

FACTORS EXPLAINING THE DISPARATE PACE OF MODERNIZATION IN CHINA AND JAPAN *

ALLAN B. COLE

Ito Hirobumi to Li Hung-chang in 1895, and Li's response:

Ten years ago when I was at Tientsin, I talked about reform with the Grand Secretary. Why is it that up to now not a single thing has been changed or reformed?

At that time when I heard you, sir, talking about that, I was overcome with admiration, and furthermore I deeply admired, sir, your having vigorously changed your customs in Japan so as to reach the present stage. Affairs in my country have been so confined by tradition that I could not accomplish what I desired.¹

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Cheng Kuan-ying, the scholarly comprador, c. 1895:

Look now, how is it that tiny Japan increasingly is benefiting [from commerce] while China for all its large size repeatedly has been distressed by it? The trouble stems merely from the lack of [competent] men who devote themselves to commercial [economic] matters. Responsibility for this lies both with the officials above and with the merchants below...²

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Sir Robert Hart in 1869:

To the mass of Chinese officials, the word improvement would convey no idea corresponding to that which is in the Western mind.³

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IN OUR OWN TIME, THE EFFORTS OF NEW NATIONS TO HASTEN THEIR economic development and the spectacular campaigns of revolutionary China to break through traditional impediments into self-generative economic growth, have whetted interest in the earlier contrast between the pace of modernization in China and Japan. We have been learning anew how arduous and complex are the factors and processes involved. For they entail more than drastic technological and industrial advance—indeed, basic transformations affecting cultures, social structures—a panoply of institutions, ideological trends, and inevitably the emotional life of peoples adjusting to modern forces.

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¹ Quoted in and by Su-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West, A Documentary Survey 1839-1923* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 126; citing Wang Yun-sheng, *Liu-shih-nien lai Chung-kuo yu Jih-pen*, II, 261-262.

² Quoted in, and by, Albert Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization*, Sheng Hsuan-huai (1844-1916) and *Mandarin Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 33; citing Cheng Kuan-ying, *Sheng-shih wei-yen* (Warnings to a Seemingly Prosperous Age), 1900 ed. 8 chuan, 5. lab.

³ Quoted in, and by, Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism, The T'ung Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (2nd ed.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 64; citing Robert Hart, "Mr. Hart's Note on Chinese Matters," Peking, June 30, 1869, reprinted as Appendix II to Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*, 876-877.

That Japan was able to industrialize and rather extensively to remold its institutional life in little more than a generation, while China floundered through one frustrating phase of revolution after another, is well known. Scholars in a number of social disciplines—notably economics, sociology, social anthropology and psychology—have been enriching analytically the interpretations which have made the insights of historians more perceptive and sophisticated. This paper will coordinate and summarize the causal factors which explain discrepancies, particularly during early attempts at modernization by these two Asian neighbors. The gaining of cumulative momentum to the point of sustained economic dynamism has been likened to an airplane: it seems easy to cruise along at high altitude, but the engines are under most strain during take-off. Like students of aerodynamics, we shall be interested in propulsive forces, in factors of resistance, and in how factors fitted into patterns conducive to, or impeding progressive change.

Scholars from other social disciplines give increasing confirmation to the historical observation that trends toward technological and institutional change were set in motion considerably earlier in Tokugawa Japan than in China under the Ch'ing. The last great period of traditional equilibrium began to change significantly in Japan toward the end of the seventeenth century, and in China, about a century later. The disturbing new forces were mainly of endogenous origins in both countries but, in the nineteenth century, their tempos and the tensions they produced were accentuated by external challenges. This rise of disequilibrating forces was longer in Japan than in China and led earlier to the next phase of gestation. In Japan, this third stage lasted from approximately the coming of the Perry expedition to the early 1890's; in China, it became a significant trend after the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion and lasted until about 1953.

Breakthrough was achieved by the Japanese economy between 1894 and about 1916, but not in China until the Communists' first Five-Year Plan. Japan was able so soon to achieve self-sustained growth and the highest level of consumption and welfare in Asia, but this has not yet been fully accomplished by mainland China.⁴ The Restorations in both these countries in the 1860's and early 'seventies had conservative aspects, but the emergent oligarchy in Japan was swiftly learning to make traditions and imperative changes reinforce each other; it was far from easy, and leaders were conscious of the hazards. They were willing to jettison the feudal system and plunge their own warrior class downward in order to strengthen their country and build their own power within the new system. It was more than four decades from the fall of the shogunate to the Chinese overthrow of their dynastic incubus, their old regime. Even then, there was not to be a smooth transition of authority in China facilitating other important transitions and giving purposeful direction to national development. Nationalism was well consolidated in Japan by then, but only slender groups in China had grasped the concept and its implications. So the Chinese Republic early developed fissions (many of them

⁴ The phases here identified as to periods have been taken from J. K. Fairbank, A. Eckstein, and L. S. Yang, "Economic Change in Early Modern China: An Analytic Framework," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, IX, No. 1 (October, 1960), 1-26.

from regional interests), was subverted by military and old-line official elements which threatened to renew the imperial cycle, but were repudiated without any strong authority and unified administration which could prevent the development of warlordism.

