployable" in the workshops for the blind. This was because work in open industry, particularly light engineering, was repetitive and easier than traditional handicrafts in workshops for the blind.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the Working Party on the Employment of Blind Persons of 1951 also considered the expansion of open employment not in terms of a shift of employable blind workforce from sheltered to open employment but an extension of employment opportunities to the blind who had not been employed but considered to be employable.<sup>28</sup> In the 1940s and early 1950s, the rise of open employment meant not the decline of

---

<sup>25</sup> See, Ministry of Labour (U.K.), Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, 1962, HMSO, p.4.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.56.

<sup>27</sup> See, *ibid.* p.5, and Thomas [1957:108].

<sup>28</sup> See, Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report of the Working Party on the Employment of Blind Persons, 1951, HMSO, p.20.



sheltered employment but the greater availability of work for the blind.

It was only after the publication of the Piercy Report in 1956, which considered the employment of disabled people on an economic basis to a greater degree than the Tomlinson Report, that the government began to seek to shift the blind workforce as far as possible from sheltered to open employment. As mentioned earlier, the Tomlinson Committee originally regarded sheltered employment as a segregated and protected labour market which was completely separate from ordinary employment in competitive industry, and therefore, they expected a major part of production in sheltered workshops to be purchased by the government and public sector. The Committee insisted that the economic drawbacks caused by the existence of such a protected market had to be endured by ordinary employers and workers in competitive markets.<sup>29</sup> This idea of sheltered employment as 'a protected labour market' for disabled people seemed to be acceptable only in the context of the wartime demand for manpower and social solidarity. In the context of the peacetime economy and the rapid growth in competitive markets in the 1950s, the Piercy Committee recommended, firstly, that "as many as possible should be encouraged to graduate from sheltered workshops to work under ordinary conditions"; secondly, that "all sheltered workshops should be regarded as places of employment with as high as possible a rate of individual productivity"; and finally, that sheltered workshops should not entirely depend on public purchases but should compete in the ordinary commercial market. Furthermore, the Piercy Committee recommended that for those who were capable only of a modicum of effort and industry, and therefore, were outside the employment field, "diversionary occupations" should be provided under the

---

<sup>29</sup> See, Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Disabled Persons, 1943, pp.34-5.

welfare provisions of the National Assistance Act.<sup>30</sup>

Based on these recommendations of the Piercy Report, the provision of sheltered workshops for the blind was completely transferred from the National Assistance Act to the 1958 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act. Now, more productivity and profitability were required of workshops for the blind than before so as to prove that the nature of workshop employment of the blind was not welfare provision but an employment service. The Working Party on Workshops for the Blind was set up in 1960 to consider ways in which workshops could be more economically productive. Their report, which was published in 1962, showed that the provision of workshop employment for the blind was prohibitively costly. They stated that "it would actually have saved money to close down all the workshops while continuing to pay the blind the same wages and augmentation as before".<sup>31</sup> In order to economise on the workshops for the blind, the Working Party made three main recommendations: modernisation of management, including mechanisation; economically reasonable standards of recruitment of the workforce; incentive in the wage system, that is, a minimum wage system with some bonus payments instead of the current piece-work rate with augmentation of payments.

Thus, under the influence of the Piercy Report, the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind officially recognised for the first time sheltered employment of the blind primarily in economic, rather than charitable, terms. In consequence, the blind were eventually allowed to enter the employment field on an economic basis. The Report of the Working Party partly met the demand of the National League by providing "minimum wages" for sheltered blind

---

<sup>30</sup> See, Report of the Committee of Enquiry on the Rehabilitation, Training and Resettlement of Disabled Persons, 1956, Cmd 9883, HMSO, pp.28,49,94,96.

<sup>31</sup> See, Ministry of Labour (U.K.), Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, 1962, HMSO, p.17.

workers. At the same time, it also implemented the ideas of Ben Purse by encouraging the blind to increase the economic value of their labour. However, once they were integrated into the employment field on an equal footing with sighted people, the employment opportunities in sheltered workshops began to shrink. Between 1960 and 1974, the number of workshops for the blind in England and Wales decreased from 62 to 52. The number of workers in the workshops did not change \_\_ remaining at just under 3,000 in the same period, but "an increasing proportion of these were sighted disabled workers".<sup>32</sup> In 1986, according to a national survey of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the number of blind people in sheltered employment schemes in Great Britain can be estimated to be less than 1,100. [Bruce et al. 1991:235,244] In contrast to the decline in workshop employment, the proportion of those in open industries among employed blind adults increased because of the policy shift toward "integration" at work in the 1980s.<sup>33</sup> However, it is crucial to note that the proportion of those in employment, whether open or sheltered, among registerable blind adults under pensionable age decreased from 33 percent in 1960 to 17 percent in 1986.<sup>34</sup>

The blind identity was affected by the shift in emphasis from welfare to economic considerations regarding the employment policy for the blind after the 1960s. The

---

<sup>32</sup> See, Ministry of Labour (U.K.), Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, 1962, HMSO, pp.57,60-76; and Morgan & Makeham [1978:1]

<sup>33</sup> In the 1980s, sheltered workshops in general began to be regarded as costly, and the Sheltered Placement Scheme was developed as a cost-efficient, as well as "integrative", alternative to sheltered workshops. In 1990, the Department of Employment argued for the shift from sheltered workshops to sheltered placement in ordinary industry. See, Department of Employment (U.K.), Employment and Training for People with Disabilities, 1990, Employment Department Group, p.64.

<sup>34</sup> See, Ministry of Labour (U.K.), Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, 1962, HMSO, pp.56,60-76; and Bruce et. al. [1991:235,244]

National League of the Blind had to accept to some extent the "sighted view" on equality at work. In the late 1960s, blind workshops began to admit sighted disabled workers in order to increase productive capacity. Accordingly, as sighted disabled workers joined them, the National League changed their title to the National League of "the Blind & the Disabled". Moreover, in the context of the rise of the disabled people's movement in the 1970s, the National League helped deaf people in 1976 to establish their own organisation, the National Union of the Deaf. The "cordial" relationship between two organisations continued throughout the 1980s. [Campbell & Oliver 1996:55,76] In the 1980s, the National League also participated in the newly emerged umbrella organisation of the disability movement, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP), which was established in 1981 as the sole agency representing disabled people in Britain in order to send British delegates to the first World Congress of Disabled People's International in that year. [Campbell & Oliver 1996:75,78] In general, in the 1970s and 1980s, the National League was involved in broader issues than before under the pressure of the policy shift toward the "economic integration" of blind workshops and the shift toward the unification of disabled people's organisations and the consequent absorption into the general category of "disability".

However, the organisational identity of the National League remained based on the sense of community within the blind workshops. Michael Barret, who had been the General Secretary of the National League since 1979, recently recalled:

"Our rules have always said that we wanted to see equality in all areas of work and our object was to see opportunities in all fields including the professional ones. But our main thrust came from the (blind) workshops." [Campbell & Oliver 1996:81-2]

Despite their efforts to improve productivity and efficiency in the blind workshops, the government at last in the 1980s

lost patience with the cost of sheltered workshops and introduced alternative arrangements for sheltered workers, namely "Sheltered Placement Schemes", by which disabled people were employed under sheltered conditions in open industry. At the annual meeting in 1987 of the Trade Union Congress, Mike Barrett argued against the sheltered placement schemes:

"I spent thirty years in a sheltered workshop, who found it good employment, worth-while employment, covering skills up to very highly skilled engineering and electronic work. We fought hard to try and get some pay out of it. We enjoy the company we work in. We do not want to see it restricted or cut back purely because it costs a bit more to put a person into a workshop than to use him as cheap labour in other schemes."<sup>35</sup>

Facing the crisis, the National League could defend the blind workshops only in terms of the sense of community they generated among the blind. The collective identity of the blind has always been the core of the National League in the postwar period as it was in the earlier years.

Another quarter of the blind world was also affected by the changes in the postwar period. The growing number of blind people in open employment in the 1940s and 1950s led to the creation of their own organisation. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) was established in 1947 by those in open employment and professional occupations, such as blind lecturers. In the 1960s, they conducted a survey of the earnings of blind workers in open industry. In the 1970s, they were "deeply involved working out detailed policies" concerning the blind in association with the Disablement Income Group, the Disability Alliance, and Lord Snowdon's Working Party. Furthermore, the National Federation of the Blind had close links with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, and particularly after the mid 1970s, it "infiltrated into and took over" the executive council of the R.N.I.B. [Campbell & Oliver 1996:99] As

---

<sup>35</sup> See, Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union Congress, 1987, p.616.

well as the National League, the National Federation also participated in the BCODP movement but to a lesser extent than the former. Although they could agree with the BCODP as to the idea of "integration", they kept a distance because, they saw, the BCODP adopted confrontational style of politics and was dominated by the interests of physically disabled people. Despite their agenda for the integration of the blind into society at large, the National Federation was rather sensitive to the boundaries between different types of disabilities and kept their group identity distinct from other disabled people. In that sense, the National Federation was committed to the blind identity as much as was the National League.

In the postwar period, the blind world was considerably affected by the "sighted view on work" which had originally been introduced to the blind world by Ben Purse in the 1920s. The National Federation of the Blind may be regarded as an inheritor of the ideas of Ben Purse. They demanded "integration" on an equal basis with the sighted. However, "integration" through employment in open industry did not bring the blind incomes equal to those of the sighted, because they were more often employed in low-paid jobs than the sighted. [Reid 1975:6-7] As a result, they had to demand additional income on a basis of their blindness. In that sense, although the National Federation established their movement based on the "sighted view on work", they had to develop demands based on their blind identity. Similarly, the National League, too, gradually adopted throughout the postwar period the "sighted view on work" in order to adapt themselves to the postwar employment policy. However, in the end, blind workshops could not be integrated into the sighted economy. As a result, the National League still adhere to the collective identity of the blind while trying to extend their sense of community by membership of the disabled population in general.

In the postwar period, partly because of economic growth in the 1950s and partly because of the shift in the

employment policy for disabled people in general, blind people have increasingly been employed in open, rather than sheltered, conditions. The shift toward "integration in employment" affected the blind identity. In the context of the decline of sheltered blind workshops, the National League of the Blind was forced to take the "sighted view on equality at work" in order to adapt themselves to open competition with the sighted in the economic market. In contrast, on the basis of growing participation in open employment, the National Federation of the Blind developed a new blind identity which was compatible to the "sighted view on equality at work". However, both organisations of the blind have kept their blind identity separate both from the sighted majority and from other disabled groups throughout the postwar period.

## Summary

In Britain, blind people began to acquire their group identity in the first half of the nineteenth century, when charitable organizations started to provide them with specific services solely for "the blind". The blind themselves also participated to some extent in the creation of the blind identity through making demands for provisions upon charities from the "client's perspective" through the activities of such blind philanthropists as Gilbert and Armitage.

At the turn of the century, on the basis of the development of the blind identity and their sense of community, those working at sheltered workshops for the blind organised their own trade union, the National League of the Blind, which provided the blind with a political identity. Through participating in the legislative process leading to the Blind Persons Act 1920, the National League strengthened their collective identity while becoming aware of differences in opinion between the blind and the sighted regarding the meaning of "equality at work".

In the 1920s and 1930s, the gap between the blind and the sighted in terms of the interpretation of the nature of "equality at work" became irreconcilable. The National League of the Blind saw it as appropriate to demand wages equal to their sighted counterparts engaged in the same industries despite their differences in productive capacity.

In contrast, the sighted majority regarded the demand of the National League as unacceptable and considered it 'fair' and 'equal' to reward the blind according to the market value of their work. As the differences of opinion became obvious, some blind people began to "learn" the sighted view of equality at work. For instance, Ben Purse argued that the blind could never be "accepted as equal" by the sighted majority unless they made "equal contributions" to society.



After the second World War, this "sighted view on the equality at work" gradually prevailed in the blind world as the blind were increasingly integrated into the sighted world particularly in the employment field. However, once they were involved in open competition with their sighted counterparts, the blind were left behind. The shift to integration in employment made the blind aware of the real differences between the blind and the sighted, and this reinforced the blind identity and their sense of community persisted throughout the post war period.

Thus, it emerged that the belief in open employment among Japanese rehabilitation professionals can not be justified by the British experience. The open employment of the blind grew in postwar Britain not because it was the choice of blind people but because of the government's concerns over the increasing financial cost of sheltered workshop employment. Furthermore, the postwar growth of open employment ensured for the blind neither equal wages nor the increase in employment opportunity. What is the most important of all is the fact that sheltered blind workers in Britain sought to maintain their sheltered workshops rather than move into open employment. From blind people's viewpoint, open employment was not necessarily the ideal solution. Let us now consider common aspects of blind people's experience in Japan and Britain.

## Chapter 4 Aspects of Experience Common to Blind People in Japan and Britain

### Introduction

In the last two chapters, we have been concerned with the historical development of employment policies in Japan and Britain. The purpose of this chapter is to consider this material in terms of those experiences which Japanese and British blind people shared in common. Such common experiences may be regarded as the outcome of blindness itself, and therefore as existing beyond differences between two countries in terms of the socio-historical context of the policy development. It is this shared experience which will provide a framework for the analysis of the field survey in Japan.

Focusing upon aspects of the policy development common to Japan and Britain, the first section aims to define the essential nature of their employment problem. In the second section, in what aspects blind people in two countries shared their particular views on work and equality through their political activities will be explored.

#### 4-1 Common Aspects of the Development of Employment Policies for the Blind in Japan and Britain

In what aspects did blind people in Japan and Britain share common experiences in the course of the development of employment policies?

The historical survey of employment policies in two countries exposed similarities and differences, among which the following three coincidences are particularly important for the present study. First of all, the close relationship between work and the blind identity emerged in the case of Britain, as well as Japan. The strong sense of community among the blind was not necessarily unique nor peculiar to Japan.<sup>1</sup> The blind identity emerged and developed in both countries around the issue of work and employment. While in Japan the collective identity of the blind emerged out of particular occupations which were reserved exclusively for the blind, it arose in Britain from segregated workshops for the blind which were protected from economic competition. It suggests that blind people may find more often in the employment field than any other aspect of life barriers which separate them from sighted people and make them aware of their distinctiveness.

The second coincidence which emerged from the study was the fact that, both in Japan and Britain, blind people were gradually integrated into the sighted majority in terms of employment after the second World War. However, the

---

<sup>1</sup> It must be noted, however, that there were internal divisions within the blind world. In Britain, in particular, there had always been a class division among the blind, for example, a division between the National Institute for the Blind representing the middle-class blind, on the one hand, and the National League of the Blind representing the working-class blind on the other. As a parallel to the class division of British society which penetrated into the blind world in Britain, an Israeli anthropologist, Deshen, discovered a deep gulf between those with "Ashkenazic" origins and those with "Middle Eastern" origins among blind Israelis. [Deshen 1992:127]

integration in employment occurred in both countries neither because of humanitarian concerns nor pressure from blind people but because traditional protected employment was eroded in the postwar period. In Britain, the cost of providing sheltered workshop employment for the blind had traditionally been justified by a philanthropic approach. Even the Tomlinson Committee took the view that the cost of sheltered workshop employment must be endured by society at large. However, after the mid 1950s, such an idea became less and less acceptable as the cost of sheltered workshops was found to be intolerably high. As a result, sheltered workshop employment for the blind was gradually displaced by open employment in ordinary workplaces where blind workers were expected to work in competition with sighted workers.

While the sheltered workshops for the blind in Britain were eroded largely due to economic considerations, the traditionally reserved occupations for the blind in Japan were invaded by sighted people mainly because of the postwar reorganisation of health services under the dominance of Western medicine. Although the traditionally reserved occupations had already been opened up to the sighted by the Meiji government in 1871, it was only after the second World War that such reserved occupations as anma massage and acupuncture were invaded by the sighted to any large degree.

Before the second World War, despite the political and academic dominance of Western medicine, Japanese traditional health services, including anma massage and acupuncture, had prevailed among the Japanese working class as cheaper and more familiar alternatives to Western medicine. However, the postwar growth of public schemes of health insurance brought the working class an easier access to Western medicine. As a result, in the late 1960s, it became less costly for insured patients to see physicians rather than to see masseurs and acupuncturists. Then, even those with minor problems, such as, flu and fatigue, who had in the past often seen masseurs and acupuncturists, began to see physicians. Under such circumstances, running after patients, the practitioners in Japanese traditional health

services, including masseurs and acupuncturists, began to seek new roles as 'para-medical' or 'co-medical' staff within the framework of Western medicine. In this context of the 'Westernisation' of Japanese traditional health services in the postwar period, the blind gradually lost out in their competition for employment in their traditionally reserved occupations of anma massage and acupuncture against sighted practitioners who could more easily perform the para-medical role. Thus, both in Britain and Japan, the postwar decline in protected employment was largely caused by factors which were external to blind people. In that sense, the blind were 'forced' to integrate into the sighted world in the employment field.

Thirdly, despite the shift to integration in employment, blind people in both countries maintained their identity in separation from both the sighted and other disabled people. Regarding their relationship with the sighted, in both countries, that became closer in the postwar period than had been the case in the past. With the growth of quota employment, more and more people settled in the sighted world instead of the blind world.<sup>2</sup> Even

---

<sup>2</sup> However, it must be noted that despite the government's efforts quota employment of the blind, except for those with good residual vision, did not develop until the 1990s in Japan to the same degree as in Britain. This is firstly because the income level of masseurs and acupuncturists was higher than the low wages earned by disabled people generally in the early years of quota employment when they usually found themselves restricted to jobs which small-scale manufacturers were willing to offer. Secondly, because the Japanese language consists of fifty Japanese characters which are phonogram and more than two thousand Chinese characters which are ideograms, the postwar development of information technology could not bring the blind the new opportunity of employment in Japan to the same degree as easily as in Britain. For example, Japanese blind people are still able neither to read nor to produce on their own, without the help of sighted assistants, ordinary documents which are used in the sighted world, even if they can use modern instruments, such as typewriters, word-processors, optacons (optical-electronic instruments which describe the shape of a letter by dots) and electronic scanners. These modern instruments have been in great use by blind students and professionals in Britain throughout the postwar period. However, that is not the case in Japan, since these instruments are unable to

those engaged in protected employment collaborated with the sighted at work. For example, in Japan, some blind masseurs and acupuncturists established partnerships with their sighted counterparts and physicians in order to apply the skills of massage and acupuncture to medical practice. Similarly, in Britain, too, sheltered blind workers collaborated with sighted managers and sighted disabled workers in order to increase the output value of their workshops. Regarding their relationship with other disabled people, both countries experienced the growth of disabled people's movements in the 1970s and 1980s, which encouraged a wide range of disabled people to merge into the general category of 'disability'. In Britain, although the organisations of the blind were considerably involved in the disability rights movement, they kept their organisational identity separate from other organisations of the disabled. In Japan, partly because of the absence of a unified national organisation representing all disabled people<sup>3</sup>, the

---

accommodate Chinese characters.

<sup>3</sup> The political unification of disabled people's movements has not yet progressed to the same degree in Japan as has been the case in Britain. The Japanese disability rights movement emerged around 1970 among those with congenital severe physical handicap, for example, *Aoi Shiba no Kai*, the 'Blue Grass Club'. The movement began to be unified in the mid 1970s, but it split into two political polarities: the old and the new left. As a result, the disability rights movement was organised under two national umbrella organisations. Thus, on the one hand, the National Congress of Disabled People's Liberation Movement, *zenkoku shōgaisha kaihō undō renraku kaigi*, which opposed the segregation of disabled people and the hegemony of able-bodied people in society, was influenced by the new left radicalism and supported by the radical left of the Japan Socialist Party, on the one hand. On the other, the National Council for the Promotion of the Incomes and Rights of Disabled People, *shōgaisha no sekatsu to kenri o mamoru zenkoku renraku kyōgikai*, which denied the radicalism of the National Congress and demanded that central and local governments should provide more benefits for disabled people in cash and in kind, as well as employment opportunities, was associated with the old left and supported by the Japan Communist Party. Because of the growing polarity of the disability lobby between the old and the new left throughout the 1970s, the existing organisations which were specifically organised for a particular group of disabled people joined neither the National Congress nor the

participation of the blind in the disability rights movement occurred only at an individual level. There has to date been no organisation of the blind which formally affiliates with the disability rights movement. Thus, both in Japan and Britain, blind people cannot be regarded as being integrated into the sighted majority nor being fully absorbed into the disabled population in general despite the current forces toward integration and the rise of the disability rights movement.

Thus, both in Japan and Britain, the policy shift to integration in the employment field was caused by the erosion of protected employment rather than the growth of open employment. The protected employment was eroded not because it was the choice of the blind but because of the factors which were external to the blind. In fact, despite the postwar shift to integration in the employment field, blind people in both countries maintained their identity in separation from the sighted majority. The strength and persistence of the blind identity in the employment field suggest that the essential nature of their employment problem was the difference between the blind and the sighted which always arose regardless of whether they were employed in segregated or integrated settings and whatever job they engaged in. In the next section, drawing on blind people's views on work and equality, two distinct ways in which blind people responded to the difference arising in the employment field will be explored.

---

National Council. Thus in Japan, although a disabled people's movement emerged in the 1970s under the general category of disability, it did not grow so much as to absorb the existing specialist lobby of the blind.

#### 4-2 Blind People's Views on Work and Equality

In what aspects did Japanese and British blind people share common views on work and equality? According to the historical analysis presented in the previous chapters, blind people's views on work and equality can be classified into two categories: the "separatist idea" and the "integrationist idea". While the former represents the belief that it is not fair to force the blind to compete with the sighted at work, the latter reflects the opinion that it is necessary for the blind to contribute as much as the sighted to the society at large in order to be accepted as equal.

The "separatist idea" assumes that the blind live in their own world which is parallel to the sighted world, and therefore, considers equality at work in terms of the fair distribution of work between these two parallel worlds. For instance, Japanese blind masseurs regarded it as rightful to demand that government should ban sighted masseurs because the occupations of anma and acupuncture traditionally belonged to the blind world. It was not the sighted but the blind who invented the Japanese method of acupuncture and established the foundation of the professions in Japan.<sup>4</sup> In that sense, anma and acupuncture were the cultural property of the blind world. From their viewpoint, sighted masseurs and acupuncturists were the

---

<sup>4</sup> Although the skills of anma and acupuncture originally came from China to Japan around the eighth century, the original Chinese anma and acupuncture had quickly declined after Chinese herbal medicines became popular in Japan. In the late seventeenth century, *Waichi Sugiyama*, a blind acupuncturist who later became a head of the blind guild, reformed the occupations of anma and acupuncture which had previously been disregarded by the sighted. Sugiyama invented new methods of acupuncture which were suitable for blind practitioners. Compared with the original Chinese methods, he used shorter needles with a tube which helped sightless practitioners to prick the skin easily. It was not the original Chinese acupuncture but Sugiyama's "blind acupuncture" that became increasingly popular in Japan in the eighteenth century, and it was copied by sighted practitioners.



"invaders" from the outside world who stole the property of the blind world.

As Japanese blind masseurs considered that the sighted were plundering the blind world, sheltered blind workers in Britain felt themselves being patronised and exploited by sighted philanthropists. British blind workers considered equality at work in terms of the "fair" distribution of wages between the sheltered workshops and normal industries.

Although the National League of the Blind had initially demanded the current piece-work rate of wages in the trades in which they engaged, they later argued that it was unfair to apply the current piece-work rates to blind workers who could work only at slower speeds than the average sighted worker. Blind workers had to compete with their sighted counterparts under the current piece-work rates which had no consideration for the disadvantages caused by their blindness. Therefore, by demanding "a minimum living wage", the National League claimed not "equal pay for equal work" but "higher rates of pay for the work done by the blind". Such a dual wage system necessarily presupposed that the sheltered blind workshops were situated in a parallel world which was totally separated from the ordinary economic market in the sighted world. Both in Japan and Britain, the "separatist idea" emphasised that it was fair for the blind to be treated "differently" and "separately" from the sighted in the employment field on a basis of the difference between the blind and the sighted. It was this recognition of the difference which encouraged the blind to develop their separate identity in the employment field.

