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ACCOMMODATING ELECTORAL REFORM

Matsuoka, like every other Lower House Diet member, faced a vastly altered political world and electoral landscape as a result of the overhaul of the Lower House electoral system in 1994. The most important aspect of the changes was the restructuring of the Lower House electoral system into a combination of 300 first-past-the-post single-member districts (SMDs) and 11 regional blocs electing 200 candidates on a proportional representation (PR) basis.¹ The electoral boundaries in Kumamoto Prefecture were redrawn, which changed its electoral composition from two MMDs to five SMDs. Now that Matsuoka was contesting a seat as the only LDP candidate, the altered electoral arrangements directly affected his electoral prospects and required some adjustment to his campaign strategy.

CONSTITUENCY REORGANISATION

The reorganisation of seats in Kumamoto Prefecture transferred Matsuoka from Kumamoto (1) with five seats to Kumamoto (3) with one seat. He was no longer competing against members of his own party, but in order to win the seat, he had to obtain a plurality—the most votes of any candidate standing for the seat. Matsuoka himself was opposed to the small constituency system, possibly fearing that it would make electoral battles even tougher, stating that ‘candidates will alter their opinions and behaviour in line with whoever is powerful at the time’.²

Kumamoto (3) was located in the middle of Kyushu at the North Eastern part of Kumamoto Prefecture, known as ‘fire country’ (*kaji no kuni*) because of Mt. Aso. It was relatively large in geographic size in comparison to the other

SMDs in the prefecture, which was indicative of its lower population density. Only Kumamoto (5) at the western end was bigger in area.

The electoral reorganisation not only sought to equalise the value of votes as far as possible across the new SMDs, but also to draw the geographic boundaries of the new districts around the *jiban* of sitting members. While the overall size of electoral districts might have shrunk, electoral restructuring was implemented in such a way that politicians such as Matsuoka were able to maintain their geographically concentrated voting bases. Kumamoto (3) encompassed Matsuoka's hometown (Aso Town) in his home county (Aso County), and it also retained Kamoto County and Kikuchi County as well as two cities, Yamaga City and Kikuchi City.

CHANGING THE CHARACTER OF THE ELECTORATE

The key consequence of electoral reform for Matsuoka was that his constituency became more rural. Kumamoto (3) lost Kumamoto City, with farm households constituting only 1.1 per cent of total households (see Table 2.1). It also lost the highly urbanised areas of Arao City and Tamana City (see Table 2.1). Kumamoto (3) had only two cities, Yamaga City and Kikuchi City, which had higher proportions of farm households (see Table 2.1). Matsuoka could now forget about having to battle it out for votes in the big cities of Kumamoto Prefecture, including Kumamoto City.

At the time of the electoral reorganisation, Kumamoto (3) was classed as semi-rural (*junnôsonteki senkyoku*),³ which was defined as an electoral district with more than 20 per cent of the population employed in primary industry.⁴ Thus, Matsuoka's electorate changed in socio-economic character from semi-urban Kumamoto (1) to semi-rural Kumamoto (3). His constituency became more rural and agricultural because it encompassed mainly rural counties.

Matsuoka went from an electorate with an average of 6.4 per cent farm households out of the total across all municipalities in 1990 to one with an average of 19.9 per cent farm households across all municipalities in 2000 (see Table 2.2 and Table 3.1). The electorate's average figure of 19.9 per cent farm households compared with the national average of only 2.75 per cent.⁵ Similarly, population density in Kumamoto (3) at 160 persons per square km was less than half the population density across the whole country at 340 persons per square km in 2000.⁶

Matsuoka's constituency was a good example of an electorate that became more homogeneous in socio-economic composition and occupational character

as a result of the electoral reorganisation. His smaller constituency of Kumamoto (3) was much less diverse than the larger one of Kumamoto (1). The redrawing of electoral boundaries meant that agricultural and forestry interests became more concentrated in his electorate.

The practical effects of electoral reorganisation were, therefore, to divest Matsuoka's constituency of a large number of urban voters. This enabled him to concentrate on representing rural regions and farm and forestry interests. Instead of turning Matsuoka into a something-for-everyone kind of politician, electoral reform, by changing the composition of his constituency, actually enhanced Matsuoka's position as a rural-regional representative and *nôrin giin*.

This outcome ran directly counter to the conventional wisdom about the impact of the 1994 electoral reform. The former MMD system, in which different candidates from the same party (the LDP) could offer specialised representation of particular interests, had changed to an SMD system in which the party candidate needed a plurality to win the seat. This was expected to force party candidates to develop wide appeal that would attract a range of voters and their interests. In theory, the changeover to the new system should have meant that Diet members representing SMDs, including Matsuoka, could no longer afford to rely so heavily on farm and rural votes. Because their special-interest supporters could not deliver a plurality they would have to broaden their appeal to a wider cross-section of voters.

In Matsuoka's case, however, electoral reform had the reverse effect. The composition of his new electorate supported even stronger sectoral specialisation. He was able to project himself more starkly as a representative of agricultural and forestry interests. The practical effects of the new system were to make the electoral battle easier for Matsuoka because he had a logical appeal for the large proportion of naturally conservative voters (many with agricultural and forestry interests) in his newly constructed electorate. Whereas in the past he had to fight hard for city votes (especially against candidates such as Noda, Hosokawa, Uozumi and the JSP and Kômeitô candidates), his prospects were now for an easier time appealing largely to rural county voters.

The impact of electoral reform for Matsuoka demonstrated that the new electoral system did not turn all SMD candidates from policy specialists into policy generalists. In some cases, the electoral reforms supported an even stronger policy specialism, and the incentives for Matsuoka to represent sectional interests were reinforced. Moreover, Matsuoka retained his *jiban* in the new electorate,

to which he was encouraged to supply regionally concentrated policy services. So the incentives for localism also remained.

