

**JAPAN AND THE MULTIPLICITY
OF CULTURAL PROGRAMMES OF
MODERNITY**

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SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH CENTRE
OCCASIONAL PAPER 15

in association with the

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

First published 1994
by the Social Sciences Research Centre
The University of Hong Kong
in association with the
Department of Sociology
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong

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Editorial subcommittee for the Department of Sociology:
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ISBN 962-7558-18-4

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I

One of the central problems or foci of studies of modernization has been the extent of convergence of modern societies, and concomitantly, whether with the worldwide expansion of modernity there will develop only one modern civilization.

In the context of these problems, and in particular the latter, Japan constitutes perhaps the most important test-case - and paradox. One central paradox, of the many that Japan constitutes for the analysis of modernity, is that this has been the first and at least till recently the only fully successful non-Western modernization of a non-Axial civilization - a civilization which could not be seen, in Weber's term, as a Great Religion or World Religion.

Weber's analysis of the civilizational roots of capitalism was part of his comparative sociology of religion. This comparative analysis was based on the premise that in all the Great Religions which he studied there existed the structural and cultural potentialities for the development of capitalism - but that it was only in the West these potentialities bore fruit. In other Great Religions or Civilizations - in what later on would be called Axial civilizations - these potentialities were obviated by the specific hegemonic combination of structural and cultural components that developed within them - very central among them being the confrontations between orthodoxies and heterodoxies or sectarianism.

Truly enough Weber dealt only with the emergence of the original, first capitalism - not with its expansion, and yet even in this framework the paradox of Japan, a non-Axial civilization that has become the first fully modernized non-Western society, stands out.

The explanation of this fact has been very often related to some of the structural characteristics of Tokugawa society,¹ which were in many ways very similar to those which industrialization in Europe was attributed to - the development of structural pluralism, of a multiplicity of centres, of economic power, the breakdown of narrow segregated ecological frameworks, the opening up of family structure, especially indeed in the rural sector, which generated many new resources, and more than incipient, very wide, cross-domain marketization. Of no small importance were also the high levels of literacy and urbanization, and extensive economic integration.²

¹. The Tokugawa period was 1600-1867; the Meiji period was 1868-1912.

². See for instance T. Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750-1920*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988; J. Baechler,

Given this structural similarity in the 'causes' of modernization or industrialization between western Europe and Japan, the latter also presents another interesting comparative paradox which is of great importance from the point of view of our discussion, namely that the pattern of modernity - economic, political, or cultural - is markedly different from the original Western one.

It has long been recognized that Japanese modern society, polity and economy exhibit some very distinct characteristics, a distinct mode of structurations of modern institutions and organizations which are structured in ways radically different from those which have developed in other - especially Western - societies. Such differences are not just local variations. They pertain to the very basic ways in which the various modern institutional arenas are regulated, defined, and the broader social and cultural contexts in which they operate.

The common denominator of these characteristics is a very high level of structural differentiation, mobility, openness and dynamics grounded in conceptions of service to social contexts, ideally (as promulgated in the Meiji ideology) to the national community. Neither the emphasis on equality nor the strong emphasis on achievement were grounded in any conception of principled transcendently oriented individuality or of transcendental legitimation of different functional (e.g., political or economic) activities.

II

These distinct characteristics of institutional formation that developed in Japan are closely related to the rather specific mode of definitions of the major arenas of social life that have been prevalent in Japan. The major characteristics of this have been the strong emphasis on contextual frameworks and the concomitant relative weakness of fully formalized, abstract rules demarcating clearly between the different arenas of action, and defining them in abstract formal terms as separate entities. Any institutional arena - political, economic, family and cultural creativity, or individual, group or organizations - has been defined in terms of its relation to the social nexus in which it was embedded. Such nexus was defined in some - continuously changing - combination of primordial, sacral, natural and ascriptive terms. The distinctive characteristic of these terms was that they were not defined in relation to some principles transcending them.

Thus, social actors, individuals or institutional arenas, have been defined in their relation to other such actors not as autonomous ontological entities, but in terms of their

The Origins of Capitalism, Oxford, Blackwell, 1975. See also Jean Baechler, 'The Origins of Modernity: Caste and Feudality (India, Europe and Japan),' in J. Baechler, J.A. Hall and M. Mann (eds.), *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism*, London, Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 39-66.

mutual interweaving in common frameworks or contexts.

Concomitantly, the major arenas of social action have not been regulated above all by distinct autonomous, legal, bureaucratic or 'voluntary' organizations or rules - even if such organizations have developed within them - but mostly through various less formal arrangements and networks which have in their turn usually been embedded in various ascriptively defined, and continuously redefined, social contexts.