In contrast to the "separatist idea", the "integrationist idea" is more acceptable to the sighted majority because it considers equality at work in the context of the sighted world where the blind are assumed to live as a minority. For example, in Britain, Purse argued that "loss of sight and other disabilities did not preclude the individual from discharging obligations and undertaking duties common to the rest of mankind." [Purse 1925:17]

Similarly, the prominent leaders of the Japanese blind lobby in the 1920s and 1930s insisted that the blind could, and had to, participate in and contribute to society by undertaking the same duties as the sighted. For instance, the blind in Japan participated in the universal male franchise movement in the early 1920s. Subsequently in the late 1930s and the early 1940s, they contributed to Japan's war effort by raising money within the blind world for a fighting aircraft, by caring for and rehabilitating the war blind, and by manufacturing munitions in sheltered workshops. So strong was the commitment to contribution and obligation that, like Ben Purse, *Takeo Iwahashi*, a prominent figure of the Japanese blind lobby in the 1930s and 1940s, argued that "the blind had to take their fair share in contributing to the society in order to be accepted as equal".<sup>5</sup> [Iwahashi 1932:224]

However, it must be emphasised that both Purse and Iwahashi were fully aware of the difference between the blind and the sighted. It was obvious to Purse that blind workers could never achieve the same standard of productive capacity as their sighted counterparts. Therefore, although he hoped that future developments in technology would reduce the productivity gap between the blind and the sighted, Purse concluded that the blind should remain under the protection of philanthropy until their productive capacity reached the standard of an average sighted worker. While Purse in Britain was bothered about the low level of

---

<sup>5</sup> Iwahashi had a personal link with the British blind lobby, the National Institute for the Blind in particular. Iwahashi became suddenly blind at the age of nineteen years when studying engineering at an university in Tokyo. After losing his sight he began to study English literature and went to Edinburgh University in the late 1920s to take his study further. While staying at Edinburgh for three years, he became acquainted with the activities of the N.I.B. and the statutory provisions under the Blind Persons Act. After he came back to Japan, he wrote a book about the voluntary and statutory services for the blind in Britain. Subsequently in 1935, he established the Japan Light House, Japan's first specialist charity for the blind, which was a carbon copy of the National Institute for the Blind in Britain.

productive capacity of the blind, Iwahashi in Japan was concerned about the decline in the social status of the blind. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, blind acupuncturists had served feudal lords and had been highly regarded in Japanese society. However, after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when the government officially adopted Western medicine instead of traditional Japanese medicine, the physicians of Western medicine began to serve the upper-class of the society. Losing their upper-class patients, anma and acupuncture became cheap alternatives to Western medicine for the urban working-class and the rural population. The decline of the professional status of acupuncturists affected the blind world as a whole. It was in this context that the leaders of the blind lobby in the 1920s and 1930s organised a campaign publicising the "blind culture" and the significant contributions of the blind in the past.<sup>6</sup>

The campaign for the promotion of social status of the blind in the 1920s and 1930s in Japan suggests that equal productive capacity does not necessarily ensure for the blind equal status. In Britain, Purse considered that only if the blind could achieve the same level of productive capacity as sighted workers would they be treated as equal in the society. However, in Japan, although blind masseurs

---

<sup>6</sup> For example, Iwahashi invited Helen Keller to Japan in order to lead a campaign to promote the welfare of the blind. He also held in 1940 an exhibition devoted to the 'blind culture', where blind musicians and poets performed the classic pieces which had been created by the elite blind in the past. Moreover, the place of honour was reserved for the works of blind scholars and writers. In the same year, 1940, a similar exhibition of 'blind culture' was held at a large department store in Tokyo by the Central Association for the Welfare of the Blind. The draft of the Tokyo exhibition of the 'blind culture' set out its aims as follows:  
"Everywhere in the world, including Japan, the blind have in the past made a great contribution to our society in the fields of science, literature, arts and politics. --- However, it is a matter of regret that the general public in Japan today tend to consider the blind as 'helpless' and 'dependent', and to ignore their potential abilities. In the context of the wartime labour shortage, it is crucial for the nation to utilise fully its potential manpower." [Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai 1940:99]

and acupuncturists could compete with their sighted counterparts on an equal footing, they had to prove their competence in the wider range of work and activities. The Japanese blind felt that it was not sufficient to show that the blind could perform particular jobs as fully as the sighted. They considered that in order to promote the status of the blind "as a whole" some of them had to engage in the highly regarded activities among the sighted, for example, the war blind engaged in the manufacture of munitions in wartime. This point suggests that not only "separatists" but also "integrationists" regarded the blind not as individuals but as a group. Indeed, the "parallel worlds" perspective was shared both by "separatists" and "integrationists" as well. Both Purse and Iwahashi had no doubt about the collective identity of the blind. They had never regarded themselves as "the same" as the sighted. While Purse found the blind different from the sighted in terms of productive capacity in industry, Iwahashi discovered the difference in terms of a wider sense of social contribution. In that sense, like "separatists", "integrationists" also recognised the fundamental difference between the blind and the sighted, and therefore, need to protect the blind community from the sighted world.

What differentiated the separatists and the integrationists was a difference in opinion as to how to protect their blind world. Separatists conceived that the blind world could be prosperous by being separated from the sighted world. In contrast, integrationists sought to protect the blind world within the wider framework of the sighted world.<sup>7</sup> In that sense, the blind "integrationists" in the 1920s and 1930s both in Britain and Japan were significantly different from the "integrationists" of the 1980s. While the latter sought to integrate disabled people individually into the mainstream society, such blind integrationists as Purse and Iwahashi wanted to see the blind world as a whole integrated into the sighted society

---

<sup>7</sup> Both Purse and Iwahashi demanded protection for the employment of blind people in integrated settings.

without losing its solidarity. From blind people's viewpoint, it was impossible to assimilate successfully into the sighted world, and therefore, the protection of their own community was seen as necessary not only by the separatists but also by the integrationists as well.

Thus, it became evident that blind people in both countries responded in two distinct ways to the difference between the blind and the sighted which arose primarily in the employment field. While some people demanded separation and preferential treatment in the employment field on the basis of the difference, others considered that such separation would let the blind world fall into a decline, and therefore, sought the way to protect the blind world within the sighted world. However, both separatists and integrationists agreed that the protection of the blind community is essential to success in their employment.

## Summary

The historical analysis of aspects of experience which were common to both Japanese and British blind people resulted in the development of three hypotheses. Firstly, given that the difference between the blind and the sighted always arose primarily in the employment field, it can be presumed that there were barriers which separated the blind from the sighted regardless of whether they were in protected or ordinary employment and whatever work they engaged in. Secondly, it can be assumed that in response to these barriers blind people developed their particular views on work and equality which differentiated themselves from the sighted majority. Finally, these views could be classified into those of the separatists and the integrationists. Although there was conflict between these two groups as to whether the blind world should be protected "outside" or "within" the sighted world, both groups shared a strong sense of commitment to the blind community on the basis of the recognition of the fundamental difference between the blind and the sighted.

Since these three hypotheses derived from the common characteristics of blind people's historical experience in two different societies, they may be regarded as part of the essential nature of blindness in the employment field. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to design the field survey so as to test these hypotheses against the experience of blind individuals. What kind of barriers do Japanese blind people currently face at work? How do they develop their particular views of work on the basis of their experience of barriers? In what ways do separatist and integrationist ideas co-exist in practice among Japanese blind people?

## Chapter 5 The Traditional World of Work:

### Blind Masseurs and Acupuncturists at Work

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the accounts of individual experiences of 20 blind people engaged in the occupations of massage and acupuncture will be presented based on the in-depth interviews. Together with the individual accounts of blind masseurs and acupuncturists, the results of a postal survey which involved 100 blind masseurs and acupuncturists will be presented so as to provide a general picture of these occupations.

Blind masseurs and acupuncturists currently work under a variety of employment conditions. Some work alone at home, while others work with colleagues at massage parlours or in physician's surgeries. Some work on a piece-work rate, while others have contract wages. However, the majority of blind masseurs and acupuncturists work in the traditional way. They work either at their own home or massage parlours on a piece-work rate. Recently, an increasing number of people have begun to work at physician's surgeries and small hospitals often based on fixed minimum wages with bonus payments. In practice, as will be described in this chapter, the employment conditions at physician's surgeries and small hospitals do not differ from those at traditional massage parlours in terms of job security and remuneration. Therefore, except for "quota" masseurs, the accounts of all masseurs and acupuncturists will be discussed in this chapter regardless of whether they work at home, at massage parlours, physician's surgeries, or small hospitals. The accounts of "quota" masseurs will be described in Chapter Six, together with those engaged in "sighted" occupations as telephonists and office clerks, since the quota masseurs work under the same conditions as those engaged in sighted occupations. Their employment condition is significantly different from that of the majority of masseurs.

The present field survey was primarily designed in order to consider possible policy options in response to the current decline of blind masseurs and acupuncturists in Japan. For this purpose, it was necessary to investigate the current situation of those people. Since this was the first survey of Japanese blind masseurs and acupuncturists, little pre-existing information was available about their work, and much had to be done to remedy this situation. The first section is concerned with how people chose these particular occupations. In the second section, the advantages of engaging in these occupations will be explored. In the last section, the problems which blind masseurs and acupuncturists are currently facing at work will be discussed.



5-1. Negative Choices: Why do they become masseurs and acupuncturists?

In general, becoming a masseur or an acupuncturist is not a matter of choice for many visually impaired people in Japan. It is the natural course of events for them to go to blind schools and move to those occupations. In particular, this is especially the case for adventitiously visually impaired adults who have already had a career as a sighted worker. Ichiro<sup>1</sup>, a male acupuncturist aged 45 years, using Braille and being self-employed, had lost his previous job at the age of 31 years because of visual impairment.

He explained:

"When I started to work at a paper mill at the age of 18 years, the employer told me to see an ophthalmologist since my sight was considerably lower than that of an average worker. The ophthalmologist told me that he was unable to improve my sight. After I had worked for thirteen years at the paper mill, the employer fired me when I became unable to fill slips. I sought the advice of a social worker at my local city council. He suggested that I should learn Braille, and go to a blind school to get a training in massage and acupuncture. The right thing I did was go to a rehabilitation centre to learn Braille, and then, I went to a blind school."

This is a typical example of the experience of people who lose their jobs as sighted people after they lose their sight.

Masahiro, aged 37 years, a partially sighted self-employed masseur, had worked as a machine operator in civil engineering before losing his sight through a traffic

---

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the fictitious names of those involved the interview, the names which end with the letters 'ro' are male names while those with 'ko' are female names. For instance, "Ichiro" is a man, while "Hanako" is a woman.

accident.

He said:

"After the accident, it took a week for me to regain consciousness. My family told me that I should think it better to lose my sight rather than lose my life. The parents of my wife pushed her to leave me since she was young enough to marry someone else. I agreed to our divorce since I was not sure whether I could earn a living for my family. So, soon after leaving a hospital, I decided to go to a blind school since a social worker told me that I could work as a masseur after I spent three years there."

For those who lost their sight suddenly, visual impairment fundamentally disrupts their way of life. In particular, the loss of earning capacity causes drastic changes in life style. Therefore, they come to blind schools in order not only to regain their earning capacity but also to re-establish their own life on a new basis. At that point they are not bothered about the kind of work which is available. The only objective is to find any sort of job.

Similarly, those who lost their sight gradually enjoyed little choice regarding their employment.

Jiro, a Braille user aged 48 years, who had quit his previous job at the age of 33 because of visual impairment said:

"In my late twenties I felt there was something wrong with my eyes. I went to see an ophthalmologist, who said that I would lose my sight. At that time I was working at a stove factory. I really worried whether I would be fired because of visual impairment. There was a 'chivalrous' boss. He gave me a job even after I became nearly blind. The job was to put oil containers on a conveyor belt. That job normally needed two workers, but I made it by myself alone. I worked very hard because I needed to prove my capability."

Saburo, a male acupuncturist aged 48 years, using Braille and employing a few masseurs, had run a small-scale turnery

for ten years before he went to a blind school. He explained:

"From childhood I could not see well in darkness, but there was no problem during daytime. However, my eyes became worse and worse after I established my own turnery business at the age of twenty eight. However, I continued to run my business even after I became unable to see the measurement made by callipers. I concealed my visual impairment from my clients. I had to make a deal with clients without knowing the details of the job since I could not see a draft. After coming back home, I inked the pencil on the draft so that I could see it. One day, one of my clients said, 'You can't see the draft, can you?'. It was the time to close my business. I decided to come to a blind school in order to be a masseur since I had to find any other job which a blind man can do."

Both Jiro and Saburo had made an enormous effort to hold their previous jobs despite their visual impairment. Therefore, once they had given up their jobs, they tended to regard the idea of open employment for blind people as impracticable. Their own experience suggested that the only work which was practicable for blind people was in the field of massage and acupuncture. Thus, when they decided to go to blind schools, adventitiously visually impaired people normally identified themselves with "the blind".

Although adventitiously visually impaired adults come to blind schools with the clear intention of becoming masseurs and acupuncturists, congenitally visually impaired children and youths had no such a clear plan regarding their future employment when they entered the blind schools. In contrast, therefore, they were often hesitant about becoming masseurs and acupuncturists.

Masako, a masseuse aged 32 years, reading normal print and being self-employed, had received all her education for 12 years at a blind school. She said:

"My family moved to a town from the countryside when I was

four years old in order to send me to a blind school. When I was around 13 years old, I began to think about my future.

I wished to run a flower shop. It was disappointing for a young girl to admit that there was nothing other than massage and acupuncture. Later, at around the age of 16, I could see the reality, and I decided to become a masseuse."

In general, those who have attended blind schools from childhood regard anma massage and acupuncture as designated work for 'the blind' who have no residual vision.

Therefore, especially those with good residual vision, such as Masako, wish to choose other kinds of work.

Fumihiro, a partially sighted teacher of massage and acupuncture aged 38 years, recalled his school days at a blind school.

"My parents took me both to a blind school and a sighted primary school when I was six years old. I made my own choice and went to the blind school. At the sighted school I was left alone in a classroom when sighted children went out to a play ground. I could not follow my sighted peers.

At the blind school everybody was sitting in a classroom all the time, so I could chat with them. I had been happy at the blind school until I became an adolescent. When I was around 14 years old, I started thinking about my future.

I didn't want to do massage and acupuncture, since these were jobs for 'the blind'. I didn't want to be part of 'the blind'. Moreover, I became ashamed of attending a blind school. I decided to go to a sighted university instead of taking the course of massage and acupuncture at the blind school. I expected that the university would give me the opportunity for some other form of employment other than massage and acupuncture. And also, I expected that attendance at the university would release me from the sense of inferiority. However, I failed the entrance exam to the university. So, I reluctantly took the course for massage and acupuncture at the blind school."

Even if they have attended blind schools from their

childhood, those who have sufficiently good residual vision to read and write ordinary print, such as Fumihiro, tend to seek occupations other than massage and acupuncture, since these appear to them to be designated jobs specifically for the 'totally blind'. In general, at blind schools, partially sighted students who use ordinary print carefully distinguish themselves from those who use Braille.

However, it is not only those with good residual vision but also those with no sight as well who hesitate to become masseurs and acupuncturists.

Shiro, a teacher of anma massage and acupuncture, who had been totally blind since his infancy and had received all his education at a blind school, said:

"I hated the jobs of massage and acupuncture, because I felt it disgusting to touch the bodies of other people. But, at the same time, I knew massage and acupuncture were the most secure jobs for the blind. There was a dilemma between money and aspiration. At first, I took a training course in piano tuning, but later changed to the course of massage and acupuncture since job opportunities were very scarce in piano tuning."

Aspects of the nature of work in the field of massage and acupuncture, such as having to touch the naked body, unstable incomes, and long working hours, often had the effect of discouraging younger people from applying for such occupations.

There is another reason why many young blind people do not want to become masseurs and acupuncturists.

Haruko, a totally blind housewife aged 40 years, had received all her education at a blind school and had worked for 16 years as a masseuse before she married a masseur, explained:

"I went to a blind school when I was four years old. From my childhood, I knew the blind should become masseurs. My

parents said, 'You should be a masseuse because you went to a blind school'. All graduates of the blind school were working as masseurs. But I wanted to do some other job. I hated the word 'anma' (massage). When people said 'anma', they looked down on blind people. Nor did I like the idea that we had to do 'anma' because we had no sight. I tried to apply for a music course when I was 16 years old. However, since the course was run by another blind school the teachers of my local blind school strongly suggested that I should apply for a massage course at their school. Anyway, the teachers had nothing but massage in their mind. I could not insist on my own idea. It was very difficult to resist the notion that blind children should become masseurs, since the idea was implanted in us from our childhood. At the interview for admission to the massage course at the blind school, a teacher asked me why I chose the job of massage and acupuncture. I replied that there was nothing else to choose. If there is something else I still want to try some other job."

The stigma attached to the job of anma massage discourages young blind persons from becoming masseurs, and they think that the stigma derives from the association between blindness and the occupation of anma massage. This point may explain the reason why the blind lobby has accepted to some extent the increase of the number of sighted masseurs. It is possible that the growth in the number of sighted masseurs may reduce the stigma attached to the occupation and raise the status of blind masseurs.

As it was, there were very few blind people who became masseurs or acupuncturists without hesitation and reluctance. None of the people involved in the present study actually chose this occupation positively. Their choice of the occupation was always more or less negative: they engaged in it largely because there was no feasible alternative. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that the decision to become a masseur is almost identical with the acceptance of the blind identity. Many people identified

themselves with 'the blind' for the first time in their lives when they decided to become 'masseurs'.

5-2. Positive Aspects: Why do they continue to be masseurs and acupuncturists?

Although they engage rather reluctantly in the occupations of massage and acupuncture, there are many blind masseurs and acupuncturists who are satisfied with their current employment.

Satisfaction in the first instance derives from the security of the job. It is commonly acknowledged that the job of anma massage is the most secure job available to blind people.

Shiro, as mentioned earlier, who had intended to become a piano tuner and changed his mind in order to be a masseur, said,

"I and my parents thought I could get along somehow if I was a masseur."

Kikuko, aged 33 years, a self-employed masseuse, who had previously worked at a bank as a telephonist, said,

"I gave up my job at the bank because it was too busy for me. My residual vision was not good enough to operate the switchboard as quickly as sighted telephonists did. The bank didn't adjust the switchboard for visually impaired telephonists. Moreover, my sighted colleagues had to deal with several jobs other than switching telephones. Although the employer told me I didn't need to do those extra jobs, I found myself less productive than my sighted colleagues. I felt that I was a 'burden' on them. I quitted the bank and chose to become a masseuse. I considered that the massage licence would secure my employment since a masseuse could work by herself without the help of sighted colleagues."

The second source of job satisfaction is the level of earnings. Based on the present postal survey of 100 blind masseurs and acupuncturists, Table 5-1 shows the weekly



earnings of blind masseurs and acupuncturists who were either self-employed or employed by traditional massage parlours.

Table 5.1 Weekly earnings of blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture in 1993	
Under 37,500 yen	23%
37,500 yen to 50,000 yen	30%
50,000 yen to 62,500 yen	16%
62,500 yen to 75,000 yen	17%
75,000 yen to 100,000 yen	6%
Over 100,000 yen	8%
Total	100%
Base (Number of respondents)	100

While the 1991 official survey<sup>2</sup> of disabled people in general suggests that 67% of visually impaired people in work earned less than 37,500 yen per week, the present postal survey of blind masseurs and acupuncturists shows that only a quarter of them fell into this category. Moreover, nearly a half (47%) of the traditional masseurs and acupuncturists earned more than 50,000 yen per week, which was slightly higher than the average contract wage of sighted workers at small-scale firms with less than five employees, where average earnings amounted to 48,500 yen per week in 1993.

It is not impossible for visually impaired masseurs and acupuncturists to earn more than the average wage of sighted workers in general. In particular, in the case of young skilful masseuse, their earnings may be higher than those of

---

<sup>2</sup> *Koseisho Shakaikyoku Koseika* (Rehabilitation Department, Social Administration Bureau, the Ministry of Health and Welfare), *Nihon no Shintai Shogaisha: Heisei 3nen Shintai Shogaisha Jittai Chosa Hokoku* (Disabled People in Japan: The Report of the 1991 Survey of Disabled People), 1994, Daiichi Hoki.

average young female workers at ordinary firms.

Natsuko, a masseuse aged 29 years, working at a massage parlour, said,

"I can earn around 50,000 yen per week. I hear that the wage of telephonists is rather lower than my earnings."

Mariko, aged 25 years, currently working as a 'quota' masseuse in a middle-scale firm, who had previously worked at a traditional massage parlour, said:

"After leaving a blind school, I worked for two years at a massage parlour, and later, I applied for my current job under the quota employment scheme. If you think about money, it's better to work as a 'parlour' masseuse rather than a 'quota' masseuse."

The average contract weekly wage of female workers with twelve years education at firms with 10 to 99 employees was 46,500 yen per week in 1993. Thus, largely because of the low wages of women in general in Japanese firms, it is possible for blind masseuse to earn more than the average wage of sighted women. Moreover, it is also likely that blind young women can earn more at traditional massage parlours rather than by working in ordinary firms as telephonists or 'quota' masseuses.

However, in general, the level of earnings of traditional masseurs and acupuncturists is not high enough to explain why many blind people continue to stay in the traditional world of massage and acupuncture despite their initial reluctance. Part of the explanation for their job satisfaction comes from the sense of self-independence. For blind youths, it is easier to gain entry into the traditional job of massage than any other.

Goro, aged 28 years, who had received all his education at a blind school, said:

"When I was at school, teachers encouraged me to study hard in order to be a teacher of massage and acupuncture at blind schools. In order to be a teacher I had to spend two more

years as a student in Tokyo. I couldn't afford that. In stead, I wanted to earn my living as soon as possible. I had no parents. I was dependent on my grandma who was very old. I was in hurry to be independent."

The sense of self-independence is also crucial for blind adults as well.

Saburo, aged 48 years, who had closed his own turnery at 38 years of age because of his visual impairment, said, "After I closed my business, I went to a blind school in order to become a masseur. Our family was dependent on *seikatsu-hogo* (public assistance) and the part-time job of my wife. I hated being 'dependent'. As soon as I attended the blind school, I began to work as a masseur without the licence.

"I think the blind should not depend on 'welfare'. A system of disability pensions or public assistance would make people easygoing, drinking, eating and singing everyday. If you don't have anything you have to work hard.

"If the blind want to be recognised as equal to the sighted, we have to earn our living by ourselves without depending on welfare payments. The blind may be able to play a guitar better than the sighted. The sighted may be impressed by a blind guitarist. But, in order to gain a full membership in society, the blind have to do the same thing as the sighted do, such as, earning their own living."

Rokuro, aged 39 years, an employed masseur working at a small medical clinic, said,

"I like work. I don't want to be totally dependent on disability pensions. Well, in the past, I supported the blind lobby which demanded the increase of disability pensions so as to maintain ourselves without earnings from work. But, if we are unemployed, we don't look normal. We can't be recognised as equal to the sighted. Being unemployed and dependent on welfare benefits, it's impossible for us to be distinguished from the homeless."

The effect of the desire for independence and the fear of the stigma of dependency encourage blind people to continue to be masseurs.

Another reason for job satisfaction derives from the sense of being relied upon by somebody else, for example, sighted clients.

Jiro, aged 48 years, a self-employed masseur, said:

"I think this job is a good job because our clients not only give us money but also express their gratitude. I'm really happy to hear my clients telling me 'Thanks to you, I feel better now'. There are few occupations which bring us money as well as the sense of being relied upon. Because my clients rely upon me I can't leave my home even if there is no client. I have to wait in all the time for urgent calls from the clients. I'm afraid my clients may develop a grudge against me if they can't find me when they suffer pains and need me."

Furthermore, unlike sighted practitioners, blind masseurs and acupuncturists often deal with mental, as well as physical, pain. Again, Jiro said,

"My clients many of whom are elderly, isolated people come to see me not only in order to receive treatment but also to talk to me about their personal lives. My blindness may encourage them to talk about their troubles. There are many problems which are more difficult than blindness. I found my blindness is an easier matter than the problems of my clients."

Jiro's wife, a sighted woman, said,

"He is entirely generous and kind to the frail. He accepts everything."

Jiro said,

"If my clients begin to feel easier mentally as well as physically, that's my pleasure. I'm quite proud of my job.

I feel that I am making a significant contribution to society."

Thus, the reliance placed on blind masseurs and acupuncturists by sighted clients encourages a sense of pride in the job and a sense of contributing the good of the wider society.

However, it must be noted that Jiro is probably one of the most successful self-employed masseurs. It is not easy for most blind masseurs and acupuncturists to enjoy the confidence of their clients to the same degree, yet it is also possible for them to be relied upon by their employers if not their clients. In the case of employed masseurs, to be understood and trusted by their employers is of tremendous importance. It is illustrated by the following account of Kim, a single man of Korean origin aged 35 years with good residual vision, who had worked as a masseur for eight years at 'Buddha', one of the largest massage parlours with 80 to 90 masseurs and masseuses at the city centre.

He explained:

"Immediately after I gained the license to massage and left the blind school I came to 'Buddha'. At that time, my father's business failed and he went bankrupt. Our family was in flight from debt collectors. I had neither money nor anywhere to stay. The Buddha provides a boarding house for the employees. That's why I chose the Buddha.

"When I left the blind school, my father gave me 100,000 yen, (which was almost the equivalent of the monthly public assistance benefit for a single household), and told me to maintain myself somehow with that money. My residual vision was not bad enough to entitle me to a disability pension. So, I came to the Buddha with nothing but 100,000 yen.

"There is no minimum wage at the Buddha. The wage is paid solely on the basis of piece-work rate. The Buddha gets 4,300 yen per client and pays us 3,000 yen. Normally, the clients call for particular practitioners. If you have a lot of clients you can earn a lot. Now, I am getting about 100,000 yen per week. I am one of the best earners at the Buddha. However, when I began to work, there were no

clients calling for me. I had no earnings for the first few months, but at least I had to earn my boarding fees. The master of the Buddha often introduced me to his clients so that I could earn my boarding fees.

"He is a nice person. Before I went to the blind school I worked for several employers. There were good men and bad men. The good employers treated me like their own son. The Buddha's master is such a person. He told me to learn various skills if I wanted to be independent. He encouraged me to go to the blind school again in order to get the licence for acupuncture. He doesn't mind whether I leave him and open my own parlour or I stay at the Buddha. I feel free to stay at the Buddha. That's why I have remained here for eight years.

"I like this job since the skill is everything. I am a Korean, you know. Clients choose the masseurs according to their skills. They don't bother about the ethnicity of masseurs. When I came to the Buddha, the master told me not to raise the question of licences to practice massage. There are many sighted masseurs operating without the licence at the Buddha. He says it is not the licence but the skill that masseurs need. I like his ideas.

"He is himself blind, and the chairman of the alumni association of our blind school, you know. Having difficulty with travelling on his own, he wants me to come with him to alumni meetings every time. It's nice to attend the meetings with the chairman.

"Thanks to the master at Buddha I have remained happy. I had never really been happy in my life. If I worked for any other master, I might have quitted. Now, I feel myself secure and happy.

"Well, I want a girlfriend, of course. I don't mind if she is blind. I don't mind either if she is Japanese although it will bring me trouble. Anyway, I want someone who understands me."

Kim's account shows that his employer understood his personal problems, such as his Korean origin, the collapse of his family and financial hardships, and helped him to

overcome these problems. By being encouraged by his employer, Kim became one of the best earners of Buddha and gained his employer's trust. In terms of income, he would be better off if he worked independently. However, he preferred working as the right-hand man of the Buddha's master.

Indeed, an important aspect of job satisfaction for many blind people was the opportunity for people to be relied upon through work. When Natsuko, a masseuse aged 29 years, could not gain the confidence of her employer, she changed her job.

She explained:

"I had my first job at a physician's surgery immediately after I left a blind school. The physician was a moody person, and frequently changed my wage and working hours. He arranged my job entirely at his convenience. I felt he was making a fool of me. Therefore, I quitted after three months.

"Then, I started work for Mr. Sato (Saburo's surname) at his parlour. I met him at a blind school when he was studying for his licence to acupuncture while running his massage parlour. He was looking for a masseuse because some female clients didn't want men to touch their bodies. But, when I left the school I thought it is better to work in a surgery rather than massage parlour.