Thus, being a *nôrin giin* and being a politician who had a strong geographically focused *jiban* served Matsuoka well in the changed system. He was able to continue to base his electoral appeal on what he could personally deliver to his constituents in the way of pork-barrel benefits as well as agricultural and forestry policy concessions, and not cleaving to some general manifesto of the LDP as a whole.⁷ Although Matsuoka was the only candidate now standing for the LDP in Kumamoto (3), his election campaign remained centred on his personal vote-seeking style and was conducted primarily on an individual basis (*kojin honi*). Such an orientation was further encouraged by the fact that his main opposition was now his old rival Uozumi, ex-LDP, standing for the New Frontier Party,⁸ which effectively split the conservative vote in Kumamoto (3).

ORGANISING THE VOTE

For Matsuoka, as for all LDP election candidates following electoral reform, his *kôenkai* remained the principal means by which he mobilised votes and organised campaign activities.⁹ Not only did he maintain his *kôenkai*, but he also strengthened it. The LDP's Kumamoto Prefecture No.3 Electoral District Branch (Jiyûminshutô Kumamoto-ken Daisan Senkyoku Shibu) became the Kumamoto branch of Matsuoka's *kôenkai*, located in Kikuyo Town in Kikuchi County. There were two other branches, the Johoku branch located in Yamaga City and the Aso Office in Minami Aso Village, Aso County. The *kôenkai* had both a Youth Division (Seinenbu) and a Women's Division (Fujinbu), which Matsuoka addressed from time to time to rally support. He also arranged for delegations of both groups to visit Tokyo from time to time for study tours of the Diet and LDP headquarters.

The *kôenkai* contained a very tight network in Aso Town, which was the core of Matsuoka's *jiban*. The town mayor, Kawasaki Atsuo, was chairman of Matsuoka's *kôenkai* in that town. Kawasaki's father became the first town mayor when Aso Town was created out of the amalgamation of five towns and villages in 1954, and he occupied that position for four terms. Extending over a period of 36 years (although not continuously) Aso Town politics was firmly within the grasp of father and son.¹⁰

Moreover, the local administrative set-up within Aso Town became virtually synonymous with Matsuoka's electoral organisation, extending right down to

the grass roots and forming the core of his personal supporters' organisation. A branch of the Aso Town Associates' Group (Dôshikai)—previously called the Aso Town Construction Associates Group (Kensetsu Dôshikai)—entrenched itself in each of the town's 52 wards. Each branch had a head separate from the head of the ward (*kuchô*), which was an administrative position. Members of the group filled most of the important positions in the town office. The group was formed in the current mayor's father's generation, and according to its treasurer, about half the voters were members. It functioned as a mechanism for Matsuoka to organise voting support. The Dôshikai's president in 2003 was the president of a local construction company who had also served as chairman of the local assembly, and who was the vice-president of the local branch of Matsuoka's *kôenkai*.¹¹

Over a long period, the Dôshikai was considered to be synonymous with a political control regime linking Matsuoka to affiliated prefectural assembly members and town mayor Kawasaki. The section head of the group reputedly had more power than the ward head, while its president, along with mayor Kawasaki, headed up Matsuoka's election countermeasures organisation (*senkyo taisaku soshiki*) within his *kôenkai*. The organisational chart of the Dôshikai corresponded exactly to Matsuoka's election organisation.¹²

The Dôshikai also allegedly controlled the way people voted in Aso Town. According to an influential figure privy to the internal affairs of the Matsuoka political control regime, 'at election time, a "trustworthy" person was sent with a "dangerous" person to a polling station. The "dangerous" person had to show the "trustworthy" person how they voted. If they hadn't done the right thing, they would be ostracised in the village. It's not like it is in the cities'.¹³

A former member of the Dôshikai, who was previously involved in election campaigns, recounted a similar story, describing how, in some localities, members would go to vote in groups and show their ballot papers to each other.¹⁴ As Hasegawa observes, 'this behavior is reflective of a closed society that puts a priority on regional and blood relations. As long as it continues, the Matsuoka-affiliated prefectural assembly member-mayor Kawasaki regime will be supported by its bedrock'.¹⁵

Such a system not only operated in national elections, but also in Aso Town elections, helping to entrench the Matsuoka political control regime even more deeply. The Dôshikai decided in detail how many votes would go to which candidate in the town elections. As a result, 16–17 members of the group

were always elected to the 18-member town assembly. Such behaviour represented a form of political vote-rigging (*dango*). The town assembly members, who were elected through this kind of vote distribution, were unable to say anything against Matsuoka's regime, and so it became even more embedded in the local political scene. What is more, town office officials (most of whom were members of the Dôshikai) carried out vote counting in elections. When a young, would-be lawyer and leader of a citizens' movement, Izeri Seigo, stood for the mayoralty against Kawasaki in April 2002, he was defeated by only nine votes. A number of locals expressed their suspicions about unfair counting in the election.¹⁶ Iseri was heard to comment that 'the rule of law was merely something that I studied in law school; it did not exist in reality'.¹⁷

This was a vote-gathering regime that centred on Matsuoka alone, not his party. It was designed to attract a personal vote to Matsuoka himself, not to the LDP, with the glue being the pork-barrel benefits Matsuoka could deliver to his *jiban* and the patronage that Matsuoka could provide to his cabal of personal supporters. He provided a crucial link for town locals to the centre of power in Tokyo, and to the prefectural political world.

ORGANISING THE FUNDS¹⁸

Electoral reform occasioned a major restructuring of Matsuoka's fund-gathering arrangements. The big difference between the pre and post reform periods was the rationalisation of Matsuoka's political funding groups and his acquisition of government subsidies through the party branch. This all took place in 1996, the first year in which a national election was fought under the new system. The previous year (1995) was effectively a transitional year, the first year in which a formal report was made of political funding (¥10 million) flowing through the local party branch, the LDP Kumamoto Prefecture No.3 Electoral District Branch to Matsuoka.¹⁹ In 1996, the party branch became a much bigger source of funding at ¥55 million.²⁰ Matsuoka, as chairman of the local LDP branch, was legally qualified to use funds from the public subsidy paid to the branch by LDP headquarters. He could use the money to support his *kôenkai* activities. In fact, the address of the local party branch of the LDP was the same as Matsuoka's *kôenkai* address in Kikuyo Town, Kikuchi County.