Meanwhile, the builders of a renovated Japan were building a unitary state with an effective central bureaucracy. Hierarchies, an emphasis on seniority, factionalism, and other vestiges of traditionalism and of feudalistic patterns persisted in the newly directed oligarchy and bureaucracy, but emphases were sufficiently functional to facilitate modernization. As in so many facets of Japanese and Chinese cultures to be discussed, there were contrasts in both degree and kind. There were features of Meiji bureaucracy which hampered modernization, but more progressive forces prevailed; in China, there was a glacial quality in the conservatism and high status of the gentry-oriented scholar-officialdom.

It was not that few efforts at modernization were made in China before 1911, but most of them were obstructed. On the contrary, Japan devised and enforced a uniform tax system able to meet governmental expenses, finance military establishments, invest in new industries, and develop what has come to be called a modern infra-structure. In China, fiscal administration had become more decentralized, more burdensome on the economic sectors where modernization should have been more encouraged. The central government was running annual deficits; the raising of more revenue during the dynasty's latter years was to amortize foreign loans and pay indemnities ensuing from military defeat rather than to provide capital for industrialization. The Japanese government became a vigorous pioneer in the building, equipping and operation of factories, mines, a merchant marine, as well as railway and telegraph lines. In and after 1881, it transferred many of these at low prices to private entrepreneurs. The dependence of Meiji enterprisers on bureaucracy, which discouraged the rapid emergence of independent capitalists on the earlier British model as a force for liberal politics, differed again significantly in degree from the exposure of would-be modern Chinese enterprisers to the supervision and exactions of what Weber called prebendary officials.

The same ideographs meaning "wealth and power" became slogans in both countries, but Japan proved to be more adaptable in important modes of institutional change.⁵ Its leaders, and increasingly the public, came rather rapidly to realize that popular education and applied sciences from the test-tube to the locomotive were involved. Many Japanese students were sent abroad for specific learning and were employed rationally upon their return; on the part of China, this process was hesitant and fumbling. Young, Western-trained Chinese, for decades, often found it hard to obtain employment where their skills could be effectively used. Before the end of the last century, Japan's population had become one of the most literate in the world, but at the end of World War II, probably 70% of all Chinese could not yet read nor write.

⁵ In his conclusion, Feuerwerker (*op. cit.*, p. 242) writes: "... One institutional breakthrough is worth a dozen textile mills or shipping companies established within the framework of the traditional society and its system of values."

Other contrasts were numerous. The Meiji government instituted a Foreign Ministry in 1868 and included it in the first cabinet of 1885, but not until 1901 did China reluctantly establish such a modern department. The Japanese established their first legations abroad nineteen years after their first treaty, but it was a generation after China's first modern treaties that this was done. Codes of law in Japan were vigorously revised and, by 1899, that empire was rid of extraterritoriality; in China, the processes were much more halting, and legal sovereignty was not fully recovered until 1943. Japan had one never-amended, conservative constitution from 1889 to 1947, while China had no less than ten constitutions or drafts between 1912 and 1947. Japan developed a fully nationalized military system in the 1870's, but—though the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek made some progress in overcoming warlord autonomy—the process was not completed until the Communist seizure of nation-wide power. The full regaining of national sovereignty and initiative was achieved by Japan between 1894 and 1911, but not by China until after 1949. Indeed, almost simultaneously with its own emancipation from unequal treaties, Japan was able to share and extend non-reciprocal privileges in China, including for the first time Japanese-owned industries in Chinese treaty ports. Thus, Japan began to invest in China, to compete with, and contribute to, the depression of certain Chinese handicraft industries, and to encroach on mainland markets. The delay in Chinese modernization proved to be disastrous as markets for many commodities were preempted by foreign enterprises. Not only did conventional tariffs prevent China from protecting young industries; foreign producers on Chinese soil began to reduce even the low revenues from imports in the same categories, and opportunities for would-be modern Chinese entrepreneurs narrowed. Clearly, there were multipliers in both the successful and negatively in the obstructed patterns of modernization. But, when interrelated factors of economic growth were explained to Chinese officials, they tended to be impressed negatively, for they saw in such connections proof that one change would lead to another until the whole traditional economy and society would be undermined.

Why were Meiji leaders and their humbler countrymen able to create an institutional milieu for the new technology, to subordinate or bend the interests of family, class, faction and region to those of the nation and of modernization? And why was Chinese modernization so long frustrated? Perhaps answers to these questions will be suggestive as to factors which help to explain the varied performance of societies which more recently have been drawn into what Eric Hoffer has called "the ordeal of change."⁶

Geographical and certain gross historical factors may have been less telling than others to be discussed, but surely they were important. Tokugawa Japan was long secluded, but its islands were increasingly exposed to alien pressures and overseas opportunities. The sea is both an insulator and a highway. Moreover, Japan has three times as long a coastline as China and better harbors. Most of its people lived within a day's journey of the littoral; its hinterlands are limited and—despite more navigable rivers in the Chinese interior—inland Japan is for the most part more permeable. The Japanese

⁶ *The Ordeal of Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

were, even before Perry, ethnically and culturally more homogeneous than their more numerous neighbors. Geography, like the organization of Japanese feudalism, encouraged a creative tension between partial centralization and competitive diversity.

