

Article

Emergence of Global Environmental Policy in Japan:

Saburo Okita and the Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems¹

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ABSTRACT: The nature of environmental policy changed dramatically in the 1980s. Until the 1970s, environmental policies were limited to stopgap measures in response to environmental problems, with little benefit to the economy. By contrast, since the 1980s, a new type of environmental policy has emerged that is compatible with economic policies. However, the research on the emergence and development of this new type of environmental policy has been scant. This article focuses on Japan's environmental policy and explores the emergence of global environmental policy, one of the new types of environmental policy compatible with economic policies. It thus reveals two key conclusions. First, Japan's systematic global environmental policy originated in 1980, when the Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems was established as an advisory body to the Environment Agency. Saburo Okita (1914–1993) and Tsutomu Tanaka (1936–), a bureaucrat closely acquainted with Okita, played key roles in the establishment and early activities of the group. Okita was then an internationally renowned economist and former executive of the Economic Planning Agency in Japan. Tanaka, originally a bureaucrat at the Economic Planning Agency, was seconded to the Environment Agency from 1979 to 1982 when he served as Director of the International Affairs Division. Although an *outsider* in the Environment Agency, Tanaka used the knowledge and experience gained during his interactions with Okita to initiate a new policy agenda: global environmental issues. Second, although the Ad Hoc Group is now largely forgotten, it played an important role in promoting global environmental policy internationally because the group's report led to the establishment of the Brundtland Commission, which stimulated the global diffusion of the concept of sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: Japan, Global Environmental Policy, Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems, Saburo Okita, Brundtland Commission

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1 Introduction

The nature of environmental policy changed dramatically in the 1980s. Until the 1970s, environmental policies were limited to stopgap measures in response to environmental problems, with little benefit to the economy. Industry considered environmental policies a burdensome annoyance that only imposed additional costs. Therefore, the government and industry recognized that environmental and economic policies were incompatible. By contrast, mainly in the 1980s, governments and industries in developed countries began to share the recognition that environmental and economic policies were complementary and compatible (Hajer 1995, pp. 96–100).

Therefore, investigating the emergence and development of a new type of environmental policy compatible with economic policies is necessary. Sluga (2017) drew attention to the major role that international business has played in global environmental governance and suggested the need for historical research on their role. Subsequently, Bergquist and David (2022) elucidated the process by which international business and the United Nations (UN) created global environmental governance between the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 (commonly known as the Stockholm Conference) and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, historical research on such environmental policies has only just begun.

In Japan, environmental destruction, such as air and water pollution, was very serious until the 1970s, and the idea that environmental policies were incompatible with economic policies was particularly strong among the government, industry, and conservative politicians. Thus, Japan is a good example for examining the birth of a new type of environmental policy compatible with economic policies. However, most environmental history studies on the case of Japan have focused on the actual damage (George 2001, Walker 2010, Miyamoto 2014). One of the few exceptions is the focus on environmental policy in Kobori (2017; forthcoming). Kobori found that the relocation of factories in the 1970s as part of Yokohama City's environmental policy conflicted with nature conservation. Furthermore, few environmental history studies have focused on Japan since the 1980s, for example, Avenell (2017) focused on the Japanese environmental movement. Consequently, environmental policies since the 1980s, which have undergone substantial changes, have rarely been examined historically.

Next, this paper reviews the situation in Japan in the 1970s, when environmental and economic policies were incompatible. During this decade, there was serious environmental pollution. Thus, the Japanese government institutionalized environmental policies,

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for example, established environmental laws, regulations, and the Environment Agency.² Until the 1970s, however, environmental policy was a stopgap measure to manage environmental problems in Japan.

Under these circumstances, the Stockholm Conference, held in 1972 and advocated by the Swedish government, engaged the Japanese government in an international debate that covered environmental issues, natural resource management, and population and housing issues. The main achievement of the Japanese government at the UN Conference on the Human Environment was that it introduced its experience in pollution control. Thus, the conference did not trigger the Japanese government to envision a comprehensive environmental policy (Miyata 2011, pp. 127–128). The proposal of the Japanese government for a ban on nuclear testing, which was intended as a check on China, was adopted in the environmental declaration of the conference. However, Japan did not endorse a proposal for a 10-year ban on commercial whaling, contrary to the global trend at the conference, a policy in which international resource management was also a theme (Higuchi 2013, pp. 264–270). After the conference, “The environmental fervor of the Japanese government and the Japanese people, which had risen so much at the Stockholm Conference, cooled down as if it were a lie” (Kaneko 1998, p. 39) due to the oil crisis.³ As a result, the Japanese government did not use the Stockholm Conference as an opportunity to actively address global environmental policy, a new environmental policy that could be compatible with economic policies.

Miyamoto (2007, pp. 11–34) and Otsuka (2020, pp. 14–15) argued that from the late 1970s to the 1980s, the environmental policy in Japan regressed or stagnated. The main reasons for this notion are the opposition to the environmental impact assessment (EIA) legislation by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (currently the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and industry stakeholders, the relaxation of environmental standards for nitrogen dioxide, and the regression of the victim relief scheme in compensation for pollution-related health damage.

However, scrutiny of the trends in the 1980s confirmed that the Japanese government began to address global environmental issues in the early 1980s. Specifically, *Chikyūteki*

² The Environment Agency in Japan was established in 1971. In 2001, the Environment Agency was reorganized to form the Ministry of the Environment. In this paper, the names of organizations and positions are those at the time.

³ English translation by the author. Kumao Kaneko (1937–) played an important role in the preparatory stages of the UN Conference on the Human Environment. In the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of international efforts regarding environmental issues were related to the United Nations, where the United Nations Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was the main department in the Japanese government in charge of this type of issue. Kaneko was also an employee of the United Nations Bureau of the MOFA at the time.

Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai [*the Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems*; hereafter, *the Ad Hoc Group*] was established in September 1980 as a private advisory body to the Director General of the Environment Agency. Global environmental policy is a new type of environmental policy that could be compatible with economic policies, unlike the air and water pollution control measures implemented in Japan up to that time. Notably, the Ad Hoc Group was rarely mentioned during discussions on environmental policies in Japan. Thus, the organization became a forgotten entity.

In response to the report of the Ad Hoc Group, the Japanese government made a proposal at a special meeting of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which led to the establishment of a special UN commission, that is, the World Commission on Environment and Development (known as the Brundtland Commission). However, researchers have not examined the details of the establishment, functions, and development of the activities of the Ad Hoc Group toward the creation of the Brundtland Commission. Furthermore, studies on the Ad Hoc Group are scant; a few researchers briefly mention that the Ad Hoc Group began to address global environmental issues in 1980, and that the group's report led to the proposal for the Brundtland Commission by the Japanese government (Ohta 1995, pp. 140–144; Ohta 2000, pp. 97–99; Schreurs 2000, p. 118; Schreurs 2001, p. 200; Schreurs 2002, p. 162; Sato 2002, pp. 101–102 and 115–116).

The Ad Hoc Group was chaired by Saburo Okita, an internationally known economist who served as a bureaucrat at the Economic Planning Agency and then as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Okita played an important role in the economic and political history of Japan. Thus, several studies were conducted on Okita, for example, Morris-Suzuki (1989, pp. 145–149) and Kobori (2014). The commonality between these studies is that they focused on the period up to Okita's retirement from the Economic Planning Agency in 1963. Thus far, the literature has not examined his career after 1964 (when he became President of the Japan Economic Research Center). Therefore, no research has highlighted him as part of the Ad Hoc Group. A biography of Okita by journalist Yoshikuni Ono also describes Okita's career after 1964 but provides only a brief introduction to the Ad Hoc Group (Ono 2004, p. 455). As I will present in the subsequent section, the concept of establishing the Ad Hoc Group was introduced by a bureaucrat named Tsutomu Tanaka (1936–). Similarly, no research was conducted on the work of Tsutomu Tanaka in the group due to the scant research on the Ad Hoc Group.

The work of the Ad Hoc Group has been most closely examined by Hideyuki Kawana, a former Japanese newspaper journalist. Kawana (1995, pp. 8–18) wrote a journalistic summary of the reports published in the period between the foundation of the Ad Hoc Group and the establishment of the Brundtland Commission. However, he did not indicate the source of individual facts. Therefore, researchers are tasked with using historical materials to elucidate the establishment and subsequent development of the Ad Hoc

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Group and its implications for environmental policy.

This article explores the process of the establishment and activities of the Ad Hoc Group from 1980 to 1982. In addition, I consider the significance of the early activities of the Ad Hoc Group in the history of environmental policy. This paper is a small step toward a comprehensive understanding of Japan's environmental policy and views Japan's environmental policy from a new perspective, that is, the emergence of global environmental policy.

To elucidate the abovementioned points, this study uses interviews with the personalities involved, official documents from the National Archives of Japan and the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and primary sources, such as reports prepared for internal use by the ministries.

2 Key Players: Saburo Okita and Tsutomu Tanaka

Saburo Okita and Tsutomu Tanaka, a bureaucrat closely acquainted with Okita, played key roles in the establishment and early activities of the group. Okita was an economist who worked as the former Director of the Development Bureau of the Economic Planning Agency and as Japan's Foreign Minister. Okita had built an extensive network of contacts in political and business circles in Japan and abroad. He was, therefore, the most internationally known Japanese figure in the political and economic fields from the 1970s to the 1990s. Tanaka, originally a bureaucrat at the Economic Planning Agency, was seconded to the Environment Agency from 1979 to 1982, during which time he served as the Director of the International Affairs Division.

Tables 1 and 2 provide a brief chronology of Okita and Tanaka. When Tanaka was transferred to the Planning Bureau of the Economic Planning Agency in 1961, Okita was the Director of the Planning Bureau. The two have shared a close relationship ever since. Later, Okita recommended Tanaka for a study program in the Netherlands and a position at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Tanaka became the first Japanese to work for the OECD and, thus, gained international experience.⁴

In a book of Okita's memorials, Tanaka recalled his memories of Okita as follows:

A while after returning to Japan, when I was on secondment to the Environment Agency as Director of the International Affairs Division, the UN Conference to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm was to be held in Nairobi,

⁴ Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

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Table 1. Brief Biography of Saburo Okita

1914	Born
1937	Joined the Ministry of Posts as an engineer
1947–1952	Chief of the Investigation Section, Economic Stabilization Board
1957–1962	Director of the Planning Bureau, Economic Planning Agency
1962–1963	Director of the Development Bureau, Economic Planning Agency
1963	Retired from the Economic Planning Agency
1964–1973	President, Japan Economic Research Center
1968–1969	Member of the Commission on International Development (Pearson Commission)
1969	Executive Committee Member of the Club of Rome
1972	Attended the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
1972	Supervised the translation of <i>The Limits to Growth</i> into Japanese
1973–1977	President, Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund
1977	Unsuccessful election to the House of Councillors
1979–1980	Minister for Foreign Affairs
1980–1981	Government Representative for External Economic Relations
1980–1993	Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems
1984–1987	Member of the Brundtland Commission
1992	Attended Rio Summit
1993	Death

Source: Okita Saburo Tsuitō Bunshū Kankō Kai [Saburo Okita's Memorial Collection Publication Society] (1994) and Ono (2004).