Accordingly, no social, economic or political sectors could easily develop a principled autonomy, autonomous claims to access to the centre, and it was very difficult for autonomous public spaces to develop. In contrast to such potential autonomy, there developed a strong tendency to the conflation of different occupational or class sectors within the different social contexts - be they enterprises, neighbourhoods or such frameworks as various new religions - above all within the context of the overall national community. Within such contexts, and in conjunction with the far-reaching structural differentiation, mobility and openness, there developed a very intensive dynamic - the best known outcomes of which were the educational and economic miracles. But it was in many ways a regulated dynamics but regulated in a rather distinct way.

It is indeed the combination of such regulations with very high levels of dynamics that attests to what constitutes one of the major puzzles for Western scholars - namely that Japan is highly regulated and controlled and yet not a totalitarian and a continually dynamic and innovative society.³

III

In order to understand the roots of the development of such distinct institutional formations in Japan, it might be worthwhile to have a look at the crucial event in the modernization of Japan - the Meiji Ishin, the so-called Meiji Restoration - and to compare it, as has been often done in the literature, with the Great Revolutions - the English Great Rebellion and Civil War, the American and French Revolutions and the subsequent Russian, and even Chinese, ones.⁴ The basic long-range processes and causes leading to the downfall of the Tokugawa

³. See for instance K. van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, New York, Knopf, 1988, and its very extensive bibliography.

⁴. For the most recent presentation of the process of the Restoration see M.B. Jansen (ed.), 'The Meiji Restoration,' in J.W. Hall et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 5, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 308-67; C. Totman et al., 'The Meiji Ishin: Product of Gradual Decay, Abrupt Crisis or Creative Will,' in H. Wray and H. Conroy (eds.), *Japan Examined: Perspectives on Modern Japanese History*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1983, pp. 55-78; W.G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1972; K. Timmergen, *Revolutions from Above*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1978.

regime were very similar to those of the Great Revolutions, just as the processes and the causes of the rise of the Tokugawa regime were similar to those of the crystallization of the early modern European absolutist regimes. The most important among such causes were the disintegration of the old mould of political economy through the development of new economic forces,⁵ and the consequent undermining of the bases of control of the ruling groups; the spread of education; the growing marketization of large sectors of the economy - two processes which cut across the different domains; the deterioration of the economic situation of the lower samurai and of large sectors of the peasantry; and the improvement of the economic situation of the merchants and of some peasant groups. Last but not least were the internal struggles within the central elite - in various samurai groups in the bakufu and in the domains. In the last decades of the Tokugawa regimes - as in those of the Absolutist regimes in Europe - there also developed, as we have seen in the cultural scene, new modes of intellectual and ideological discourse which called into question many of the basic premises of the Tokugawa ideology. All these processes constituted a very important background to the movements which toppled the Tokugawa bakufu.

The late Tokugawa period - from the Tempo reforms of the beginning of the 19th century - abounded in peasant rebellions, in rural and urban movements of protest,⁶ and in continuous struggles in the central court of the Shogun in the bakufu - as well as in the relations between the bakufu and the great lords, the daimyo. Extensive struggles also developed with the growing dissatisfaction of many of the lower echelons of samurai within the domains of the daimyo. It was the cooperation between various groups of upper and lower samurai within several domains, especially Choshu and Satsuma, with some connivance from the Imperial Court, that toppled the Tokugawa regime.⁷

Intellectual ferment also abounded. New forms of political ideological discourse were developing - greatly influenced, on the one hand, by neo-Confucian schools and education and on the other by the various movements of nativistic schools and movements. The great expansion of education and literacy, of Confucian schools and academies - an expansion which probably made late Tokugawa Japan the most literate pre-industrial society - provided a very important background to the development of new discourse. New groups, above all of unattached educated Samurai (shishi) - and to a smaller extent urban and peasant groups - organized themselves and travelled around the country, promulgating various would-be radical programmes. There developed also, in common with the situations preceding the

⁵. For an early analysis see: Zenichi Itani, 'The Economic Causes of the Meiji Restoration,' *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Second Series, Vol. XVII, 1938.

⁶. See for instance H.P. Bix, *Peasant Protest in Japan 1590-1884*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986.

⁷. A.M. Craig, *Choshu in the Meiji Restoration*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1961; W.G. Beasley, 'Politics and the Samurai Class Structure in Satsuma, 1858-1868,' *Modern Asian Studies* I, 1, 1967, pp. 47-57.

Great Revolutions, a general consciousness of the disintegration of the centre.

All these developments created at the end of the Tokugawa regime a potentially revolutionary situation, not dissimilar to the situations which developed on the eve of the Great Revolutions.

IV

The Meiji Ishin also shared some very important characteristics with these revolutions in terms of its 'outcomes'. In common with them it deposed an existing 'traditional' ruler, in this case the Shogun, and changed the composition of the ruling class entirely.