In 1996, Matsuoka's political funding groups were all rolled into one: the Matsuoka Toshikatsu New Century Politics and Economics Discussion Association, which collected the largest amount of any of his funding sources

in that year—¥128 million.²¹ Matsuoka's *kôenkai* also generated a substantial amount—¥97 million.²² This three-fold structure remained thereafter, with varying proportions of the total official funding gathered from the three sources each year. Generally speaking, the largest amounts came from Matsuoka's political funding group, except for 2000 when the biggest quantity was sourced from the LDP party branch (¥155 million).²³ In that year, Matsuoka's *kôenkai* ranked second with ¥132 million and his political funding group ranked third with ¥120 million.²⁴ Matsuoka also received money from his faction, the Mitsuzuka faction.

Matsuoka remained in the Mitsuzuka faction until 1998, when he moved to the Etô-Kamei faction (Shisuikai) led by Kamei Shizuka and Etô Takami. The faction was composed of members of the Kamei group, which had spun off from the faction headed by former Prime Minister Mori, and former Nakasone faction members. Etô was a prominent member of the *nôrin zoku* who became joint leader of the faction. Kamei was known to hand out 'pocket money' to get his faction members to vote in the way he wanted. In 1998 when Matsuoka joined, he received a ¥2 million contribution from Kamei's *kôenkai*.²⁵

Suzuki Muneo also remained an important source of financial backing for Matsuoka. Suzuki's 21st Century Policy Research Association donated a total of ¥6 million to Matsuoka's New Century Politics and Economics Discussion Association over four years: ¥2 million in 1996, ¥1.5 million in 1997, ¥2 million in 1998 and ¥500,000 in 1999.²⁶ In addition, Matsuoka received ¥500,000 from the LDP's Hokkaido House of Representatives Proportional Representation District No. 1 Branch in 1999. The LDP Kumamoto Prefecture Electoral District No. 3 Branch also received ¥6 million in 2000.²⁷ This made the total amount ¥12.5 million from Muneo over this period.²⁸

Matsuoka's political funding group did not record the exact amount received in several lots from Suzuki's 21st Century Policy Research Association in 1995: ¥2 million in August 1995, ¥3.5 million in September 1995 and ¥3 million in December 1995—for a total of ¥8.5 million. It only recorded a total of ¥2 million.²⁹ Taking the additional amounts into account produced the grand sum of ¥19 million.

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE AFTER THE REFORM

The 1996 Election

In the intervening period since the previous general election in which the Japan New Party boom overhang continued to be felt, Matsuoka, who was re-elected in 1996—the first poll held after the electoral reorganisation—increased his voice in the Federation of Kumamoto Prefecture Liberal Democratic Party Branches (Jiyû Minshutô Kumamoto-ken Shibu Rengôkai).³⁰ He achieved a closely fought victory over Uozumi standing for the New Frontier Party (see Appendix). In the final vote count, Matsuoka beat Uozumi only by a whisker (1,275 votes). It was Matsuoka's continuing support in Aso County, where Uozumi could only obtain around a third of the votes secured by Matsuoka, which once again stood him in good stead and saved him from defeat. It was fortunate for Matsuoka that the ever-popular Hosokawa stood for re-election in Kumamoto (1) rather than in Kumamoto (3).

The most outstanding feature of the 1996 election was that it once again underscored Matsuoka's dependence on the voters of Aso County. Overall, Matsuoka won 64.9 per cent of the total vote cast in Aso County, supplying just under 40 per cent of his total vote. He won first place in all the towns and villages in the county (see Table 3.1), with the proportion of his vote ranging from 56.7 per cent in Nishihara Village to 75.9 per cent in Kugino Village. His vote tally in Aso Town was higher than ever at 31,081 votes, which was 72.2 per cent of the total vote. The figures pointed to Matsuoka's successful consolidation of his *jiban* in Aso County and his increasing reliance on this region for electoral support. Clearly Matsuoka had successfully made the transition from Kumamoto (1) to Kumamoto (3), transferring the hard vote based on his hometown and home county into the new electorate. He retained the part of the electorate that had always supported him strongly and it became an even bigger rock on which his electoral performance rested.

Matsuoka gained uniformly second place in all the towns and villages of Kikuchi County, with Uozumi beating him into 1st place. Nevertheless, Matsuoka's vote tally in Kikuchi County was nearly three times what it had been three years earlier in 1993 (compare Table 2.2 and Table 3.1). Matsuoka was even more popular in Kamoto County where he won first place in all the towns except for Ueki Town (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Farm household composition/votes cast for Matsuoka by municipality in Kumamoto (3) in 1996
Lower House election

Name of municipality	No. of farm ^a households	Farm households as % of total in municipality/ies	Votes cast for Matsuoka	% of total cast vote	% of Matsuoka's total vote	Placing among ⁴ candidates
Cities	3,224	16.1	11,637	33.3	14.4	2nd
Yamaga City	1,490	13.2	7,365	41.2	9.1	2nd
Kikuchi City	1,734	20.0	4,272	25.0	5.3	2nd
Countries	17,293	20.7	69,088	47.9	85.6	1st
Kamoto County	5,052	29.5	14,233	43.1	17.6	1st
Kahoku Town*	795	54.3	1,798	49.5	2.2	1st
Kikuka Town*	1,158	55.6	2,632	52.9	3.3	1st
Kamoto Town*	603	22.8	2,464	47.7	3.0	1st
Kao Town*	695	47.2	1,821	49.3	2.3	1st
Ueki Town	1,801	19.1	5,518	35.5	6.8	2nd
Kikuchi County	4,570	11.1	23,774	37.6	29.5	2nd
Shichijo Town	618	39.4	1,438	49.5	2.2	2nd
Kyokushi Village	533	36.8	1,477	52.9	3.3	2nd
Ozu Town	1,148	12.6	5,681	47.7	3.1	2nd
Kikuyo Town	729	8.0	4,710	49.3	2.3	2nd
Koshi Town	505	7.4	3,672	35.5	6.8	2nd
Shisui Town	620	14.8	2,663	49.5	2.2	2nd
Nishigoshi Town	417	4.7	4,133	52.9	3.3	2nd

Aso County	7,671	31.1	31,081	64.9	38.5	1st
Ichinomiya Town	727	22.4	3,369	57.6	4.2	1st
Aso Town	1,643	27.6	8,867	72.2	11.0	1st
Minamioguni Town	578	38.3	1,783	59.4	2.2	1st
Oguni Town	854	28.5	3,701	62.0	4.6	1st
Ubuyama Village	286	47.2	786	65.1	1.0	1st
Namino Village	264	50.9	770	63.2	1.0	1st
Soyo Town	733	49.8	2,304	74.3	2.9	1st
Takamori Town	616	25.1	2,806	60.0	3.5	1st
Hakusui Village	584	44.6	1,883	67.0	2.3	1st
Kugino Village	420	57.1	1,412	75.9	1.7	1st
Choyo Village	401	18.7	1,690	57.6	2.1	1st
Nishihara Village	565	33.0	1,710	56.7	2.1	1st
Total/average	20,517	19.9	80,725	45.1	100.0	1st

Notes: ^a Farm household data are for 2000.