"Mr. Sato was very different from the physician. He really needed me for his female clients. When he introduced male clients to me, he was reasonably careful because there are some odd men who wish women to touch their bodies sexually. I think Mr. Sato regards me as a professional as well as a lady. I wish to continue to work for him as long as possible since he relies on me as the only masseuse at his parlour.

"I'm not really sure about my skill. Some clients tell me that I am quite good as a female practitioner. Generally speaking, our clients prefer masseurs to masseuses since masseurs have bigger fingers and are able to press more

strongly than masseuses. But I am quite happy with my current job since the master, Mr. Sato, treats me properly."

The relationship between employers and employees is one of mutual dependence. Employers enjoy the fact that their employees depend upon them.

Saburo employs a masseuse, Natsuko, and two masseurs, all of whom graduated from the same blind school which he attended.

Saburo said,

"It is easy to start a massage parlour because you don't need a large sum of capital investment. Moreover, the blind can borrow money at low interest rates from the city council. Compared with my previous business, a turnery, it is much easier to run a massage parlour.

"When I opened my parlour, I worked hard. I wanted to make my business as profitable as possible. I thought that success in business would bring me respect and status in society. However, although it is a 'paying' business, massage is not so highly profitable as my previous business, the turnery. There is a limit on how much you can increase your profit in the business of massage. My parlour has already reached that limit. I have little business interest in massage any longer.

"At the moment, I am more interested in caring for blind youths than in business. I am employing a masseuse and two masseurs, Natsuko, Yoshihiro and Norihiro, all of whom are not yet skilful enough to be self-employed. Natsuko and Yoshihiro (both of whom are aged 29 years and have worked more than five years for Saburo) are quite good, but they are still young. They need more experiences before they can open their own parlours. Norihiro (aged 30 years) has just left the blind school. Since he graduated at university before he became blind, he talks big. But there are no clients to call him. He is all talk and no skill in massage. He makes no contribution to my business, but I don't mind."



Indeed, some employers value their relationship with blind employers beyond money, and thus rejected the idea of employing sighted masseurs and masseurs who would guarantee to raise profits.

Saburo continued:

"There was a time when I employed a sighted masseur. From the business point of view it's better to employ the sighted because they can visit clients at home. But I love to care for blind young people. I always cook a light meal for them at my parlour. By helping them to be economically independent, I can contribute to society."

Thus, Saburo was satisfied with his business not because of its profit but because his blind employees depended upon him. Indeed, he talked far more about his parlour and his blind employees than his own family, sighted wife and children. Since his parlour was open everyday, he and his employees took a day off in rotation. On his day off, Saburo did not take client or go home to his family, but stayed in his parlour with his employees.

Masahiro, a masseur aged 37 years, had tried a number of approaches to running a massage parlour, but throughout he had shown considerable commitment to the blind community, from which his wife was also drawn.

He said,

"After I was licensed to practise anma massage when I was 30 years old, I together with my wife immediately opened a parlour at city centre. I met my wife at the blind school.

She was also a masseuse and an acupuncturist. We employed several men whom we had known at the blind school. After two years we closed the parlour and moved to the health resort in countryside. The work in the health resort was much easier than that in the city, since the clients at a health resort were holiday makers and generous with payment.

I needed an easier job for my wife since she had just had a miscarriage at that time. I thought a health resort was good for her health too. We stayed there for one year.

"After we returned to Osaka, we opened another parlour in a suburban area where my parents lived. We didn't employ anybody else this time. Unlike the city centre, you don't get the clients in a suburban area to employ several masseurs. But we were quite happy for one and a half years there.

"Then, someone invited me to open a new business at a health resort in Hokkaido, (the northern island of Japan). I was excited about the invitation. There were huge resort hotels under construction at that time. I expected a considerable growth of massage business there. I closed my parlour and I left my wife for Hokkaido since she was pregnant. In Hokkaido, I intended to employ a dozen blind youths in my business. However, after six months I gave business up and returned to Osaka since I discovered that we would have no clients at all in Spring and Autumn. Holiday makers came to the health resort only in Summer and Winter.

"Then, I began to work as the manager of a parlour at the city centre in Osaka. The owner of the parlour is not a masseur but an estate agent. I am employing both sighted and blind masseurs"

Indeed, in many ways commitment to the blind community represents a major way of serving society at large, and in Masahiro's view transcends in importance making money.

Masahiro continued:

"There are many ways of making money out of massage, but making money is not the most important thing in my life. I have always wanted to work with blind youths. If I employ sighted masseurs I can make money easily. But, by helping visually impaired youths, I can be proud of contributing to society. In order to look after young totally blind masseurs and masseuses, you have to be a highly skilful masseur with wide experience. There are so many things to teach them."

Currently, while working as a masseur in the evening, Masahiro is attending blind school again in order to get a licence to practise acupuncture. At the school, he is

pleased to teach his classmates his skills in massage.<sup>3</sup>

Both Saburo and Masahiro are highly skilled masseurs and have many regular clients who rely on them. They are capable of doing well in business on their own. However, they both want to continue to work with blind youths. This is partly because they need to employ several masseurs in order to run their business on a large scale. However, it would be more profitable to employ sighted masseurs rather than blind masseurs. Although it may not be easy for blind employers to manage sighted employees, there are some blind masseurs who successfully manage a large number of sighted masseurs. For example, the master of the "Buddha", a blind masseur, employs about 80 to 90 masseurs and masseuses, about three quarters of whom are sighted. Both Saburo and Masahiro have also managed successfully sighted employees. In fact, Masahiro has worked more often with sighted masseurs than visually impaired ones, although he emphasised his wish to work with blind youths. However, the reason why he frequently changed his business was that he wanted to employ as many blind young people as possible.

It appeared to be the case that blind skilled masseurs employ blind youths out of a sense of loyalty to the blind community rather than in pursuit of their business interests. If they employ a number of blind youths, they become well known as a 'successful man' within the blind world. Moreover, it is a great honour for skilled masseurs to be asked by blind schools to employ young graduates. Normally, blind schools refer young graduates to successful alumni for employment. The blind schools, particularly the teachers of massage and acupuncture, owe much to the successful school alumni who employ blind youths and provide them with job opportunities. It is largely out of such socio-cultural considerations within the blind world rather

---

<sup>3</sup> Even after he injured his hand while playing blind baseball at the school and gave up attending classes for a year, he still continued to attend the class in massage training in order to teach his classmates.

than economic considerations, that blind skilled masseurs employ blind youths and seek to be depended upon by sectors of the blind community, such as blind schools, the teachers of massage and acupuncture, and blind school leavers.

Although the people involved in the study had initially engaged in the occupations of anma massage and acupuncture rather reluctantly, that initial reluctance was eased by the advantages of these particular occupations, for example, the availability of job opportunities, a guarantee of modest income, a sense of independence, and a sense of being relied upon by other people. In particular, it appeared to be crucial for many blind masseurs to be relied upon by others, including clients, employers and employees. By helping frail clients and young blind masseurs, skilled blind masters of massage and acupuncture could feel themselves to be 'contributing' to society.

5-3. Problems

There seem to be a number of problems for blind people who work in the traditional world of anma massage and acupuncture.

Firstly, in general, the earnings of masseuses are less than those of masseurs. Table 5-2 shows that while more than half of masseurs could earn more than 50,000 yen per week in 1993 only 22 % of masseuses earned that amount. Except for young masseuses working at massage parlours in urban areas, many masseuses earned much less than masseurs.

Table 5.2 Weekly earnings of blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by sex in 1993		
	Masseurs	Masseuses
Less than 37,500 yen	19%	42%
37,500 yen to 50,000 yen	28%	37%
50,000 yen to 62,500 yen	17%	11%
62,500 yen to 75,000 yen	19%	11%
75,000 yen to 100,000 yen	7%	--
More than 100,000 yen	10%	--
Total	100%	100%
Base (Number of respondents)	81	19

Furthermore, Table 5-3 shows that the earnings of traditional masseurs and masseuses decrease as they get older. The proportion of those who fell into the lowest earnings band, less than 25,000 yen per week, steadily increased according to their age: from 5% among those in their twenties and thirties to 27% among those in their sixties. In contrast, the proportion in the middle earnings band, from 25,000 yen to 75,000 yen per week, decreased steadily with age: from 82% among those in their twenties and thirties to 63% among those in their sixties. The proportion in the high earnings band, more than 75,000

yen per week, was about 15% among three age groups: 20s & 30s, 40s, and 50s. However, among the oldest age group, those in their sixties, only 9% earned more than 75,000 yen.

	20s+30s	40s	50s	60s
Less than 25,000 yen	5%	8%	14%	27%
25,000 to 75,000 yen	82%	77%	71%	63%
More than 75,000 yen	14%	15%	14%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base <sup>4</sup>	22	39	28	11

The low earnings of masseuses and older masseurs necessarily influenced the degree of dependence on disability pensions among visually impaired people working in the traditional world of massage and acupuncture. According to the evidence of the postal survey, 85% of those working as traditional masseurs and acupuncturists received disability pensions in 1993. (Table 5-4) However, by no means all of the people receiving pensions were dependent on them. In fact, among the people involved in the study, as many as a third were not dependent on disability pensions in any way, even though half of these actually received pensions.

In receipt of pensions	Heavily dependent	14%	85%
	Partly dependent	54%	
	In receipt but not dependent	17%	
Not in receipt of pensions		15%	
Total %		100%	
Base (Number of respondents)		98	

<sup>4</sup> Number of respondents.

Table 5-5 shows the gender difference in the degree of dependence on disability pensions among those in receipt of pensions. While the majority of masseurs (69%) were 'partly dependent' on the disability pensions, masseuses varied widely in terms of the extent to which they were dependent on pensions. It is worthy of note that all four 'heavily dependent' masseuses were self-employed, married, and having no children while all five masseuses who were 'in receipt of but not dependent of pensions' were parlour masseuses with children, two of whom were single mothers.

<u>Table 5.5</u> Degree of dependence on disability pensions among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by sex			
	Masseurs	Masseuses	All
Heavily dependent	15%	27%	17%
Partly dependent	69%	40%	64%
In receipt but not dependent	16%	33%	19%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Base (Number of respondents)	68	15	83

Table 5-6 shows clearly that blind people engaged in the occupation of massage in general become less economically self-supporting and more dependent on disability pensions as they get older.

<u>Table 5.6</u> Degree of dependence on disability pensions among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by four age groups					
Age groups	20s & 30s	40s	50s	60s	All
Heavily dependent	5%	11%	19%	36%	14%
Partly dependent	59%	47%	63%	45%	54%
Self-supporting	36%	42%	19%	18%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base (Number of respondents)	22	38	27	11	98

The low earnings of masseuses and older masseurs are largely due to the characteristics of their job. Firstly, the practitioners who have large hands are preferred by clients since they can exert a strong pressure. This is the reason why masseurs tend to have more clients than masseuses. Secondly, anma massage requires physical strength.

Masahiro said,

"After you treat one client, you become very hungry. As anma masseurs are often called 'navvies on a mat', we have to be as tough and strong as construction crews."

This explains why young physically strong masseurs earn more than older ones.

Since anma massage is a relatively suitable job for young physically strong men, those who are weak or worried about their old age wish to become acupuncturists. For example, Hidehiro, aged 29 years, who was relatively short and thin, had worked as a masseur for seven years at four massage parlours and two physician's clinics.

He observed,

"I am planning to get a licence to practise acupuncture, because I will lose my physical strength when I get older. Anma massage represents hard physical labour for mature people."

Furthermore, some people wish to be acupuncturists largely because they are not fully confident of the effect of anma massage.

Although he is not one of those who lacked confidence in his skills of anma massage, Kim said,

"Our clients demand stronger pressure as they call us more frequently. In the end, it is impossible to satisfy clients with anma massage. They need acupuncture. So, I decided to go to a blind school again in order to get the licence for practising acupuncture."

Masahiro, a skilful masseur aged 37 years, actually doubted



the efficacy of anma massage and said,  
"In my view, anma massage is a 'deceitful' business. As clients call masseurs more often, their problems in fact get worse although they feel comfortable during the treatment. It's much better for them to do some physical exercises on their own. Anma massage does more harm than good to clients. I am not proud of my job, although I am sure how much my clients are pleased with my skill. Acupuncture is different. It really works and does no harm to clients. My mother in law, (a sighted acupuncturist in her sixties), specialises in the treatment of piles, and there is always a queue for her practice. I decided to go to a blind school again to learn acupuncture."

However, there are a number of problems with acupuncture as well. While anma massage is at least a paying job, it is very difficult for acupuncturists to earn a living. First, there are far fewer clients for acupuncture than for anma massage. Second, there are more sighted acupuncturists than sighted masseurs. Moreover, although the majority of sighted masseurs are not licensed, almost all sighted acupuncturists are licensed. Because of intense competition with sighted acupuncturists for clients, there are few blind people who practise acupuncture although the vast majority of those who left blind schools have a licence to practise.

Furthermore, the skills of acupuncture are more complicated than those of anma massage. While the skills of anma massage primarily depend on the physical strength of practitioners, the skills of acupuncture have far more to do with their sensitivity. In other words, only a limited number of gifted people can be 'successful' acupuncturists.

Saburo, who practises acupuncture as well as anma massage, said,  
"Acupuncture is a tricky business. When it works, it works very effectively. When it doesn't, it never works at all. When it doesn't work, I don't take the treatment fees."

Without good results I can't demand payment, can I?"

Ichiro who had practised mainly acupuncture at his home for seven years said,

"When I left the blind school, I was quite confident in my skills of acupuncture. However, as I worked as an acupuncturist, I came across many difficult cases. Our clients are often those on whom physicians and various para-medical practitioners have already given up. It is impossible to cure them. I found it difficult to eliminate their pains. I gradually lost confidence in my capacity to practise acupuncture."

Thus, whether they are working as masseurs or acupuncturists, it is not easy for blind people to be so confident of their capacity as to feel themselves relied upon by their clients and to gain a sense of independence.

Being self-employed is another source of the sense of independence. Table 5-7 shows that the majority (66%) of blind masseurs wished to be self-employed. Furthermore, nearly three quarters of those who were currently self-employed were satisfied with their current employment status. Moreover, as many as half of those who were currently employed at massage parlours and physician's clinics wished to be self-employed.

Table 5-7 Preference of employment status among blind practitioners of massage and acupuncture by current employment status			
Q20 & Q21			
Whether would you like to be self-employed or employed?			
	Self-employed	Employed	All
Wish to be self-employed	73%	52%	66%
Wish to be employed	27%	48%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Base (Number of respondents)	64	31	95

There are mainly two reasons why people wish to be self-employed. Firstly, there are few cases in which employed masseurs are fully satisfied with their earnings and working conditions. Those who work at physician's clinics are often dissatisfied with their earnings. Unlike those working at massage parlours who are paid on a piece-work rate, masseurs at physician's clinics receive contract wages. However, their gross earnings are often lower than those of ordinary sighted employees in Japanese firms.

Goro and Rokuro, who worked at a physician's clinic, complained,

"Unlike ordinary workers, we have neither a yearly pay increase nor seasonal bonus payments. Moreover, the wages sometimes decrease depending on the 'mood' of the physician!"

Furthermore, employment at physician's clinics is not necessarily secure. Goro and Rokuro said,

"We may be fired whenever the number of patients declines."

The clinic where Goro and Rokuro worked may be a rather extreme case, and in fact, it is notorious as a 'bad' employer among the blind community in Osaka since it fired many blind masseurs over a short period. However, in general, the employment at physician's clinics is more or less influenced by the personality of physicians. In that sense, masseurs employed by physicians are totally dominated by and dependent on their employers.

In contrast, those working at massage parlours have no minimum wage, their earnings being based on piece-work rates. Normally, they get 70% of the service fees. In so far as they are called by clients, their job and earnings are secure and stable. However, there are still some exceptional employers who indulge in harsh exploitation of masseurs. Some still pay their employees only 30% of the

service fees. Others force their masseurs to work for many hours without a rest.

Shoko, a masseuse aged 25 years, using Braille, had worked for six months at a large massage parlour immediately after she had left a blind school. She recalled her hard work. "I was terribly busy there. At the beginning I thought it was a nice place to work. The parlour was run by a sighted master, and all employees were sighted except me. I hated the blind school and the blind world. I had been totally fed up because I had stayed at the blind school too long since my childhood. Therefore, I was happy with the sighted and to be part of the sighted world. However, gradually I became increasingly busy at work. I had less and less time to have my lunch. When I was eating my lunch at a pub nearby, the manager of the parlour would come to the pub to call me. Moreover, sometimes he even came to the toilet to fetch me. Eventually, I got an ulcer and gave the job up."

In general, since the majority of parlours provide out-reach services for clients, the employers prefer sighted or partially sighted practitioners to blind ones. As a result, it is difficult for totally blind practitioners, such as, Shoko, to find employment at massage parlours with good working conditions.

Apart from earnings and employment conditions, there is another reason why many masseurs wish to be self-employed.

Hidehiro, aged 29 years and able to read normal print, who had worked as a masseur for six employers in seven years, currently planned to be self-employed. He said, "Being self-employed, I want to test my ability. Since I have always worked not for myself but for employers, I am not really sure about my skill. At massage parlours, how many clients call you does not necessarily depend on your skill. There are some who pay back a portion of service

fees to clients so as to have more clients. Others get clients not by skill but by talk. As I came to know the reality of massage parlours, I became unable to concentrate on my job. If I am self-employed, I can concentrate on my business and feel myself to be independent."

Employed masseurs often lose their work incentives. Those at physician's clinics are expected to treat patients quickly since physicians can prescribe only fifteen-minutes-massage under health insurance schemes. Fifteen minutes is too short a period to practise anma massage properly.

Hidehiro said,

"When I worked at a physician's clinic, my skill began to decrease as I became unable to apply strong pressure."

In contrast, those at massage parlours tend to skim the job because it is too demanding. Parlour masseurs are normally booked for one hour per client. It is not easy for them to sustain their concentration for a full hour. Moreover, they need to save their strength for other clients.

Hidehiro said,

"At a massage parlour I saw a masseur who dozed over his work."

In general, blind masseurs and acupuncturists wish to be self-employed in order to have clear work incentives. This may also be the case for sighted practitioners. However, blind people seem to be more serious than the sighted about their work, since they understand more clearly that work is not only a source of income but also a source of social life and social identity.

However, it is not possible for all blind masseurs and acupuncturists to be successful entrepreneurs. Self-employed blind masseurs and acupuncturists have to face strong competition from sighted practitioners.

Goro, aged 28 years, a masseur employed by a physician, said,

"Since I left the blind school I have never thought of being self-employed. In this day and age, such an idea is out of date. We have more sighted masseurs than before. Outreach services are the main current of massage business today. It's impossible for us to compete with the sighted in an age of mobile massage services."

Ichiro, aged 45 years, who had recently closed his own acupuncture clinic and became a 'quota' masseur working for the publisher of large daily paper, said,

"I opened my clinic seven years ago. For the first year I had few clients. One year later, I would have about three patients a day. I could earn enough. However, in the last year, a judō therapist opened a clinic nearby.

Immediately my patients moved to the judō therapist since judō therapists, as well as physicians, charge patients only ten percent of the cost of treatment and are able to demand health insurance for the rest of the cost. Then, I lost many 'easier' patients, those with minor problems, and I retained only a few 'difficult' patients whose demands were not met either by physicians or judō therapists. The sharp decline in the number of patients made me unable to earn a living. Furthermore, through treating only those who were 'difficult' patients, I lost my confidence in my ability in acupuncture. I decided to be a 'quota' masseur."

Experiencing strong competition from sighted masseurs, the vast majority of blind masseurs (82%) wanted to see the number of sighted practitioners reduced, while another 14 percent demanded preferential treatment from the government, for example, a free voucher for massage provided for elderly people by the government which can be accepted only by blind practitioners. (Table 5-8) Except for a tiny minority (4%) who welcomed free competition from the sighted, blind masseurs considered it unfair that sighted people engage in traditionally reserved occupations for the blind.

**Table 5.8 Opinions of blind masseurs about the way to protect their employment**

Q25. In order to ensure for visually impaired people employment in massage and acupuncture, which means would you think appropriate?

Reduce the number of sighted practitioners	82%
Preferential treatment for blind practitioners	14%
Free competition	4%
Total	100%
Number of respondents	100

Hidehiro, aged 29 years, explained:

"Sighted people can choose whatever job they like. It is extremely difficult for us to engage in ordinary jobs other than massage and acupuncture. We can do nothing but massage. It is not fair that sighted people take our jobs while enjoying a wide variety of job opportunities. There are plenty of occupations in which they can engage. Why do they need to work as masseurs?"

This is a typical opinion of blind masseurs about their sighted counterparts. However, those who are successful and confident in the job have a slightly different opinion.

For instance, Masahiro, aged 37 years, said:

"I don't mind the sighted engaging in this job so far as they have the licence to practice. There are so many sighted people practising without licence particularly at large massage parlours in the city centre. I'm sure, nine out of ten masseurs working in the city centre have no licence. All of them are sighted. It is illegal to practise massage without licence, but nobody cares.

"I had to spend three years at a blind school and sit for exam in order to get the bloody licence. It was not easy for me to study for three years at school in my late twenties. It is not fair that sighted people engage in the job without going through three-years training course and

the licence exam. If I knew that anybody can do this business without licence, I would never have gone to the blind school."

The issue of unlicensed sighted masseurs is largely neglected by the government. It is illegal to practise massage without licence, but in practice, the government does not enforce the law. It is almost impossible to estimate the number of unlicensed masseurs and their impact upon blind masseurs. However, it is evident that unlicensed sighted masseurs are a serious threat to the job opportunities of blind masseurs, particularly those working in urban areas.

Besides the competition from sighted practitioners, including unlicensed masseurs, other paramedical therapists and physicians, self-employed blind practitioners need to have the patience to wait for clients.

Rokuro, aged 39 years, a masseur working at a physician's clinic, who had previously run his own massage parlour with his wife for eleven years, said,  
"When I decided to close my parlour, my wife was against the idea, partly because we had managed our business well and partly because she was worried about my safety as a commuter. But I hated waiting around for clients. On average, we had three clients per day, but there were several days each month on which we had no clients at all. It's really disappointing to have 'no-client-days'. Moreover, I learned some bad news. Several blind masseurs closed their parlours because of the decline in the number of clients. Somebody said that blind masseurs will lose out to the competition from the sighted. I decided to be employed because I wanted a secure job. I needed a sense of security."

Ichiro, who also closed his clinic, said,  
"Once you got a 'no-client-day', you became pessimistic. You began to think negatively about everything. In order



to get rid of the negative thinking from your mind, you had to get out of the home. Even if you waited for clients at home, there was no guarantee they would come. Either you have to advertise your clinic, or you have to go out for work."

Even successful self-employed masseurs are also afraid of 'no-client-days'. Jiro said, "If I had a 'no-client-day' I would give up this job. Fortunately, I have had clients everyday since I opened my parlour. Therefore, I intend to continue my business." The fear of 'no-client-days' is serious for self-employed masseurs and acupuncturists. They have to be both patient and confident to overcome their fear of the future.

Finally, although a mutual reliance between employers and employees at massage parlours, which is based on the sense of membership of the blind community, is crucial to a sense of job satisfaction among blind people, such relationships are beginning to disappear. That traditional relationship can be traced to the master-apprentice relationship of the blind guild of the past. And such a feudalistic relationship is generally felt to be out of date in today's Japan. Furthermore, there are fewer successful master masseurs who can afford to employ a number of young masseurs than was the case in the past.

Saburo, who employed a masseuse and two masseurs, said, "As far as I know, apart from my parlour and a few others, there are no successful parlours in Osaka in which all employees are blind. Although there are several successful sighted parlours, there are few successful blind parlours. I suppose the massage business is in decline in the blind world."

This is partly because sighted people began to run the massage business on a larger scale than before, and partly because there are fewer with the talent for the business in the blind world than before. The successful master

masseurs, such as Saburo and Masahiro, are often those who became blind in middle life and came to the blind community with a variety of business experience in the sighted world. After they became masseurs, the success of the business owed much to their past experience in the sighted world. However, in the last twenty years, the cause of adventitious blindness has changed. In particular, fewer people are blinded through industrial accidents, and as a consequence, chronic diseases, such as diabetes, are now the main causes of visual impairment among adults. These conditions create health problems, and therefore, the blind population seems to experience greater problems of ill health than in the past. Thus, even if adventitiously blinded people enter the world of massage, they tend to experience greater problems in developing their business interests in the area.

Moreover, the attitudes of young blind people to their work has also changed.

Masahiro said,

"Young people are more interested in leisure than work. They want to chat with me, but they don't want to learn from me. Boys listen to me to find out how to seduce a girl. But they have no ear at all for my suggestions about the skills needed for massage, and how to run the business of massage. I suppose they have no interest in their business."

Saburo attributed the indifference of young masseurs to their dependence on disability pensions.

"Pensions spoil young people. Totally blind young men receive nearly 20,000 yen per week. If they live with their parents they don't need to work. Even if they work, they don't need to work hard."

It is not clear whether or not young blind masseurs currently have less incentive than before to work. Moreover, if there is any truth in the assertion, the reasons for their lack of incentives is unclear. However,

it is true that more and more young masseurs have begun to choose 'light' jobs, such as, those of 'quota' masseurs, hospital masseurs and masseurs at physician's clinics, instead of the more difficult 'heavy' jobs at traditional massage parlours. Jobs in traditional parlours are 'heavy' partly because masseurs have to practise more than one hour per client and partly because the clients demand a lot since they are paying the full cost of services. In short, massage at traditional parlours is an 'expensive' service. In contrast, hospital masseurs and those at physician's clinics practise only fifteen minutes per patient. The patients pay only from ten to thirty percent of the cost of treatment, and the rest of the cost is paid by health insurance. The patients do not demand much since the price is cheap. Similarly, as will be described in the following chapter, a 'quota' masseur rarely gives each client more than half hour per session, and their services are free of charge for the clients. In short, jobs, such as those of 'hospital' masseurs and 'quota' masseurs, are 'light' because they offer 'quick and cheap' massage for clients.