Table 2. Brief Biography of Tsutomu Tanaka

1936	Born
1959	Joined the Economic Planning Agency
1961	Planning Section, Planning Bureau, Economic Planning Agency
1964	Completed the Economic Planning Course at the Institute of Social Studies (The Hague)
1964–1968	OECD Secretariat, Economic Bureau, Paris
1972–1976	First Secretary and Counselor, Delegation of Japan to the OECD, Paris
1979–1982	Director of the International Affairs Division, Minister's Secretariat, Environment Agency
1982–1993	Director of the Coordination Section, Director of the Research Bureau, Director of the Price Bureau, among others, Economic Planning Agency
1993–1995	Administrative Vice-Minister for Economic Planning
1995–2007	Professor, Faculty of Policy Studies, Chuo University

Source: Anonymous (2007, p. 181) and interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

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and I was to work on global environmental issues in preparation for the conference. When I thought of organizing a high-level roundtable for this purpose, the first thing that came to my mind was to ask Mr. Okita to chair it. Fortunately, he agreed, and since then, Mr. Okita has been very active in the field of environmental policy. I was happy to have been able to create such an opportunity, but I was also afraid that I might have put an extra burden on Mr. Okita, who is extremely busy. (Tanaka 1994, pp. 19–20. English translation by the author.)

Tanaka's interest in global issues began with his participation in the Japan Research Team of the Club of Rome and the translation of *The Limits to Growth*⁵ under Okita's direction.⁶ Okita was one of the first to *discover* the limits to growth in Japan and became its *evangelist*.

Tanaka worked at the Japanese Delegation to the OECD in Paris from 1972 to 1976, whereas Okita was appointed chairman of Interfutures,⁷ an organization established by the OECD in Paris in 1976. As such, their association continued. In addition, Keichi Oshima⁸ (Professor of Nuclear Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Tokyo), who later became a member of the Ad Hoc Group, served as the Director for Science, Technology, and Industry at the OECD from 1974 to 1976. During this period, Oshima and Tanaka were in Paris. The two men continued their friendship until Oshima died.⁹

In 1979, Tanaka was seconded to the Environment Agency. His transfer to the Environment Agency was less of a wish than a coincidence.¹⁰ At the Environment Agency, he *discovered* the problem of the *global environment*.

3 Establishment of the Ad Hoc Group¹¹

3.1 Launch

Tanaka was appointed the Director of the International Affairs Division in the Director

⁵ Meadows et al. (1972).

⁶ Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

⁷ The OECD Interfutures Project, launched in January 1976 on the initiative of the Japanese government, aimed to examine the future of the world.

⁸ If following the Japanese pronunciation faithfully, his first name is “Keiichi.” However, Oshima usually wrote “Keichi.”

⁹ Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the following description of this section is based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018, and June 26, 2019.

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General's Secretariat of the Environment Agency on July 20, 1979. The International Affairs Division was established within the Director General's Secretariat in May 1972, one year after the establishment of the Environment Agency (Kankyochō 10 Shūnen Kinen Jigyō Jikkō Iinkai, 1982, p. 392). In those days, the Director post of this section was occupied nearly exclusively by individuals seconded by the Economic Planning Agency.

At the time, the main task of the International Affairs Division was to support the international activities of various bureaus, such as the Air Protection Bureau, the Water Protection Bureau, and the Nature Conservation Bureau. It also compiled the monthly activities of the Environment Agency into an English-language booklet called the *Japan Environment Summary* and was responsible for public relations activities at the UN and the OECD. The International Affairs section was not busy until Tanaka became head of the division.

During that period, one of the tasks of the Director of the International Affairs Division of the Environment Agency was to participate in the Governing Council of the UNEP, which met for two weeks each May in Nairobi, Kenya. Tanaka attended the Governing Council meeting in May 1980 and found that the Japanese delegation did nothing much at the Council: during the week, the Director of the International Affairs Division merely sat there. Tanaka, accustomed to international discussions at the OECD, was surprised to find that the Japanese played no role in the UNEP. He then decided that Japan should play an important international role in global environmental issues.

At this time, *The Global 2000 Report to the President: Entering the Twenty-First Century*¹² was published. Prepared by the Council on Environmental Quality in collaboration with the Department of State at the behest of President Carter, the report warned of a rapidly growing world population, a widening gap between the rich and the poor, food shortage, deforestation, desertification, increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, ozone depletion caused by chlorofluorocarbons, and acid rain. Tanaka found not only a link to *The Limits to Growth* in the report but also a realistic perspective not influenced by *The Limits to Growth*. He also knew that the Environment Agency should act to address global environmental problems immediately.¹³

Tanaka instructed the staff of the International Affairs Division to prepare a summary of the Japanese version of *The Global 2000 Report to the President: Entering the Twenty-First Century*. The purpose was to explain the contents of the report to the Director General of the Environment Agency and others. The Japanese summary was completed in August

¹² Barney (1980).

¹³ When Tanaka read *The Global 2000 Report to the President*, he felt that “this is what is really important!” Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

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1990 as a 15-page report entitled *The Global 2000 Report: Main Findings and Conclusions (Provisional Translation)*. Later, the International Affairs Division also worked on the translation of the report under the supervision of Tanaka.

In July 1980, Hyosuke Kujiraoka (Liberal Democratic Party) was appointed as the Director General of the Environment Agency. Tanaka wanted to explain to Kujiraoka that the Environment Agency should manage global environmental problems. However, Tanaka was unable to find time because Kujiraoka, who had recently arrived at the post, was particularly busy. Thus, their meeting was postponed until August 1980. According to government procedure, the Director of the International Affairs Division would explain the matter to the Deputy Vice-Minister; subsequently, the Deputy Vice-Minister would explain it to the Director General. However, Tanaka considered that this process would be futile. Therefore, he explained it directly to the Director General. Consequently, Director General Kujiraoka immediately understood the importance of global environmental issues.¹⁴ However, the proceeding became a matter of concern because of problems related to the law on the establishment of the Environment Agency (see Section 3.2).