Japan's position helps to explain why its inhabitants long were borrowers from the continent, thus developing habits and traditions of adjustability and interest in foreign cultures. Psychologically and materially, they have not been as self-sufficient as the Chinese. Indeed, under modern conditions, the paucity of their natural resources has compelled industrialization which, in turn, has impelled requisite technological and institutional changes. Japan's competitive position has allowed less traditional inefficiency. Ambivalence between conservatism and impressionability was encouraged by geography. But Japan was more proof against being overwhelmed from the continent than Britain and, in certain respects, crucial for our analysis of contrasts, the Japanese were much freer than the Koreans to modify or eschew aspects of Chinese institutions as acculturation proceeded. For example, though in and after the Nara period they repeatedly imitated the Chinese imperial bureaucracy, they never developed such a dominant one staffed by such a self-conscious official class based on the landed gentry and so thoroughly committed to Confucian ideology. The late continuance of feudalism in Japan itself attested to the considerable cultural autonomy of which that insular society was capable.

For Europeans, Americans and expansionists operating from India, Japan was at the end of the line and thus their impact was mitigated. The Japanese could observe the defeats of prestigious China by superior Western technology and draw prudent conclusions. The United States, which took the initiative in reopening relations with Japan, had a vast continent to people and develop; it sought no territorial aggrandizement in Asia.

In terms of pre-modern means of transportation, China was in some respects more isolated than Japan, however. Its self-image as the world hub fostered an ethnocentrism which is being reevaluated now that it has again been aroused. The Chinese "world culture" bred an outlook rather different from that of the Japanese. It was more complacent. Early Western visitors to Japan noted the vigor and curiosity of the Japanese; having just come from the China coast, they observed the differences. Even if there had been more prevalent innovative elites in China during the nineteenth century, the vastness and regional pluralism of their empire would have made it more difficult for changes to be diffused. Even today, the Communists—with their effective apparatus—have difficulties stemming, in part, from the bulk and complexity of China.

Because manifold revolutions such as basically occurred during the Meiji and Taisho reigns—and the one that recently has culminated in China—are accompanied by great tensions, it is significant that the transmission of legitimate authority was relatively smooth in Japan. Shogunal die-hards and rebellious peasants and samurai were quickly disciplined; loyalties were rapidly transferred to, and institutionalized in, the Emperor and nation. Japan had the advantage (for purposes of rapid change yet adequate stability) of an indigenous royal line the legitimacy of which stemmed from heredity, not popu-

larly recognized or pragmatic mandate. Thus, the new oligarchy had a potent symbol and authority to check those who would interfere with drastic change and to justify effort toward a new order. In China, the Manchu dynasty had in some ways remained foreign and to its end pursued the strategy of divide-and-rule. Chinese nationalists, therefore, faced two ways until the Ch'ing, its privileged court, the eunuchs and nobility were overthrown.

From comparative analyses of techno-economically developing societies, some nine ingredients, or clusters of conditions conducive to innovative readiness for change,⁷ have been derived and can be summarized as follows:

1. Predisposition toward such manifold changes is usually stronger, or, at least, the transition is smoother, where elements of the traditional elites have suffered deterioration of their status, have experienced a period of partial alienation and withdrawal, have tended to reject the values of the dominant group or of the system, and tend to be receptive to changes as they seek ways to resolve problems and assert leadership in new modes. Of course, a new revolutionary elite—like the Chinese Communists—can arise, but this usually involves more turmoil and time. Innovators cannot very effectively be aliens (as, for example, Western enterprisers in Chinese treaty ports) because the larger society will tend to reject the new values and practices. Change is facilitated when led by an already respected group.⁸ Readiness for change is also needed on the part of other strata which are to be important in the future processes of industrialization.

2. Not just exceptional instances but a trend of what might be called pre-modern technological innovativeness and readiness for industrial reorganization are prerequisites. This cannot occur unless a sufficient base of scientific and technological knowledge exists. The trend can be assisted by the availability of capital, usually from mercantile sources; it is frequently associated with developing business skills. It also requires enough socio-political freedom to permit deviant activity. When we come to compare and contrast the value systems of China and Japan, we shall note other conditions encouraging the development of innovative personalities.

3. The values and diffused functions of the traditional, solidary family in a society crossing the threshold into rapid modernization, will be in process of modification. Loyalty to family will be subordinated in more spheres to other allegiances, and this will have significance for nation-building, productive efficiency, as well as restraints on corruption and nepotism.

4. Required also are leading elements with a vision of the direction which their society should take both technically and in the development of new insti-

⁷ These preconditions are, of course, determined in part by the nature of modern industrialism and the demands it makes on societies. It requires rational, universalistic, functionally specific relations; it emphasizes efficient rather than customary method, rational decisions rather than traditions, the pertinent abilities of persons rather than their situational statuses. Obligations and expectations involved in relations must be precisely defined. Cellular, self-sufficient social units must yield to closely interrelated ones. There is need for coordination and the development of new operative patterns by both the state and private organizations.