The crucial problem is that this current shift from 'heavy' to 'light' work may reduce the skills of visually impaired masseurs and acupuncturists.

Jiro, a self-employed masseur, did not regard 'quota' masseurs as professional because they are not paid by their clients.

"If it is free of charge, everybody will ask for treatment. Our business is not like that. Our clients come to see us regardless of the time and money they have to spend."

The skills involved in massage and acupuncture have developed and been maintained within the blind world not through practice in 'light' but in 'heavy' work. If the majority of blind masseurs and acupuncturists engage in the 'light' work, the number of skilled visually impaired practitioners will gradually decrease. In that event, the blind community will lose their historical heritage, their

traditional skills in anma massage and acupuncture.

Thus, blind masseurs were currently facing many problems, for example, the low earnings of masseuses and older masseurs; the difficulties in earning a living from acupuncture; the poor and insecure employment conditions at massage parlours and physician's surgeries; and the strong competition from sighted practitioners and physicians which discouraged the independent practice of blind masseurs. Above all, the current shift of blind masseurs from 'heavy' to 'light' work may reduce their skills, and consequently, their job opportunities in the future.

## Summary

It became evident that the blind identity primarily emerged in the employment field. The people involved in the study had initially engaged in the reserved occupations rather reluctantly because they hardly wanted to accept the 'blind identity'. In order to prepare themselves to engage in the occupations which had traditionally been designated for 'the blind', they had to accept the "blind identity" regardless of whether they were congenitally or adventitiously visually impaired and whether or not they had residual vision. These designated occupations were not simply a means to get employment and income but the pathway to the blind identity.

However, once they engaged in the blind occupations, they found themselves as capable as sighted people in terms of work. In general, many blind masseurs could regard themselves as independent and self-reliant through being relied upon by others, such as clients, and employers or employees. In particular, it appeared to be crucial for them to be able to 'contribute' to society through work. However, there were also problems which discouraged blind masseurs from sustaining their business. In particular, the strong competition from sighted practitioners and physicians hindered the independent practice of blind masseurs. Moreover, blind masseurs currently tended to engage more often in short-session para-medical massage rather than traditional long-session anma massage because the former was relatively secure and provided 'light' work with stable incomes. The shift from the 'heavy' to 'light' work may cause the decline in skills and morale of blind masseurs, and may jeopardise in the long term their traditionally reserved job opportunity.

In order to evaluate the current employment policy for visually impaired people in Japan, it is necessary to

investigate not only the situation of blind masseurs but also that of other forms of employment. In the next chapter, the accounts of experiences of those engaged in "integrated" employment will be presented.

## Chapter 6

### The New World of Work: Blind People in Integrated Employment

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the accounts of individual experiences of 21 blind people working at ordinary workplaces side by side with sighted colleagues will be presented based on the in-depth interviews. Those involved in the interviews include five "quota" masseurs, four telephonists, three social workers, two civil servants, four office clerks of private firms, a worker for a Braille publisher, a researcher, and a stand-up comedian. Furthermore, in order to provide a general picture of those in the integrated employment, the present research uses some of the findings from the postal survey of 223 people working at private firms which was conducted by the research committee of the Japan Light House in which I participated as research consultant.

The accounts of "quota" masseurs are included in this chapter rather than the previous one largely because their employment conditions were more similar to those of people in "sighted" occupations rather than those of ordinary masseurs. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in Japan, the employment of blind people in open industry originates in the introduction of the British model of rehabilitation for the war blind in the late 1930s. After the Second World War, training in telephony, piano-tuning and light engineering began to take place at a few rehabilitation centres and blind schools. However, except for those with good residual vision sufficient to engage in manual work on an equal footing with sighted workers, the integrated employment of visually impaired people in general did not grow until the late 1970s. In 1976, the government introduced the "levy/grant" system in addition to the employment quota of disabled workers which had already been introduced in 1960. As a result, large firms in service

industries, such as banks and department stores, began to employ blind telephonists in order to fill their employment quota and reduce the levies which were imposed upon them for failing to fill their quota.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, in the 1980s, a few rehabilitation centres began to train visually impaired people in computer programming. Moreover, in the late 1980s, many private firms began to employ blind masseurs in order to fill their employment quota. These "quota masseurs" practice massage for the employees of the firms.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter aims to describe the current situation of blind people in integrated employment. In the first section, why and how particular people chose to engage in "sighted" occupations instead of the traditionally reserved "blind" occupations will be considered. It will be argued that the majority of those in integrated employment had a "sighted" identity before entering the employment field. The second section is concerned with how people got their current employment. It will become evident that visually impaired people enter "integrated" employment through the

---

<sup>1</sup> The introduction of the levy/grant system appeared to have no immediate impact upon the total number of disabled people in quota employment. In fact, the number of those in quota employment slightly decreased in the late 1970s. This was largely because many employers in manufacturing industry had already filled their employment quota with relatively 'fit' disabled workers, such as deaf people, before the levy was introduced. However, the levy system stimulated the employment of disabled workers in service industry where there had previously been few disabled workers. Moreover, the levy system extended the employment opportunities to those regarded as 'unfit' for work, such as the blind and the mentally handicapped. The effect of the levy system became visible in statistics in the 1980s. The number of disabled people in quota employment increased from 135,228 in 1980 to 203,634 in 1990. See, Wakabayashi [1993:40,70].

<sup>2</sup> The employment of visually impaired masseurs or masseuses in private firms was part of the quota employment scheme. The quota masseurs were employed for providing a short period of massage, approximately twenty minutes, for employees of the firm who have a stiff neck or eye strain because of computer work at the office. The practice is normally free of charge.



"segregated" entrance. In the third section, various barriers to work will be explored. In practice, visually impaired people are often isolated or marginalised at work even in "integrated" employment. Finally, the last section is concerned with exploring how people coped with those barriers. It emerged that their association with either the 'blind world' or people with other disabilities compensated for their marginality at work.

6-1. Why did visually impaired people chose to work with sighted people?

In the course of the present study it emerged that it was generally the case that visually impaired people who sought employment in the wider sighted society had identified with 'the sighted' rather than 'the blind' in their childhood or school days. This 'sighted identity' appears to be a key to an understanding as to why they chose 'sighted' occupations rather than 'blind' ones, such as, anma and acupuncture.

For those who grew up in sighted schools despite their visual impairment, it was natural to seek sighted employment. Shichiro, a Braille user aged 27 years, lost his sight through an accident at school when he was 14 years old. He went to a sighted high-school and a university despite his blindness. He recalled,

"I went to a university just like everyone at my high school. The school was a good private school where almost all students went to university. So, it was a natural course for me. I never thought about my sight. Although I was using Braille, I had no problem at high-school. I really enjoyed the school. Although I couldn't participate in the gymnastic class, I attended the class and enjoyed chatting with a gymnastic teacher during the class.

"It was same at university. It was even better than the high-school because I didn't need to find someone who could translate my textbooks into Braille. There was a Braille service for blind students at the university. Since I had no problem in the high-school nor the university, I thought I could get along well in the sighted world. So, in the final year at the university, I applied for ordinary jobs for which sighted students normally applied. But, in seeking those jobs I faced difficulties for the first time in my life. I was screened out by every employer. I was refused by more than a hundred employers."

After having been rejected by employers in the private sector, he obtained his current job as a counsellor at a voluntary organisation for the blind where he was the only blind member of the staff.

Shichiro had been confident in coping with the sighted world as a result of his experience at high-school and university. The strength of his confidence explains his persistence in applying for more than a hundred jobs. It seems that those who have managed student life successfully in sighted schools despite their visual impairment expect the opportunity to work in sighted employment. This point can be supported by the case of Hachiro, aged 32 years, a part-time researcher for disability rights organisations and a Ph.D candidate in social work studies, who had been partially sighted from his infancy until he lost his sight at the age of 25 years.

He said:

"I was lucky because my local school, 'Paddyfield Primary School' was the only primary school in Osaka which provided a special class for partially sighted children. So, despite my visual impairment, I went to the same school together with the children of my neighbourhood. There were seven partially sighted children including myself, but in fact there was no 'special class'. We were placed in ordinary classes together with sighted children. We received special teaching only three hours a week after normal school hours. I didn't think it useful. Once the school attempted to separate us totally from sighted classes. All of us opposed the plan. We didn't have any problem in sighted classrooms. Except in the case of ball games, I didn't see myself as 'slow' or 'inferior' at all. There were many sighted children who were 'slower' than me. "All of us went to a local middle-school, 'Holewell Middle School'. It was also the only school in Osaka which had a special class for partially sighted children. There, too, we were integrated into normal sighted classes. Only for a gymnastic class were we separated from our sighted peers.

We asked a teacher to separate us because we didn't see any fun of playing ball games with sighted children.

"All of us went to high-schools although everybody went to different schools according to individual circumstances, such as, abilities and the place of residence. But nobody went to blind schools. It was natural for me to go to a sighted high school because I thought that blind schools were the place for 'totally blind' children. At the high school I was called 'mole'. I didn't feel it insulting. I had close friends among those who called me 'mole'. There were some people who were always laughed at by everybody because they were 'slow' particularly in a gymnastic class. But it was not me. They were sighted boys who were 'slower' than me."

Hachiro went to university, but he lost his sight at the age of 25 years when he had been planning to undertake postgraduate study in social economics.

He continued:

"I got into a panic. I spent one year doing nothing. Then, I went to a blind school to learn massage and acupuncture. I quitted the school two weeks later. I had no interest at all in massage and acupuncture. I could not memorize the technical terms of the subject at all. I tried to find any job other than massage and acupuncture. There was nothing. Suddenly, I had a good idea. I decided to go to postgraduate school. Before losing my sight I had prepared myself for postgraduate study. I had given it up in the panic of losing my sight. I had considered it impossible for me to undertake postgraduate study because I could not read Braille quickly. But later, I found 'talking books' and 'voluntary readers for the blind'. Then, I began to think again about postgraduate study. Why not?"

Both Shichiro and Hachiro did not find it necessary to go to blind schools and to become masseurs and acupuncturists largely because they had found themselves

fully capable of coping with the sighted world based on their experiences in sighted schools. However, they appeared to be rather exceptional because many visually impaired children experienced difficulties in sighted schools.

Hachiro said,

"Well, I was happy at the high-school, but my (partially sighted) friends told me that they were depressed at high schools. They said that I was 'insensitive'."

Shichiro also said,

"I don't agree with the idea that all visually impaired children should go to sighted schools. It's a matter of individual choice. Whether they are happy at sighted schools depends on personality. You have to be 'easy-going' since it is quite hard to participate in sighted schools at the beginning. It also depends on how far the school makes the effort. In my case, my visual impairment was caused by an accident at the school. Therefore, the school felt themselves responsible to some extent for my visual impairment."

In both cases, the terms 'insensitive' and 'easy-going' imply the existence of negative aspects of school life at sighted schools. The following accounts of Toshiro and Mihoko clarify this point.

Toshiro, aged 32 years and able to read normal print, was currently working as a social worker for mentally handicapped children at a social service department of a local authority.

He recalled his school days:

"I also went to 'Paddyfield Primary School' together with Hachiro. But he was special among us (seven partially sighted children) in the sense that he came from the school's neighbourhood. So, he just went to the school where his neighbours went. But we (other six partially

sighted students) were different. Except Hachiro, we all came from beyond the local community. In that sense, while Hachiro was an insider at school, we were outsiders. It was difficult for me to make friends with sighted children there because I lived far away from the school. Nor, at home, could I play with children nearby because I didn't go to their local school. I always played with a partially sighted boy whom I met at Paddyfield School. He also lived far away both from the school and my home. So, we often stayed over together at weekends at our respective homes. "In high school, classmates were kind. But I was rather depressed because, you know, I was in my late teens. I found myself less attractive than other boys. I always wore thick glasses. I couldn't play sports. How could I get a girlfriend? I had no hope. I studied hard because it was the only way in which I could present myself as 'capable', and therefore, 'attractive'."

Like Shichiro and Hachiro, Toshiro also managed his life well at sighted schools, but he felt himself somehow isolated. The sense of isolation is clearer in the following account of Mihoko, a woman aged 34 years, working as a telephonist at a local authority office.

"I wore thick glasses in my childhood. Children living nearby laughed at my glasses. So, I found myself 'different' from others, but I didn't think about my visual impairment. I didn't feel that I had bad eyes. I cycled a good deal.

"When I was ten years old, I had an acute pain in my eyes. Moreover, it became hard to read textbooks at school. I became rapidly conscious about my visual impairment.

"In a middle school, a teacher and my parents asked me if I wished to go to a blind school. Of course not. I didn't want to be separated from my friends. It scared me very much. To me, blind schools were somewhere beyond my imagination. It appeared to me to be a separate world where those who couldn't see at all were put. After that I found it impossible to talk to anyone about my sight. I

was worried that I would be put away in a blind school if someone discovered that I could not see textbooks.

"I couldn't write anything in exams because I couldn't read questions. But I couldn't tell teachers that I could not read. I hated to read in class. Since I couldn't read properly people laughed at me. I tried to learn a whole lesson in a textbook by heart in order to read in a class.

"I was more depressed in high school. I was separated from my friends. They went to a local public high school. I couldn't go there because I could not get a good enough mark in middle school. Then, I went to a private girls' school.

Since I was depressed I couldn't get used to people at all there. I had no friends there and was always isolated. To make matters worse, the school was keen on gymnastics. My classmates didn't want to play with me in a team since they would get poor marks in the gymnastic class if they lost the ball game because of me."

Unlike Shichiro and Hachiro, both Toshiro and Mihoko did not feel at home in sighted schools. They often found themselves 'different' and 'isolated' from their sighted peers.

However, all of these four people who grew up in sighted schools despite their visual impairment shared a common 'sighted identity'. Both Shichiro and Hachiro recognised the sighted world as their place to live. Toshiro and Mihoko also recognised the sighted world as a place where they had to survive, however hard it might be, because they had never imagined anywhere else where they fitted in. In general, they concentrated all their efforts on getting along with sighted people.

Hachiro said,

"Until losing my sight I had always thought that I had to do my best among sighted people."

Mihoko said,

"I had always seen myself as a burden on society. I had

always thought that having bad eyes is a bad thing. So, I had always been cautious of giving others trouble."

As they identified with the sighted world, they shared the attitudes toward the blind world commonly found among the sighted. Firstly, like ordinary sighted people, they had no idea about blind schools and the blind world until a particular stage of life.

Hachiro said,

"I had never thought of learning Braille until I lost my sight. I had no interest in blind schools."

Secondly, even if they came across the members of the blind world they responded to them in the manner of sighted people.

Toshiro said,

"At university, I joined a Braille Society and visited a blind school. I saw a totally blind girl who was so sweet as to attract the affection of everybody. Currently, I am working for families with mentally handicapped children. I always talk to the mothers of those children about that pretty blind girl. I tell them to bring up their children to be like her so as to attract people's affection despite their mental handicap.

"By the way, my sighted colleagues sometimes talk to our clients about myself.

They say,

'Look at this man. Even if he is disabled, he is brilliant. Don't bother too much about your child.'

I think it is irresponsible to tell them my story because I'm not comparable to their children. The type and the degree of disability involved is totally different."

Toshiro was prepared to consider a blind girl at a blind school as comparable to his clients, children with mental handicap, while he saw himself as absolutely different from his clients.



Similarly, Mihoko responded to totally blind people as if they were different 'creatures' when she met them for the first time at a rehabilitation centre for the blind.

"At the Centre, I was always with a partially sighted girl who also came from a sighted high-school. We were watching blind people eating and walking alone.

We talked to each other,

'How wonderful they are!'

'How can they eat so nicely?'

'Look, they turned at the corner of the corridor without touching a wall! How did they see the corner?', and so on. It was really astonishing."

Finally, they distinguished themselves clearly from members of the blind world.

Mihoko said,

"As I came to know girls who came from blind schools, I was surprised because they were so 'cheerful'. I couldn't believe that. While I had always been depressed in sighted schools, they had been 'happy' at blind schools. I wondered if I had wasted my school days. Even now, although I wish to behave like them, it is difficult for me."

Shichiro made a clear distinction between himself and blind university students who came from blind schools, of whom he was very critical.

"We had a society of blind students from several universities around Osaka. Apart from myself, all came from blind schools. At that time I was already nearly totally blind, but I found myself very different from them. While I always asked sighted peers to help me, they didn't. They always tried to do things for themselves although it was impossible. They preferred technological aids to personal assistance. I used people rather than machines because it was much easier and more efficient.

"They could not behave naturally in front of sighted people.

Some became overly 'sociable', while others always tried to show their independence by not asking anybody to help them. It was strange.

"What I hated the most was the 'extraordinary closeness' among blind students. When they found I was blind, they treated me as if we had been close friends for a long time. It's unusual and strange for ordinary people to behave like that since we had never met before.

"They always stuck together and spoke critically of blind schools. Although they criticised blind schools, they in fact created a 'blind school' within 'sighted universities'. "This was all because they didn't know the sighted. They didn't know what the sighted were like. They didn't know how far we could ask them for help. I could see whether or not it was burdensome for sighted people to help me because I could put myself in their place. But those who came from blind schools couldn't do that because they had never had to get along with their sighted peers before. That made us very different from each other."

Thus, all of four persons who spent their school days at sighted schools despite their visual impairment identified themselves with the sighted world rather than the blind world. Therefore, it seemed to be a matter of course for those who had maintained a 'sighted identity' to seek employment within the sighted world.

This was also true in the case of some of those who spent their school days at both sighted and blind schools. As mentioned in the previous chapter, although almost all adult students at blind schools had spent their childhood and adolescence in sighted schools, they often stopped identifying with sighted people when they decided to go to blind schools. They came to the blind schools because they lost a sense of belonging to the sighted world. However, this was not the case for those who were transferred from sighted schools to blind schools in the course of their childhood. Some of these children maintained their 'sighted identity' even after they aimed at blind schools.

Yasuhiro, aged 26 years and able to read normal print, a clerk at a large maintenance company for office computers had been to Holewell middle school where Hachiro and Toshiro had also studied. However, since he was six years younger than Hachiro and Toshiro, his experience at the middle school was totally different from theirs. Firstly, when Yasuhiro went to the middle school in 1980, violence in classrooms was common all over Japan. Secondly, partly because of the violence and bullying in classrooms, it appeared that the Holewell middle school changed their policy from one of 'integration' to the 'protection' of partially sighted children in the early 1980s.

Yasuhiro said,

"Teachers at the middle school told me to go to a blind school.

I said,

' I want to go to a sighted high school'.

They said,

' Don't worry. There are many at the blind school who left this school'.

Although I wished to apply both to a sighted high school and a blind school, the teachers persuaded me to apply only to the blind school. I reluctantly agreed with them because I was a bit worried that I might be bullied again at a sighted high school.

"As soon as I went to a blind school I realised that I had made the wrong choice. As I expected the blind school was really boring. I wanted to get out of the school as soon as possible since I was afraid that I might 'sink' in the blind school. There was a peculiar atmosphere in the blind school. Once you became used to it you could feel at ease. But, once you felt at ease in the blind school you could no longer get into society. To me, it was going to 'destroy' me. I was going to forget my past experience in sighted schools and become a completely different person.

"At the final year of the high-school department of the blind school, a teacher suggested that I should leave the

school instead of taking a training course in massage and acupuncture. I was bit surprised since I expected teachers to persuade us to take the course in massage. I went to a college of art and design."

Yasuhiro spent only three years at a blind school and returned to the sighted world as a 'sighted' student of an art college. After leaving the college he found his current job through the quota employment scheme. It is possible for those with good residual vision who spent only a few years at blind schools to maintain a 'sighted identity', and therefore, to seek employment in the sighted world. However, even some of those with greater visual impairment and far more experience of blind school were able to retain their sighted identity.

For example, Yukihiro, aged 26 years, a friend of Yasuhiro, working as an assistant clerk at a business research company, who had been more severely visually impaired than Yasuhiro<sup>3</sup> since childhood and had remained for six years at a blind school, still maintained his 'sighted identity' and returned to the sighted world.

Yukihiro said,

"I went to a sighted primary school. Just before I was leaving the school, a teacher from a blind school came to see me and persuaded me to go to a blind school instead of a sighted middle school. My parents also persuaded me. " They told me that the teachers at middle schools would erase a black board so quickly that there would not be enough time for me to write it down. They saw me as unable to catch up on the classes at sighted middle schools. I couldn't oppose their persuasion, but I was not happy at

---

<sup>3</sup> Concerning disability registration which consists of six grades according to the severity of disability, Yukihiro had always been registered as 'Grade 3' since his childhood, while Yasuhiro was currently registered as 'Grade 5'. Although neither of them used Braille nor a long cane, it was hard for Yukihiro to read normal print and to work on personal computers.

all.

"Although I made friends with others at a blind school, I was always dubious in my heart as to whether I had chosen a right school. Whenever I saw sighted boys around, I felt myself being left out. I imagined what I would have been like in a sighted school.

"As soon as I came to the blind school I realised that everybody was going to be a masseur. I was not happy about it. When I was 17 years old I had to decide whether to take a course in massage and acupuncture or leave the school. I wanted to play music and to be a singer. A teacher encouraged me to go to a college of art and music. I thought hard about it. I decided to go to the college because I discovered that I had always wanted to get out of the blind school. I felt that the longer I stayed at the blind school the more difficult it would become for me to return to the wider society."

Both Yasuhiro and Yukihiro went to the blind school rather reluctantly and had always felt dubious about their decision to do so. It was not only partially sighted youths but also some who were 'totally blind' as well who maintained their sighted identity even after they aimed at blind schools.

An example is Kuro, aged 29 years, a quota masseur at a private residential home for the elderly.

He said:

"I had an operation for a brain tumour at the age of 12 years. Because of the operation I suddenly lost all my sight. Until that time I had been fully sighted. I had been to a sighted primary school. I didn't know anything about blindness and blind schools.

"After leaving primary school I went to a sighted middle school. One year later, my father told me to consult a teacher as to whether I should continue to study at a sighted school or move somewhere else. When I saw the teacher, he asked me if I would like to go to a blind school. I found his suggestion reasonable since I could

not read at all at the middle school, although I was anxious about how I would get on in the blind school.

"At the blind school I found my peers. I felt at ease. I spent five years there. At the age of 17 years, a teacher encouraged me to go to university.

I asked her, 'What for?'

She said, 'You can find something to do at university'.

I didn't hate massage and acupuncture. I just naturally began to think about university. When she told me about university, my life actually began."

After failing twice in the entrance examinations for universities, eventually at his third attempt, Kuro got his place.

Yasuhiro, Yukihiro and Kuro each completed their six-years primary education at sighted schools as sighted or partially sighted children. With the exception of Kuro, they found themselves being 'forced' to move from a sighted school to a blind school, although Kuro's account may imply that there was 'a secret deal' behind his back between his father and the teacher of the middle school. The initial reluctance to go to a blind school seems to be crucial in terms of the maintenance of 'sighted identity'. Moreover, in those cases, sighted teachers of blind schools suggested that they should return to the sighted world. It is likely that because they had maintained their 'sighted identity' at blind school as a result of their past experience at sighted schools they saw in the teacher's suggestion a signal for their return to the sighted world.

A 'sighted identity' can even be found among those who aimed at blind schools at an earlier stage in life and without reluctance. There were partially sighted children with good residual vision who recognised themselves as 'sighted', and therefore, 'capable', in comparison with their blind peers at blind schools, mainly because they had never competed with 'fully sighted' children in school.

Reiko, aged 33 years, an assistant community worker working at an education department of a local authority, who had received her 15 years education at blind schools despite her good residual vision, said,

"I was born on a small island. I played with children living nearby and cycled a good deal. Although I knew that I could not see as much as ordinary children could, I had no experience of being left alone by my sighted peers.

"When I left nursery school I had to leave the island at the age of six in order to go to a blind school on the mainland.

It was a pity that a little girl had to go alone to boarding school and live apart from her family.

"I had been to the blind school for four years, when I was transferred to another blind school in Osaka because my family moved to Osaka for employment reasons. At both blind schools, I was less handicapped than others. I was always 'caring' for others, not 'being cared for'. I always took my blind friends around.

"At blind school, I hardly felt myself 'visually handicapped'. When I began to work among sighted people I found myself 'disabled' for the first time in my life."

Similarly, Satoko, aged 29 years, a quota masseuse of one of the Japan's largest electronic manufacturers, who had had good residual vision until she lost her sight at the age of 24 years, had always identified with sighted people in her neighbourhood rather than her peers at the blind school.

"Neither my parents nor myself had noticed my visual impairment at all until a school doctor told us at a health examination of children who were about to enter a primary school. I had no problem at all. I played together with all the children nearby. But the school doctor told my parents to send me to a blind school because I would lose my sight in future and I would dislike going to a blind school at a later stage of my life.

"I was too 'sighted' and capable to go to a blind school. I found the blind school oppressive. Teachers saw us as

different from normal children. The teachers at the primary school department were the most arrogant. They were like 'dictators'. They didn't consider us to be a 'whole' person. I decided that as long as I stayed at the blind school I would never be recognised as a 'full' person. "Even after I went to the blind school, I always played with sighted children in my neighbourhood. I cycled a good deal. When I was at the high school department of the blind school I often left the school before it was over. I knew that sighted high schools normally shortened their school hours during exam periods. In my neighbourhood girls were already back at home around noon. I felt ashamed of coming back later than them."

The sense of capability and the sighted identity of Reiko and Satoko appeared to have been developed by their experience not in sighted schools but in blind schools. This point is developed in the following account of Yuko, aged 50 years, a quota masseuse in a large department store. She said,

"I went to a sighted primary school. Although I had no problem with sighted children, I knew I had bad eyes and worried about whether I would find a job in the future. One day a teacher at a blind school came to see me and advised me to go to the blind school. He said that since I had good residual vision I would easily find suitable employment. So I was happy to go to the blind school. I was transferred to the blind school at the age of ten.

"I was surprised that there were so many visually impaired people at the blind school. Until then, I had thought that I was the only person who had bad eyes. I felt at ease at the blind school. Moreover, I was relaxed since it was much easier to study at the blind school than the sighted school.

