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CULTURAL PREMISES AND THE LIMITS OF CONVERGENCE IN MODERN SOCIETIES

AN EXAMINATION OF SOME ASPECTS OF JAPANESE SOCIETY

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper* I shall attempt to analyze some comparative aspects of modern societies which bear on the problem of convergence of modern, especially industrial, societies and the closely related analytical problems of the relations between culture and social structure.

I shall do it by examining some aspects of modern Japanese society—first the initial stage of Japanese modernization and then the special modes of conflict-resolution in Japanese society. My starting point will be the analysis of the Meiji Restoration in comparison with the Great European Revolutions.

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This analysis will indicate the importance of civilizational dimensions of politics (*i.e.,* that many variations in the political process and in the structure of political power are shaped not only by the relative strength of the state vis-a-vis various social, especially class, forces; and second, the basic ideologies of the ruling elites—whether authoritarian or totalitarian, corporatist or competitive, etc.—but also by the interaction between such forces and the basic cultural or civilizational premises of the political realm and of the state that are prevalent in the different societies) and the concomitant different sets of rules governing political action. This possibility has been neglected in large parts of contemporary research which has emphasized the importance of the state. Because of this neglect, these developments in political sociology were connected with a narrow definition of the political process and a consequent neglect of some central aspects of this process and the analytical concepts that bear upon it.

This impoverished conception of the political process can perhaps best be seen in the analysis of one central aspect of this process, emphasized by many of these scholars: protest. Most of these analyses focused on protest, and on patterns of distribution and allocation of resources, but paid little attention to the symbolism of protest as a relatively autonomous dimension of such movements, or to the possibility that such symbolism may be important in the impact of such movements on the political process, particularly in democratic societies chiefly by effecting changes in the basic rules that regulate political struggle and conflict.[1]

The same neglect could be found in many recent works in comparative historical sociology, such as, for instance, those of John Hall, Michael Mann or Jean Baechler[2] which have taken up again the problem of the origins of the West in a broad comparative framework. Most of these works have analyzed, often in a very sophisticated way, various structural factors—such as power relations between different groups, various political-ecological conditions, above all intersocietal relations.

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[1] P. Burstein, "Review of Bringing the State Back," in AJS, 1987.

[2] J. Baechler, "Aux origines de la modernité: castes et féodalités (Europe, Inde, Japon)," in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie,* Vol. 27, No. 1, 1986, pp. 31-57; J.A. Hall, *Powers and Liberties,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985; *Ibid.,* "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism," in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie,* Vol. 26, No. 2, 1985, pp. 193-223; M. Mann, *The Source of Social Power,* Vol. 1., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

They have, however, almost entirely neglected to analyze one type of social group—namely heterodoxies, so strongly stressed by Weber and to some extent also by Marx and some of the early Marxists—in the political dynamics of the civilizations.[3]

The importance of the civilizational dimension in the formation of political institutions and political dynamics has been analyzed in several research projects within the framework of the Programme on Comparative Civilizations at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology and the Truman Institute of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. These studies have addressed themselves among others to such problems as the origins and diversity of Axial-Age civilizations;[4] the comparative analysis of the political dynamics of some of these civilizations;[5] as well as processes of center-formation and protest in selected modern societies;[6] the civilizational frameworks of modern revolutions;[7] the crystallization of different types of early states in Africa;[8] and the comparative study of cities and urban hierarchies in the major historical civilizations.[9] Lately, with the help of the World

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[3] S.N. Eisenstadt, "Macrosociology and Sociological Theory: Some New Directions," in *Contemporary Sociology,* Vol. 16, No. 5, Sep. 1987, pp. 602-609.

[4] S.N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations,* Albany, N.Y., SUNY Press, 1986.

[5] S.N. Eisenstadt, *Culture and Social Structure: A Comparative Analysis of Civilizations,* forthcoming, 1989.

[6] S.N. Eisenstadt, L. Roniger, and A. Seligman, *Centre Formation, Protest Movements, and Class Structure in Europe and the United States.* London, Frances Pinter Publishers, 1987.