⁸ See especially: Everett E. Hagen, "How Economic Growth Begins: A General Theory Applied to Japan," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, XXII, No. 3 (Fall, 1958), 375-376, 379-383; and the same author's *On the Theory of Social Change: How Economic Growth Begins* (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, Inc., 1962), espec. chap. 14.

tutions—leaders committed to the new objectives and capable of controlling the pertinent means, including sufficient political power to attain aims and block opposition. They must be competent planners and, in implementing programs, to have command and the support of followers capable of responding in new directions: those who accept the new disciplines and organizations. It is particularly important that prime leaders have effective understandings and relations with locally influential elites.

5. Success in this kind of revolutionary transition depends on entrepreneurial groups in being or incipiently available, enterprisers who are ideologically motivated to take advantage of new conditions which tend to multiply as an old order decays. They should not be excessively committed to tradition, nor to monopolistic privileges and limitations. Such types tend to reflect impetuses from an expanding money economy and commercialization of agriculture. In both China and Japan, there were some who—by involvement in the putting-out system—in the nineteenth century had come to the verge of factory production. Such business leaders have been readier for the dawn of industrialism when they have become familiar with proto-modern financial methods, have networks of rural supply, can rapidly respond to expanding domestic and foreign trade, and have strategic alliances with, but are not too dominated and despoiled by, regional elites and wielders of state power.

6. Industrialization is encouraged by, at least, available ingredients of a genuine nationalism in terms of attitudes, molding institutions, nation-wide markets, and a sense of community and of consensus, though one susceptible of transformation.

7. Another crucial precondition is government and administration with creative tensions between centralized authority and regional cum local autonomies. Effective communication between central planners and local implementers is needed, with accepted procedures for command and reporting. Industrialization and other facets of modernization can be achieved more rapidly where governmental regulation penetrates deeply without smothering local initiatives and where there is a progress imbalance between factors making for continuous stability and opportunities for response to new conditions and forces. Optimally there should be a strong enough authority to preserve stability but sufficient dynamism to cast off traditional impediments and launch vigorously in the new direction.

8. As already indicated, there is needed the capacity to produce surpluses and the purposeful discipline to convert them into capital for both state and private investment in coordinated programs.

9. There may be other significant factors, but let us say here that finally, during the pre-dawn of industrialism, the impending transformation can be facilitated by the existence of peasant artisans whose traditional crafts have engendered “quickness of hand and eye, respect for tools and materials, and adaptation to an environment of moving parts.” In societies like those of China, India and Japan—crowded before the industrial revolution—most transitional new factories were small enough to make these skills still relevant. The labor force also needs to be adjustable to new functional emphases and disciplines. . . . After such a catalogue of preconditions, is it any wonder that

societies have shown and still exhibit a wide variety of responses to this relatively recent and pervasive trend centered on industrialization? In this perspective, Japanese society by 1860 was exceptionally precocious.

Without procrustean imposition of such theories, with others let us try to illumine the significance of similarities and contrasts in Chinese and Japanese experience during the processes of modernization. In the first place, the Japanese were keener pursuers of Western knowledge than were their continental neighbors. George Wong has shown that Chinese scholar-officialdom opposed Jesuit teachings, not only on grounds of religious prejudice but also from ethnocentrism and a comprehensive philosophical background. They even sensed threats to their class status and to the whole traditional system.⁹ Their campaign against Western ideas culminated in the first half of the eighteenth century, shortly before Dutch studies began to gain momentum in Japan. By the time of Perry's arrival, there were no less than thirty-five centers of learning through Dutch sources extending from Nagasaki to Hokkaido, and eager Japanese were able to ask the American intruders whether an isthmian canal had been dug, and whether cannon seen on the "black ships" were of the Paixhans shelf-firing type. Being a borrowed philosophy, Confucianism seems not to have had as strong a confining grip on minds in Japan as in China. As in many (but not all) of the contrasts cited here, this was one of degree and yet is significant. More Japanese chose to stress the neo-Confucian doctrine favoring "the investigation of things." In their country, empiricism and pragmatic tendencies increasingly provided a rationale for important prerequisites of modernization.¹⁰ Furthermore, the lower samurai, who were in an increasing economic bind as the feudal system declined, found in the championing of Dutch studies a relatively safe form of protest and a constructive way out. Artificial isolation apparently whetted Japanese curiosity about foreign affairs while Chinese self-satisfaction was more impervious.¹¹ The greater degree of pluralism in Japan permitted varied responses to Western learning and power,¹² but in China the stifling imperial bureaucracy and its Confucian "literocracy" were deterrents; when regionalism grew after the great mid-century rebellions, modernization was ineffectually attempted by Confucian satraps while Japan had already begun national planning and implementation.

Furthermore, institutional and technological changes were already in motion in Japan before the American expedition made demands. T.C. Smith points out that not just a few Japanese scholars but officials generally were already convinced of the potentialities of modern techniques. "By 1850,"

⁹ George H. C. Wong, "China's Opposition to Western Science during Late Ming and Early Ch'ing," *Isis*, LIV, Pt. 1, No. 175 (1963), 29-49.