The institutional effects of the Meiji Restoration in terms of structural change and modernization are also easily comparable to those of Western revolutions - and in Japan, unlike in the first European or American revolutions, these processes were outcomes of conscious policies. The tempo of urbanization, of expansion of education, of commercialization (the high level of which, especially from the end of the eighteenth century, contributed in no small degree to the erosion of the Tokugawa regime) and the relatively quick process of industrialization and of crystallization of a modern capitalist-industrial system, was very intensive.⁸ In many ways it was much quicker and more intensive than parallel processes in many European countries, as was also the very strong international orientation - i.e., an orientation to attain an independent, possibly a major standing in the new international order dominated by Western European and American economic or political and colonial orientation.

Similarly the Meiji Ishin ushered in a new mode of legitimation of the political system, even if this new mode was ultimately presented as a restoration of an old, traditional one, and was legitimized in a combination of such restorative terms and new, above all pragmatic, knowledge.

Moreover, just as the Great Revolutions, the Meiji Ishin ushered in not only a new mode of legitimation, but a new - essentially modern - overall cultural programme which encompassed most arenas of life. It constituted indeed a total change of Japanese society.⁹ It was indeed a modern programme, even if in many crucial ways, it differed from the cultural programme of modernity in the West.

⁸. M.B. Jansen and G. Rozman (eds.), *Japan in Transition: from Tokugawa to Meiji*, Princeton University Press, 1986; *Cambridge History of Japan*, op. cit.

⁹. See G.M. Wilson, *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan - Motives in the Meiji Restoration*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, Chap. 2; Najita Tetsuo, 'Conceptual Consciousness in the Meiji Ishin,' in N. Michio and M. Urrutia (eds.) *Meiji Ishin: Restoration and Revolution*. Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 1985, pp. 83-8.

V

And yet from the very beginning the Meiji Ishin differed in some very crucial aspects from the European, American (and later on the Russian and Chinese) revolutions. The first such difference is of course manifest in its very name - even if the term Ishin is possibly closer to Renovation, or being pulled in a new direction rather than simply Restoration as it has been called in Western literature.

The discourse that developed at the end of the Tokugawa period and during the Ishin and in the Meiji state contained several elements which can indeed be probably found in all programmes of modernity. Two - potentially contradictory - of these elements have been the more pragmatic of state formations and the more 'social' egalitarian communal themes, themes of social justice and participation. But the way in which these tensions worked out - ideologically and institutionally - differed greatly between the Meiji regime and the post-revolutionary regimes in societies which developed out of Axial civilizations.

The crux of this difference was indeed, rooted in, or closely connected with, the Axial or non-Axial roots of, respectively, the Great Revolutions and the Meiji Ishin. Of special importance in this context was the nature of the utopian components or orientations, especially the relative predominance of universalistic, missionary, future-oriented orientations, which necessarily entailed a strong break with the past.

It is indeed here, in the cultural programme promulgated in the revolution and in the post-revolutionary regimes that some of the distinctive characteristics of the Meiji Ishin which distinguish it from the Great Revolution are to be found. This programme differed greatly from that of most of the Great Revolutions. It was in a way the reverse mirror image of those of the Great Revolutions - although in many ways it was no less radical. It was proclaimed as a renovation of an older archaic system which in fact never existed before, and not as a Revolution aiming to change the social and political order to totally reconstruct state and society alike, according to principles transcending that now in a new direction.

The new cultural programmes, the cosmology and ontology entailed in it were promulgated as the renovation of an older archaic system, which in fact never existed, not as a revolution aimed at changing the social and political order in an entirely new universalistic direction. Utopian, future-oriented orientations, rooted in a universalistic-transcendental vision, were, in contrast to the other Revolutions, very weak, almost nonexistent, although millenarian restorative themes were prominent in different sectors of the uprisings before and during the Restoration.

Concomitantly in the Meiji Ishin there did not develop, as was the case in the Great Revolutions in Europe, the U.S., Russia, and China, a universalistic, transcendental, missionary ideology, or any components of class ideology - two elements which were also very weak in the peasant rebellions and movements of protest of the Tokugawa period. Some

elements of a universal civilizing mission developed in late Meiji, in attitudes towards Korea and China, but these did not entail the conception of these societies constituting, together with the Japanese one, parts of a general universal civilization. The Meiji Ishin was inward-oriented towards the Japanese people; it aimed at the revitalization of the Japanese nation, at making it capable of taking its place in the modern world, but it had no pretence to 'save' the entire world - mankind as a whole - in terms of a new universalistic, future-oriented utopian vision. Many of the leaders of groups which were active in the Restoration emphasized the importance of learning and of promulgating universal knowledge, but only very few of them translated it into principles of overall political action, of ways to reconstruct the Japanese polity and collectivity - and these leaders lost out very early in the game. Similarly, explicit social symbolism - especially class symbolism - was almost entirely absent and was certainly not incorporated into the major symbols of the new regime - not even in connection with the semi-utopian or rather 'inverted utopian' restorationist themes.

The cultural programme promulgated in the Meiji Ishin - and later on by the Meiji state - consisted of a mixture of pragmatic orientations to the question of how to adapt to the new international setting with strong Restorationist components or orientations. It constituted a combination of the restorationist nativistic vision with what may be called functional prerequisites of modern society, such as efficacy, achievement and equality. These later themes were indeed very strongly emphasized - but mainly in terms of their functional contribution to the organization of a modern society.