Sources: Sômuchô, Tôkei Kyoku, 2001. *Heisei 12-nen Kokusei Chôsa Hôkoku Dai 2-kan Dai I-ji Kihon Shûkei Kekka Sono 2 Todôfukuken, Shichôson Hen-43 Kumamoto-ken* [Year 2000 National Census Report Vol. 2 Primary Basic Statistical Results 2 Prefectures and Municipalities Edition 43 Kumamoto Prefecture], Tokyo, Sômuchô, Tôkei Kyoku, pp: 288–91 and 294–303; Asahi Shinbunsha Senkyo Honbu, 1997. *Asahi Senkyo Taikan: Dai 41-kai Shûgin Sôsenkyo (Heisei 8-nen 10-gatsu)*, Dai 17-kai Sangiin Tsûjô Senkyo (Heisei 7-nen 7-gatsu) [Asahi General Survey of Election: The 41st House of Representatives General Election (October 1996), The 17th House of Councillors Regular Election (July 1995)], Tokyo, Asahi Shimbunsha, p. 278.

Matsuoka's total county vote shot up considerably in the 1996 election, rising by more than 20,000 votes. It supplied 85.6 per cent of Matsuoka's supporting votes (see Table 3.1). The most substantial increases occurred in Kamoto County and Kikuchi County. The smaller proportional rise in Aso County suggested that Matsuoka's level of support there was just about at saturation point. The general picture of Matsuoka's electoral performance in the counties underlined his position as the farm and rural-regional representative.

Amongst voters in urban areas, Matsuoka gained second place (to Uozumi) in Yamaga City and Kikuchi City, winning 41.2 per cent of the vote in Yamaga City but only 25.0 per cent in Kikuchi City (see Table 3.1), where Uozumi was more popular. Overall, city votes shrank to 14.4 per cent of Matsuoka's total vote (see Table 3.1), underscoring once again Matsuoka's unequivocal conversion to farm and rural-regional representative of the district.

Based on these figures, the composition of Matsuoka's voting support was clear: strong backing from rural counties, and especially strong support from his *jiban*, which was a reliable and continuing source of votes. Not surprisingly, in Kumamoto Prefecture Matsuoka came to be known as 'Aso's Matsuoka'. His slim margin of victory also served to underscore the regionally concentrated nature of his support base.

In the campaign itself, name recognition was no longer an issue. Matsuoka was a third-time candidate who had already made a name for himself in both policy activities and in *rieki yûdô seiji*.³¹ His public promises (*kôyaku*) prior to the election contained the usual all-embracing goals of 'establishing stable politics', 'implementing social welfare policies', 'reviving agriculture, forestry and fishery industries and agricultural, mountain and fishing villages', 'promoting administrative reform, including educational reform', and 'maintaining basic transport and information networks'.³²

As for money, figures reveal that financial support skyrocketed in 1996 compared with earlier years. However, the election was marred by violation of the Public Office Election Law by one of Matsuoka's local secretaries, and the issuing of a subsequent search warrant against his name. When interviewed about it, Matsuoka said, 'I'm very disappointed. So that it never happens again, we're making sure that everyone in the [electoral] office knows [the rules], and we've put up notices around the office'.³³

Matsuoka was recommended by the Nokyo National Council in the 1996 election, but did not appear on a list of prefectural *nôseiren*-endorsed candidates.³⁴

A member of a Kumamoto agricultural cooperative posted a comment about Matsuoka on the Internet, which said, 'Matsuoka *sensei* is really terrible. When the votes for the LDP in the Kumamoto PR electorate were low, he put incredible pressure on each unit agricultural cooperative. Most people were voting for Hosokawa *sensei* [who was standing for the New Frontier Party]. We really had lots of trouble in the election when Hosokawa *sensei* gained a lot of votes...' ³⁵

For Matsuoka to receive electoral support from the prefectural *nôseiren*, he had to demonstrate sympathy for, and understanding of, the organisation's agricultural policy campaigns (*nôsei undô*), and to make a public promise of adherence to a position that would reflect the intentions of Nokyo along with farmers in politics. In exchange for recommendation and authorisation (*kônin mo suisshin mo*), he would have to sign a policy agreement with the organisation and become a staunch friend (*meiyû*) of the league. ³⁶

After the election, Matsuoka, along with 139 other successful Diet members who had been recommended by the National Council, fronted up at a 'Gathering to Talk About the Future of Japanese Agriculture' hosted by the National Council and the National Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (Zenkoku Nôgyô Kyôdô Kumiai Chûokai, or Zenchû). The management of each prefecture's *nôseiren* was also in attendance. Because Matsuoka was chairman of the LDP's Agriculture and Forestry Division (Nôrin Bukai) at the time, he featured prominently in the speechmaking.