"I talked more often to adults rather than my peers at the blind school. I liked to chat with adult students and care workers at the school boarding house. They loved me probably because I was the most 'sighted' and capable among my peers. I wanted to become a teacher of the blind.



"When my family moved to Osaka when I was 17 years old, I was transferred to a large blind school in Osaka where there were many bright students. Then, I came to understand that I had been 'capable' because I had been at a small blind school in rural area. I gave up all thought of becoming a teacher."

Thus, blind schools may unintentionally help partially sighted children with good residual vision to develop their sighted identity and their confidence in their own capacity largely because of the absence of 'fully sighted' children in the school. However, there were also 'totally blind' children who had never been to sighted school but had identified with sighted people. Blind children do not necessarily notice their difference from sighted children particularly in their early childhood. They usually notice the difference when they find themselves unable to do what sighted children normally do, for example, running, cycling, and so on. However, it seems to be possible for small blind children to run and cycle like any sighted child in a less handicapping environment, such as a remote rural area where there is little traffic on the streets and where the lack of street lighting in the evening has less significance for them than for the sighted.

Mariko, aged 25 years, a quota masseuse at a trade company, who had been totally blind since her infancy and had received all her education at a blind school, said,

"In my childhood, I was playing with children in my neighbourhood. I cycled even if I could not see. I was living in a rural area. There was little traffic on the roads. I didn't find myself different from others."

Even if they had noticed how they differed from sighted children, some congenitally totally blind people had been integrated with sighted children in their early childhood.

Keiko, aged 27 years, working for a Braille publisher, had

been totally blind since her infancy and had spent 15 years at a blind school before she went to an university. She said,

"In my early childhood, I noticed that I might be different from my cousins and children in the neighbourhood. But, I often played with them. Among little children, there were no 'barriers' between the sighted and the blind. When we were small they took me around naturally. But, when we grew up, it became difficult for us to get along well with each other. This is because we became conscious about our difference."

Nuiko, aged 26 years, working at the information office for blind customers in a large toy manufacturer, had also experienced 'integration' in her early childhood before she went to a blind school. She said:

"Before I went to a blind school I had no blind friends. All my friends were sighted. They picked me up on their bicycles, and we went to catch insects. They gave me some insects to play with. They showed me the insects, and asked if I could see those. Of course, I couldn't. But I didn't feel sorry about it."

Yoshiko, aged 26 years old, a totally blind telephonist of a local authority office, recalled her childhood as follows.

"When I was playing with sighted children in my neighbourhood, I often lost sight of them because they ran away. But, I played with them even after I went to a blind school. I didn't notice any difference between us."

Keiko, Nuiko and Yoshiko were all totally blind from their early childhood. However, all of them had once acquired 'sighted identity' despite their blindness through their experience of 'natural integration' in their pre-school days.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The term 'natural integration' is quoted from the recent anthropological accounts of disability in the context of 'pre-industrial' society. See, Ingstad & Whyte [1995].

Moreover, it appeared to depend on the attitudes of their parents as to how far they could maintain their initial 'sighted identity' through the course of life. Although the parents of these three blind women were all sighted, among them Nuiko's parents seemed to be the most earnest about integrating their blind daughter with sighted children.

Nuiko said,

"Although they were concerned about my blindness, they encouraged me to play with sighted children and applied for a place for me at a sighted primary school. Since our application was refused, I went to a blind school. My parents were disappointed. I felt like a 'failure' and a 'loser'.

"After I spent ten years at a blind school, we moved to New York, (the United States), where my father had a job. I went to a local public high school in Bronx for two years. I was really happy there because I could ask teachers for help whenever I could not catch up the classes. And, the study wasn't so difficult in the U.S. as in Japan. I was really relaxed at school in New York. After leaving the high school in New York, we came back to Japan and I went to a Japanese university. Fortunately, I didn't need to take the harsh entrance examinations for Japanese universities. I applied to a Japanese university as an 'overseas student' in order to bypass the entrance examination. I don't know if my parents took me to the U.S. in order to bypass the university entrance examination. But it was they who suggested I should apply to the Japanese university as an 'overseas student'."

Keiko's parents also helped her to go to an university. She said,

"I was good at English at the blind school. So, I wanted to learn English at university. My parents agreed with me partly because they hoped that I could teach English in a blind school. At my blind school, there was a totally blind female English teacher. Moreover, it was not strange

for my family to want to send me to university because my sighted brother had already studied at university."

Once she had failed the entrance examination at her first attempt, her parents helped her to go to a sighted crammer college.

It was likely that Keiko and Nuiko maintained their initial sighted identity which they had acquired through their experiences in their pre-school days even after they went to blind schools because their parents wished them to be integrated into sighted society. In comparison with the parents of Keiko and Nuiko, Yoshiko's parents seemed to have been dubious about 'integration'.

Yoshiko said,

"My parents did not really encourage me to play with sighted children. They worried in case I injured myself. I was their only child. They were also worried about my future. Therefore, they were 'relieved' when they sent me to a blind school. They hoped that the blind school would sort out all our problems for us.

"I found the blind school quiet and dull. Although I felt like getting out of the blind school, I was afraid to go to sighted school because I knew nothing about the sighted school.

"When I decided to take the job of telephonist at a local authority office, my parents were not really happy. They wanted me to get a license to practice massage and acupuncture which appeared to them to secure my future. I persuaded them because I wanted to work among sighted people and to know about them. My parents finally agreed with me, because it was a job in the civil service, (which was the most secure employment in Japan)."

Because of the lack of encouragement from her parents, it took fourteen years for Yoshiko to return to sighted society. However, Yoshiko's account showed that some blind people could maintain their initial sighted identity even

without the encouragement of their sighted parents.

It must be admitted, however, that the congenitally blind persons who referred to 'natural integration' and 'sighted identity' in their early childhood were all female.

It may be more difficult for blind boys than blind girls to be 'naturally' integrated with sighted children in their early childhood because boys are expected to play more actively than girls. For example, it is 'normal' that boys should catch insects for girls. While a blind girl can play a 'normal' social role and receive insects from sighted boys, a blind boy is unable to fulfil his 'normal' social role in catching those insects. Thus, 'gendered' social role may work positively for the 'natural integration' of blind girls in their early childhood, but not for boys.

However, although 'gendered' social role may prevent blind boys from being naturally integrated with sighted children in their early childhood, it may encourage some blind boys in their adolescence to enter into a sighted society. For example, a 'delinquent' subculture tends to lead a blind boy to the sighted world.

Taro, aged 38 years, *rakugo-ka*<sup>5</sup>, who had been totally blind since his early childhood and went to a blind school for 12 years, said,

"I was a 'delinquent', completely deviant, at blind school. In blind schools, those who became masseurs and acupuncturists were 'normal'. Those who went to sighted universities were 'unique' but not 'deviant'. I always wanted to be a comedian from childhood. Such a boy was completely out of the experience of blind schools.

"When I finished middle school I went to see a master comic storyteller to ask him to teach me. He told me that he would teach me after I finished the high school. Now I think he meant that I had to 'fight' the blind school and

---

<sup>5</sup> "Rakugo-ka" (comic storyteller) is one of the Japanese traditional entertainments, like "stand-up comedians" in the U.K.

its assumptions.

"At the high school department, I had no friend except a bad boy who came from a sighted middle school. He was partially sighted, and his father was a boss of 'yakuza' (Japanese Mafia). He picked me up on his motorcycle and we had a lot of fun. Can you imagine that we were driving recklessly in front of the blind school? Then, we ran away downtown to catch girls. Of course, sighted girls. How can I find a 'blind' girl downtown?"

When Taro was in the high school, in the early 1970s, it was still unusual for girls in general to have access to the juvenile delinquent subculture in Japan. Moreover, the delinquent subculture was, and is still, primarily a sighted culture. There was no place for the juvenile delinquent in blind schools and the blind world. Therefore, the delinquent subculture attracted only boys from blind schools and led them into its sighted world.

There was another case in which 'gendered' social role could lead blind adolescent boys into sighted society.

Nobuhiro, aged 45 years, a director of a rehabilitation centre for the blind, who went to university from blind school, said,

"There are two ways to get along with sighted people. Firstly, you may take the initiative in making the relationship with sighted people. Secondly, you just follow them. It depends on your personality. I have always taken the initiative. At university, whenever I asked sighted students to read books for me I gave them the books. That's the way I 'use' the sighted."

Because of the dependent social role of women in general in Japan, it is easier for blind women than blind men to ask the sighted for help. In contrast, a masculine social role encourages blind men to 'organise' sighted volunteers, often women, and to give them 'orders'. In order to 'organise' and 'use' sighted people, blind men have to live in the

sighted world where they can find many sighted people around. This was probably one of the reasons why Akihiro, aged 30 years, sought sighted employment.

He said:

"I had always been an 'organiser'. When I was 12 years old, I organised a sport society, named the 'Mouse Club', at a blind school. At that time, we were wasting time without doing anything at the school boarding house. I was bored and wanted to do something. I organised my peers in order to play blind baseball once a week.

"When I was 18, I chose not to take a course in massage and acupuncture. I thought I could take the course anytime later if I wished. I wanted to get out of the school. I looked for job at a job centre. I found nothing there. I was referred to a rehabilitation centre for the blind, where I was trained in computer programming for lathes."

After he left the rehabilitation centre, Akihiro, while working at several metal turneries, developed business relationships with many sighted people. Finally, he became a manager of a small metal turnery with about ten employees.

Furthermore, he was an active member of the disability rights movements in the 1980s. He organised his blind peers in his locality in order to push the local authority to employ his blind school friend. Thus, for those, like Nobuhiro and Akihiro, who were sociable and good at organising others, it seemed reasonable to seek employment in a wider society where they could utilise their ability more effectively than in the closed blind world. However, there was no such opportunity for blind women. It should be noticed that although 'gendered' social role may encourage blind boys to organise others and may lead them into the wider sighted society it may discourage blind girls to do so because women are normally expected to follow others instead of leading them.

In this section, I have argued that the majority of visually impaired people in sighted employment had a

'sighted identity' regardless of the degree of their visual impairment or the type of education which they had received.

In most cases, the 'sighted identity' of visually impaired people was developed through their experience of integration with sighted children in their school days or pre-school days. In contrast, some partially sighted people with good residual vision acquired 'sighted identity' at blind school because in the blind school they had no competition from sighted children. Moreover, there were also some cases, such as, Satoko and Taro, in which antipathy towards the authority of blind schools appeared to lead visually impaired youths to a 'sighted identity' as a counter-culture. There were also a few blind men who acquired 'sighted identity' based on their successful management of social relationships with sighted adults after they left blind schools. Although all the people involved here had sighted parents and grew up in sighted families, much depended on the attitudes of the parents as to how far visually impaired children maintained and developed 'sighted identity'. Let us now consider how these people obtained their current employment.



6-2. Separate Entrance in Employment: How did they get sighted employment?

How did people find their current employment in the sighted world? To what extent did the manner of their entry into such employment differ from that utilised by their sighted counterparts?

Among 21 people who were currently in integrated employment, there were six persons, all male, who had sought employment through 'normal' means, such as local job centres, advertisements in news papers and postal recruitment for the final-year students of universities.

Immediately after leaving a blind school, Akihiro who was able to read normal print with vision aid at that time went to a local job centre. He said:

"As they (placement officers) normally did for sighted job seekers, they examined me by using an 'occupational aptitude test'. The test result was, of course, 'nothing suitable' for me. They referred me to a rehabilitation centre for the blind."

Two totally blind male students sought employment through postal recruitment when they were in the final year at university, as their sighted peers normally did.

Kuro said,

"Except for one large advertisement agency, no firm refused to see me. They were kind enough to talk to me. But, after the interviews, they always said, 'Sorry, I don't think there will be any job for you'. That's it."

Shichiro had more than hundred interviews for jobs, but he could get nothing. He said:

"I think I was too optimistic about the employment of the totally blind at that time. In interviews, I gave them a good impression. So, they were pleased to see me twice or

three times. But, at the final stage of selection, they asked me, 'By the way, what kind of job can you do for us?'

I couldn't answer the question. I expected that they would find a job for me. Now, I realise that it is almost impossible for totally blind persons to work in an ordinary firm where there is no specific job for the blind."

Thus, all three persons who sought employment through the normal channels normally utilised by sighted people were rejected.

It may be easier for those with good residual vision to get employment through the normal channels used by sighted job seekers.

For example, Toshiro, aged 32 years, a social worker at a local authority, obtained his present job in this way. He said,

"I studied social work at university since I thought that I would be able to get a job in social work despite my handicap. I thought that ordinary employers at private firms would never give me a job. I expected that people working in the field of social work would be 'generous' to me.

"In the final year at university, I took an examination for entry into social service at a local authority with sighted applicants, and I got my current job."

Although Toshiro successfully entered into secure full-time employment side by side with sighted applicants, he was the only person involved in the study to do so. It seemed to be difficult not only for blind people but also for partially sighted people with good residual vision to get secure employment through the normal job seeking channels.

Yasuhiro, aged 26 years, a clerk at a large maintenance company for office computers, said,

"After leaving the college of art and design, I found a job through a job advertisement in a news paper at a small

design office where the boss, his wife and a secretary were working. I didn't tell them about my eyes. Within a month I was fired. The boss told me that I was too 'slow' for the job.

"Thereafter, I did several part-time jobs for about six months. My parents were always asking me about my job. I also wanted to have a secure job. Then, I went to see Miss Suzuki (a blind teacher at a blind school), who referred me to the local job centre. I was registered as a 'disabled' job seeker. Soon after, I found my current job."

Yukihiro, aged 26 years, an assistant clerk at an established business research company, had a similar experience. He said:

"When I left university where I studied art and music, I still wanted to be a singer. So, I just worked on a part-time basis at a few factory firms. It was just an unskilled manual job.

"A year later, because the job was hard and low paid, I asked my friend at a blind school to point me in the way of a better job. He was working as a masseur in a hospital. He referred me to a physician's clinic where two totally blind masseurs were working. I worked there for a year as their assistant. I guided the patients to the masseurs, taking the masseurs out for lunch, and so on.

"Those two masseurs told me that the present job was not necessarily secure and the physician was not a good employer, probably the worst in Osaka. They said that they were looking for a job as 'health masseurs' (quota masseurs) at a large private firm because the job would be more secure than the current job. Then, I began to think that I should also find a secure job. I went to see Yasuhiro because we remained friendly after we left the blind school. He told me to go to a local job centre in order to be registered as 'disabled'. Immediately after registration, I found my present job."

The accounts of Yasuhiro and Yukihiro show that although partially sighted people may find jobs through the normal

means of job seekers agencies, the work obtained in this way tended to be low-paid and insecure. However, once they were registered on a quota employment scheme at local job centres, they immediately found secure jobs. In other words, it was not only blind but also partially sighted people who had to be registered as 'disabled' on a quota employment scheme in order to get secure employment.

Moreover, what was striking in these accounts was the fact that help was sought through relationships with the blind world, for example, a teacher and friends at a blind school. There was no equivalent for them in the sighted world of whom they could ask help or advice concerning employment. In fact, of the twenty one people who were currently in the integrated employment, seventeen obtained their first full-time job in the 'sighted world' through their connections with the 'blind world', such as blind schools and rehabilitation centres for the blind.

Among the six blind university graduates, three went to rehabilitation centres for the blind, where they were referred to their current employers. The other three university graduates were employed by non-profit organisations for the blind. In that sense, their employment was situated somewhere between the blind and the sighted world. The rest of my interviewees, except Toshiro, a social worker, Hachiro, a part-time researcher, Ichiro, a quota masseur, and Taro, a comic storyteller, got their first appointment in integrated employment either through rehabilitation centres or blind schools. Thus, job opportunities in the sighted world in fact were allocated to visually impaired job seekers predominantly through welfare institutions for the blind. Indeed, the evidence seemed to suggest a 'back door agreement' between the welfare institutions and sighted employers.

Yoshiko, aged 26 years old, was appointed to the job of telephonist at a local authority office when she was still in a blind school. She said:

"When I was in my second year of the course in massage and acupuncture at a blind school, a teacher told me personally that a job would be available for a blind telephonist at a local authority office. I took an examination for service with other visually impaired applicants. But, I think, they had already decided before the exam that they would give me the job. It was at the local authority which ran my blind school. Therefore, if the school referred someone to the local authority, they normally accepted the applicant."

Reiko, aged 33 years, provided further evidence for the 'partnership' between the local authority and its blind school. She said:

"After I worked for seven years as a telephonist at a large department store, I applied for the job of telephonist at a local authority office. I failed in the examination for service. I couldn't believe that because I was the most experienced in the job among the applicants. They gave the job to a young blind boy who was still at blind school at that time. There must be a 'deal' between the local authority and the blind school."

Moreover, blind schools allocated their students or ex-students job opportunities not only in the public sector but also in the private sector as well. For example, Reiko, herself, had originally been referred to the job at the department store by her blind school when she had been in her final year of the course in massage and acupuncture. The following account of Yuko, aged 50 years, suggests that it was not sighted society but the blind school that created job opportunities for visually impaired people in sighted society.

Yuko said:

"After I got divorced at 42, I returned as a teaching assistant to the blind school which I had left twenty years before. I got the job through my friend, Ms. I., who was a teacher of massage and acupuncture there. We had been

classmates at the school. So, Ms. I. asked the headmaster to give me the job of teaching assistant. It was a temporary job, but I worked there for two and a half years. "In the middle of my third year at the blind school, the headmaster told me to practise massage at a local authority office for their employees for a while. I was transferred from the blind school to the local authority office. I didn't know that it was a pilot employment scheme for 'quota masseurs'.

"Six months later, the headmaster told me to take a job of quota masseur at a large department store. I wanted to go back to the blind school since I was worried that I might be too old to cope with the new job among sighted people. The headmaster said that there would be no job for me at his school. In this way, I became the 'first quota masseur' in our county."

Thus, it was the partnership between a blind school and a local authority that created in 1987 the possibility of employment of a 'quota masseur' at a department store. Soon after, several private firms employed quota masseurs. The number of 'quota masseurs' increased steadily from 1987, and reached a peak in 1992 when thirty new places were available in Japan as whole.

It was not only blind schools but also rehabilitation centres that had close relationship with local authorities and sighted employers. In terms of the employment of visually impaired telephonists, a non-profit rehabilitation centre also seemed to have a 'deal' with the local authority which was their main funding body.

Mihoko, aged 34 years old, a telephonist at a local authority office, said,

"When I left the rehabilitation centre where I was trained in telephony, I applied for a job at another local authority. But I didn't get the job. Although my friends at the rehabilitation centre found jobs at banks and in private firms, I wanted to have a job in the civil service

because all my family were working in the civil service. "One year later, the rehabilitation centre told me to apply for a job at this local authority, and I was successful this time. I'm sure there is a special relationship between this local authority and the rehabilitation centre."

Moreover, there appeared to be close relationship between rehabilitation centres and private firms as well.

Kazuhiro, aged 25 years, had suddenly lost his sight at the age of 18 and had been trained in Braille and the use of the long cane at a rehabilitation centre.

He said:

"After I spent a year at the rehabilitation centre, I applied to T Blind School, because if I had to go to a blind school in order to be a masseur I wanted to go to the best place. I failed the entrance exam because of my poor reading skill in Braille. I had been more interested in the use of information technology than in Braille. Therefore, instead of a blind school, I went to an occupational training centre for word processing for the blind.

"After I had been at the training centre for a year, I was told to work temporarily for a soap manufacturer who was looking for someone who could produce Braille pamphlets for their blind consumers. After working one month there, I returned to the training centre. Then, six months later, the soap manufacturer gave me a full-time appointment.

"Later, I found out that they had employed a blind girl before, who had just left the T Blind School, but she left the job within a year. This was why they were looking for someone to fill the vacancy. But, this time, they wanted to make sure that a new blind employee would work on a much more permanent basis than the previous blind girl. So, the employer and the training centre spent some time assessing me."

Although the process described by Kazuhiro may be regarded as a reasonable 'partnership' between a training centre and

a sighted employer, the following account of Akihiro is a different story.

Akihiro said:

"I was the first trainee in computer programming for lathes at the rehabilitation centre. Although I had been trained less than one year, they asked me to work at a metal turnery. They told me that they needed a 'successful case' for further funding for the training course. So, I went to the metal turnery. There was no job for me. The employer wanted not me but a grant for employers under the quota employment scheme. Since the grant could be paid only for the first 18 months, they began to tease me soon after my appointment. They told me to paint a wall and to clear a ditch when it was raining. It was terrible. I quitted the job just within a few months. Later, I found out that they didn't report my resignation to the local labour office and they continued to receive the grant."

This 'negative partnership' between rehabilitation centres and sighted employers was encouraged to some extent by the grant system of the quota employment scheme. For instance, a quick turnover of disabled employees within 18 months brings the employer a maximum amount of the grant under the quota employment scheme. At the same time, the quick turnover makes more places available for job seekers who are trained in rehabilitation centres. This kind of 'negative partnership' was also found to exist between blind schools and the employers of masseurs, such as physicians, who always recruited young immature masseurs and masseuses from blind schools and induced them to resign within a year in order to get the maximum amount of grant out of the quota employment scheme.

There were also several people who found sighted employment through their personal relationships in the blind world.

Kuro, aged 29, a masseur working at a luxurious private



residential hostel for the rich elderly, went to a rehabilitation centre to be trained in massage and acupuncture after he graduated from university and failed to get a job.

He said,

"After I finished a course at the rehabilitation centre I got my current job through Mr. Yamada who was also a blind university graduate and was teaching massage and acupuncture at another rehabilitation centre."<sup>6</sup>

Nuiko, aged 26, who was on the staff of customers' information at a toy manufacturer, also found her employment through her personal connection with Mr. K., a blind researcher working at a rehabilitation centre.

She said,

"When I was writing my dissertation at university I went to see Mr. Honda in order to borrow some Braille journals. Thereafter, we kept in touch with each other. One day, he rang me and asked if I wished to work at a toy manufacturer's. At that time, I intended to study for a Master's degree. He told me to call him if I 'failed' in the entrance exam for the postgraduate school. Then, I failed in the exam. When I rang him, he said, 'Let's go through the entrance formalities to the firm'. So, I got the job without any trouble. I feel very sorry to hear that many people had so much trouble finding their jobs."

In Japan, it is not unusual for job seekers in general to find employment either through their personal connections

---

<sup>6</sup> Blind people who went to universities from blind schools and could not find employment after graduation often chose to get a licence to practise massage and acupuncture. However, they were normally reluctant to return to the blind schools partly because they might be regarded as 'failures' by those schools and partly because their ex-classmates might be teachers there. Therefore, they often took the course of massage and acupuncture not at blind schools but at rehabilitation centres. As a result, a group of blind university graduates were trained in massage and acupuncture at rehabilitation centres. Some of them became the instructors of massage and acupuncture at the rehabilitation centres, and developed networks among the blind university graduates who later trained there as in the case of Kuro.

or a close relationship between their schools and employers.

However, it was not 'normal' that the people involved in the present study often found their employment without any competition not only with sighted job seekers but also with visually impaired job seekers. The earmarking of jobs in this way excluded the vast majority of visually impaired people who wished to enter integrated employment.

Goro, aged 28 years, currently working as a masseur at a physician's clinic, said,

"I have been looking for a chance to apply for a job as a quota masseur. I had no chance in the past two years. I knew that a lot of people became quota masseurs in these years because a Braille journal always showed the names of sighted employers who employed new quota masseurs. But, I never saw any job advertisement on the Braille journal. The journal let us know that there was a job only after someone had already taken it. It is not fair."

Masahiro, aged 37, a self-employed masseur, was interviewed for a quota masseur's post but was rejected.

"In the interview, I told them how to run this business based on my ten-years experience. They were pleased to listen to me, and they said I gave them very useful information."

Ichiro, aged 45 years, who eventually got employment as a quota masseur at a newspaper publisher at his fifth attempt, said,

"In order to get a job as a quota masseur, you have to go to a large job centre in the city centre. Not your local one.

You have to go there frequently, and you must really push them. Then, if you are lucky, you may be informed about job interviews. You must go to the interview by yourself. If you are taken by a sighted person, such as your wife, a friend, or a social worker, they will never employ you because they think you cannot commute on your own.

Secondly, you should not talk too much. Don't try to teach them about massage and acupuncture. Just keep saying 'Yes,

Sir'. They prefer fresh masseurs who have just finished their course at blind schools."

As it is difficult to get integrated employment without connections in blind schools or rehabilitation centres, it is also difficult for visually impaired people to change their jobs in a sighted society.

Although Reiko, aged 33, an assistant community worker, had originally been referred for a job as telephonist at a department store by her blind school and had got the job easily, but it was difficult for her to move to a local authority office. She said:

"I wished to have a job as telephonist at a local authority.

But, at my first attempt to move, I failed the exam for service despite my seven-years experience in the job. I realised that it was very difficult to get a job at a local authority office without the right connections. In the next year, I applied to another local authority for a job. There was no job for telephonist, but they offered me a general clerical job. I took the job because I didn't know the job was so hard."

Asako, aged 26, a telephonist at a pharmaceutical company, said,

"Although I'm not really happy with the current job, I won't change my job. I want to keep this job as long as possible because it took me two years to get it."

Thus, the majority of people who were currently in integrated employment found their jobs through their connections not in the sighted world but the blind world. This was largely because the integrated employment opportunities were created by the partnership between sighted employers and welfare institutions for the blind, such as, blind schools and rehabilitation centres for the blind, in the context of the quota employment legislation involving the levy and grants. As a result, the entry into integrated employment was based on the exclusion from

certain jobs not only of sighted job seekers but also of visually impaired people seeking a better job within the integrated employment and those seeking integrated employment some years after they had left blind schools or rehabilitation centres. Moreover, the restricted entry of visually impaired people into integrated employment influenced their status, promotion and social relationships in their workplaces, as we shall see in the next section.

6-3. Job Satisfaction and Marginality in Employment:

How far were people integrated?

How far were visually impaired people satisfied with their current employment, and to what extent were they integrated with their sighted colleagues in workplaces where the majority of workers were sighted?