To follow Sonoda Hidehiro:¹⁰

The new principle of social equality of the four classes caused by the reorganization of the samurai class was embodied in tendencies commonly shared by the navy, army and university run by the central government. The character of social equality expressed in these tendencies was, of course, quite different from that of European egalitarianism. 'Equality' in this historical context meant that whoever had the ability of perform the samurai's specialized duty could have an 'equal' chance to do it. Conversely, all Japanese people should have 'equal' functions or duties to the state which have been exclusively occupied by the samurai estate. To realize the national policy of 'enrich the country and strengthen the military,' it was thought that 'equal' allocation of the samurai's specialized duty to the four classes was absolutely necessary. We would like to call this type of social equality 'functionalistic egalitarianism' because it was distinguished by the 'equal' requirement of all persons in their duties or functions to the state.

Functionalistic egalitarianism was not the recognition of 'equal' human rights as a political ideology which was of European origin and played a significant role in European history, but was the unintentional outcome of the samurai's thorough pursuit of practicality in service to the state. In giving explanations of the decline of the samurai class it is important to acknowledge that a distinct form of egalitarianism had already

¹⁰ H. Sonoda, 'The Decline of the Japanese Warrior Class, 1840-1880,' *Japan Review*, Vol. 1, 1990, pp. 73-112.

become established during the last days of the Tokugawa regime when Western political ideology, which had a strong influence on the equalization of highly stratified societies and on the decline of the aristocracy in Europe, began to be introduced into Japan...

It was only among small groups of intellectuals that there developed a tendency to ground these functional prerequisites in principled metaphysical or transcendental orientations, but they were not successful in changing the hegemonic orientations and premises. The message promulgated by the Meiji Restoration was oriented to the renovation of the Japanese nation - it had almost no universalistic or missionary dimensions. During the Ishin and especially after the Restoration numerous individual scholars engaged in the pursuit of knowledge from abroad and promulgated various, including strong universalistic, new ideas at home, but ultimately it was the so-called Meiji oligarchs, composed of the leaders of the different rebellious factions in the Restoration, that moulded the Meiji regime.

VI

It is the combination of these characteristics that makes the designation of 'revolutionary Restoration' or 'revolutionary Renovation' the most appropriate one to describe the Meiji Ishin. It was indeed - because it envisaged a new type of society, a new modern cultural programme - a revolutionary transformation, more than a 'simple' violent change of regimes, or more than 'just' a political event. It espoused a totally new vision of society. But the cultural programme which gradually crystallized in the Ishin, and above all in the Meiji State regime, distinguish it from the Great Revolutions and from the cultural programmes of modernity that were promulgated with them.

VII

These distinct characteristics of the Ishin ideology were closely related to some of the structural characteristics of the revolutionary process itself - which again distinguished it from that of the Great Revolutions. The most important of these characteristics were the relative weak connections between different rebellious groups, their relative segregation, the almost total absence of sacralization of violence, and of the construction of the centre in a liminal mode, which distinguish the revolutionary processes that toppled the Tokugawa bakufu from those of the Great Revolutions.

Of special importance in this context is the fact that close and continuous contacts did not develop between the major actors in the Restoration and religious or cultural sectarian groups or autonomous religious leaders. True enough, cultural developments were of very

great importance in the background of the Restoration. There was first of all the very wide spread of education,¹¹ especially of Confucian education among the samurai groups, the merchants and even among some sectors of the peasants, making Japan probably the most literate pre-industrial country and contributing to a very high level of public consciousness. Second there were the many new religions,¹² the 'religions of relief', which were so widespread in the last decades of the Tokugawa rule.

The numerous Confucian academies that sprung up since the eighteenth century greatly contributed to the development of such political consciousness and to the undermining of the legitimacy of the Tokugawa rule. Moreover, many of the themes of protest that developed, whether in the periphery or in the centre, were imbued with relatively recently constructed ideologies - whether Confucian or 'nativistic'.

But in all these developments there were but few independent Confucian scholars or Buddhist monks who played an autonomous role or attempted to construct the basic framework of the revolutionary discourse.

What is perhaps most distinctive about the Meiji Restoration as compared to the Great Revolutions was the almost total absence of *autonomous*, distinct religious or secular intellectual groups as active independent elements in the political process of the Restoration - and not as simply providing the background for the revolutionary process. This was indeed in marked contrast to the situation, for instance, with respect to the Puritans in the English Revolution and their descendants in the American one, the ideologues of the French Revolution, or the Russian Intelligentsia.¹³

It was above all the samurai, some of them learned in Confucian lore, the shi-shi (who also included, as we have seen, some merchants, peasants and even women), who were most active in the Restoration - but on the whole they did not act as Confucian scholars bearing a distinctly Confucian vision, but rather as members of their respective social and political groups. Accordingly it was possibly the weakness, the near-absence of autonomous groups of ideologues, of intellectuals independent of other social sectors and cutting across them, that

¹¹. I. Matsutaro, 'The Meiji Restoration and the Educational Reforms,' *American Anthropologist* 54, 1988, pp. 24-7; R. Rubinger, *Private Academies of Tokugawa Japan*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982; R.P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

¹². H.M. Harootunian, 'Religions of Relief,' in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 5, op. cit.