He also attended a 'Meeting to Talk with Diet Members' hosted by the Kumamoto Prefecture *nôseiren* and the Kumamoto Prefecture Nokyo Central Union (Kumamoto-ken Nôgyô Kyôdô Kumiai Chûokai) in September 1997. The four LDP Diet members officially endorsed and recommended by the prefectural *nôseiren* in the 1996 elections reportedly attended this meeting. Each of the Diet members who participated issued their national policy reports and exchanged opinions with Nokyo officials on topics and issues relating to farmers in Kumamoto including rice production adjustment (*gentan*), the quantity of rice for government purchase (*seifumai*), the new basic law for agriculture, and the management of farms producing buckwheat noodles (*soba*) and *igusa* as well as livestock products. ³⁷

THE 2000 ELECTION

The Lower House election in 2000 represented the peak of Matsuoka's electoral performance in his entire Diet career. He was up against a bunch of new

Table 3.2 Farm household composition/votes cast for Matsuoka by municipality in Kumamoto (3) in 2000

Name of municipality	No. of farm households	Farm households as % of total in municipality/ies	Votes cast for Matsuoka	% of total cast vote	% of Matsuoka's total vote	Placing among 4 candidates
Cities	3,224	16.1	17,832	56.4	16.3	1st
Yamaga City	1,490	13.2	10,427	62.0	9.6	1st
Kikuchi City	1,734	20.0	7,405	50.0	6.8	1st
Countries	17,293	20.7	91,295	65.2	83.7	1st
Kamoto County	5,052	29.5	21,919	69.2	20.1	1st
Kahoku Town*	795	54.3	2,657	76.2	2.4	1st
Kikuka Town	1,158	55.6	3,753	77.8	3.4	1st
Kamoto Town	603	22.8	3,532	71.4	3.2	1st
Kao Town	695	47.2	2,499	71.7	2.3	1st
Ueki Town	1,801	19.1	9,478	63.5	8.7	1st
Kikuchi County	4,570	11.1	35,339	56.2	32.4	1st
Shichijo Town	618	39.4	2,279	66.4	2.1	1st
Kyokushi Village	533	36.8	2,239	72.3	2.1	1st
Ozu Town	1,148	12.6	7,594	59.0	7.0	1st
Kikuyo Town	729	8.0	7,295	56.4	6.7	1st
Koshi Town	505	7.4	5,475	51.3	5.0	1st
Shisui Town	620	14.8	4,147	58.1	3.8	1st
Nishigoshi Town	417	4.7	6,310	49.7	5.8	1st
Aso County	7,671	31.1	34,037	74.7	31.2	1st
Ichinomiya Town	727	22.4	3,314	63.0	3.0	1st
Aso Town	1,643	27.6	9,275	79.2	8.5	1st
Minamioguni Town	578	38.3	2,156	73.3	2.0	1st

Oguni Town	854	28.5	4,161	74.1	3.8	1st
Ubuyama Village	286	47.2	906	78.3	0.8	1st
Namino Village	264	50.9	876	77.4	0.8	1st
Soyo Town	733	49.8	2,257	77.3	2.1	1st
Takamori Town	616	25.1	3,104	70.5	2.8	1st
Hakusui Village	584	44.6	2,082	78.1	1.9	1st
Kugino Village	420	57.1	1,390	82.0	1.3	1st
Choyo Village	401	18.7	1,999	73.8	1.8	1st
Nishihara Village	565	33.0	2,517	75.7	2.3	1st
Total	20,517	19.9	109,127	63.6	100.0	1st

Note: ^a Farm household data are for 2000.

Sources: Sômuchô, Tôkei Kyoku, *Heisei 12-nen Kokusei Chôsa Hôkoku Dai 2-kan Dai 1-ji Kihon Shûkei Kekkai Sono 2 Todôfuku, Shichôson Hen-43 Kumamoto-ken*, pp: 288–91 and 294–303; Kumamoto-ken Hômu Pêji/Senkyo Kanri Inkai, (*Dai 42-kaï Shûgingin Sôsenkyo (Shôsenkyoku) Kaihyô Kekkai: Heisei 12-nen 6-gatsu 25-nichi [(The 42nd) House of Representatives General Election (Single-Member Districts), The Results of the Vote Count: 25 June 2000]*, p. 3; <<http://www.pref.kumamoto.jp/gyousei/senkan/osirase/no42/pdf/04.pdf>>.

candidates, all relative unknowns (see Appendix) against whom he was a clear favourite. For the first and only time, Matsuoka won first place in all the towns and cities of Kumamoto (3) (see Table 3.2).

Because Uozumi (having lost the last election to Matsuoka by a whisker) had moved to the Upper House, a split in the conservative vote was avoided. The absence of Uozumi as an electoral rival meant that Matsuoka won close to 80 per cent of the LDP vote. This did not stop him, however, from simultaneously standing on the LDP party list in the Kyushu bloc.

In addition, Matsuoka benefited from being a jointly endorsed LDP-Kômeitô candidate (the average increase in support for LDP candidates across electorates from this arrangement was reportedly 20,000-30,000 votes). These were not personal votes, but party-influenced votes. Even so, the distribution of Matsuoka's support remained relatively the same across the electorate. As Table 3.2 indicates, Aso Town in Aso County remained Matsuoka's most reliable source of support, providing the highest number of votes ever for Matsuoka (34,037) and almost a third of his total vote with 74.7 per cent of votes in that county going his way. Clearly Matsuoka's *jiban* in Aso County remained absolutely unshakeable and unassailable. This was despite a deliberate effort by the DPJ candidate, Hamaguchi Kazuhisa, to try and pick up the anti-Matsuoka vote by holding large-scale gatherings in Matsuoka's home district of Aso Town.³⁸

The key differences between the 1996 and 2000 elections were the rise in Matsuoka's support in Yamaga City and Kikuchi City (no doubt partly due to Kômeitô's endorsement) and the massive increase in support for him across the counties (by more than 20,000 votes in total) (compare Table 3.1 and 3.2). The latter could be attributed to the consolidation of Matsuoka's power as a *nôrin giin* and his attainment, by 2000, of agriculture and forestry tribe Diet member (*nôrin zoku*) status.³⁹ In the interim, Matsuoka had played a key role in guiding benefits to the localities of Kumamoto (3) and in influencing agriculture and forestry policymaking in LDP and Diet committees. Matsuoka's own public election promises, with echoes of 1996, contained the usual mix of bland generalities and motherhood statements, such as 'reviving the market and economy', 'implementing a social welfare policy', 'implementing educational reform and public safety countermeasures', 'rejuvenating regional areas', and 'strengthening international and diplomatic undertakings for resolving population, food and environmental problems'.⁴⁰