Tanaka was developing a concrete plan to tackle global environmental problems. The major Japanese newspaper reported on the idea on August 4, 1980. The headlines of this article on the front page of the evening edition were “Preventing pollution of ‘Spaceship Earth’” and “Environment Agency shifts to positive stance.”

In recent years, countries worldwide have become increasingly concerned about the spread of environmental destruction at the global scale, including population explosion, hunger, desertification, and the logging of tropical rainforests. To tackle these problems in earnest, the Environment Agency in Japan has decided to establish an “International Cooperation Study Group” of experts to study the current status of pollution, future projections, and countermeasures, and has begun preparations for such studies. [...] Thus far, the United States has been the most concerned about the pollution of the global environment. In response to the directive issued by President Carter, the Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of State recently collaborated to produce *Entering the Twenty-First Century: The Global 2000 Report*, which warns nations that if current trends continue, the world in the year 2000 will be more polluted and environmentally degraded than it is today. [...] By contrast, the *White Paper on the Environment*, which was published by the Environment Agency of Japan, devotes the majority of its pages to the introduction of the current situation of pollution and destruction of the environment in Japan and the measures being taken. It only touches a little on inter-

¹⁴ Kujiraoka was a rare politician in the Liberal Democratic Party because he was passionate about environmental issues.

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national cooperation, and mostly ignores global-scale pollution problems. On the other hand, recent criticisms have emerged from the residents of developing countries, which pointed out the *export of pollution* by Japanese companies and the destruction of virgin forests through the export of timber to Japan. As a result, the Environment Agency can no longer afford to maintain a closed attitude to environmental destruction and pollution in other countries. Until now, research on the protection of the earth's forests, meteorological changes due to increased amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and individual environmental pollution has been conducted separately by the Forestry Agency, the Meteorological Agency, and specific scientists, respectively. Therefore, there was no institution to consolidate a wide range of information in one place. For this reason, the Environment Agency has been keen to establish this study group. Thus, the Environment Agency plans to investigate the current status and prospects of global environmental problems, the response of international organizations, and Japan's approach thus far during the 1981 budget year. Then, the agency will conduct a detailed examination of individual problems, such as desertification and marine pollution, during the 1982 budget year. (Asahi Shimbun, August 4, 1980, evening edition, English translation by the author.)

The criticism that the White Paper of the Environment Agency largely ignored global environmental problems and the Agency's continued closed-mindedness regarding environmental pollution abroad is indicative of Tanaka's perceptions. Tanaka was a type of *outsider*, which enabled him to be objective about the situation at the Environment Agency. Notably, the day after the aforementioned article was published, Tanaka was summoned by an official from the Ministry of Finance and severely questioned on whether he leaked budget-related matters to the press. At the time, Tanaka ignored the topic and stated that he was merely responding to an interview with a newspaper reporter. To tackle global environmental problems, the Environment Agency needed to obtain a budget from the Ministry of Finance. However, this prospect was unlikely at the time. By contrast, the Ministry of Finance displayed a strong attitude toward this issue.

Surprisingly, at that time, bureaucrats in the Environment Agency criticized that global environmental issues were not in the purview of the International Affairs Division or that the International Affairs Division was tackling an unnecessary task of global environmental problems. However, Tanaka was not concerned with such criticisms. The reason for the Agency's reluctance to tackle global environmental issues was that it believed that its focus should be serious domestic environmental problems, such as pollution. In 1980, the Environment Agency considered domestic environmental problems, such as photochemical smog control due to increased levels of nitrogen dioxide; exhaust gas control for heavy trucks; and legislation for EIA, which failed five times, as urgent issues (Asahi Shimbun, August 2, 1980, morning edition). In the *Ten-Year History of the*

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Environment Agency, the emphasis of the Agency from 1972 to 1981 can be summarized as pollution prevention, nature conservation, and environmental protection research (Kankyochō 10 Shūnen Kinen Jigyō Jikkō Linkai, 1982, pp. 343–367). A Japanese bureaucrat of the Environment Agency stated, “In the 1980s, we were more concerned with domestic environmental issues than international ones” (Schreurs 2002, p. 129).

Thus, initiating steps toward global environmental issues was difficult. The biggest barrier, however, was the law on the establishment of the Environment Agency.

3.2 Barriers: Law on the Establishment of the Environment Agency

According to the law on the establishment of the Environment Agency, the Agency was an organization for the prevention of pollution and nature conservation. However, it was also expected to contribute to the health and well-being of the Japanese people. Therefore, the task of the Environment Agency was centered on domestic environmental problems in Japan. At the time, the Environment Agency also conducted international affairs but only in relation to international cooperation with international organizations. Thus, according to the law, a general agreement existed within the Agency, that is, addressing a wide range of global environmental problems would be difficult.

Tanaka could not overturn this view. At the time, he could only argue that the Agency should be in charge of global environmental issues because of their importance. For global environmental issues to be included in the jurisdiction of the Agency, amending the law became a necessary but challenging task.

Finally, *instructions* from Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki (Liberal Democratic Party) settled the question of the law. The next section describes the *instructions*.

3.3 Instructions from the Prime Minister

As aforementioned, Tanaka relayed the need for the Environment Agency to tackle global environmental problems to Kujiraoka, who immediately understood the gravity of the situation. The biggest barrier, however, was the law on the establishment of the Environment Agency. Thus, Kujiraoka and Tanaka wanted to meet with Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki to discuss the matter. However, securing a meeting with the Prime Minister is difficult for a section Director, such that even a minister can only meet with the Prime Minister by appointment. Thus, Tanaka asked the then-secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office, who was an acquaintance, to set an appointment with the Prime Minister.