¹³. On the Puritans see: M. Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1966. On the Intellectuals in the French Revolution, see A. Cochin, *La révolution et la libre pensée*, Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1924; idem, *L'esprit du Jacobinisme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1979; F. Furet, *French Revolution*, New York, Macmillan, 1970; Idem *Interpreting the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981. On the Russian Intelligentsia, see: V.C. Nahirny, *The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence*, New Jersey, Rutgers N.J., Transaction Publications, 1982.

explain the fact that in the Meiji Ishin there developed few new, relatively continuous political settings, frameworks bringing different social groups together and moulding them according to an overall political-social vision, and in which there developed common discourse and political activism.¹⁴

Some additional aspects of the revolutionary process of the Meiji Ishin are interesting from a comparative point of view. Significantly, while violence did of course rage during the events leading to the Restoration and after it - it did not become sanctified to the extent that it did in the Great Revolutions. It was above all elite violence, especially on the part of Tokugawa loyalists, often manifest in rebellions such as that of Sakamoto Ryoma, who did engage in violence in order to 'restore' the shogun, very much in line with the more traditional type of violence, with the 'nobility of failure' that was sanctified at least among some of the elite groups.¹⁵ But unlike in the Great Revolutions, no such sanctification was accorded to popular violence, nor even to the violence that was employed by those samurai groups which toppled the bakufu regime. Such violence was not seen as the expression of the search for a new overall social order.

Similarly while liminal situations abounded, of course, among the different rebellious groups and movements of protest, yet the central political areas did not become, as in the revolutions, such a liminal area.

VIII

It was within the framework of these orientations that there developed the definition of modernity in Japan out of the parameters of the Meiji Ishin and the cultural programme of modernity that crystallized in the Meiji Ishin as keeping up with the times, as adapting to the times, to the mastery of Western technology and finding a proper place in the international arena. 'Keeping up with the times' was defined as the verdict of the movement of history, but such movement was not defined - as in the West, with its Christian roots, as well as to some extent in other civilizations in terms of historical progression as a historical process defined

¹⁴. T. Najita, 'Conceptual Consciousness in the Meiji Ishin,' op. cit.; H.D. Harootunian, 'Religions of Relief,' op. cit. For a comparative analysis see S.N. Eisenstadt, 'Frameworks of the Great Revolutions: Culture, Social Structure, History and Human Agency,' *International Social Science Journal* 44 (3), Aug. 1992, pp. 385-401.

¹⁵. M.B. Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryoma and the Meiji Restoration*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1961; J. Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975; N.L. Waters, *Japan's Local Pragmatist: The Transition from Bakumatsu Meiji in the Kawasaki Region*, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University.

or measured by some transcendental, universalistic criteria or values or vision¹⁶ - in terms which are perceived as being beyond existing mundane reality. Closely related was the quest for authenticity among wide sectors of Japanese society, for finding Japanese authenticity in the new intellectual sector.

This search for the authenticity of Japanese collectivity and the concomitant evaluation of modernity moved, as we have seen above, between several basic poles. One such major pole was the search to negate modernity - in such cases defined mostly as Western modernity - as undermining the true Japanese spirit or pristine nature; the other such pole was the appropriation of modernity by Japan and the concomitant attempts to identify the true Japanese as against other, Western modernity, sometimes even seeing this as a proof of technological success of the Japanese, of the superiority of Japanese spiritual sensibilities. One direction of the search for Japanese authenticity was the emphasis of the uniqueness of the spiritual essence of the Japanese peoplehood or collectivity.

However limited - as Befu and Manabe have shown the belief of wide sectors of Japanese society in many of the concrete tenets of Nihonjiron as objectively 'true' - the very wide spread of this literature and responsiveness to it does attest to the fact that it must have struck on some chords very close to the search for authenticity among large sectors of the Japanese population.¹⁷

The other major direction of the search for identity, which could overlap with the former, but could also develop in a contrary direction, was that of search for authentic 'natural' universal essence beyond the artificial contrivances of political, social, or even linguistic - a search which could be identified in such 'utopia' as those of Ando Shoeki.¹⁸ The emphasis on such universal essence was in principle universalistic - albeit couched in highly immanentist terms.