Matsuoka was the only candidate standing in Kumamoto (3) to receive the official recommendation of the Nokyo National Council and the Kumamoto Prefecture *nôseiren* in the 2000 election. In order to receive the recommendation, Matsuoka had to pass through a comprehensive vetting process by the Nokyo organisation. Several steps were involved: approval of his answers to a public questionnaire set by the organisation and the signing of a policy agreement relating to political topics, which demonstrated Matsuoka's real understanding of the concerns of the organisation, and an application by the prefectural *nôseiren* to the National Council for recommendation by the entire body—both national and prefectural—operating in a unified fashion.⁴¹

Less obvious to the public view was Matsuoka's ever-tighter network of contacts with construction industry executives in his electorate. According to the son of one such executive, these 'recruits' to Matsuoka's cause were not always willing. During the election, the president of a concrete company found his name on a list of Matsuoka promoters. When he went to Matsuoka's campaign-launching ceremony as instructed by his secretary, he was asked to take a position on the podium. The president got fairly angry at this kind of treatment and consequently voted for the DPJ.⁴²

THE QUINTESSENTIAL SPECIAL-INTEREST POLITICIAN

In winning and retaining the seat of Kumamoto (3) in the 1996 and 2000 elections, Matsuoka's political and policy behaviour were once again predominantly shaped by local and sectional interests as well as by the personal interests of certain clients. These interests were significantly but not substantially affected by electoral reform.

Local interests

Winning the seat of Kumamoto (3) meant that Matsuoka had to work really hard as the representative of that electoral district. The SMD system intensified the electoral competition that Matsuoka faced while concurrently shrinking the geographic size of his electorate, which encouraged an even stronger predisposition towards localism.⁴³ The new electoral system thus entrenched rather than curbed Matsuoka's 'constituency-service-oriented politics'.⁴⁴ Matsuoka was a good example of how electoral reform in Japan had the contra-indicated effect of unleashing the unrestrained forces of localism.

Another significant difference was that the new electoral system encouraged Matsuoka into a whole constituency-service orientation rather than simply a predominant focus on his *jiban*. While the latter remained extremely important, the need for a plurality meant that Matsuoka had to direct his appeals to the entire electorate and not just to a specific part of it. This meant doing whatever he could to direct public resources across the whole electorate. In this way, Matsuoka attempted to demonstrate that he was the most effective representative of that district.

The changeover to the new electoral system thus strengthened the incentives for Matsuoka to engage in pork-barrelling, to make promises about what he was going to do for his constituency and to broaden regionally concentrated policy services beyond his *jiban*. Although Matsuoka's primary electoral payback was to the voters of Aso County, he could not afford to neglect the rest of the electoral district because of his need for a plurality.

One of the most significant impacts on Matsuoka's representation of interests was, therefore, the incentive to engage even more intensively in *rieki yûdô seiji*. To differentiate himself from his rivals (from different parties) under such a system, he had to demonstrate the advantages he had as an incumbent. Guiding benefits to the whole district was the best way to do this. Moreover, because he was now the only member of the LDP elected from his Kumamoto constituency, his power strengthened in the prefecture.⁴⁴

Through his successful acquisition of public works projects for a number of areas in his constituency, but particularly for the towns and villages of Aso County, Matsuoka consolidated his reputation as a politician who guided benefits to local areas (*rieki yûdôgata no seijika*).⁴⁵ Matsuoka was described as 'very useful' in alerting the central agencies to local interests and in securing budgets and projects.⁴⁶ In fact, in his constituency, Matsuoka's record of obtaining funds for various public works projects was soon unsurpassed. As far as the residents in the deserted rural and mountainous villages of Kumamoto were concerned, where agriculture was in decline and where young people had all left for the cities, public works were indispensable as the only industry in town. For them, it was said, 'Matsuoka was a necessary evil'.⁴⁷ Matsuoka commented during a general meeting for party reform at LDP headquarters in November 1997: 'If you want to call me a "civil engineering Diet member" (*doboku giin*), then do that. There are no Diet members who aren't thinking about elections'.⁴⁸ In this sense, Matsuoka 'did not hide the fact that he was a "concessions king"'.⁴⁹

Matsuoka became a great believer in getting down to the grass roots and conducting on-the-spot investigations of particular issues of concern to locals. His website exhibited photographs of numerous visits to this place or that, discussing matters with farmers and others. Matsuoka always returned to his locality at the end of each week and met up with local people, talking to them and getting to know what they wanted.

Besides bringing public works back to his electorate, representing local interests was crucial to Matsuoka's electoral fate in other ways. Localism was more than just *rieki yūdō seiji*. It required him to exert influence on behalf of local politicians in his constituency over particular matters of concern to them, such as budget allocations to particular municipalities, local government amalgamations, the impact of the central government's decentralisation policies and the distribution of fiscal powers between central and local governments. Matsuoka was often visited by delegations of local leaders and politicians from his electorate, wanting him to intercede with the central government on issues affecting local government in their area. For example, some municipalities in Kumamoto (3) were alarmed about the potential impact of local government mergers on government spending in their localities, such as cuts in public works that could undermine the regional economy. In February 2003, LDP Diet members representing Kumamoto Prefecture, including Matsuoka, met to exchange opinions with municipal mayors. A majority of the local mayors felt that consideration should be given to the distinctive situation in each district in the local government merger process. The LDP Diet members' group confirmed that they would consider the earnest opinions of regional representatives and strive to reflect them in policies.⁵¹

Matsuoka also regularly hosted study tours of the Diet by his local constituents. He was happy to show groups of visitors from his *jiban* various aspects of Diet and party operations in Tokyo. The Aso branch of the association of ward heads, for example, visited Matsuoka in Tokyo and asked to be shown around the Diet. Matsuoka was able to say that he hoped everyone had gained some idea of where he worked and how important his job was as a Diet member.⁵² Another such tour included 18 people from Oguni Town, Kikuchi City and Omori Town. Matsuoka showed them around the Diet and introduced them to various Diet members.