As a result, Kujiraoka and Tanaka met with Suzuki on September 12, 1980, with the aforementioned secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office in attendance. Kujiraoka presented an explanation using *The Global 2000 Report: Main Findings and Conclusions (Provisional Translation)* and other materials, which led to the Prime Minister’s understanding of the importance of global environmental issues. Kujiraoka then expressed

that he would like to receive *instructions* from the Prime Minister regarding the necessity of the Environment Agency to address global environmental issues. Suzuki agreed and issued the *instructions*. When the Prime Minister provides an *instruction*, certain procedures are often required, for example, the Deputy Vice-Minister request to the Prime Minister for *instruction*. However, such procedures were ignored on this occasion. That Prime Minister Suzuki instructed the Director General of the Environment Agency to consider global environmental issues was made clear at a press conference held by Kujiraoka, which was reported in the evening edition on September 12, 1980, of Asahi Shimbun.

The *instructions* settled the question about the law on the establishment of the Environment Agency. Fortunately, at the time, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and other ministries were uninterested in the jurisdiction of global environmental issues.

3.4 Member Selection

Kujiraoka, as the Director General of the Environment Agency, commissioned the Ad Hoc Group on September 26, 1980, per the instruction of Prime Minister Suzuki on September 12, 1980. The Secretariat of the Ad Hoc Group was part of the International Affairs Division of the Environment Agency, where Tanaka was in charge of its operation.

On September 26, 1980, the members of the Ad Hoc Group were announced (Asahi Shimbun, September 27, 1982, morning edition). Notably, Tanaka had been selecting members of the Ad Hoc Group before the instruction from the Prime Minister. Tanaka also intended to appoint Okita, who had not been involved in environmental issues until then, as chairman of the Ad Hoc Group. At the time, few Japanese could compete internationally. Okita was Japan's representative in the economic field. Tanaka believed that Okita could also play an important role in global environmental issues. As aforementioned, Tanaka became interested in global environmental issues through the translation of *The Limits to Growth*, with Okita offering him the opportunity. Therefore, Tanaka wanted Okita to cooperate with him. Naturally, Tanaka conceived the idea of Okita assuming chairmanship. Tanaka visited Okita's office as the Government Representative for External Economic Relations in the MOFA and asked him to support global environmental issues, to which Okita readily agreed. Tanaka appreciated Okita's ability to consolidate issues and move them forward. Tanaka said that Okita's background as a government official provided him with an intuitive understanding of the policymaking process.

Other members of the Ad Hoc Group were prominent figures in Japan. Their titles and areas of expertise were as follows: Kinji Imanishi (Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University, Ecology, Anthropology), Tadao Umesao (Director, National Museum of Ethnology, Ethnology), Keichi Oshima (Professor, University of Tokyo, Nuclear Engineering), Ichiro

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Kato (Professor, University of Tokyo, Civil Law), Yoichi Kaya (Professor, University of Tokyo, Control and Systems Engineering), Jiro Kondo (Director, National Institute for Environmental Studies, Aeronautical Engineering, Environmental Science), Kenzo Tange (Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo, Architect), Shuzo Hayashi (Chairman, Nature Conservation Council, Former Director General, Cabinet Legislation Bureau), Yujiro Hayashi (Executive Director, Toyota Foundation, Futurology), and Kiyoo Wadati (Chairman, Central Council for Pollution Control, Meteorology).

As previously mentioned, Tanaka was a close friend of Oshima, who was also in Paris. Tanaka had known Kaya since the Japan Research Team of the Club of Rome, whereas Yujiro Hayashi was his senior at the Economic Planning Agency. Tange had been involved in solving the pollution problem and shared close relations with Okita and Oshima. Tanaka also considered Imanishi and Umesao to be suitable members of the group.

Tanaka's policy was to collaborate with the best people to discuss global environmental issues, which differed from the customary selection of members of this type of group in the central ministries and agencies. Traditionally, the selection was based on recommendations from each bureau, such that several objections emerged in the Environment Agency.¹⁵

The Ad Hoc Group then moved toward completing its report by the end of 1980. In the following section, I focus on the group's report.

4 1980 Report of the Ad Hoc Group

The Ad Hoc Group met five times between October and December 1980 and submitted a report entitled *Basic Directions in Coping with Global Environmental Problems* to Kujiraoka, Director General of the Environment Agency, on December 20, 1980.¹⁶ This report was presented at the OECD as the *Okita Report* and distributed at the UN.

The objectives of the Ad Hoc Group were as follows (Ad Hoc Group 1980, p. 18).

- i) To make a broad assessment of the present situation and future developments in the main areas of environmental problems on a global scale and to make comprehensive judgements as to the urgency of these problems.
- ii) To prepare suggestions on the shape of Japan's basic policy on global environmental prob-

¹⁵ Tanaka had no acquaintance with Shuzo Hayashi and Wadati before the establishment of the group, and they were recommended by various bureaus in the Agency. Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

¹⁶ This report has Japanese and English versions. The Japanese title is *Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni taisuru Torikumi no Kihonteki Hōkō ni tsuite*. All citations from this report in Section 4 are from the English edition cited as Ad Hoc Group (1980).

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lems.

- iii) To examine the issues that will require study in the future and ways in which such study might be conducted.

To date, the minutes of these five meetings are unavailable.¹⁷ According to the Ad Hoc Group (1980, p. 17), these meetings included reports on discussions in UN bodies; reports on international conferences organized by the UN; reviews of reports, such as *The Global 2000 Report to the President*.

The 1980 report of the Ad Hoc Group stated that the identified global environmental problems included population, foodstuff, ecosystems, forests, deserts, soil, animal and plant life, sea and water, atmosphere and climate, energy, chemical substances, and habitation. Among the atmosphere and climate problems, the increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide due to the increased consumption of fossil fuels was mentioned (Ad Hoc Group 1980, pp. 12–15). Furthermore, symbolized by the statement, “Many global environmental problems occur in the ecologically fragile tropical and sub-tropical zones and the processes are thus irreversible” (Ad Hoc Group 1980, p. 10), the 1980 report of the Ad Hoc Group regarded global environmental problems as occurring more in tropical and subtropical regions than in Japan.