Despite strong differences between these orientations to modernity and to the

¹⁶. See for instance Kano Masanao, 'The Changing Concept of Modernization', *Japan Quarterly*, Jan-Mar, 1976, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, pp. 28-36. See also G. McCormack and Y. Sugimoto (eds.), *The Japanese Trajectory: Modernization and Beyond*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988; and T. Najita and H.D. Harootunian, 'Japanese Revolt Against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century,' in the *Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 6, Cambridge Press, 1988, pp. 711-60. See also, for a general discussion of the predicament of modernity in Japan, Tetsuo Najita, 'Personal Notes on Modernity and Modernization,' Association for Asian Studies, Presidential Address, March 26, 1993, Los Angeles, CA.

¹⁷. Harumi Befu and Kasufum Manabe. 'A Dynamical Study of Nihonjinron - How Real is the Myth?' *Kwansei Gakuin University Annual Studies*, 1981, XXXVI, pp. 98-111. And also: 'Nihonjinron: The Discussion and Confrontation of Cultural Nationalism,' *Kwansei Gakuin University Annual Studies* Vol. XL, 1991.

¹⁸. T. Najita, 'Remembering Forgotten Texts: Ando Shoeki and the Predicament of Modernity.' Lecture at Hachinote Aomori (10/17). Symposium on 'Ando Shoeki and Today.' Draft.

constitution of Japanese collective identity, the common core of this discourse was the strong immanentist orientations thereof and the concomitant bracketing out of universalistic values as rooted in transcendental visions or orientations which are perceived as being beyond existing mundane reality, beyond the 'times' - and as guiding them.¹⁹

Closely related to this strong core of the Japanese discourse of modernity was the continual dissociation between 'Zweckrationalität' and 'Wertrationalität,' with a very strong tendency to extol instrumental and technological achievement in a technocratic mode - one of the more recent manifestations of which is the emphasis on information as the core of a new societal order, of non-confrontational society of which Japan is the precursor. There could also develop a total negation of such Zweckrationalität in the name of pristine Japanese or 'natural' spirituality - with, however, but little discussion of the relation of such instrumental rationality with different Wertrationalität, or of the discourse of different 'Wertrationalitäten.' Concomitantly, there developed on the level of ideological discourse relatively little autonomous, critical evaluation by different groups of intellectuals, of the concrete developments of the modern society that developed in Japan, which could guide concrete political programmes.

IX

It was this cultural programme of modernity, rooted as it was in the non-Axial, immanentist ontologies that have been prevalent in Japan, that guided the crystallization of the Meiji state and later on the development of modern Japanese society, and to some extent at least the specific characteristics of the major institutional formations of modern Japan to which we have alluded at the beginning of this article. I will illustrate these characteristics in somewhat greater detail as they apply to the political arena.

The strong emphasis on the embeddedness of the major arenas of action in contexts defined in some combinations of natural, sacral or primordial terms can be identified first of all in the strong tendency to the conflation of the national community, of the state and of society - a tendency which has become especially prevalent in the modern and contemporary arenas.

Such conflation has had several repercussions on the structuring of the ground rules of the political arena. The most important of these repercussions have been the development, first of a weak concept of the state as distinct from the broader overall, in modern terms national community (national being defined in sacral, natural and primordial terms), and

¹⁹. Lawrence Olson, *Ambivalent Moderns: Portraits of Japanese Cultural Identity*, foreword by Ronald A. Morse. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992.

second of a societal state characterized²⁰ by a strong tendency to emphasize guidance rather than direct regulation and permeation of the periphery by the centre.

The view of the Japanese state as a 'weak' one was proposed by D. Okimoto who has also proposed that power in Japan is not conceived as an independent entity to be applied to different arenas and life according to 'objective' criteria. Rather, it is embedded in a structure of interdependent relationships which operate on the basis of dispersed actions and coordination up and down vertical hierarchical networks, rather than on the basis of coercion from above. It is based on fine tuning, consensus building and continual adaptation. Hence government could be compared to an 'orchestra conductor',²¹ and there has developed a marked tendency - to use a term proposed by Victor Koschmann - to 'soft rule', the rule of a given authority, not grounded in some transcendental vision, and hence not confronting society in terms of such visions either.

Such conflation of the national community and of the state, and the concomitant weakness of distinct conceptions of the state and of civil society, had developed already in the Sengoku and Tokugawa periods, in the concept of Kokutai, and has developed in the modern and contemporary periods in the concept or slogan of 'united monarch and people' (*kunmin dochii*), and in the closely related distinction between Kokutai (national structure) and seitai (political structure) which makes the latter inferior to the former and embedded in it.

Closely related has been a very weak development of an autonomous civil society, although needless to say elements of the latter, especially the structural, organizational components thereof (such as different organizations) have not been missing. One of the most interesting corollaries of this embedding of the political arena and of civil society alike within the overall community has been, as we have seen, the absence in the historical ('feudal') and early modern conceptions of autonomous legal rights and of representative institutions. In Japan, however, unlike in many absolutist, or totalitarian systems, the absence of such institutions was not connected with a strong symbolic distinction of the centre, of the state, or with strong efforts by the centre not only to control, but also to restructure and mobilize the periphery - according to a new vision destructive of the values hitherto prevalent in the periphery.