Sectional interests

Because of the predominantly rural nature of his support base, Matsuoka was concerned with conditions in rural-regional industries. After electoral reform,

his support rate in individual municipalities of Kumamoto (3) became highly correlated with the percentage of farm households in that municipality. For example, a significant correlation in the 2000 poll results could be observed between the percentage of farm households in a municipality and the percentage of the total vote Matsuoka received.⁵³

The switch to a single-member electorate did not, therefore, force Matsuoka to sacrifice his agricultural and forestry policy specialism in order to broaden his appeal to a wider cross-section of voters. He retained and indeed consolidated his representation of farm and forestry interests. If anything, an agricultural and forestry policy niche beckoned him even more strongly. There were many farm votes to be retained as well as new ones to be won in his new constituency. Indeed, he had to cater to farm households and forest owners even more assiduously in Kumamoto (3) than in Kumamoto (1).

As a *nôrin giin*, Matsuoka combined two predominant types of representation. The first was representation of large aggregated interests such as agriculture and forestry in terms of advancing particular macro-policy objectives, often defined in cooperation with large integrative interest groups such as Nokyo or the forest associations. Matsuoka made a point of attending 'request roundtables' of the Kumamoto Nokyo organisation at which he listened to what locals were saying about particular problems.

The second was representation of special interests through the application of micro-policies and/or allocations of specific-purpose subsidies to particular groups of beneficiaries. Agricultural and forestry policy generated a lot of pork-barrel benefits including subsidies for agriculture and rural infrastructure that could benefit particular localities, or agricultural cooperatives or other groups of farmers. So it doubled as policy that could also serve local interests in the electorate.

On the other hand, as the sole Diet representative from Kumamoto (3), Matsuoka had to take care of all aspects of the lives of his supporters in those municipalities where he won a plurality of votes—their welfare, economic, social and livelihood needs and so on. When his margin of victory was so small, as his generally was, every vote counted. He could not afford to concentrate exclusively on regional areas and agricultural and forestry issues and ignore the cities. After all, supporters in Yamaga City and Kikuchi City delivered 14.4 per cent of his total vote in the 1996 elections and 16.3 per cent in 2000. So Matsuoka had to be concerned with city businesses and other economic and social issues of concern to urban voters.

Such policies were, however, a sideshow to the Matsuoka's main orientation towards localism and sectionalism. These were the primary strategies by which he sought electoral success. The strongly bifurcated rural-urban split in his electoral strategy adopted during his days as Diet representative for Kumamoto (3) was abandoned. Once again, Matsuoka's changed electoral circumstances challenged predictions that the new electoral system would exclusively produce policy generalists rather than policy specialists, and median vote-seekers rather than special-interest vote-seekers. Quite the reverse, Matsuoka's specialism became more pronounced in keeping with the more homogeneous nature of his constituency in rural counties, which provided the large majority of his supporting votes.

Every New Year Matsuoka delivered a National Policy Report to the inner circle of his *kôenkai* in the Aso Town Gymnasium.⁵⁴ The report referred to Matsuoka's achievements in all areas of public policy, but particularly to the agriculture and forestry policies that he had influenced and to his achievements in terms of bringing pork-barrel benefits back to his electorate.

Clientelistic interests

Because the new electoral system intensified competition amongst candidates for a plurality, Matsuoka had an even stronger incentive to offer his services as a mediator to those seeking personal favours in order to secure votes and political funds. Matsuoka faced an environment of heightened competition for bribery and 'financial influence corruption'.⁵⁵ Electoral reform failed to convert Matsuoka into a new style of politician, primarily concerned with programmatic policies rather than with special interests and individually brokered deals.

Such activity involved engineering benefits not only for the leaders of particular interest groups and other public, semi-public and private organisations, but also for businessmen as well as for local government politicians and officials. Matsuoka constantly received petitioners in his Diet office seeking his patronage in the form of favours regarding various matters. Matsuoka's natural expectation was to deliver benefits in exchange for money or votes. Once when an executive of a public interest corporation (*shadan hôjin*) visited Matsuoka to petition him for a favour, Matsuoka shouted at him, 'I am not doing this job as Diet member for a hobby. If you don't bring money, bring votes'.⁵⁶ Such a comment revealed the depth of Matsuoka's orientation towards

clientelistic interests and his propensity to act as a political broker. As one member of the Japanese public averred, 'he is a conscientious person who will do anything if you give him money'.⁵⁷ When the Mediation for Profit Prohibition Law (*Assen Ritoku Kinshihô*), which made it a crime for politicians to receive compensation for mediating with bureaucrats and others over matters such as public works contracts, was debated in the Diet in 2000, Matsuoka opposed the bill. He remarked that 'denying mediation results in the denying of the politicians themselves. It is erroneous to assert that mediation is evil'.⁵⁸ He also commented on the subject of collecting contributions from construction companies, saying that these were effectively 'a repayment for services rendered'.⁵⁹

NOTES

- 1 The figure of 200 was reduced to 180 prior to the 2000 election.
- 2 Nakanishi, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu', p. 28.
- 3 Shigeki Nishihira, 'Shosenkyoku Bunrui Kijun no Teian' ['Proposals for a Classification Standard for the Single-Member Electorate System'], *Chûô Chôsaô*, No. 449, March 1995, p. 5; electoral data kindly supplied by author, worksheet, p. 2.
- 4 A total of 26 SMDs out of the total of 300 were categorised in this most rural of electoral categories. The percentage of population employed in primary industries in Kumamoto (3) at the time was 25.0 per cent (*ibid.*).
- 5 This figure was calculated from data available at http://www.pref.kumamoto.jp/statistics/siryo/h15nenkan/xl_data/nenkan_data/nenkan-SB1.xls. The figures are based on the 2000 census.
- 6 Data was obtained from http://www.pref.kumamoto.jp/statistics/siryo/h15nenkan/xl_data/nenkan_data/nenkan-SB1.xls and <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2000/kihon1/00/zuhyou/a001.xls>
- 7 As Curtis has aptly commented, where candidates in the new Lower House electoral districts 'differ tends to depend more on the kind of constituency they are running in than the party they belong to. Elections take place in separate districts. They are rarely nationwide referenda on broad policy issues. In a country such as Japan...where parties are loosely structured, what candidates say their policies are depends on what they think will get them elected in their particular districts'. *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, p. 164.
- 8 Its Japanese title was Shinshintô.
- 9 Ellis S. Krauss and Robert Pekkanen, 'Explaining Party Adaptation to Electoral Reform: The Discreet Charm of the LDP', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 30, No.1, Winter 2004, pp. 10–13.
- 10 Hasegawa Hiroshi, 'Jimin "Gajô" no Chikaku Hendô' ['A Tectonic Shift in an LDP "Stronghold"]', *Aera*, 24 November 2003, p. 26.
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 *ibid.*
- 15 *ibid.*
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 *ibid.*
- 18 See also Chapter 6 on 'The Identical Twins of Nagata-chô'.