The report also presented the following important points: first, the preservation of the global environment is in the interest of all nations; second, a development that destroys ecosystems should be avoided, and development should be compatible with the preservation of the environment; and third, Japan should review its development assistance and aim to strengthen international cooperation by addressing global environmental problems (Ad Hoc Group 1980, pp. 5–7). The report also recognized global environmental policy as part of Japan’s resource policies for energy, food, and timber.

Heavily dependent on overseas sources for energy, food, timber, and other materials, Japan should contribute actively to the conservation of the world’s soil and forest, both for securing resources for its own sake and in order to prevent a global deterioration of the environment. (Ad Hoc Group 1980, p. 6)

Thus, the Ad Hoc Group considered global environmental protection to be in the interest of all countries. In addition, the Ad Hoc Group viewed global environmental policy in the context of development assistance and resource policies. These two views are thought to be based on the recognition that global environmental policy is also essen-

¹⁷ In Japan, government documents are not well managed. Therefore, I assumed that the minutes of these five meetings were discarded.

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tial for economic-related policies.

The 1980 report provided a general direction for global environmental policy in the world and Japan and was a holistic view of global environmental problems. At the time, global environmental problems were not widely recognized as a policy issue in Japan. Therefore, increasing the awareness of them to the public was a significant step.

5 1982 Report of the Ad Hoc Group: Advocating an International Forum

The second report of the Ad Hoc Group, entitled *International Cooperation in Coping with Global Environmental Problems: Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the UN Conference on the Human Environment*, is 27 pages long and was submitted on April 8, 1982, to Bunbei Hara (Liberal Democratic Party), the Director General of the Environment Agency who succeeded Kujiraoka.¹⁸ The main subjects examined in this report are the chapter titles *Resources, Energy and the Environment, Development Aid and the Global Environment, Research, Study and Education for the Protection of the Global Environment*, and *International Framework for the Protection of the Global Environment*.

In *Resources, Energy, and the Environment*, the report calls for the increased promotion of the conservation of resources and energy in the industrial and domestic sectors. Furthermore, in *Development Aid and the Global Environment*, it urges Japan's business community to provide due consideration to the environment in development aid in general and to formulate specific guidelines for action on environmental protection when investing in developing countries. *Research, Study, and Education for the Protection of the Global Environment* stresses the need to further strengthen and enhance environmental education in schools and social education and to improve public opinion on environmental protection (Ad Hoc Group 1982, pp. 8–9, 11, 13, and 16).

In addition, *Development Aid and the Global Environment* includes the following description.

This seems to reflect the awareness of these countries¹⁹ which has grown with the increasing devastation of their environment that the protection of the environment means the preservation of the resource base for sustainable socio-economic development. (Ad Hoc Group 1982, p. 11)

¹⁸ This report has Japanese and English versions. The Japanese title is *Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai heno Kokusaiteki Torikumi nitsuite: Kokuren Ningen Kankyō Kaigi 10 Shūnen ni atatte*. All citations from this report in Section 5 are from the English edition cited as Ad Hoc Group (1982).

¹⁹ In the text, “these countries” means many developing countries.

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This text indicates that not only many developing countries but also the Ad Hoc Group recognized the importance of environmental policy for economic policy.

The most notable aspect of the 1982 report of the Ad Hoc Group is the section on the *International Framework for the Protection of the Global Environment*. At the near-end of this report, the following statement was issued.

[...] we suggest that a top-level international forum for research and consultation be established in order to study global environmental problems under the perspective of the global environment in 2000 and beyond, and incorporating the viewpoints of both the north and the south. The outcome of the study is expected to have a profound influence on the policy-making of all countries of the world. (Ad Hoc Group 1982, p. 19)

The phrase “a top-level international forum for research and consultation” was modeled after UN Special Commissions, such as the Brandt Commission on North-South issues and the Palme Commission on disarmament.²⁰ Therefore, this “international forum” was called the UN Special Commission on the Environment.

In May 1982, after the publication of this report, Hara, Director General of the Environment Agency, proposed the establishment of the commission corresponding to “a top-level international forum for research and consultation” at the special meeting of the Governing Council of the UNEP. Finally, with the cooperation of other countries, this forum for research and consultation was realized as the UN Special Commission on the Environment.

Thus, this section presents the process of preparing the report, with special attention to how this “international forum” was discussed and incorporated into this report. The Ad Hoc Group held eight meetings and two drafting committees between January 1981 and March 1982. The meetings consisted mainly of reports by committee members of the Ad Hoc Group and the Director of International Affairs. Guest speakers included Lester Brown (Director of the Worldwatch Institute) and Jim MacNeill (Director of the OECD Environment Directorate and later Secretary General of the Brundtland Commission) also gave talks (Ad Hoc Group 1982, pp. 24–25).

The turning point in the preparation of the second report of the Ad Hoc Group was the 12th meeting, held on January 14, 1982. This meeting included a speech by Mostafa Tolba, the Executive Director of UNEP. At the meeting, Hara, Director General of the Environment Agency, who represented the Government of Japan at a special meeting of the UNEP Governing Council held later in Nairobi, requested the Ad Hoc Group to pre-

²⁰ Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on June 26, 2019.