¹⁰ Paper read by Harry Harootunian on "Social Values and Leadership in Late Tokugawa Thought," at the convention of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, 1964.

¹¹ Thomas C. Smith, *Political Change and Industrial Development in Japan: Government Enterprise, 1868-1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), 1-4.

¹² A point made by Edwin O. Reischauer in "Modernization in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan," *Japan Quarterly*, X, No. 3 (July-September, 1963), 303. The bakufu and the western tozama fiefs had special considerations of economic factors and power for being innovative along modern lines. In addition to Sat-Cho-Hi-To fiefs, however, those of Echizen and Mito were astir.

he wrote, "Japan had gone through an apprenticeship that lay almost entirely in the future for China."¹³ The Tokugawa bakufu was goaded into action along these lines not only by its responsibility for general defense but also by the activities of long-hostile and powerful western han. Where in China, even during the "self-strengthening" movement of the 'sixties and 'seventies, could scholar-officials have been found actually working in shipyards and foundries? Yet samurai on some of those fiefs were eagerly engaged in hand-soiling tasks.¹⁴ Changes in the world view of, at least, some Japanese aristocrats—and increasingly of creative monks and artisans—gains in innovative qualities from an altered view of man's relation to his physical and social universe, began to stir during the late Heian period. Such currents seem to have affected less the common folk and highest strata than Japan's merchants, prosperous peasants, its lesser elite and that crucial medial element between castle towns and peasantry, the goshi (rustic samurai)—who were often village headmen—and their sons.

Examination of the motivative value systems in the two cultures help to explain why these changes were well under way in Japan but not in China before 1860. When Japanese came aboard foreign vessels or were sent abroad on missions after the first treaties, they were seen busily sketching the gadgets and machines which were novel to them. Their curiosity and graphic sense were aroused. On the contrary, when Yeh Ming-ch'en, Viceroy at Canton, was taken prisoner by the British and sent to Calcutta in 1858, officers sympathetic with his boredom asked if they could supply him with reading matter, whereupon he replied: "Long ago I memorized the Confucian classics, the only worthwhile literature." This attitude among Chinese changed long before 1949; after the Communist victory, thousands of Chinese students were busily sketching and studying in the Soviet Union. There had been a widespread change in values and attitudes, but considerably later than in Japan.

Founders of the Tokugawa regime did officially establish Confucianism, but their shogunate failed to develop a moral basis with the depth and hold attained in China. Three main factors account for this: the inculcation of this ideology by a scholar-officialdom more dominant in China; the more diffuse values, functions and claims of the Chinese family and clan; and the greater vitality of other-worldly Buddhist sects in Japan with significance for behavior in this life. The partial decentralization of feudalism affected all of these—preventing a hegemony by imperial officials and encouraging religious pluralism. Filial piety was a prime value in China; the body politic was a porous mass of autonomous family and village cells living mainly in an agricultural pattern which emphasized subsistent self-sufficiency more than in Japan.¹⁵ In

¹³ *Op. cit.*, 3-4.

¹⁴ The quarter-size railway and train which Perry's expedition brought was studied by Japanese samurai and daimyo with the aid of, at least, one Dutch work on steam engineering so that soon they were themselves operating the new conveyance in Edo; by contrast, the first railway built near Shanghai was thought to offend the feng shui (forces of geomancy), to endanger humans and crops, so it was amputated and dumped on a beach in Taiwan.

¹⁵ One example of the difference in this respect was the period of mourning for parents which, in China unlike Japan, made provision for officials to leave their posts for as long as three years and retire to their family estates. Could there have been any

China, loyalty was not to a nation or even (with the exception of officials) to the imperial authority but to the Confucian way of life, and this matrix was basically incompatible with the nature and requirements of modernization. No transcendent sanctions prevailed in China, no clear and binding hierarchy of loyalties which could be turned to the service of modernization when elites altered the direction of policies. In Japan, however, loyalty usually supervened over filial reverence, so there were ethical sanctions for loyalty and obedience to non-sanguineous hierarchical superiors. The Chinese system encouraged strong identification with tradition, with the paternal image rather than emphasis on autonomy and achievement, on precedents, considerations of situational status, and on orthodox conservatism. These patterns were not lacking but were less firm, comprehensive and mutually reinforcing in Japan. In China, a humanistically intellectual life was even more highly esteemed than in Japan, and there was less interest in, and respect for, business, industrial and scientific pursuits. In China, men looked "up to the past," in the main, until a drastic revolution more recently shifted the emphasis to an industrialized, communistic future. Foreign advisers in Meiji Japan reported that leaders of modernization were reluctant to consider traditional precedents; so intent were they about the future.¹⁶

Along with stronger goal orientation in utilitarian directions—encouraged by the Japanese system of values—went a military elite, greater interest and pleasure in manual-technical activity, and keener interest in the nature and operations of man's physical environment and in the means for utilizing and even shaping material surroundings for human advantage. Emphasis on research, though gaining in Japan during the middle and late Tokugawa era, was less prominent in the T'ung-ch'eng school of Sung neo-Confucianism which prevailed in China from the Ch'ien Lung reign (1736-96) and was the main rationalizing source for Tseng Kuo-fan and other leaders of the T'ung Chih Restoration (1862-74). Neo-Confucianism separated moral values from material conditions—an outlook which Marxism reversed.¹⁷