The 1993 Japan Light House postal survey showed that 44% of visually impaired people currently working for private firms were satisfied with their work. (Table 6-1)

Satisfied	44%
Unsure	37%
Dissatisfied	19%
Total %	100%
Base (Number of respondents)	219

Mariko, aged 25, a quota masseuse, said;

"I could have earned more as a parlour masseuse than as a quota masseuse. But, I feel the privilege of a quota masseuse when I am fully booked and have to refuse clients. I'm really pleased to say, 'I am sorry, I am fully booked today. Please come and see me tomorrow'. You can never experience such a thing at a parlour. Parlour masseuses have to wait around for clients all the time."

Kazuhiro, aged 25, working in a customers' information service unit at a soap manufacturer's, said;

"I have no problem at all in the office. I can talk frankly with my sighted colleagues. I often go to pubs with my boss and colleagues. I disclose my position openly and they understand me."

Reiko, aged 33, who had worked for eight years as a telephonist at a department store, recalled;  
 "I really enjoyed my job. You could say telephony is boring and routine work. But it was my cup of tea. I'm shy, and neither talkative nor outgoing. I like to work 'backstage' rather than on 'stage'."

"The secret pleasure of telephonists is to discover the private lives of colleagues. There were men who often received calls from women outside. Some of the men used false names. Sometimes, I happened to recognise the familiar voices of these 'naughty' men in the office. It's great fun to see their appearance. They didn't look handsome at all."

However, the extent of job satisfaction varied considerably according to the type of work in which they were engaged. While almost as many as half of quota masseurs and telephonists were satisfied with their work, this was true of only slightly more than a third of computer programmers and office clerks. (Table 6-2)

Table 6.2 Job satisfaction of blind workers at private firms by the type of work						
Type of work	Massage	Teleph.	C.P. <sup>7</sup>	Clerk	Other	All
Satisfied	49%	48%	39%	35%	45%	44%
Unsure	37%	37%	33%	38%	38%	37%
Dissatisfied	15%	15%	27%	27%	17%	19%
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base <sup>8</sup>	68	52	33	37	29	219

The majority (71%) of the people involved in the study considered themselves to be different from their sighted colleagues. (See Table 6-3)

<sup>7</sup> Computer programming.

<sup>8</sup> Number of respondents.

Table 6.3 Difference between the blind and the sighted recognised by blind workers at private firms

Q. Would you find yourself different from your sighted colleagues at work?

	Massage	Teleph.	C.P. <sup>9</sup>	Clerks	Others	All
Yes	76%	76%	67%	61%	66%	71%
No	24%	24%	33%	39%	34%	29%
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Base <sup>10</sup>	63	51	33	36	29	212

Furthermore, masseurs and telephonists more often than other visually impaired workers considered themselves to be different from sighted colleagues. The reason for this was that they were often isolated at work because of the nature of their job.

Ichiro, aged 45, a quota masseur, said;

"I don't talk to anybody in the office. I talk only with those who come to see me for treatment. I am the only masseur in the office, and have no colleagues. If there are no clients I just sit in the massage room all the day. It is a 'isolating' job."

Yuko, aged 50, a quota masseuse, said;

"In the morning, as soon as I arrive at the office, I go to the department of health and welfare for the employees in order to receive a list of the names of those who are due to have treatment. Only at that time do I see my boss and colleagues. I always stay alone in massage room. A contractor brings my lunch to my room. I chat with my clients, but I have to listen rather than talk to them. They come to see me not only to have massage but also to complain about work. When I finish I just ring the secretary of my boss, and go home."

<sup>9</sup> Computer programming.

<sup>10</sup> Number of respondents.

Thus, quota masseurs were both physically and socially segregated at work largely because their work is different from that of sighted workers. This is also the case with telephonists.

Yoshiko, aged 26, currently working at a local authority office, said;

"The work is dull because we have few calls. My office is a tax office. Not many people call the tax office. I work a one-hour shift with a sighted partner, but she is an agency worker. So, I am the only telephonist employed by the local authority."

Tomoko, aged 33, working for a private firm, said;

"I am the only telephonist at the office. Although I work with several sighted colleagues, they are not specialist telephonists but assistant clerks. They deal with the telephone only during busy hours and my rest period. Normally they are engaged in clerical work."

Even if they work with sighted telephonists, blind workers may feel isolated at work.

Mihoko, aged 34, working at a local authority office with two sighted telephonists, said,

"I don't feel that I am participating in society through work. We always work in a small isolated group. We don't see any other people at the office. We don't know what they are doing there. Telephony is a suitable job for those who wish to keep their distance from others. Indeed, sighted telephonists are often women of a domestic and shy personality."

Thus, telephonists, including sighted ones, were often isolated at work. It is worthy of note that visually impaired workers in isolated settings, such as quota masseurs and telephonists, were more satisfied with their work than those working in integrated settings, such as computer programmers and office clerks, who were engaged in



the same work as their sighted colleagues.

The aspects in which visually impaired workers considered themselves to be different from sighted workers also varied according to the type of work in which they were engaged.

Table 6.4 Aspects of difference between the blind and the sighted recognised by blind workers at private firms by the type of work <sup>11</sup>				
Aspects of difference	Massage	Teleph.	Computer	Clerk
Employment status	<u>48%</u>	25%	21%	11%
Wages	<u>38%</u>	24%	3%	8%
Job performance	17%	29%	30%	<u>50%</u>
Training opportunity	25%	22%	30%	17%
Promotion	16%	20%	24%	17%
Access to information	22%	<u>63%</u>	21%	19%
Base <sup>12</sup>	63	51	33	36

Table 6-4 shows three striking points. Firstly, nearly a half (48%) of quota masseurs felt themselves 'discriminated' against in terms of employment status, and 38% felt their wages were considerably lower than sighted workers. Secondly, nearly two thirds (63%) of telephonists found difficulty in accessing official information at work, such as, circulars and notice-boards in the offices. Thirdly, as many as half (50%) of clerks considered themselves to be less capable than their sighted colleagues in terms of job performance. The following accounts explain these

---

<sup>11</sup> When visually impaired workers considered themselves to be 'different' from sighted workers in terms of employment status, wages, training opportunity, promotion and access to information, it may be possible to interpret these 'differences' as evidence of 'discrimination' against visually impaired workers. However, in terms of job performance, it can be said that visually impaired workers considered themselves 'inferior' to sighted workers.

<sup>12</sup> Number of respondents.

problems.

The employment conditions of quota masseurs varied according to individual employers. However, their employment status was often different from that of normal full-time employees.

Ichiro, a quota masseur currently working for a newspaper publisher, explained;

"At the beginning I was employed on a part-time basis, despite the fact that I worked eight hours every weekday. Although my monthly contract wage was almost same as that of sighted full-time employees, I could have neither yearly pay increase nor additional payments, such as, seasonal bonus pay and overtime pay. I could not join the employees' trade union. I negotiated with senior staff of the personnel department for full-time employment. It was a tough negotiation because I had to do it by myself alone."

Yuko, a quota masseuse currently working at a department store, said;

"I enjoy my job because there are many people waiting for treatment everyday. But I am not satisfied with my wage. I have been employed on a yearly basis. While those with permanent appointments can enjoy yearly pay increases, my wage has not increased at all since I began to work seven years ago. However, because there are about four hundred employees with yearly appointments at our store, I hesitate to demand a permanent appointment."

While normal full-time employees in Japanese firms generally have permanent appointments, the majority of quota masseurs have a one-year appointment. Although they can normally expect an extension of the appointment, they often miss the yearly pay increase, seasonal bonus payments, and membership of the employees' trade union, all of which are the core of the Japanese managerial system.

In short, quota masseurs are carefully discriminated

from normal full-time workers together with many married women working on a part-time basis. This is also sometimes the case for other types of visually impaired workers, such as telephonists and office clerks. However, in terms of employment conditions, there is far more discrimination against quota masseurs than other visually impaired workers.

This appears to be largely because they are engaged in peculiar work which is not undertaken by any sighted worker in offices. While there are sighted telephonists and clerks, but there are no sighted masseurs in ordinary firms.

In a sense, quota masseurs are not only the 'minority' but also the 'outsiders' at work.

Ichiro, a quota masseur explained,

"I hate being called 'Mr. Hamada' by my sighted colleagues at work. I feel as if I am an outsider. I asked them to call me just 'Ichiro' because I am not one of their customers but their colleague. But, they still treat me like a customer."

As we have seen, telephonists were also separated from normal workers because of the specialisation of their work. However, unlike the case of quota masseurs, there are both sighted and blind telephonists in offices. Because there are sighted people who are engaged in the same job, visually impaired telephonists are not discriminated against in terms of employment conditions although their wages are considerably lower than general workers, such as clerks. Instead, visually impaired telephonists felt themselves excluded in terms of access to official information at work, such as circulars and notice-boards.

Yoshiko, aged 26 and totally blind, working at a local authority office, explained why she was concerned about the availability of official information at work.

"During work I see none of my colleagues except a sighted boss and an agency telephonist who is my backup. I am working in isolation. I want to get in touch with my colleagues whether sighted or blind and whether telephonists

or not. I meet my colleagues through trade union activities. I think the circulars of the trade union should be printed in Braille as well."

The difficulty of gaining access to official information at work was not only a problem for totally blind telephonists but also those with good residual vision.

Reiko, a partially sighted woman aged 33, who had worked for eight years as a telephonist at a department store, recalled;

"I had to remember the names of all senior staff. Although there was a list of the senior staff which was made for telephonists, I had to make one for my own use because I could hardly see the ordinary list. Moreover, I needed to remember the names and location of all the shops in our store. When someone called up a shop which had no internal line I had to switch the call to the nearest shop which did have one. There was also a map of the shops in the store, but I could not see it. I walked around the store during my rest period in order to make my own map."

There seem to be a number of reasons why visually impaired telephonists are more concerned than other visually impaired workers about circulars and notice-boards in the offices. Firstly, because telephonists are isolated at work, the circulars and the notice-boards are a crucial means of providing them with a link to their colleagues, and therefore, a sense of belonging. Secondly, for the purpose of their job, telephonists need to know official announcements about changes in personnel and in organisational structure in the offices. Finally, as is suggested by the Japan Light House survey<sup>13</sup>, because

---

<sup>13</sup> Rodosho (Ministry of Labour) & Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai (Japanese Association for the Promotion of the Employment for Disabled People), Sikaku Shogaisha no Shokuba Teichaku Housaku ni kansuru Chosa Kenkyu (Report of the survey of visually impaired workers regarding the term of their employment), 1994, Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai, p.57.

technological advances in telephones tends to threaten their jobs they are also concerned about the personnel policy of the employers. As a consequence, visually impaired telephonists tend to be highly sensitive to circulars and notice-boards in their offices.

In contrast both to quota masseurs and telephonists, visually impaired clerks often regarded themselves as different from their sighted colleagues in terms of job performance. There are two types of visually impaired clerks. The first are totally blind clerks who specialise in services for blind customers. The second are partially sighted clerks who are engaged in ordinary jobs with sighted clerks. In the case of specialist blind clerks, although they are confident in their work they often feel themselves 'marginal' at work.

Nuiko, aged 26, a totally blind specialist clerk to a toy manufacturer, said;

"I'm making a Braille pamphlet of toys and amusement parks for blind children. We produce the same pamphlet in normal print for their sighted parents. We also send Braille stickers to about three hundred blind children who write to us. I read all these letters from children because they were written in Braille.

"I am working with a sighted boss and a part-time sighted assistant who is employed by a 'personal assistant' scheme under the quota employment legislation. The grant is paid by the government in order to meet a part of the cost of the personal assistant for disabled employees. In fact, my employer registered a full-time worker as my assistant so as to receive the full amount of the grant. Then, they provided me with a part-time assistant. But I didn't complain about it because they allowed me to choose the assistant. She is a housewife and a nice person. Before she came, I had another part-time assistant whom the employer chose without my consent. It was terrible because the previous assistant didn't listen to me at all and caused me a lot of trouble, involving lies and rumours. Now, it's

all right.

"My sighted boss, Mr. Kawasaki, has deeply committed himself to the issues of disability, integration and normalisation. He is well known in the field of the employment of disabled people. He is an unpaid secretary of an association of the employers of disabled workers. He often delivers public lectures. His comments are in newspapers and social work magazines.

"However, Mr. Kawasaki seems to me to be too committed to disability issues which make no direct profit for his company. I think my colleagues are suspicious about his contribution to the firm. They say, 'Mr. Kawasaki is special, because he has a personal link to the owner of the firm.' I discovered that the father of Mr. Kawasaki had also worked for this firm, and he died when Mr. Kawasaki was a child. Since that time, the owner of the firm has looked after him and his mother. Therefore, he is rather peculiar among ordinary employees.

"It was all right during the economic boom. But during the recession, our jobs are likely to be regarded as useless by our colleagues, because we can make little contribution to our sales output. In the current recession everybody is talking about cost efficiency.

"I feel myself 'marginal' and 'insecure'. If my job is regarded as insignificant for the company, I would like to undertake mainstream work, for example, planning for new products, and translation of safety regulations for toys in foreign countries. Although those who are engaged in the translation of safety regulations tell me that it is a boring job, they are definitely contributing to our export business. I want to prove that I can make a significant contribution to the company."

The marginality of the specialist services for blind customers in terms of profit-making tends to marginalise socially those who are engaged in that work, that is, not only specialist blind clerks but also sighted senior staff in charge of the work.

The following account of Kazuhiro, aged 25, a totally blind specialist clerk at a soap manufacturer shows that even if the specialist services for blind customers are regarded as important by sighted colleagues, the blind clerk may wish to undertake mainstream work rather than his current specialist job.

Kazuhiro said,

"My boss, the head of the customers' information department, had the idea that it is no longer the age of manipulating the public image of our commodities. In the past, we made expensive visual advertisements by using film stars and popular singers. But, according to my boss, that advertising strategy is currently out of date. He says today is the age of 'pragmatism' and 'realism' again, as it was in the 1960s. It means that we have to produce user-friendly, as well as, environmentally friendly, commodities, for example, washing soap which is easy to use both for disabled and frail elderly people. I really like his ideas, and my job plays a significant role in the context of his advertisement strategy. Because the past business contributions of my boss are highly regarded by his colleagues, all his sighted staff support his advertisement strategy, and therefore, respect my job.

"Being encouraged by my boss, I worked hard and I am satisfied with what I have done in the past three years. We have about a hundred blind customers who are registered on our customers' list. I have made, and have been updating every year, a catalogue of our products for blind customers. However, it is not just a catalogue. Because of the demand from blind customers, we explain how to use each product. I test all products myself. I wash my clothes at home, and consider how to explain the proper use of washing soap. For example, most of our products are nowadays prepared for repacking so as to save the waste of environmentally damaging plastic containers. However, it is not easy for blind customers to pack new soap into an empty plastic container. I devised a particular method of repacking for blind customers. We write special

instructions for blind customers in the catalogue. Moreover, we are providing one-day courses for blind customers in washing and tooth brushing several times a year. The courses are popular among blind customers. "I think I have already established the foundation of services for blind customers. We already have the know-how regarding services, therefore, any blind person can be engaged in this job. So, I want to have another blind clerk to take my job, while I move to a mainstream job, that is, planning for new products. If you had a concern about blind users in the course of planning and designing new products, we could provide blind, as well as, frail elderly, customers with much better services. "My boss is encouraging me to go into the mainstream, and I really wish to do so. I have already spent three years here. I have to prove that I can contribute to the business not only through information services for blind customers but also some other work as well. At the moment, I feel myself a little bit under pressure."

Thus, unlike visually impaired quota masseurs and telephonists, blind specialist clerks are neither discriminated against nor isolated from sighted workers. However, their work is 'different' from that of the majority of sighted workers because they are specifically engaged in providing services for a tiny minority of customers, blind people. While the specialist nature of their work brings them a considerable degree of job satisfaction, it tends to allocate them marginal roles at work. Therefore, blind specialist clerks wish to participate in mainstream jobs in order to achieve full membership of the workforce.

The second group of visually impaired clerks are partially sighted people who are engaged in mainstream jobs, that is, work which is normally undertaken by sighted workers. However, partially sighted clerks also regarded themselves as 'different' from sighted colleagues not in terms of the type of work but job performance.



After having worked for eight years as a telephonist at a department store, Reiko, aged 33, was currently employed as an assistant community worker at a local authority. She explained the difficulties of her current job.

Reiko said:

"At the moment, I am in charge of three social clubs for women living in our area. With the representatives of the clubs, I plan and run the events of these clubs. Normally, we invite a guest speaker, and I book a hall for the meeting and send invitation cards to the members of the club. On the meeting day, I set up the hall and close when it finishes.

"My colleagues are normally in charge of three or four community clubs. Therefore, my work load is almost the same as theirs. Although they also work in shifts as receptionists at our office, I hardly do such work. At the reception, I have to deal with many forms. I cannot immediately find a proper form on request. Sometimes, I get into a panic when there is a long queue of clients.

"Although I have already spent four years at this office, I have not been confident of my ability to deal with the job. The job is much harder than I expected. I am much slower than my colleagues. Being surrounded by sighted people, I often feel as if I am 'disabled'. I hardly felt myself 'disabled' before I got this job. I had always been confident of my ability when I had worked as a telephonist."

Partially sighted clerks tended to regard themselves as inferior to sighted colleagues in terms of both the amount and the quality of work which they carried out. This sense of inferiority led some partially sighted clerks into accepting unfair employment conditions in private firms.

Yasuhiro, aged 26, had worked for five years for a company maintaining office computers; there were more than three hundred employees, but he was unable to get the 'permanent' appointment which is usual for normal full-time male employees of such a large-scale private firm in Japan.

Yasuhiro said:

"I am extremely busy at work. I keep and update data on our customers. I also keep and check computer parts in stock. I receive the orders for maintenance from our customers. I receive information from the head office in Tokyo. I word-process for senior staff. I do almost everything except visiting clients to maintain the computers. I cannot visit clients because I cannot drive a car.

"I have worked for five years in this branch office. Ordinary workers, including senior staff, move from one office to another every few years. Therefore, I have worked longer in this office than anyone else. In that sense, I am the most experienced in services for our local customers. New senior staff often ask me about our local customers. It makes me even busier because they interrupt my work.

"I have been employed on the basis of one-year appointments. At the beginning they told me that I would be able to have a permanent post. But, I couldn't. I am not discriminated against in terms of salary. I can receive additional payments which are same as other workers, and my wage is increased yearly like others. But I have to ask the employer to renew my appointment every year. I feel it unfair because I am engaged in the same job as workers with permanent appointments.

"When I asked for a permanent appointment, senior staff said,

'When you get permanent post, you will have to work much harder. It will not good for your eyes.'

'Well, you can't drive a car, can you?'

'If your sight becomes more severely impaired in future, you won't be able to work, will you?', and so on.

I became unsure about my capacity to work under the same conditions as sighted colleagues."

Thus, almost all visually impaired people working in offices where the majority of employees are sighted experience certain forms of discrimination from their sighted colleagues.

Shichiro, aged 27, a social worker for the blind at a voluntary organisation explained why visually impaired workers in integrated employment were often treated differently to sighted workers.

Shichiro said:

"Our organisation trains visually impaired people in telephony and computer programming, and encourages them to enter employment in ordinary firms with sighted people. Although we call it the 'normal' employment of visually impaired people in contrast to traditional blind masseurs and acupuncturists, I don't think it is 'normal' at all. From my viewpoint, they are the same as traditional masseurs.

"Before I took this job, I had attempted to get employment in ordinary firms. At that time, if I had been a telephonist or a computer programmer I could have got employment in any private firm. However, it was not the employment which I sought. I did not want to be employed as a 'disabled' worker.

"In order to be 'normal' at work, you have to enter employment in competition with sighted job seekers on the same ground. And also, you have to be engaged in the same job with sighted colleagues. In order to be equal to sighted people, you need the same exams, jobs and achievements. Otherwise, we will never be regarded as 'equal' by sighted people."

All of those mentioned so far in this section entered their current employment through being registered as 'disabled' at the local labour office. In other words, they entered employment through a special door for disabled job-seekers which separated them from able-bodied labour market. As a consequence, there was no possibility of promotion for these visually impaired people. Under the Japanese managerial system, both those without permanent appointment and specialist workers, such as, telephonists, quota masseurs and computer programmers, are excluded from promotion, although they may have a yearly pay increase. It was only a minority of visually impaired workers in

private firms who regarded themselves as 'different' in terms of promotion. (See Table 6-4) However, this never meant that they were not discriminated against in terms of promotion. In practice, it meant that only a minority of visually impaired workers were interested in promotion while the majority had neither the possibility of nor interest in promotion. Among those involved in the study were two visually impaired people who entered employment in competition with sighted people on an equal footing, and therefore, could be promoted.

Toshiro, aged 32, who had worked for nine years as a social worker at a local authority, had originally entered the employment together with sighted colleagues through the same examination for service. He said:

"I have somehow managed my work so far, although I am 'slower' than my colleagues. When I was a student I didn't regard myself 'slow'. I found myself 'slower' than others when I began to work.

"I have a problem in understanding other people's handwriting. I have to read casework records which are written by my colleagues. It takes me a long time to get to grips with the records. In particular, I hate reading physicians' letters. Their handwriting is terrible.

"Now, I wonder whether I should sit an exam for promotion. If I become a senior social worker, I have to supervise the casework of my junior staff. I have to read their casework records. It is impossible for me to read all their records because it takes me so long.

"My boss suggests that if I was a supervisor I could tell my staff to write case records clearly in large letters. However, I am afraid that it may give my staff an advantage over me. Moreover, if I lose my sight in the future I could never work as supervisor."

Thus even if there is a possibility of promotion, it is not always an indication of 'equality' between visually impaired workers and sighted colleagues. Indeed, in the case of Toshiro, the opportunity of promotion intensified his sense

of 'difference' from sighted colleagues.

In general, except for specialist workers, such as telephonists, those working for local authorities are the most likely to have the opportunity of promotion regardless of their disability. However, there is another group of disabled workers who may be promoted, namely, those working for small-scale firms.

Akihiro, aged 30, had worked for eight years at several turneries as a computer programmer for electronic lathes, and had been promoted whenever he had moved from one firm to another.

"Although I was originally referred to my first job by the rehabilitation centre where I had been trained in programming electronic lathes, I quitted the job soon after because of harassment. They just wanted not me but the grant for quota employment. Then, I found another place soon after, because in those days there were still few electronic lathe operators. Within a year I moved to another firm which was relatively large in scale in the field of this business. There were about thirty employees. I stayed there for three years because the wages were good. "However, I was extremely busy there. We had to work overtime everyday and we hardly had weekends. Soon after, a senior worker and a colleague left the job because it was too hard, and I became a senior worker with an assistant. Then, I became much busier than before. As a senior worker, I had to make deals with clients as well as operating lathes. I was always in hurry. I received an order from a client in the afternoon, and we had to deliver the goods by the next morning. I don't know how I managed the job. I was still young and tough. I worked without a single day off for three and half months. It was crazy. "Then, I was invited to move to another firm which was smaller in scale. There were about ten employees. It was the firm where my brother was working. The owner of the firm asked us to run his business. My brother was in charge of dealing with customers and I was in charge of

manufacturing goods. We developed the business and established two new workshops. However, we went bankrupt during the recession in 1993. We had invested too much in equipment during the boom around 1990."

The world of small-scale business is a relatively less discriminatory for some disabled workers who have well developed business talents. They may be able to stand on an equal footing with sighted workers. However, it is neither stable nor secure employment. Although they can be promoted, they may either lose their job because of bankruptcy or become ill through over-work.

Thus, visually impaired people in 'integrated' employment were in reality 'marginalised' at work in various ways. Quota masseurs tended to experience "discrimination" in terms of wages and employment conditions. Telephonists often felt themselves "isolated" at work, while blind specialist clerks found "difficulties in getting into the mainstream work". Partially sighted workers engaged in the mainstream work with their sighted colleagues regarded themselves either as "inferior" to the sighted counterparts or as being "treated unfairly" by the employers and colleagues. In short, visually impaired people in 'integrated' employment experience some form of barrier at work. Let us now consider how visually impaired people responded to these barriers and managed their 'marginal identity' at work.

#### 6-4 Management of Marginal Identity: How did they cope with the barriers at work?

Two types of identity management emerged from the study which were employed by visually impaired people who wanted to transform their marginal identity at work. One was to participate in the activities of their sighted colleagues whether at or outside work. Another was to be associated either with other visually impaired people whether at or out of work, or disabled colleagues in general at work, in order to compensate for their marginality.

As we have seen, specialist blind clerks, such as Nuiko and Kazuhiro, expressed the wish to be engaged in mainstream jobs at the office to make a more significant contribution to the firm and to occupy a more central and secure place at work. It seems reasonable that visually impaired workers who felt themselves 'marginal' at work should attempt to participate in work normally undertaken by their sighted colleagues.

Tomoko, a partially sighted woman with good residual vision, aged 33, working for a pharmaceutical firm as a telephonist, explained;

"When I started this job four years ago, I was lonely because I was the only telephonist in the office. Although almost all women in the office worked in shifts as telephonists for a short period everyday, they were normally engaged in clerical work. I felt myself 'different' and 'insecure'.

"I worked hard to be associated with my sighted colleagues. Before switching the line to my colleagues, I gave them information about the call. For example, 'A call from Mr. K, sounds like he's furious'.

"I often receive calls from customers when there is no one in the office, for example, during lunch time. I write orders for articles on behalf of my sighted colleagues. Later, I tell them, 'Can you read the order? Sorry, I have

bad eyes'.

"I am not just a telephonist. I am pleased to do whatever I can. My boss told me that if there is anybody else like me he would like to employ another visually impaired telephonist."

As has been suggested in the case of Nuiko and Kazuhiro, blind specialist clerks, it may not be easy for visually impaired workers to participate in the mainstream employment of sighted colleagues. However, there were a number of people who participated in the activities of their sighted colleagues not at but outside work.

Satoko, aged 29, a quota masseuse, took lunch everyday with her sighted colleagues.

"Before lunch time, there are some who call me up. They ask me whether they can come to a massage room to have lunch. They prefer the massage room to the staff dining room which is extremely crowded during lunch time.

"They buy their lunch outside and come to the massage room everyday. We have a chat over lunch. I offer them a place, and they bring lunch for me."