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pare a report for this meeting. A drafting committee was formed to prepare the report, of which Saburo Okita, Keichi Oshima, Yoichi Kaya, Jiro Kondo, and Yujiro Hayashi were members (Ad Hoc Group 1982, p. 27). However, the staff of the International Affairs Division wrote the draft of the report, and the five members of the drafting committee were only responsible for checking the draft.²¹

From the end of January to the middle of February 1982, Tanaka and the staff of the International Affairs Division listened to the views of the members of the Ad Hoc Group.²² Based on these views, a draft report was prepared by the staff of the division. According to the summary of the minutes of the drafting committee, the members of the drafting committee considered the proposal for the top-level international forum.²³

In parallel with the preparation of the draft report, negotiations occurred between the Environment Agency and MOFA, and between MOFA and Tolba of UNEP, who visited Japan to deliver a lecture to the Ad Hoc Group on January 14, 1982.²⁴ During this visit, Environment Agency Director General Hara informed Tolba that Japan would propose the establishment of a special commission at the UNEP meeting in May 1982. Additionally, Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Bureau of the MOFA, Tsuneo Oyake, told

²¹ Okita had asked the Secretariat (i.e., the staff of the International Affairs Division) to prepare a draft text of this report by the time of the second meeting of the Drafting Committee (held on March 19, 1982). “Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai: Dai Ikkai Kisō Iinkai Tōgi Yōshi [Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems: Summary of the First Drafting Committee Discussions],” February 25, 1982, file Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai: Kisō Iinkai Shiryō [Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems: Drafting Committee Materials], Hei 24 Kankyō 00515100, Tsukuba Annex, National Archives of Japan (NAJ).

²² “‘Teigen’ no Sakusei ni tsuite (An) [Preparation of the ‘Report’ (Draft)],” n.d., file Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai: Kisō Iinkai Shiryō, Hei 24 Kankyō 00515100, Tsukuba Annex, NAJ; “Kaku Iin ni taisuru Intabyū Sukejūru (Appointment Toritsuke) [Interview schedule for each group member (Making an appointment)],” January 29, 1982, file Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai: Kisō Iinkai Shiryō, Hei 24 Kankyō 00515100, Tsukuba Annex, NAJ.

²³ “Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai: Dai Ikkai Kisō Iinkai Tōgi Yōshi [Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems: Summary of the First Drafting Committee Discussions],” February 25, 1982, file Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai: Kisō Iinkai Shiryō, Hei 24 Kankyō 00515100, Tsukuba Annex, NAJ.

²⁴ The following descriptions are based on this document: “‘Tokubetsu Iinkai’ ni tsuite (Memo) [On the ‘Special Commission’ (Memorandum)]” n.d., Sengo Gaiko-Kiroku: Kokuren Kankyō Keikaku Kankyō Tenbō Bunsho Seifukan Junbi Iinkai [Postwar Diplomatic Record: United Nations Environment Programme, Intergovernmental Inter-session Preparatory Committee on the Environmental Perspective (to the Year 2000 and Beyond)], 2016–1413, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan (DA-MOFAJ).

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Tolba that Japan would be willing to send a Japanese member to the special commission and that Japan would consider covering the costs of the commission. In addition, at the time, the Planning and Coordination Division of the United Nations Bureau was in charge of the matter of the Special Commission on the Environment at the MOFA. Tanaka asked the Director of the Planning and Coordination Division of the United Nations Bureau for his cooperation in realizing the commission and consulted him about covering the costs of the commission.

According to the document “*Tokubetsu Inkai’ ni tsuite (Memo) [On the ‘Special Commission’ (Memorandum)]*”, the amount that Tolba claimed to MOFA in his official telegram of February 17, 1982, as necessary expenses for the Special Commission was approximately \$3,000,000 and \$4,500,000 for one or two years, respectively. Furthermore, the document informed the Japanese government that Switzerland was prepared to provide the Special Commission with a meeting place and offices in Geneva for free. Thus, other countries were also acting at this point to establish the Special Commission.

The 1982 draft report of the Ad Hoc Group was approved at the 13th meeting of the Ad Hoc Group (held on March 31, 1982) after the second meeting of the drafting committee (held on March 19, 1982). This meeting was held at the Environment Agency; however, only the minutes of the meeting prepared by the MOFA are available.²⁵ The attendees were the five members of the Ad Hoc Group, Saburo Okita, Kiyoo Wadati, Keichi Oshima, Shuzo Hayashi, Yujiro Hayashi, as well as the Director General, the Administrative Vice-Minister, other senior officials of the Environment Agency, and MOFA officials. According to the minutes of the 13th meeting, the majority of comments from the members of the Ad Hoc Group on the draft text prepared by the Secretariat were minor wording corrections.

This paper presents two of these comments. First, Wadati instructed that a “Conclusion” should be added to the report; this instruction is probably the reason why the 1982 report of the Ad Hoc Group contains a short sentence “Conclusion” after the proposal for the international forum. In addition, Okita said that the title for Chapter 3, which mainly discusses the situation in developing countries, should be changed from “Development and the Environment” to “Development Aid and the Global Environment.” This statement was peculiar to Okita, who was involved in overseas aid as the President

²⁵ The following descriptions are based on this document: “‘Chikyūteki Kibo no Kankyō Mondai ni kansuru Kondankai’ Dai 13 Kai Kaigō [13th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems],” by Keizai Kyoku Kokusai Keizai Dai 2 Ka, April 1, 1982, Sengo Gaiko-Kiroku: Kokuren Kankyō Keikaku Kanri Rijikai Tokubetsu Kaigō [Postwar Diplomatic Record: United Nations Environment Programme, Session of Special Character of the Governing Council], 2013–2990, DA-MOFAJ.

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of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund. The main contribution of Okita and the other members of the Ad Hoc Group in the preparation of the report seems to have been the modification of such wording. In Okita's case, the roles expected from him were to chair the Ad Hoc Group and to represent Japan on the international stage after the completion of the report.