There were still other factors which go far to explain why leading administrators and ordinary producers in Japan were predisposed to more rapid responses to modern science and capitalist industrialism, and why Japanese culture was probably more encouraging to innovative personalities. We have seen that the Confucian value system of the Chinese official-gentry-peasant society was antipathetic to non-handicraft technical innovation. Robert Bellah, using Weberian and Parsonian insights, has called attention to late Tokugawa preceptual currents, accepted especially in entrepreneurial circles, which accentuated ethical values already strong in the Japanese system: diligence, frugality, self-cultivation and-discipline, and the validity of accumulating and investing

more telling indication of relative emphasis on Confucian orthodoxy as compared with bureaucratic efficiency?

¹⁶ Dr. Erwin Baelz, a German doctor called to the Imperial Medical Academy in Tokyo, observed in 1876 that "The Japanese have their eyes fixed exclusively on the future, and are impatient when a word is said of their past." See: William W. Lockwood, "Japan's Response to the West, the Contrast with China," *World Politics*, IX, No. 1 (October, 1956), 42; citing Baelz, *Awakening Japan* (New York, 1932), 17.

¹⁷ Cf., Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*, espec. 59-61.

wealth for the benefit of the family and of society.¹⁸ Everett Hagen has, even more cogently, observed that a Protestant-like ethic in Japan, leading to efforts to make the earth a fruitful habitation, was

associated not with a sense of guilt but rather with a sense of inadequacy and of shame at revealing it, and associated with a sharply contrasting religious dogma. This is persuasive evidence... that the religious dogma as such was not of central importance in the economic behavior, but rather as a reflection and rationalization of unconscious needs which are also the proximate causes of the economic performance.¹⁹

These ethical impulses were combined with the felt imperative to repay on (endless obligation to father-images), *giri* (maintaining personal honor by meeting lateral obligations), and *gimu* (executing obligations to society). With the possible exception of the first, these were much stronger and more structured patterns in Japanese than in Chinese motivation and behavior. Moreover, the more vigorous sects of Japanese Buddhism encouraged faith in abstract deities and were concerned with transcendence over evil. Yet, in the application of ethics, the Japanese have been known to be situational rather than absolute; their notable adjustability, if not opportunism, has been attributed in part to this. The more dominant and self-sufficient Confucian system on the continent was certainly more inhibitive of innovation and acceptance of change.

Bellah further asserts that China's system of values stressed the integration of its society-economy-government-ideologies.²⁰ Chinese government was a web of checks and balances; it penetrated little below the *hsien* (county) level, where the cellular structure of autonomous family and local interests prevailed. It was much harder for such a society than for a hierarchical, late-feudal society like Japan's to mobilize to meet the threats and complex challenges of modernism. Even though the Tokugawa consolidators and perpetuators had favored system integration along Confucian lines, other factors and forces—many of them with earlier roots and momentums—limited their success and, goaded by later external pressures, contributed to the demise of their order and to rapid modernization.

Even a glance at new nations in our day confirms the significance of effective leadership toward modernization. In China, after the great rebellions in the nineteenth century had been crushed, there were no disaffected strata both sufficiently alienated and capable of withdrawal and later of revisionist reassertion. After the defeats of T'ai-p'ing and Nien elites, this pattern did not recur until 1927-28 and after, when the Communists retreated to mountainous borderlands. The transition in leadership could be much more smoothly accomplished in Japan because of related changes long in progress and because traditional values and habits could be bent to the service of new changes. In Japan, too, there were groups which resisted change, but they were controlled by the powerful elements sponsoring renovation. The conservatism, dominance and inertia of Chinese scholar-officialdom were clearly demonstrated in the quashing of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898. Only the rising military gov-

¹⁸ Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan* (Glen-coe, Ill.: The Free Press and The Falcon's Wing Press, 1957), espec. 51-177.

¹⁹ *On the Theory of Social Change*, 348.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, chaps. I, II and VII.

ernors could challenge this incubus, but even the more reformist of these warlords tended to reach accommodations with gentry-official elites, were usually regional rather than national in outlook, and had social and ideological biases which precluded the manifold imbalance required for successful modernization.

In contrast, the Meiji Restoration (which in essence was not a conservative restoration but illustrated how traditional values could be used to legitimize change) was accomplished by an alliance of lower *samurai*,²¹ rural industrialists and both urban and *han* merchants. Would-be capitalists were unwilling to replace one feudal regime with another, and thus perpetuate restrictions on their enterprises; they seem to have been chiefly responsible for turning the movement into one to destroy the former system. They, with the new national military and the more modern bureaucrats, were to become the prime elites of the new Japan.²² Yet most of them left one foot in the conservative countryside and sought a more efficient, enlightened authoritarianism. The peasantry provided a social base for the continued imposition of traditions on the whole people. So it was that Japan, whose Meiji system was fraught with problems for the future, could nevertheless—because of this rare blend of conservatism and progressivism—change so rapidly and rather smoothly, though not without severe tensions.