Moreover, there were several women who occasionally went shopping with their sighted colleagues.

Yuko, aged 50, a quota masseuse at a department store;  
"Sometime I go shopping with sighted colleagues on holiday. They take me around."

Yoshiko, aged 26, a telephonist said;

"I go shopping with a sighted colleague after work."

However, visually impaired people usually spend their leisure time with their peers rather than with their sighted colleagues at work.

Yuko said;

"I normally spend my holiday with the teachers of a blind



school, where I had worked as a teaching assistant some time ago. We meet once a week at a senior teacher's home and invite a master of recitation. We learn how to recite Japanese traditional poems. That is my great fun."

Yoshiko also said;

"I go to pubs with sighted members of our trade union. I also went on holiday with them to a resort. They played tennis. I had nothing to do. I prefer going out with my blind school friends."

Visually impaired people, particularly totally blind young women, appeared to be excluded from their sighted counterparts not only at work but also in leisure as well.

Yoshiko explained;

"Sighted girls are always enjoying whatever they see. They talk about clothes, accessories, hairstyles, cosmetics and jewellery. When we travel by train, they talk about the scenery. When we dine they talk about the colours and the shapes of the food. When they play tennis, they talk about how the men play. Because they always talk about appearances and sights, it is impossible for me to take part in the conversation."

Visual elements in ordinary social chats among sighted people tend to intensify the marginality and the isolation of visually impaired people at work. It is not only the case with totally blind workers but also those with good residual vision.

Reiko, a partially sighted woman aged 33, working for a local authority as an assistant community worker explained; "In the office, I hardly understand why people are laughing. I feel myself 'isolated'."

Yoshiko who grew up in blind school also said;

"Until recently I didn't know that sighted people communicate with each other in silence with their eyes."

Asako, a totally blind woman aged 26, who had worked for one year as a telephonist at a private firm, said;

"I am trying to establish good social relationships with my sighted colleagues. I am often told that I look blue because I am quiet. My colleagues encourage me to chat with them, but it is difficult for me. I knew sighted people because I went to university. I watch television programs which are popular among sighted people. But whenever I talk my sighted colleagues find my talk boring. "I am often regarded as less emotional than ordinary girls although I cry and laugh. In order to get along with sighted people I have to be always cheerful even if I am depressed at heart."

Visually impaired people have difficulties not only in written communication but also in 'oral' communication with sighted people. Face-to-face communication in the sighted world is in fact 'audio-visual' communication. Therefore, as is the case for deaf people, visually impaired people can also understand only part of communication. Such 'cultural' barriers, as well as, 'social' barriers, or 'institutional discrimination' in Michael Oliver's term, prevent visually impaired people from participating in the sighted world. However, it may be particularly the case among visually impaired women because no men mentioned difficulties in 'oral' communication. There may be more visual elements in conversations among women than those among men.

There was another 'cultural barrier' which prevented visually impaired women in particular from participating the leisure activities of the sighted.

Keiko, a totally blind woman aged 27, working for a Braille publisher, explained;

"When I was at university I had several sighted friends. We often had tea and a chat, and sometimes, went to pubs with men. We still keep in touch with each other. But I didn't join them when they went for holidays because I

couldn't ask them easily to take me to public baths and dressing rooms at hotels<sup>14</sup>. Instead, I went to the seaside with my blind school friends. I don't care about them because we knew each other from childhood. I can easily ask them for help when I change into a swimsuit and when I take a bath."

In fact, the majority of people spend their leisure time with their blind school friends or some other visually impaired people. While enjoying their company, they complain about their work and their problems in their social relations with their sighted colleagues at work. Through the companionship of the blind world, they compensate for their 'marginal identity' in the sighted world. Informal association among visually impaired people in leisure naturally leads to the establishment of formal organisations of visually impaired people in integrated employment. An example is the Association of Quota Masseurs.

Ichiro, aged 45, a quota masseur, explained;  
"There are about seventy members mainly in Tokyo and Osaka. Those in Tokyo are better treated than us by their employers, and they have permanent appointments. Their movement is stronger than ours, and local labour offices in Tokyo are tougher with the employers than their counterparts in Osaka. However, the Association of Quota Masseurs is an unofficial organisation, which is not recognised by any kind of authority, such as, government, trade unions, and employers' associations. We meet once in two months on Sunday, and exchange information about our jobs."

---

<sup>14</sup> In Japan, resort hotels normally have no personal bathrooms. Instead, they have two separate large public bathrooms for men and women, which can accommodate more than fifty people at once. In the bathroom, the use of long canes is embarrassing for other people because everybody is naked. Therefore, in the Japanese public bath, visually impaired people are totally dependent on sighted guides. It is culturally rather strange for naked sighted men to take naked blind men around in the public bath. It is still more strange for women.

Satoko, aged 26, a quota masseuse, described the meetings. "At the meetings, we normally have a lecture about 'short-session' massage. However, people come for a social meeting after the lecture. We complain about our wages, working hours, and the attitudes of sighted bosses and colleagues. I find myself luckier than others because I am treated much better than them by my employer."

Because the Association of Quota Masseurs is an unofficial organisation, they have no power to negotiate with the employers. However, it seems to provide quota masseurs with a sense of belonging and ease to an extent to which they can compensate for their marginality at work.

The disabled workers' unit of the civil service trade union is another formal organisation with which some people in the study were associated.

Mihoko, aged 34, a telephonist at a local authority office and a senior member of the unit, explained their activities. "The ultimate purpose of our unit is to increase the number of disabled workers who are employed by the local authority.

The more disabled people we see at work, the better we are understood by non-disabled colleagues. If we remain as a tiny minority among civil servants, we can never be treated as the equals of non-disabled colleagues.

"Although we have no representative on the executive council of our trade union, we have a power to put pressure on the executive council because we are the most active section in the trade union.

"Personally, I owe a lot to the trade union movement of disabled workers. Before joining the union, I had always regarded myself as 'inferior', and therefore, a 'burden' on society. I had always been cautious about giving trouble to sighted people because of my visual impairment at school and at work. However, I came across a chap in a wheelchair through the union activities. He was a cheerful and pleasant person. He convinced me that disabled people are not a burden on society, and that we have a right to live as

we are. Since that time, I gradually changed, and I became able to manage the relationships with my sighted colleagues at work. Until then, I had been unable to say anything to sighted people around me.

"Now, I demand anything, such as an audio word-processor, when it is expected to improve my working conditions. If I work more efficiently, I can contribute more to the office, and therefore, to my sighted colleagues."

Reiko, aged 33, an assistant community worker at a local authority, explained the importance of increasing the number of disabled workers in offices.

"When I came to the office, I expected civil servants to be more sympathetic to our special needs. It turned out to be wrong. In my office, they put things anywhere and never sort them out. It takes me ages to find staplers and files. My colleagues always leave their desks without sliding their drawers and chairs in. I have to be careful when moving around even in my office. Once I asked them to sort out things in the office so as to enable me to walk around easily and to find things immediately. But they were not happy at all. So, I never ask them. Unless we have more disabled people in offices, our needs cannot be understood by able-bodied colleagues. That is what we always talk about with disabled members of the trade union."

Thus, as was the case of the association of quota masseurs, in order to compensate for their marginality at work, visually impaired workers often join the disabled workers' unit of the trade union and participate in their activities. Moreover, unlike the association of quota masseurs, since the disabled workers' unit is an official organisation as part of a trade union, it is possible for them to transform their marginality at work through trade union activities. However, some visually impaired members of the union are cautious about being associated with those in wheelchairs who are the majority of the disabled workers.

Yoshiko, aged 26, a telephonist, explained;

"It is useful to cooperate with those in wheelchairs because we have shared interests in many respects. For example, the building which is accessible for those in wheelchair is also easy for us to access, too. We can understand each other's problems. However, the special needs of visually impaired people should not be ignored. Because we are a tiny minority even among disabled workers in general, our needs and demands tend to be forgotten."

Visually impaired people appear to be 'marginal' not only at work but also even among their disabled peers. However, it is fortunate if you can be a member of a trade union and there are some disabled colleagues at work. In private firms, disabled workers are often excluded from trade union membership because of their short term appointments, and as a consequence, there is no disabled workers' unit in the trade unions. However, an isolated quota masseur attempted to compensate for his marginality through informal association with a 'hard of hearing' person in the mainstream of the firm.

Ichiro, aged 45, a quota masseur at the publisher of a newspaper, said;

"I expected that if I worked for the publisher of a newspaper I would easily access information. However, I have no link to the newspaper. I don't know what is written in our newspapers. Although I am a member of a trade union, I do not know what our trade union is doing. The union staff told me that they had held a bowling tournament. I didn't know that. They said they announced the tournament through the union circular. How can I read it?

"At the moment, I am translating a serial article in our newspaper into Braille. The article is about an old blind masseur and is written by a 'hard of hearing' pressman. He became hearing impaired in his fifties. I often go to see him and ask him to check my translation."

Thus, it emerged that two methods of identity

management were often employed by visually impaired people in integrated employment. Some sought to participate in the activities of their sighted colleagues as far as possible in order to be integrated at work. However, the majority of the people involved in the study compensated for their marginal identity at work through being associated with other visually impaired people or disabled people in general.

## Summary

In this chapter, it emerged that many visually impaired people maintained a 'sighted identity' regardless of whether they were totally blind or partially sighted, whether they went to blind schools or sighted schools, and whether or not they were visually impaired at birth. Those who identified themselves with sighted people tended to seek employment in the sighted world. At work, however, they faced various barriers which made it difficult for them to maintain their 'sighted identity'. Firstly, they were excluded from 'normal entry' into employment, and they often experienced more disadvantageous conditions than normal sighted workers once they found a job, for example, low wages, short term appointments, and relegation to specific jobs which brought them no opportunity of promotion. Secondly, because their roles at work were often limited to specific areas of work, such as, massage, telephony, computer programming, and special services for blind customers, they regarded themselves as 'marginal' at work. In order to compensate for the marginality, they tried to participate in the mainstream at work as far as possible either through individual effort, as well as collective activities, such as those of the disabled workers' trade union, and the association of quota masseurs.

However, it is important to note that the barriers at work were not only 'social' but also 'cultural' in nature. It was not only because of 'institutional discrimination' that visually impaired people could not participate in the mainstream at work. Some visually impaired people, young totally blind women in particular, were often excluded and isolated from social chats among their sighted colleagues because of the visual elements of the conversational exchange. It is not only deaf people but also visually impaired people who face difficulties in face-to-face communication with sighted-hearing people. Visual cues are very important in communication.



## Chapter 7 Conclusion and Policy Implications

### Introduction

In this chapter, policy implications will be discussed based on the findings of the present research. In the first section, three hypotheses which were presented in Chapter Four will be tested against the outcomes of the field survey in Japan. What kind of barriers do blind people face at work? How do they develop their particular views of employment based on the experience of barriers? In what ways do the separatist and integrationist approaches to employment coexist with each other? In the second section, the current education and employment policy for the blind in Japan will be reviewed in the light of the findings from the present research.

## 7-1 Experience of Blindness at Work

As was shown in Chapter Four, the historical analysis of the blind identity in Japan and Britain presented three hypotheses. Firstly, it was assumed that the blind identity emerged primarily in the employment field because of barriers at work. Secondly, it was also suggested that blind people developed on the basis of their experience of barriers two particular views of employment, namely, the 'separatist' approach and the 'integrationist' approach. Finally, from blind people's viewpoint, there was no dichotomy between separation and integration in employment. The field survey of blind people in Japan substantiated these hypotheses.

None of those involved in the study identified themselves with "the blind" simply because they lost their sight. In the case of those who lost their sight in the middle of life, they continued to pursue their previous "sighted role" as long as possible. Those who had already been employed tried to maintain their previous job either by concealing their impairment or by overcoming handicap at work. In the case of those who became visually impaired in the middle of school years, they wished to remain at sighted schools as long as possible. Even those who were blind from birth did not find themselves unable to participate in sighted schools and society. Thus, in any case, at the onset of visual impairment, people initially tried to "assimilate" into the sighted world.

It was only after they gave up the "assimilation strategy" that people began to identify themselves as members of the blind community. It was primarily in the employment field where people discovered formidable barriers. For instance, while blind children either at sighted or blind schools could maintain their "sighted identity", those disengaged from sighted employment did no longer identify themselves with the sighted world. Compared with the barriers in the other areas of life, the

barriers at work had a crucial impact upon the self-identity of blind people.

The barriers in the employment field took various forms. There were barriers at the entrance to employment: visually impaired people were debarred from entering into employment in the normal way. They were allowed to enter only through limited opportunities, such as, quota employment schemes and traditionally reserved occupations. Once they were employed, while in the case of quota employment they were often relegated to specific jobs which led them to a marginal status at work, in the case of reserved occupations they were hindered by competition from their sighted counterparts and physicians. However, these barriers were not simply due to prejudice and institutional discrimination against blind people. The essential nature of the barriers was the pervasiveness of the visual elements at work. Those who had previously been in normal sighted employment gave up their jobs when their residual vision had so deteriorated that they could no longer perform the essential parts of their jobs, for example, recognising order forms and filling sales slips. Similarly, those with good residual vision who were engaged in the same jobs as their sighted counterparts accepted a lower status at work than the sighted because they could not perform some tasks, for example, driving a car. It was also because of visual elements at work that many blind people were relegated to such specific jobs as telephonists and masseurs and were either marginalised at their workplaces or hindered by competition from their sighted counterparts and physicians. As visual cues in daily conversation debarred visually impaired people from participating fully and easily in sighted social life, visual elements at work discouraged them from assimilating successfully into the sighted world of work.

Based on the experience of barriers at work, blind people cease assimilating into the sighted world and begin to differentiate themselves from the sighted majority

through two different approaches to employment, namely, the "separatist" approach and the "integrationist" approach. The former "separatist" approach is illustrated by blind masseurs who have always demanded throughout the twentieth century to reserve their occupation exclusively for the blind. According to the postal survey component of the study which included a hundred blind masseurs in Osaka, the majority (82%) wanted to reduce the number of sighted masseurs. Although there were a minority of people (4%) who welcomed the competition from sighted practitioners, many blind masseurs regarded the competition as unfair. For instance, sighted practitioners can drive a car or a motorcycle and provide mobile services. They can monitor their appearance and tidy themselves up before they see the clients. They can also watch their clients and read their needs in their faces. They can communicate with the clients more easily than blind practitioners both by responding to visual cues in conversation and by taking advantage of their wider experience in and knowledge about the sighted world. When they run the business on their own, sighted practitioners advertise their business more effectively than their blind counterparts by using visual images. Furthermore, sighted entrepreneurs can run the business on a larger scale than blind master masseurs because they can keep their "eye" on a large number of employees. In short, sighted practitioners bring visual elements into the business of anma and acupuncture. As a result, blind practitioners are forced to compete with them in fields other than the skills involved in the job. Blind masseurs want to rule out sighted practitioners because they change the nature of business in anma and acupuncture so as to create the barriers of visual elements even within what has been an important aspect of the blind world.

This point also applies to those in 'sighted' occupations, such as telephonists and computer programmers. Blind telephonists can compete with their sighted counterparts in terms of the essential part of the job. However, sighted telephonists tend to extend their job to

the areas other than telephony, and create barriers for blind telephonists. Similarly, in the early days of information technology, blind computer programmers could compete with their sighted counterparts, but the increasing use of visual symbols and "icons" in the recent software programs, such as, "windows", tends to jeopardise their jobs. Therefore, the "separatist" approach is by no means peculiar to blind masseurs. Whatever occupation blind people engage in, sighted people engaging in the same occupation bring visual elements into the job and eventually make the job unsuitable for the blind. In that sense, in order to provide blind people with stable employment, it is necessary to restrict to some extent the entrance of sighted people into the occupations which are suitable for blind people.

While the separatists try to create separate work for the blind by excluding sighted people and visual elements from the work, the integrationists aim to establish their own place within the sighted world of work despite their marginal status at work. Neither assimilating into nor separating from the sighted world, those integrationists choose to remain as a minority in the sighted world. In order to stay in an alien world, they need the association with the blind community. For example, blind telephonists and quota masseurs needed the company of their blind peers in order to compensate for their isolation at work in the sighted world. Those in sighted employment relied on the blind community not only as a compensation for their marginal status but also as a crucial basis on which they could establish their own place at work. For instance, blind specialist clerks were employed by the firms which were willing to serve their blind customers. Without the blind community, blind specialist clerks cannot hold their jobs. Similarly, for those working in local governments, it was an important part of their work and trade union activities to encourage the general public, including their sighted colleagues, to understand the unique needs of the blind. In general, the integrationists aim to establish a

'different but equal' status by representing the blind community in the sighted world and mediating between these two worlds. Similarly, the separatists also seek the 'different but equal' status in the sense that they want to be regarded as equal to the rest of the society while demanding preferential treatment in the employment field.

Blind people pursue the 'different but equal' status through making their own inimitable contribution to society.

The separatist approach provides the blind with specialised jobs to which a sense of sight is not essential, and therefore, through these particular jobs blind people can make their own inimitable contribution by specialising in non-visual elements of work, such as touching, listening and talking. For instance, the unique method of Japanese acupuncture was invented by the blind so as to accommodate the lack of sight of practitioners, and it was later adopted by sighted practitioners who recognised the advantage of the blind method over the original Chinese method. This is an example of the unique contribution which blind people may only make based on their uniqueness. Similarly, by omitting visual elements from work, blind telephonists can concentrate far more than their sighted counterparts on their essential job, listening and talking to customers. Blind computer programmers can also play an inimitable role in the development of information technology in terms of its audio aspects. The integrationist approach also provides opportunities in which blind people can play a particular role in sighted society by representing the blind community and mediating between these two worlds.

Thus, from blind people's viewpoint, there was no dichotomy between separation and integration in employment. While the separatist approach encourages the reservation and maintenance of existing job opportunities for the blind, the integrationist approach calls for the creation of new opportunities for their employment. Both separatists and integrationists disengage from the sighted world and engage in the blind community in order to make their special

contribution to society and achieve the 'different but equal' status.

To sum up, blind people initially held a "sighted identity" and tried to "assimilate" into the sighted world. However, once they entered into the employment field, they could no longer maintain the sighted identity because of barriers at work. Instead of assimilating into the sighted world, blind people began to differentiate themselves from the sighted by employing two distinct approaches to employment, that is, the "separatist" approach and the "integrationist" approach. These two approaches were complementary to rather than conflicting with each other for the purpose of making a particular contribution to society and achieve a 'different but equal' status. From blind people's viewpoint, the dichotomy was not between separation and integration, but between assimilation and differentiation.

## 7-2 Policy Implications

Blind people's voluntary disengagement from the sighted world and engagement in the blind community has been totally ignored by experts and policy makers in the field of blind welfare in Japan. Therefore, there is a need to review the current policy for the blind.

First of all, the current policy principle of "integration" needs to be reconsidered. It seems to be crucial to make a distinction between "the integration of individual blind persons" and "the integration of the blind as a whole".<sup>1</sup> While the government expects blind persons to be integrated "individually" into mainstream society, the present research suggests that blind people wanted to be integrated without losing their collective identity. As Sainsbury [1986] suggested in the case of deaf people, the possibility of the "parallel world" solution must be considered. As deaf people attained normal life through participating both in hearing and deaf communities, blind people also need their own unique community on which they can rely in order to participate in sighted society. However, while encouraging them to "assimilate" into the sighted majority in the employment field as much as possible, the current policy discourages blind people from making their unique contribution to society through disengagement and differentiation from the sighted world. The policy principle of integration needs to be reformulated in accordance to blind people's search for a "different but equal" status in the sighted world.

As far as education policy is concerned, it seems to be

---

<sup>1</sup> In the field of disability studies, the idea of "integration" has often been considered in the sense that disabled persons should be integrated "individually" into the mainstream society. In practice, it often leads to the "assimilation" of disabled persons into the non-disabled society. For example, Wolfensberger's "normalisation" principles discourage disabled individuals from associating with each other in order to avoid social stigma and achieve "societal integration". See, Wolfensberger [1972].



difficult and, to some extent, impractical to maintain blind schools in their current form. As a matter of fact, the current number of blind children is too small to maintain all existing seventy blind schools. According to the recent government survey of disabled people, the number of visually impaired children under seventeen years of age is estimated to be less than four thousand. This suggests that there are on average about 222 children in each age group. If these children are allocated evenly to existing seventy blind schools, each school will have only three children every year. Moreover, one of these three children is likely to have mental handicap because as many as one third of the estimated number of visually impaired children have mental handicap too. Thus, statistically speaking, the number of pupils at blind schools, particularly that of children in junior grades, is too small to provide proper opportunities for mutual learning. Therefore, it seems to be inevitable to close junior and middle school departments at some of the existing blind schools. The present research found some evidence which gives support to the closure of junior and middle schools. It became evident that the majority of those interviewed had identified with their sighted peers in their childhood and that they became aware of their difference from the sighted only after they entered into the employment field. Therefore, if the significance of blind schools relies on a sense of community among the blind, there is little point in keeping in separate schools blind children who are too immature to develop their distinctive identity. In short, regarding the education of blind children under the age of 14 years, the government should consider the shift from special education to mainstream education particularly in the areas where the number of blind children residing is too small to create viable classes.

However, this does not mean the abolition of blind schools. Instead, the transfer of blind children under the age of 14 years to sighted schools will turn blind schools back into their original form, that is, the schools of anma

and acupuncture for blind adults and young people, and it will strengthen a sense of community among the students. The present research suggests that the blind schools, as well as traditionally reserved occupations, provided a crucial basis on which those disengaged from sighted employment could develop their solidarity and collective identity. In practice, many blind people keep in touch with their blind school friends through work and leisure activities long after leaving school, often throughout the remainder of life. Sometimes, such friendships lead to marriage. The blind schools must be maintained primarily for those who have experienced the barriers at work and have had themselves disengaged from the sighted world. Accordingly, the schools should specialise in adult education and vocational training.

Regarding employment policy for the blind in general, the current Japanese quota employment scheme has been so far successful in securing employment opportunities. Table 7-1 shows that the number of disabled persons in quota employment has steadily increased since the introduction of the scheme in 1960. Moreover, although the introduction of the levy/grant system in 1975 appeared to have no immediate impact upon the total number of disabled people in quota employment, the levy system increased employment opportunities in the 1980s. The accounts of blind people involved in the present research proved the positive influence of the current quota levy scheme. For instance, partially sighted persons with good residual vision who had never been able to secure employment through the normal means of job hunting obtained secure employment immediately after registering themselves as disabled at local job centres. Furthermore, in the late 1980s, through the employment of quota masseurs and blind specialist clerks, many totally blind people could enter for the first time into integrated employment. This was caused partly by the effect of the levies which were imposed upon employers for failing to fill their quota and partly by the government campaign for the employment of severely disabled people

including totally blind people in the context of the economic boom in the late 1980s.

Year	Number of disabled persons engaged in work on the employment quota	Proportion of disabled employees among all employees %	Ratio of totally unemployed persons in general labour market %
1961	42,192	0.78	1.0
1965	73,788	1.12	0.8
1970	115,149	1.25	1.2
1975	138,065	1.36	1.9
1980	135,228	1.13	2.0
1985	168,276	1.26	2.6
1990	203,634	1.32	2.1
1994	245,348	1.44	2.9

The success of the Japanese quota levy scheme appears to be rather unusual when it is contrasted with the 'failure' in Britain.<sup>3</sup> The Japanese success can be explained by the following factors. Firstly, Japan has never experienced an unemployment rate as high as that of

---

<sup>2</sup> Sources:  
Wakabayashi [1993:40, 70]  
*Rōdōshō* (the Ministry of Labour), *Heisei 7nenban Rōdō Hakusho* (the 1995 White Paper of the Ministry of Labour), 1995, Nihon Rōdō Kenkyū Kikō.

<sup>3</sup> In Britain, the quota employment scheme had increasingly been questioned since the 1970s both by employers and administrators. The continuous decline in the number of those registered as disabled encouraged the anti-quota arguments. In the 1980s, disability lobbies counter-argued for the enforcement of the quota scheme based on the German model of the levy system. However, the disability lobbies were gradually discouraged by the German model since they realised that it enabled employers to opt out of employing disabled people. In the 1990s, the disability lobbies were preoccupied with anti-discrimination legislation, and the British quota scheme was finally abolished in 1995 in exchange for the enactment of an anti-discrimination law.

Britain. The low level of unemployment and the relative shortage of manpower helped the quota scheme to be successful in Japan. Secondly, the Japanese employment quota has been significantly lower than that of Britain. It was originally in 1960 only 1.1 percent, and currently, is still 1.6 percent, which is slightly higher than a half of the British quota. The low employment quota encouraged employers to comply with their obligation. Thirdly, although there were some employers who chose to pay the levies instead of employing disabled people, the levy/grant system provided many employers with financial incentives to employ disabled people. Finally, the Japanese government used "social sanctions" effectively against employers who did not fill their quota. In 1992, the Ministry of Labour announced for the first time the names of the worst employers who did not employ disabled people despite the instructions of the ministry. It had an intimidating impact upon Japanese entrepreneurs who tend to conform to the behaviour patterns of the majority.

Although the current quota scheme has been successful in securing job opportunities in quantity, it should be improved so as to ensure fair competition for employment and fair conditions of employment. As was suggested in Chapter Six, under the current system it is difficult for blind people either to get quota employment for some years after they have left a blind school or a rehabilitation centre, or to seek a better job within quota employment. Job vacancies should be made public and open to all blind job-seekers. Moreover, those in quota employment often experienced unfair employment conditions in terms of wages, status and promotion. Local labour offices should be empowered to investigate the employment conditions of those in quota employment. The legal rights to demand fair employment conditions must be ensured for blind individuals concerned. In short, the combination of the quota levy scheme with anti-discrimination measures, which was in fact

recommended by the Social Justice Commission in Britain<sup>4</sup>, is the most desirable policy option in Japan.