These characteristics of the political arena can be also identified in the political system which developed in Japan after the Second World War and which has recently been judged by a group of Japanese and Western scholars to be a clearly democratic system in which some of the major components of democracy - rule of law, freedom of assembly, of the press - have been continuously expanding.

²⁰. For numerous illustrations of this mode of political activities, presumably rooted in the agrarian as against the equestrian society, see Shoichi Watanabe *The Peasant Soul of Japan*, foreword by Louis Allen. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

²¹. D. Okimoto, *Power in Japan, The Societal State*, final draft, August 1989.

Concurrently this system has continued to exhibit some very distinct characteristics. Closely connected to these characteristics of the major institutional arenas of modern Japan there has also developed a rather distinct pattern of political dynamics, especially of the impact of movements of protest on the centre. The most important characteristic of this impact was the relatively weak principled ideological confrontation with the centre - above all the lack of success of leaders of such confrontational movements to mobilize wide support; the concomitant quite far-ranging success in influencing, if often indirectly, the policies of the authorities and the creation of new autonomous but segregated social spaces in which activities promulgated by such movements could be implemented.

But it is not only that many of the components of a 'full' liberal democracy have been, as it were, underdeveloped, as manifest in the nature of the impact of movements of protest. What is especially important in the context of our discussion here are the reasons for such underdevelopment.

Such underdevelopment has been due not only to the presumed autocratic or repressive components of the regime. It is also - perhaps above all - rooted in some of the basic premises of the mode of legitimation of this system as it developed under the Meiji, above all in the very narrowness of the autonomous public space, or civil society, independent of the state organs and in the concomitant legitimation of the state in terms of its embeddedness in the national community.

The processes of democratization and of the continual diversification of sectors and elites that took place after the Second World War have expanded the access of broader sectors of society to the organs of government and imbued these organs with a greater respect for the legal specification of the rights of citizens and for legal procedure. It has not, however, greatly expanded the scope of an autonomous civil society which could promulgate its own criteria of legitimation and impose them on the state in the name of principles transcending the state and the national community alike.

The specific type of civil society that developed in Japan is perhaps best illustrated by the continual construction of new social spaces which provide semi-autonomous arenas in which new types of activities, consciousness and discourse develop, which however do not impinge directly on the centre. Those participating in them do not have autonomous access to the centre, and are certainly not able to challenge its premises. The relations between state and society are rather effected in the mode of patterned pluralism, of multiple dispersed social contracts.

But this weakness of civil society was not due to its suppression by a strong state, but rather to the continual conflation of state and civil society with the national community. While it is those close to the centre - oligarchies, bureaucracies, politicians and even heads of economic organizations - who have on the whole shaped the contours of this community, yet they have not done it in a continuous confrontational response to the demands of other sectors of civil society. The constitutional-democratic system that has developed in Japan has

not been grounded in the conceptions of principled, metaphysical individualism or in a principled confrontation between state and society as two distinct ontological entities.

Accordingly, changes in the types of political regimes, or in the relative strength of different groups, have not necessarily implied changes in principles of legitimation and in the basic premises and ground rules of the social and political order.

X

All these institutional characteristics of modern Japan are indeed closely related to the distinct cultural programme of modernity that developed there, with its strong non-Axial roots - as it crystallized in the Meiji Ishin and the Meiji state.

They attest to the possibility of the development of multiple programmes of modernity. They attest to the fact that the incorporation of different themes and institutional patterns of Western modern civilization in new Western European societies did not entail their simple acceptance in their original form. It rather entailed the continuous selection and reinterpretation of such themes and reconstruction of the institutional pattern.

Such cultural programmes that develop in these societies entailed different interpretations of the basic cultural programme of modernity; they entailed different emphases on different components of these programmes - such as man's active role in the universe; the relation between Wertrationalität and Zweckrationalität; the conceptions of cosmological time and its relation to historical time; the belief in progress; the relation of progress to history as the process through which the programme of progress occurs; the relation to the major utopian visions; and the relation between the individual and the collectivity, between reasons and emotions, and between the rational and the romantic and emotive, could be realized.

In many of these civilizations the basic meaning of 'modernity' - its cultural historical programme - was quite different from its original Western vision rooted in the ideas of Enlightenment, of progress, of the unfolding of the great historical vision of reason and self realization of individuals, of social and individual emancipation.

While modernity was, within many of the non-Western societies, conceived as growing participation both on the internal and international scene in terms derived from the ideas of equality and participation, the other dimensions - especially those of individual liberty, of social and individual emancipation and individual autonomy as closely related to the historical unfolding of reason, which were constitutive of the Western European discourse on modernity from the Enlightenment on - were not necessarily always accepted.

These different symbolic and institutional constellations have developed first of all with respect to the interpretation of the basic symbolic conceptions and premises of different modern civilizations; with respect to the ways in which these basic symbolical premises of

modernity are selected and reinterpreted according to the new 'modern' traditions; in their conception of themselves and of their past; and with respect to their new symbols and collective identity and their negative or positive attitudes to modernity in general and to the West in particular.