In Japan, hierarchy was a matter of ranked social statuses, and deference was attached to the office as much or more than to the incumbent. It was thus easier to appoint qualified persons with less preference than in China shown to clients, relatives and fellow townsmen. In Japan as, but even more than, in China, superior status entailed a strong sense of duty and downward obligation, which helped to pave the way for a leadership trained and responsible for duties. Moreover, the stronger loyalty ethic, the large measure of voluntary consent among lower ranks, the better communication and increasing mobility among strata in Japan, hastened the diffusion of new values, techniques and ideas—once progressive leadership had emerged. In China, the dominant scholar-official class—by education and status—was thoroughly committed to neo-Confucianism and its world view. Japanese elites enjoyed their statuses by virtue of heredity, not examinations. They were thus intellectually freer to reorient policies and, through patterns of loyalty and obligation, both to command and persuade their followers.

Some of the most striking contrasts between these two Asian neighbors was with respect to the status and activities of merchant-entrepreneurs and

²¹ Albert M. Craig is doubtless correct in writing in his "Choshu in the Meiji Restoration," *Harvard Historical Monographs XLVII* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961)—that population in the highest *samurai* ranks was thin, so that there is not much meaning in the low *samurai* background of much of the top Meiji leadership. Still, it is significant that top bracket *samurai* were deterred by their closeness to the feudal and pro-bakufu elites from leading in a new direction. Writers like Craig, Jansen and Sakai do see special significance in the renovative roles played by many *goshi*-headmen and their sons. Their being the lowest of the status-eroded *samurai* must have been significant.

²² Interesting data and interpretations about the social backgrounds of 100 leading entrepreneurs of the Meiji-Taisho periods, 239 governmental official and political leaders, and 21 leaders in finance and trade, are provided by Miwa Ryoichi and Everett Hagen in the latter's *On the Theory of Social Change: How Economic Growth Begins*, 350-352.

the extent of proto-capitalist developments. Mercantile activity and profit-making were low in the traditional value systems of both countries, because of the agrarian emphasis in both. But the Chinese scholar-gentry were especially supercilious, suspicious, domineering and interventionary in relations with merchants. They sensed the danger that capitalistic development held for their more static equilibrium. There were also efforts, under the Tokugawa, to thwart mercantile assertiveness and periodically to cancel debts in the interests of the feudality. But, especially late in that period, Japanese merchants in practice set the pace and tone of urban life; they waxed in wealth, influence, and—especially in some fiefs and towns—in autonomy. As the feudal class and economic systems were undermined, the more affluent *chonin* bought *samurai* titles in a kind of black market, allowed *samurai* families to adopt some of their sons and, to an extent, intermarried with this elite. *Samurai* entrance into productive occupations also tended to lend more dignity to them.

Officials in China farmed out governmental enterprises to private interests, but where in China were there conditions comparable to the indebtedness of many *samurai* and *daimyo* to merchant lenders, and the turning over of financial management of whole fiefs to merchants? It was partly through such influence that Japanese merchants were able to augment their autonomy. In China, so much prestige was attached to ownership of land and to the holding of official rank and office that there was a serious flight of capital and talent in the form of merchant investments in land as well as the purchase of rank and the expensive education of businessmen's sons for bureaucracy. In Japan the energies of such enterprisers tended to be more concentrated in their own economic sphere by the greater difficulty of purchasing land or of entering the nobility. There were many more Japanese than Chinese between 1860 and 1928 who contributed outside of government to the modernization of their country.

The centralization of Japanese feudalism in the late sixteenth century reduced the autonomy of merchants, guilds and monasteries in matters of trade, but on some shogunal estates, there continued to be certain cities and towns where commercial freedoms were considerable; this was also true of some of the *han*. By Tokugawa times, most guilds had become companies, but restrictive monopolies were common in both Japan and China. As a money economy and the commercialization of agriculture advanced in Japan more markedly than in China, there rose from among prosperous peasants (including *goshi*-headmen types), landlords and rural moneylenders, a class of *han* (later prefectural) enterprisers who were less bound by traditional restraints. They were quicker to seize opportunities presented by the rapidly expanding domestic and later foreign markets. The later *zaibatsu* and entrepreneurs of lesser scope were more often the most successful of these elements rather than from among the traditional monopoly merchants. Such capitalists also led in developing the putting-out system into the early factory stage of production. It was in its limitation of the regulatory and interventionary fiat of the central shogunate that Japan's feudal matrix, with its competitive interests, made an inadvertent contribution to the rise of capitalism. Japanese administration was less centralized, less uniform, less atomized than the Chinese system.

Much has been written about the dependence of Japanese business interests on, and their alliance with, the Meiji oligarchic bureaucracy. This became less pronounced after 1881, however, and early in the present century big business in Japan became a somewhat autonomous political force. Especially after 1890, Japanese interest groups developed a more modern pluralism.