Finally, concerning the employment of blind masseurs and acupuncturists, it became evident that the traditionally reserved occupation is a crucial means through which blind people can make their own inimitable contribution to society. However, blind masseurs and acupuncturists are currently facing strong competition from sighted practitioners, including unlicensed masseurs, various paramedical practitioners and physicians. Without the government's intervention, it seems inevitable that blind people will gradually lose their job opportunities in this field. However, the issue of blind masseurs and acupuncturists has been neglected throughout the postwar period. Except for regulating the number of places in sighted schools of massage and acupuncture in the interests of blind practitioners, nothing had been done for the employment of blind masseurs until the late 1980s when the employment of quota masseurs was promoted under the quota scheme.

The government's inaction in this field is partly due to the fact that the postwar blind lobby sought coexistence with sighted practitioners after having failed to eliminate them before the second World War. As was shown in Chapter Two, they failed in the past to restore a monopoly of anma massage largely because of the increasing medicalisation of massage. However, today, it is possible to draw a clear boundary between medical and non-medical massage because of the postwar development of physiotherapy, and therefore, to restore blind people's monopoly of non-medical anma massage.

There is another reason for lack of government initiatives in protecting blind masseurs. Throughout the postwar period, the government has been influenced by the belief in open employment of the experts in blind welfare. However, their assumption in this respect relied entirely upon the

---

<sup>4</sup> See, Massie [1994:13].

British experience, and, as was shown in Chapter Three, British open employment for the blind did not necessarily solve their employment problem. Finally, the current policy principles of normalisation and integration also make the government reluctant to reinforce the system of reserved occupation for the blind. While open employment is seen as "normal and integrated", the reserved occupations are regarded as "segregating". However, from blind people's viewpoint, there is no dichotomy between integration and segregation in terms of employment.

Thus, despite possible opposition, a good case may be made out for the reinforcement of reserved occupations for the blind. In order to improve the job opportunities of blind masseurs and acupuncturists, the government should firstly eliminate the unlawful practice of unlicensed sighted masseurs. Currently, a large number of sighted people are engaged in anma massage without licence at massage parlours, sauna baths and resort hotels. The employers of these unlicensed masseurs should be penalised. Secondly, the government should restrict the excessive use of para-medical massage at surgeries and hospitals which takes elderly clients away from self-employed blind masseurs and limits the job opportunities of blind masseurs to 'cheap' short-session massage under a physician's supervision. Although the tough rule for the use of para-medical massage may result in the displacement of blind masseurs currently working at surgeries and hospitals, it will create opportunities for them to engage in independent practice in which they can develop their skills and achieve job satisfaction to a greater extent. In order to encourage elderly clients to return from physicians to self-employed blind masseurs, local authorities could provide elderly people with free vouchers for anma massage and acupuncture which can be used only at the establishments of self-employed blind masseurs. While para-medical massage takes clients away from traditional anma masseurs, quota masseurs would not compete with self-employed traditional masseurs because the quota masseurs serve largely young and

healthy people who would not come to see traditional masseurs. Therefore, the employment of quota masseurs could be encouraged so as to expand the market in massage and acupuncture.

In short, three recommendations for the improvement of education and employment policy for blind people in Japan emerged from the present research. Firstly, special schools for the blind should specialise in higher vocational education. Secondly, the current quota levy scheme should be strengthened by being combined with anti-discrimination measures in order to ensure fair selection and fair employment conditions. Finally, the traditional reserved occupations of anma massage should be maintained particularly through eliminating unlicensed sighted masseurs and the dominance of physicians over the business.

## Summary

The field survey of blind people in Japan substantiated the hypothesis which was presented by the historical analysis of the blind identity in Japan and Britain. The blind identity was a "social creation" in the sense that it emerged only after visually impaired people experienced barriers in the employment field. However, blind people were not only excluded by the sighted society but also themselves disengaged from the sighted world in order to seek a "different but equal" status through their engagement in the blind community.

The present study showed that Japanese blind people have always demanded separation in employment. Although they began to seek employment opportunities in the sighted world after the second World War, it was not their choice but the outcome of the erosion of protection and separation in employment. This was also the case in Britain from where the Japanese belief in open employment derived. The current Japanese education and employment policy for the blind does not take account of such voluntary disengagement from the sighted world. While encouraging them to assimilate into the sighted majority, the current policy discourages their efforts to contribute to and participate in society in their own inimitable way.

In order to reform policy in accordance with blind people's views of employment, while strengthening the current quota levy scheme by the introduction of anti-discrimination measures, the reserved occupations should be reinforced by the specialisation of blind schools in the training of anma and acupuncture, the elimination of unlicensed sighted masseurs, and the reduction in power of physicians over the field of anma and acupuncture.



Appendix Questionnaire for the Postal Survey of Blind  
School Leavers

The following questionnaire was sent to 314 alumni of two blind schools in Osaka both in large print and in Braille.

Please answer the following 27 questions. Where the question gives you choices, please tick properly. Where the question ask the number of years, please put the figure properly.

The following questions ask about yourself.

Q.1 Please tick your sex.

A:Male B:Female

Q.2 Which kind of letters do you usually use?

A:Braille B:Print C:Both

Q.3 Please tick your age band.

A:twenties B:thirties C:forties

D:fifties E:sixties F:seventies and above

Q.4 Do you have a Disability Registration Card?

Y/N

(If Y, please specify the grade of your registration)

Q.5 How many years have you attended the schools for the blind? [ ]

Q.6 Have you ever attended ordinary schools for the sighted, including nursery schools and universities?

Y/N

(If Y, how many years in total have you attended the ordinary schools? [ ] )

Q.7 Have you ever worked as "the sighted"?

Y/N

(If Y, how many years in total have you worked as "the sighted"? [ ] )

Q.8 How many years ago did you leave the school for the blind last?

- A: Less than 3 years      B: Less than 5 years  
C: Less than 10 years    D: Less than 20 years  
E: More than 20 years ago

The following questions ask about your life conditions.

Q.9 Are you living alone?

Y/N (If Y, go directly to Q.12)

Q.10 With whom are you living?

Please tick as many as you like.

- A: Partner                      B: Your own children  
C: Your own parents            D: Your own siblings  
E: Your partner's family      F: Others (please specify)

Q.11 Do you have any sighted member in your household?

Y/N

Q.12 Do you receive a disability pension?

Y/N (If N, go directly to Q.14)

Q.13 If your disability pension would be terminated, how far would your economic situation change?

- A: Need to ask for public assistance  
B: It would be very worse off  
C: It would be quite worse off  
D: No change but feel uncertain  
E: No problem at all

The following questions ask about your work.

Q.14 Have you ever had any paid-job since you left the school for the blind?

Y/N (If N, go directly to Q.22)

Q.15 Have you ever changed your job since you left the school for the blind?      Y/N

(If Y, how many times did you change your job, since you left the school for the blind? [   ] )

Q.16 Do you have any paid-job at the moment?

Y/N (If Y, go directly to Q.18)

Q.17 Would you plan to work?

A: Not at all.

B: Not at the moment, but maybe in future.

C: Looking for a job.

(Please go directly to Q.22)

Q.18 What is your current paid-job?

A: Massage & Acupuncture (Self-employed)

B: Massage & Acupuncture (Employed)

C: Others (Please specify)

Q.19 How much income per month do you get from the current paid-job?

A: Less than 100 thousand yen

B: Less than 150 thousand yen

C: Less than 200 thousand yen

D: Less than 250 thousand yen

E: Less than 300 thousand yen

F: Less than 400 thousand yen

G: Less than 500 thousand yen

H: More than 500 thousand yen

Q.20 (For self-employed masseurs and acupuncturists)

Would you have any intention to be employed? Y/N

(If Yes, please specify hopeful conditions of employment.)

Q.21 (For employed masseurs and acupuncturists)

What plan would you have in terms of your work?

A: wish to be self-employed.

B: seek for better employment in clinics

C: seek for better employment in hospitals

D: seek for quota employment as "health keeper"

E: Others (Please specify)

The following questions ask about your opinions.

Q.22 Have you known that the "Act to Promote Disabled Persons to Be Employed" imposes levies on firms which fail to employ prescribed number of disabled persons?

Y/N

Q.23 If a place in quota employment with an annual pay of 2400 thousand yen (14 thousand pound) is available, would you like to take the job?

A: No

B: Yes, if it is a job in massage and acupuncture.

C: Yes, if it is a suitable job for visually handicapped persons.

D: Yes, regardless the type of the job.

E: Others (Please specify)

Please write the reason of your answer.

Q.24 In order to ensure visually handicapped people works of massage & acupuncture, what method would you think most appropriate.

A: Reduce the number of sighted masseurs & acupuncturists.

B: Provide particular clients, such as, the elderly, vouchers of massage and acupuncture which can be used only for visually handicapped practitioner.

C: Free competition

D: Others. (Please specify)

Q.25 If the government have the following two policy options, which one would you prefer?

A: The government should raise the amount of disability pensions so as to maintain your life.

B: The government should ensure you a paid-work.

We appreciate your co-operation.

If you have any opinion concerning the government policy for visually handicapped people, please write your opinions in the following space.

## Bibliography

The titles which are written in *italics* are Japanese publications.

All English publications are published in London unless otherwise stated.

All *Japanese publications* are published in Tokyo unless otherwise stated.

Abberly, Paul

- 1987 "The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a Social Theory of Disability" in Disability, Handicap & Society, Vol.2 No.1, pp.5-19.

Abel, Rhoda A. D.

- 1987 Identification of the Blind, 1834-1968: a study of the establishment of the Blind Register and the registration process, Ph. D. thesis, LSE.

Akisada, Yoshikazu

- 1984 "Kindai no Hisabetsu Buraku (Buraku in Modern Japan)" in E. Isomura et. al. ed. Koza Sabetsu to Jinken 1: Buraku 1 (Discrimination and Human Rights Vol. 1: Buraku 1), Yuzankaku.

Albrecht, Gary L. (ed.)

- 1976 The Sociology of Physical Disability and Rehabilitation, University of Pittsburgh Press.

Arakawa, I., Ooi, S. & Nakano, Y.

- 1976 Nihon Shōgaiji Kyōikushi (A Japanese History of Education for Disabled Children), Fukumura Shuppan.

Arthur, John

- 1952 Through Movement to Life: The Economic Employment of the Disabled, Chapman & Hall.

Barnes, Colin

- 1991 Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination, Hurst & Company.  
1996 "Visual Impairment and Disability" in G. Hales ed. Beyond Disability, Sage, pp.36-44.

Berkowitz, Edward D.

- 1987 Disability Policy: America's Programs for the Handicapped, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Blaxter, Mildred  
1976 The Meaning of Disability, Heinemann.
- Bolderson, Helen.  
1980 "The Origins of the Disabled Persons Employment Quota and its Symbolic Significance" in Journal of Social Policy, Vol.9 No.2, pp.169-186.  
1991 Social Security, Disability and Rehabilitation: Conflicts in the Development of Social Policy 1914-1946, Jessica Kingsley.
- Bruce, I., McKennell, A. & Walker, E.  
1991 Blind and Partially Sighted Adults in Britain: The RNIB Survey, Volume 1, HMSO.
- Butler, Richard J. & Wilson, David C.  
1990 Managing Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations: Strategy and Structure, Routledge.
- Campbell, Jane & Oliver Mike  
1996 Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future, Routledge.
- Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai (The Central Association for the Welfare of the Blind)  
1940 Nihon Mōjin Fukushi Nenkan (Japanese Annual Paper of the Welfare for the Blind), Chuō Mōjin Fukushi Kyōkai.
- Cornell, John B.  
1967 "Individual Mobility and Group Membership: The Case of the *Burakumin*" in R.P. Dore ed. Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Crawcour, E. Sydney  
1988 "Industrialization and Technological Change, 1885-1920" in P. Duus ed. The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 6 The Twentieth Century, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Department of Employment (UK)  
1990 Employment and Training for People with Disabilities, Department of Employment.
- Deshen, Shlomo  
1992 Blind People: The Private and Public Life of Sightless Israelis, Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.
- Doi, Yoichi  
1977 "*Kyusai no Yokusei to Kokumin no Kanka* (From Relief to Control)" in K. Uda et. al. ed. Shakai Fukushi no Rekishi (A History of Social Welfare), Yuhikaku.

- Dore, Ronald P.  
 1967 ed. Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press.  
 1969 "The Modernizer as a Special Case: Japanese Factory Legislation, 1882-1911" in Comparative Studies in Society and History, 11-4.
- Duus, Peter  
 1976 The Rise of Modern Japan, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Duus, Peter & Scheiner, Irwin  
 1988 "Socialism, Liberalism and Marxism, 1901-1931" in P. Duus ed. The Cambridge History of Japan Vol. 6 The Twentieth Century, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fine, Michelle & Asch, Adrienne  
 1988 ed. "Moving Disability Beyond Stigma", Journal of Social Issues, vol.44 no.1.
- Floyd, Michael  
 1991 "Overcoming Barriers to Employment" in G. Dalley ed. Disability and Social Policy, Policy Study Institute, pp. 210-235.
- Frank, Gelya  
 1988 "Beyond Stigma: Visibility and Self-Empowerment of Persons with Congenital Limb Deficiencies" in Journal of Social Issues, Vol.44 No.1, pp.95-115.
- French, Sally  
 1993 "Disability, impairment or something in between?" in J.Swain, V.Finkelstein, S.French & M.Oliver ed. Disabling Barriers — Enabling Environments, Sage, pp.17-25.
- Goffman, Erving  
 1968 [1961] Asylum: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates, New York; Penguin.  
 1968 [1963] Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, New York; Penguin.
- Groce, Nora Ellen  
 1985 Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
- Harris, Jennifer  
 1995 The Cultural Meaning of Deafness: Language, identity and power relations, Aldershot, Avebury.
- Higgins, Paul C.  
 1980 Outsiders in a Hearing World: A Sociology of Deafness, Sage Publications.
- House of Commons (U.K.)  
 1914 Hansard, 11 March 1914.

- Hyodo, Hiromi  
1985 Katarimono Josétsu: Héiké-Gatari no Hasséi to Hyōgen (An Introduction to the Oral Literature of the Héiké Story: Its Origin and Performance), Yūséidō.
- Ikeda, Takamasa  
1994 Nihon ni okeru Shakai Fukushi no Ayumi (The Development of Social Welfare in Japan), Kyoto: Hōritsu Bunkasha.
- Ingstad, Benedicte & Whyte, Susan Reynolds (ed)  
1995 Disability and Culture, University of California Press.
- Iwahashi, Hideo  
1932 Aimō: Mojin Kagaku ABC (Love the Blind: An Introduction to the Welfare for the Blind), Osaka, Niciyō Sékaisha.  
1938 "Shitsumei Gunjin to sono Shakai Mondai (Social Problems of the War Blind)" in Shakai Jigyō Kenkyu (The Journal of Social Work), Vol.26 No.8.
- Jones, Catherine  
1985 Patterns of Social Policy: An Introduction to Comparative Analysis, Tavistock Publications.
- Kato, Yasuaki  
1972 Mōkyōiku-shi Kenkyu Josetsu (Introduction to the History of Special Education for the Blind), Tōhō Shobō.  
1974 Nihon Mōjin Shakai-shi Kénkyū (The Japanese Social History of the Blind), Miraisha.  
1991 Wagakuni Tokushu Kyōiku no Seiritsu (The Establishment of Special Education in Japan), Tōhō Shobō.
- Kawai, Yukio  
1981 "Nihon ni okeru Shakai Fukushi no Tenkai (The Development of Social Welfare in Japan)" in Y. Ichibangase & S. Takashima ed. Koza Shakai Fukushi 2: Shakai Fukushi no Rekishi (Social Welfare Series 2: The History of Social Welfare), Yuhikaku.
- Kawakami, Takeshi  
1967 Gendai Nihon Iryōshi (A Modern History of Health Services in Japan), Keisou Shobō.  
1992 Sengo Iryōshi Josetsu (An Introduction to the Postwar Development of Health Services in Japan), Keisou Shobō.



- Kimura, Chujiro  
 1978 "Showa 20 Nendai no Shakai Jigyo Gyosei o megutte (Social Administration from 1945 to 1954)" in Shakai Fukushi Kenkyu (The Journal of Social Welfare Research) No. 23, Testudo Kosaikai.
- Koseisho (Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japan)  
 1992 Kosei Tokei Yoran (Annual Health and Welfare Statistics), Kosei Tokei Kyokai.
- Kōseishō, Sakaikyoku, Kōseika (Rehabilitation Department, Social Administration Bureau, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japan)  
 1991 Nihon no Shintai Shōgaisha: Shōwa 62 nen Shintai Shōgaisha Jittai Chōsa Hōkoku (Physically Disabled People in Japan: The Report of the 1987 Survey of Physically Disabled People), Daiichi Hōki.  
 1994 Nihon no Shintai Shōgaisha: Heisei 3 nen Shintai Shōgaisha Jittai Chōsa Hōkoku (Physically Disabled People in Japan: The Report of the 1991 Survey of Physically Disabled People), Daiichi Hōki.
- Martin, Frances  
 1891 Elizabeth Gilbert and her Work for the Blind, Cassell & Company.
- Massie, Bert  
 1994 Disabled People and Social Justice, Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Miller, E. J. & Gwynne, G. V.  
 1972 A Life Apart: A pilot study of residential institutions for the physically handicapped and the young chronic sick, Tavistock Publications.
- Ministry of Labour (UK)  
 1951 Report of the Working Party on the Employment of Blind Persons, HMSO.  
 1962 Report of the Working Party on Workshops for the Blind, HMSO.
- Monbushō (Ministry of Education, Japan)  
 1924-60 Monbushō Nenpō (Annual Report of the Ministry of Education), Monbushō.  
 1960-94 Gakkō Kihon Chōsa Hōkokusho (Annual Report of School Survey), Okurashō Insatsukyoku.
- Morgan, P.L. & Makeham, P.  
 1978 Economic and Financial Analysis of Sheltered Employment, Research Paper No.5, Department of Employment.
- Murphy, R.; Scheer, J.; Murphy, Y. & Mack, R.  
 1988 "Physical Disability and Social Liminality: A Study in the Rituals of Adversity" in Social Science and Medicine, Vol.26 No.2, pp.235-242.

- Nakagawara, Michiyuki  
 1990 "Shōi Gunjin (The War Disabled)" in Shakai Fukushi Kenkyujo (Social Welfare Research Unit) ed. Senzen Senchuki ni okeru Shōgaisha Fukushi Taisaku (The Services for Disabled People before the Second World War), Shakai Fukushi Kenkyujo.
- Nakayama, Tarō  
 1934 Nihon Mōjin-shi (The Japanese History of the Blind), Shōwa Shobō.  
 1936 Zoku Nihon Mōjin-shi (The Supplement to the Japanese History of the Blind), Shōwa Shobō.
- Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai (Japanese Association for the Promotion of Employment of Disabled People)  
 1994 Sikaku Shogaisha no Shokuba Teichaku ni kansuru Chosa Kenkyu (The Report of the Research into the Stability of Employment of Visually Impaired People), Nihon Shogaisha Koyo Sokusin Kyokai.
- Nihon Raito Hausu (Japan Light House Welfare Centre for the Blind)  
 1962 Nihon Raito Hausu 40 Nenshi (The 40 Years of Japan Light House), Osaka: Nihon Raito Hausu.  
 1972 Sékai Mōjin Hyakka Jitén (The World Encyclopaedia of the Blind), Osaka: Nihon Raito Hausu.
- Oliver, Michael  
 1983 Social Work With Disabled People, Macmillan.  
 1984 "The politics of disability" in Critical Social Policy, Issue 2, pp. 21-32.  
 1990 The Politics of Disablement, Macmillan.  
 1996 "A sociology of disability or a disablist sociology?" in L. Barton ed. Disability and Society, Longman, pp.18-42.
- Owen, David  
 1964 English Philanthropy 1660-1960, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Belknap Press.
- Peters, Susan  
 1996 "The politics of disability identity" in L. Barton ed. Disability and Society, Longman, pp.215-234.
- Piachaud, David  
 1986 "Disability, Retirement and Unemployment of Older Men" in Journal of Social Policy, Vol.15 No.2, pp.145-162.
- Pritchard, D.G.  
 1963 Education and the Handicapped 1760-1960, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Purse, Ben  
 1925 The Blind in Industry: Fifty Years of Work and Wages, Edson.

- Reid, Fred  
 1975 The Incomes of the Blind: A Review of Occupational and Financial Problems of Blind People of All Ages, The Disability Alliance.
- Report of an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Disabled Persons (Tomlinson Report), 1943, Cmd 6415, HMSO.
- Report of the Committee of Enquiry on the Rehabilitation, Training and Resettlement of Disabled Persons (Piercy Report), 1956, Cmd 9883, HMSO.
- Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Relief of Distress, 1909, HMSO.
- Rikyoren [*Riryoka Kyōin Renmei*] (The Association of Blind Teachers of Anma Massage and Acupuncture)  
 1973 Rikyōren 20 Nenshi (The 20 Years of Rikyōren), Rikyōren.  
 1994 Rikyōren 40 Nenshi (The 40 Years of Rikyōren), Rikyōren.
- Ritchie, J.M.  
 1930 Concerning the Blind, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd.
- Rōdōshō (Ministry of Labour, Japan)  
 1995 Heisei 7nenban Rōdō Hakusho (The 1995 White Paper of the Ministry of Labour), Nihon Rōdō Kenkyū Kikō.
- Rooff, Madeline  
 1957 Voluntary Societies and Social Policy, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Rose, June  
 1970 Changing Focus: The Development of Blind Welfare in Britain, Hutchinson.
- Ruch, Barbara  
 1977 "Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature" in John W. Hall & T. Toyoda ed. Japan in the Muromachi Age, Los Angeles: University of California Press.  
 1990 "The Other Side of Culture in Medieval Japan" in K. Yamamura ed. The Cambridge History of Japan Vol.3 Medieval Japan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sainsbury, Sally  
 1986 Deaf Worlds: A study of integration, segregation and disability, Hutchinson.  
 1993 Normal Life: A Study of War and Industrially Injured Pensioners, Aldershot, Avebury.
- Scheff, Thomas  
 1966 Being Mentally Ill, Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

- Scott, Robert A.  
1969 The Making of Blind Men, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Shimada, Nobuo  
1955 Mōjin no Gyōken Yōgo Tōsōshi (A History of the Movements of the Blind to Protect their Reserved Occupations), Osaka: Osaka Ichiritsu Mōgakkō Dōsōkai (Alumni Society of Osaka City School for the Blind).
- Shimoda, Tomoe  
1991 Mōkai Kotohajime (An Introduction to Blind Worlds), Azusa Shoten.
- Stone, D.  
1984 The Disabled State, Philadelphia, Temple University Press.
- Sumiya, Mikio  
1974 Nihon no Rekishi (The History of Japan) Vol. 22, Chuō Kōron.
- Tanaka, Satoshi  
1994 Eisei Tenrankai no Yokubo (The Discourse of Public Hygiene), Seikyusha.
- Teikoku Gikai, Shugiin (House of Commons, Japanese Diet)  
1980(1905) Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Giji Sokkiroku (Debate Papers of House of Commons), Vol. 20, Tokyo University Press.
- Teikoku Gikai, Kizokuin Iinkai (House of Lords' Committees, Japanese Diet)  
1981(1914) Teikoku Gikai Kizokuin Iinkai Giroku, Vol.3, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten.
- Teikoku Gikai, Shugiin Iinkai (House of Commons' Committees, Japanese Diet)  
1981(1914) Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku, Vol. 4, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten.  
1986(1924) Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku, Vol. 39, Kyoto: Nozomikawa Shoten.  
1989(1909) Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku (Debate Papers of the Committees at House of Commons), Vol. 51, Tokyo University Press.  
1989(1912) Teikoku Gikai Shugiin Iinkai Giroku, Vol. 69, Tokyo University Press.
- Thomas, Mary G.  
1957 The Royal National Institute for the Blind: 1868-1956, Brighton: Brighton Herald.

- Tokyo Kyoiku Daigaku Kyoikugakubu Zoushigaya Bunkou  
(Zoushigaya School, The Faculty of Pedagogy, Tokyo  
University of Education)
- 1976 Shikaku Shogai Kyoiku Hyakunen no Ayumi (Hundred  
Years of Special Education for Visually Impaired  
People), Daiichi Hoki.
- Topliss, Eda  
1982 Social Responses to Handicap, Longman.
- Trade Union Congress  
Report of the Annual Meeting of Trade Union  
Congress, Trade Union Congress.
- Vlastos, Stephen  
1989 "Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868-1885"  
in M.B. Jansen ed. The Cambridge History of Japan  
Vol.5 The Nineteenth Century, Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press.
- Wakabayashi, Yukinori  
1993 Shōgaisha Koyō Taisaku no Shintenkai (The New Era  
of the Employment Policy for Disabled People),  
Rōmu Gyōsei Kenkyusho.
- Walker, Alan  
1982 Unqualified and Underemployed: Handicapped Young  
People and the Labour Market, Macmillan.
- Williams, Ian  
1989 The Alms Trade: Charities, Past, Present and  
Future, Unwin Hyman.
- Whaley, J.; Mattison, C.; Dodd, A. & Mullins, D.  
1986 A Sense of Purpose: A study of visually  
handicapped people and their search for work,  
Royal National Institute for the Blind.
- Wolfensberger, Wolf  
1972 The Principle of Normalization in Human Services,  
Tronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation.
- Yamada, Akira  
1987 "Nihon ni okéru Shōgaisha Fukushi no Rékishii (The  
Development of Social Policy for Disabled People  
in Japan)", in Y. Ichibangasé & S. Satō ed.  
Shōgaisha no Fukushi to Jinkén (The Welfare and  
Human Rights for Disabled People), Kōséikan.
- Yelin, Edward H.  
1992 Disability and the Displaced Worker,  
New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.

Yoshida, Kyoji

1977 "Kaikyu Tairitsu no Gekika to 'Shakai Rentai' no  
Gisei (The Intensification of Class Conflicts  
in the Disguise of 'Social Solidarity'" in  
K. Uda et. al. ed. Shakai Fukushi no Rekishi  
(A History of Social Welfare), Yuhikaku.

Yoshimoto, Tadasu

1906 Nichiei no Mōjin (The Blind in Japan and Britain),  
Tōzaisha.

Young, A.F. & Ashton, E.T.

1956 British Social Work in the Nineteenth Century,  
Routledge & Kegan Paul.