- 19 Kitamatsu, *et al.*, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu Daigishi Tettei Bunseki', p. 47.
- 20 *ibid.* See also below.
- 21 *ibid.*
- 22 *ibid.* All these figures were confirmed by the nationwide analysis of political funding conducted by the *Asahi Shinbun* in 1998. See 'Seiji Shikin Zenkoku Chōsa Kekka: 96-nen Sōsenkyō, Shōsenkyoku Kanren Tōsensha 384 Ninbun o Kōkai' ['Results of the National Investigation of Political Funding: Disclosure of 384 Successfully Elected Persons in the 1996 General Election']. Available from <http://www.asahi.com/paper/special/shikin/>
- 23 Kitamatsu, *et al.*, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu Daigishi Tettei Bunseki', p. 47.
- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 *ibid.*, p. 48.
- 26 *ibid.*, pp. 48–49.
- 27 These are the years in which they were reported; they were actually received in the preceding year.
- 28 Kitamatsu, *et al.*, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu Daigishi Tettei Bunseki', pp. 48–49.
- 29 *ibid.* p. 49.
- 30 Itō, 'Heisei Jiken Fuairu: Nōrin Jigyō Hojokin o Dokusen Suru Matsuoka Toshikatsu', p. 65.
- 31 See Chapter 4 on 'Exercising Power as a *Nōrin Giin*'.
- 32 See <http://www.kumanichi.co.jp/senkyo/senkyo-33.html>
- 33 See <http://www.kumanichi.co.jp/senkyo/senkyo-33.html>
- 34 Dai 41-kai Shūgiin Giin Sōsenkyō: Fuken Nōsei Undō Soshiki Suishin, Shiji Tōsen Giin Ichiran' ['The 41st House of Representatives General Election: A Summary of Elected Diet Members Recommended and Supported by Prefectural Agricultural Policy Campaign Organizations'], *Nōsei Undō Jyōnanaru*, No. 10, November 1996, p. 22.
- 35 See <http://piza.2ch.net/giin/kako/987/987905181.html/>
- 36 'Genchi Rupo—Kumamoto ken' ['On the Spot Report—Kumamoto Prefecture'], *Nōsei Undō Jyōnanaru*, No. 24, March 1999, p. 29.
- 37 'Suishin Giin to Meiyū no Paipu o Futoku' ['Fattening the Staunch Friend Pipe with Recommended Diet Members'], *Nōsei Undō Jyōnanaru*, No. 15, September 1996, p. 23.
- 38 *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 20 June 2000.
- 39 See also below, Chapter 4 on 'Exercising Power as a *Nōrin Giin*', and Chapter 5 on 'Exercising Power as a *Nōrin Zoku*'.
- 40 See <http://www.kumanichi.co.jp/senkyo/senkyo2000/kouho/kouho31.html>
- 41 'Dai 42-kai Shūgiin Sōsenkyō ni mukete' ['With a View to the 42nd House of Representatives Election'], *Nōsei Undō Jyōnanaru*, No. 30, April 2000, p. 3.
- 42 See <http://piza.2ch.net/giin/kako/987/987905181.html>
- 43 As Curtis observes, '[a]s a general matter, the smaller the district, the greater is the tendency for candidates and voters to be concerned with local issues'. *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, p. 163. As he points out, 'the U.S. House of Representatives—with single-member districts—is better known for pork-barrel politics than for sober consideration of how best to design policies to serve the broad national interest'. *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, pp. 163–64.
- 44 *ibid.*, p. 164.
- 45 Itō, 'Heisei Jiken Fuairu: Nōrin Jigyō Hojokin o Dokusen Suru Matsuoka Toshikatsu', p. 65.
- 46 "'Munee no Bōrei"' ni Maketa Meiyū "Matsuoka Toshikatsu"' ['The Sworn Friend "Matsuoka Toshikatsu" Who Lost to "Munee's Ghost"'], *Shūkan Shinchō*, 20 November 2003, p. 28.
- 47 Hasegawa, 'Kanjūdanomi no Hazama de Shundō', p. 24.
- 48 Nakanishi and Special Reporting Group, 'Suzuki Munee, Matsuoka Toshikatsu', p. 105.
- 49 *Mainichi Shinbun*, 18 November 1997.
- 50 See <http://piza.2ch.net/giin/kako/987/987905181.html>
- 51 Matsuoka Toshikatsu Official Site, 'Sessoku na Shichōson Gappei no Saikō o' ['Reconsidering the Hasty Municipality Mergers'], in *Katsudō Hōkoku [Activity Report]*. Available from <http://matsuokatoshikatsu.org/site002//public/003.html>

- 52 Matsuoka Toshikatsu Official Site, 'Kokkai Kengaku' ['Diet Study Tour'], in *Katsudô Hôkoku* [Activity Report]. Available from <http://matsuokatoshikatsu.org/index1.html>
- 53 The correlation was $r=0.629$. The regression coefficient between percentage of population in farm households and the percentage of the total vote received by Matsuoka was 0.535, which is also highly significant. This data was obtained from Horiuchi Yusaku who kindly did the calculations for the author.
- 54 Hasegawa, 'Kanjûdanomi no Hazama de Shundô', p. 25.
- 55 'Karate 4-dan', p. 35.
- 56 Nakanishi and Journal Reporter Group, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu to Iu Giwaku Nin', p. 184.
- 57 See <http://piza.2ch.net/giin/kako/987/987905181.html>
- 58 Nakanishi and Journal Reporter Group, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu to Iu Giwaku Nin', p. 182.
- 59 Kitamatsu, *et al.*, 'Matsuoka Toshikatsu Daigishi Tettei Bunseki', p. 46.