These processes of reinterpretation also apply to the basic concept of economic development. While the emphasis on economic and technological development has certainly become part of each modern or modernizing society or civilization, these still differ greatly with respect to the overall cultural and social premises. Above all, they vary with respect to the degree to which the emphasis on economic development is connected with an emphasis on the mastery of their respective environments as against an adaptation to it; to the relative importance of economic goals in the panorama of human goals; to conceptions of the social order to productive as against distributive economic orientations; with respect to the type of political regimes - whether authoritarian, pluralistic or totalitarian regime, with respect to the major modes of political protest and participation, to conceptions of authority, hierarchy, and equality.

These differences between the different programmes of modernity were not purely cultural or academic. They were closely related to some basic problems inherent in the political and institutional programmes of modernity. Thus, in the political realm, they were closely focused on the relations between the utopian and the civil components in the construction of modern politics; between 'revolutionary' and 'normal' politics, or between the general will and the will of all; between civil society and the state, between individual and collectivity. These different cultural programmes of modernity entailed also different conceptions of authority and of its accountability, different modes of protest and of political activity, and different modes of constitutional formations.

These considerations do not negate the obvious fact that in many central aspects of their institutional structure - be it in occupational and industrial structure, in the structure of education or of cities - very strong convergences have developed in different modern societies. These convergences were above all manifest in the development of common problems - but the modes of coping with these problems differed greatly between these civilizations. These differences are attributable to a great variety of reasons - such as, among others, the various historical convergences, the historical timing of the incorporation of different societies into the emerging international systems. But beyond all these reasons, even if in close relation to them, these differences were also closely related to the development of the new distinct cultural programmes of modernity which crystallized in these societies or civilizations.

These different cultural programmes of modernity were not shaped by what has been sometimes presented in some of the earlier studies of modernization as natural evolutionary potentialities of these societies; by the natural unfolding of their tradition, nor by their placement in the new international settings. Rather they were shaped by the continuous

interaction between the cultural premises of these different societies; their historical experience; and the mode of impingement of modernity on them and of their incorporation into the modern political economic, ideological world frameworks.

Such different cultural programmes of modernity crystallized through the process of a highly selective incorporation and transformation in these civilizations of the various premises of Western modernity.

From this point of view modernity development has to be viewed as a distinct type of civilization which has its own distinct expansive capacities. This approach is, of course, very close to the Weberian one, but in many ways goes beyond it, as well as beyond the initial studies of modernization of the fifties and sixties of this century. As against the assumptions of these latter studies it became clear that while indeed modernization and industrialization gave rise to many common problems and some common core institutional patterns, yet the patterns of institutional response to these problems vary greatly between different societies or civilizations.

Or, in more general words, it became clear that in their encounters with the impact of the political, economic, and ideological forces of modernization, different societies and civilizations develop different patterns of response, different dynamics, different patterns of modern civilization, and that these are to some degree at least related to the patterns of symbolic institutional dynamics that developed within them in previous 'historical' times.

Thus, while the spread of modernity has indeed taken place throughout most of the world, yet it did not give rise to just one civilization, one pattern of ideological and institutional response, but to at least several basic variants - and in order to understand these different patterns, it is necessary to take into account the pattern of historical development of these civilizations.

（日本社會與現代化的多重文化性質）

（摘要）

本文嘗試從日本社會現代化的過程的角度去探討現代化的多種文化基礎。作為近世中唯一臻至現代性社會的東方社會，日本在其發展過程中與西方社會實具有相同的地方。這包括了市場地位的提昇及經濟的商業化、教育的普及、創新的思潮、人民在組織及思想上的較大開放性等。這種變化顯示出明治維新及幕府制度統治的瓦解不單單是政權或統治階級的興替，而是一個全面革新局面的出現：政治系統被賦予了新的認受性；文化綱領上有一種現代性的面貌。但在締造這局面的過程，日本社會也顯現了與西方現代化截然不同的特徵。在文化/宗教的層面上，日本社會缺乏西方現代社會早期的超越世俗、涵蓋性及有烏托邦色彩的信仰及思想體系。代之而行的是一種蘊含於遠古、內育於本土性的社會大群體的文化取向。在社會結構及個人關係的層面上，這文化取向的後果是知識階層缺乏自主性，及市民社會的薄弱。「國家」和「社會」都被涵蓋在一個非先驗性而有神聖莊嚴感的自然群體概念。這影響了現代日本社會中政治權力的性質、及個人自主性與政治參與的意義。作為一個成功現代化的社會，日本在社會內部的重整，及在對外的國際社會地位的努力，均有其與西方現代社會一致的地方。但其對市民社會、權力運作及個人自主性的詮釋則明顯受到其獨有的文化傳統及這文化傳統與現代化過程的互為因果所影響。