There was also some gain in entrepreneurial activities in China during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but central bureaucracy was much more intact and dominant there. The attitudes of scholar-officials were those of taxers and squeezers more than of developers. They continued to regard entrepreneurs as their competitors for control over agricultural surpluses. They could and commonly did regulate within licensing procedures, intervened, sometimes confiscated, and levied exactions. Thus, they curbed capital accumulation, innovation, and functional efficiency in economic fields. Business operators were obliged to seek official protection rather than to enjoy that of impartial law. When, following the great rebellions, neo-Confucian gentry-officials like Tseng Kuo-fan, Li Hung-chang and Tso Tsung-t'ang fostered a superficial modernization according to such slogans as "self-strengthening" and "Western instruments for utility, Chinese principles as the essence," theirs was a genuinely conservative Restoration (1862-74). All of the modern-type enterprises which they encouraged to buttress their regional power were according to the *kuan-tu shang-pan* pattern, which is to say: "official supervision and mercantile management." Some gentry capital was attracted from agriculture, rural usury, and pawnshops into some of these ventures; officials, the government, and especially comprador capitalists also invested. The last mentioned were forerunners of the bureaucratic capitalists of the Republican and Nationalist eras. They were assimilated to the traditional official system and usually had purchased formal official titles and ranks. As investors also in traditional enterprises, land and real estate, they were, in addition, assimilated to the gentry. Maladministration and subordination to political considerations, in the end, caused the failure of all these enterprises.²³ The successful application of modern science to productivity under dynamic capitalism was as unlikely in conjunction with Chinese official hegemony as in Japan under a feudal aristocracy which drained off most agricultural surpluses. Both of these incubuses had to be overthrown, but, because the new forces were further advanced in Japan, the new departure was made there four decades earlier and much more purposefully.

There were a number of other factors in Japan's favor as its society adjusted to modern conditions. Certain ideological and organizational trends during the Tokugawa period enabled Japan to cross the threshold quickly into a true nationalism of attitudes and institutions. The growth of population, urbanization, and the *sankin kotai* system, which required that *daimyo* leave their families in Edo and spend alternate years there themselves, helped to develop a national market in a fuller sense than obtained in China. In Japan, the practices and services of trade and finance were more highly developed. The considerable penetration of government under the shogunate became much

²³ Cf., Albert Feuerwerker, *China's Early Industrialization*, Sheng Hsuan-huai (1844-1916) and *Mandarin Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), espec. chaps. 1-3, 7.

deeper than China's, once the feudal structure was swept away. Thus, for example, in fields such as the export of raw silk, the government encouraged the organization of producers' and exporters' organizations through which standards for graded qualities could be established and enforced. So, although Chinese silks had a headstart, their sale abroad was fairly soon overtaken by the Japanese product. Commercialized farming and wage labor for two centuries in Japan had prepared peasants, who were illegally migrating to the cities, to respond to new relationships in pursuit of monetary incentives. Primogeniture in Japan, not in China, tended to keep patrimonies intact, to provide modest capital for small-and medium-scale enterprises, and to encourage activities in addition to those associated with agriculture by younger sons.

In conclusion, we confront the question whether Japan's riper preparation and readier adaptation to modern conditions was principally from earlier and further historical development of the many trends already mentioned, or did Tokugawa culture differ in essentially determinative respects from that of China, and in ways which facilitated modernization. A sociologist has devoted a whole volume in an attempt to demonstrate that mid-nineteenth century Japanese civilization was more like that of Western Europe, as occidental feudalism waned and reawakening advanced, than it resembled that of China from which it has absorbed so much.²⁴ Although in my opinion he exaggeratedly makes many a difference in degree appear to be in kind, and despite important differences between the civilizations of Japan and Western Europe, I am inclined to agree with his general conclusion. Japan's feudal legacy, like that of Europe, probably contained in foetal form some of the institutional preparation for making the transition to a modern society—more than did China's rigidly orthodox and dominant bureaucracy. Japan's martial traditions evidently contributed to rapid acceptance of modern militarism and an emphasis on building a strong army and navy. Its ethical system, tempered in its feudal age and including a high sense of honor and unlimited sacrifice for liege or ideals, also had pertinence. A strong national consciousness from as early as the thirteenth century had, long before 1854, combined with feudal loyalty to form a genuine patriotism. This was quickly shifted from *daimyo* or *shogun* to Emperor, and from *han* to nation. The strong Japanese sense of legal and contractual rights, including those pertaining to property, could more easily be transformed along Western lines, including acceptance of the principle of equality of individuals before uniform law. We have noted the greater protection which feudalism afforded Japanese entrepreneurs. Probably the Japanese family institution was more like those in Western Europe than like those of China or India. And the *chonin* were in some crucial respects more like their bourgeois contemporaries in the West.²⁵ In trying to analyze change in vast social universes, there are doubtless aspects and correlations which elude us, but the salient contrasts between China and Japan as they strove to adjust to the impact of modernism are clear and impressive.

²⁴ Norman Jacobs, *The Origin of Modern Capitalism and Eastern Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1958).

²⁵ Cf., Edwin O. Reschauer, "Japanese Feudalism," in Rushton Coulborn, ed., *Feudalism in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), espec. 46-48.