6 Proposals to Establish an International Forum and Subsequent Developments

The 1982 report of the Ad Hoc Group was submitted to Hara, the Director General of the Environment Agency, on April 8, 1982. In response to this report, Hara, as a representative of the Government of Japan, proposed establishing the international forum at a special meeting of the Governing Council of the UNEP held in Nairobi on May 11, 1982, as follows:

I should like to propose the establishment of a special commission which would present guidelines for future environmental policies by studying from a longterm and comprehensive point of view, measures for the protection of the global environment, including the measures I have just suggested. The task of this special commission would be to explore the ideal global environment for the twenty-first century and to formulate strategies to attain it. In order to achieve the desired objective, we would invite to serve as the commission's members the world's leading experts with the broad knowledge and deep insight needed for the task. My country will co-operate positively for the setting up of such a commission, taking into account the views of other members of the Governing Council on this matter. (Statement by H. E. Bunbei Hara, Representative of Japan to the Session of a Special Character of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, May 11, 1982)

This proposal, after several discussions and changes, was finally realized with the cooperation of other countries and named the World Commission on Environment and Development as a special commission of the UN. The Japanese government was the largest contributor of funding to this commission and sent Okita as a member.

Tanaka's time at the Environment Agency ended when he prepared the 1982 report of the Ad Hoc Group and proposed the Special Commission of the UNEP. It was customary for a person to be transferred from the Economic Planning Agency to the Environment Agency as head of the International Division for two years. However, Tanaka extended his term of office by one year, saying, "The work in the International Affairs Division was interesting. I started a new job, which I did not finish for two years, so I wanted to continue. And both the Economic Planning Agency and the Environment Agency agreed to

it. So, I served as head of the division for three years.”²⁶

7 Conclusion

This paper focused on the early activities of the Ad Hoc Group and charted the emerging process of global environmental policy in Japan. A summary of the discussion in this paper is as follows:

Tanaka was inspired by *The Global 2000 Report to the President* and realized the importance of global environmental issues. He instructed his subordinates to translate the book while devising a plan for the Environment Agency to initiate steps toward global environmental issues. However, the law on the establishment of the Environment Agency at the time rendered this objective difficult for the Agency. With the help of Director General Kujiraoka and Prime Minister Suzuki, Tanaka nevertheless overcame the problems surrounding the law. The presence of Kujiraoka, who understood the promotion of environmental policy, was also important in this process. Tanaka then used his network of contacts to organize the Ad Hoc Group, a forum for discussing global environmental issues within the Environment Agency.

The Ad Hoc Group’s view that global environmental policy and economic policy were compatible is evident from the two reports of 1980 and 1982. The 1980 report of the Ad Hoc Group provided only a general view of global environmental problems. However, at a time when global environmental problems were less recognized as an important issue than they are today, the report was significant as an early warning. The report was translated into English and distributed to the OECD, the UN, and other organizations, which became a signal of Japan’s presence in the global environmental policy.

The purpose of the 1982 report of the Ad Hoc Group was to recommend the establishment of the international forum, which resulted in the World Commission on Environment and Development (i.e., the Brundtland Commission). From January 1982 onward, in parallel with the preparation of the Ad Hoc Group report, the negotiations between the Environment Agency and MOFA and between MOFA and UNEP, which were essential for the realization of the international forum, were held.

Tanaka was the most suitable person for devising the global environmental policy. However, his ability was not acquired through a systematic education in the organization. He gained international experience by studying abroad on Okita’s recommendation and working for the OECD; whereas his sensitivity to global environmental issues was developed as he worked on the translation of *The Limits to Growth* at the request of Okita.

²⁶ Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018.

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An important contribution to Tanaka's *discovery* of global environmental issues was Okita's *discovery* of *The Limits to Growth*. Nevertheless, Okita's presence in the Ad Hoc Group was not necessarily notable until the completion of the 1982 report. However, according to Tanaka, without Okita, the formation of the Ad Hoc Group would have been impossible.²⁷ Moreover, as a representative of an organization within the Japanese government that advocated policy initiatives on global environmental issues, Okita's influence in the group was significant. In other words, Okita's presence, supported by political and business communities, was necessary for the global environment to be widely recognized as an important issue in Japan. In addition, Okita was the most suitable person for establishing an international forum at the UN and the most internationally known Japanese expert in the fields of politics and economics at the time.

Next, I consider the significance of the early activities of the Ad Hoc Group in the history of environmental policy. First, Tanaka, an outsider, provided a new perspective on global environmental policy to the Environment Agency. As such, Japan's global environmental policy was emerging from a view that differed from the mainstream pollution measures of the Agency at that time. In the early 1980s, the Environment Agency, similar to other ministries, did not prioritize global environmental problems as a policy issue to be addressed. Therefore, Tanaka, who was seconded from the Economic Planning Agency, instead of an employee who originally worked at the Environment Agency, was assigned to address this issue. Ito (2016, p. 190) argued that the presence of outsiders is significant in the development of environmental protection technologies. However, this case demonstrates that outsiders are also important in policy innovation. Tanaka, an outsider, played the role of an innovator in the sense that had a new view not bound by the existing framework.

Second, Japan's systematic global environmental policy originated in 1980, when the Ad Hoc Group on Global Environmental Problems was established as an advisory body to the Environment Agency. Japan's global environmental policy emerged in the early 1980s when anti-pollution and domestic environmental policies were in retreat or stagnation.

Third, although the Ad Hoc Group is now largely forgotten, it played an important role in promoting global environmental policy internationally because the group's report led to the establishment of the Brundtland Commission, which stimulated the global diffusion of the concept of sustainable development.

Japan's contribution to the establishment of the Brundtland Commission nearly afforded it a position in global environmental diplomacy in the 1980s. However, Japan's global environmental diplomacy, which was newly emerged, suffered an early setback in

²⁷ Based on an interview with Tsutomu Tanaka conducted by the author in Tokyo on October 24, 2018, and June 26, 2019.

the late 1980s. This point will be discussed in a subsequent study.

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