[7] S.N. Eisenstadt, *Revolutions and the Transformation of Societies.* New York, The Free Press, 1978.

[8] S.N. Eisenstadt, M. Abitbol and N. Chazan, "The Origins of the State Reconsidered" and "State Formation in Africa, Conclusions," in *The Early State in African Perspective: Culture, Power and Division of Labor,* edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, M. Abitbol, and N. Chazan. Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1988.

[9] S.N. Eisenstadt and A. Shachar, *Society, Culture and Urbanization.* Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1987.

Society Foundation, we have focused on the analysis of problems of convergence of modern societies.

II. THE CIVILIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE GREAT (MODERN) REVOLUTIONS.

In all these researches a very strong emphasis was laid on the analysis of interweaving between "cultural" and "institutional" dimensions in the crystallizations and dynamics of societies and civilizations. Here we shall illustrate this approach by comparing the Meiji Restoration with the civilizational frameworks and conditions of the "Great Revolutions" that ushered in the modern era in Europe and the world: the Great Rebellion in England, the American and the French Revolutions, and the later revolutions in China and Russia. The Turkish and Vietnamese Revolutions can probably also be included in this category.[10]

On the ideological level, these revolutions were characterized by the intensification, transformation, and combination of several themes found separately in most Axial-Age civilizations. The most important of these are a highly articulated ideology of social protest, especially in a utopian emancipatory vein, *i.e.,* ideologies based on symbols of equality, progress, and freedom, presumably leading to the creation of a better social order; a strong emphasis on violence, novelty, and totality of change; and a strong universalistic missionary zeal oriented to the creation of a new type of man and ushering in a new historical era.

Similarly, on the organizational level they were characterized by bringing together several components of social movements and political struggle articulated and organized by counter-elites, central political struggle, and religious (or intellectual) heterodoxies. While the tendency to such combinations—of different symbolic and organizational components, as well as of these two sets of components—can be found in all Axial-Age civilizations, only in these revolutions was this potentiality fully actualized.

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[10] S.N. Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies,* New York, The Free Press, 1978; E. Kamenka, (ed.), *A World in Revolution*?, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1970; *Idem.,* "The Concept of a Political Revolution", in C.J. Friedrich, (ed.), *Revolution: Yearbook of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy,* Nomos 8, New York, Atherton, 1967, pp. 122-138; B. Mazlish, A.D. Kaledin & D.R. Baloton, (eds.), *Revolution,* New York, Macmillan, 1971; J. Baechler, *Revolutions,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1976.

The combination of these ideological and organizational aspects of these revolutions shaped their outcomes and distinguished them from other changes of regimes in the history of mankind. They interwove "cultural" and institutional dimensions in a way not to be found in other processes of change, generating a simultaneous change in central aspects of the trans-systematic rules prevalent in a civilization alongside changes in the basic rules regulating the political arena and the centre.

These revolutions were characterized by the overthrow of existing political regimes and changes in their basic premises and constitutional arrangements and in the bases and symbols of their legitimation; by a radical break with the past; by the displacement of the incumbent political elite or ruling class in favor of another one; and by the concomitant development of significant changes in all major institutional spheres of society—above all in economic and class relations.

How can these revolutions be explained? This question seemingly refers to the problems of the "causes" of revolutions. Here, in broad terms, two types of explanations have been predominant in the literature—one dealing with different types of structural conditions and the other with specific historical circumstances.

Among the structural conditions singled out in the literature one can find inter-elite struggles in combination with other forces, such as class struggle; the dislocation, social mobilization, and political articulation of broader and newly-emerging social groups; and the weakening of the state—often under the impact of international forces. Yet a closer look at the historical evidence reveals that most of these conditions could also be found in many human societies, especially in the more differentiated ones, in other types of regimes within both Axial-Age and non Axial-Age civilizations.[11]

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[11] S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires,* New York, Free Press, 1963, Chap. XII; *Idem*, (ed.), *The Decline of Empires,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1966.

It may of course be claimed that the fact that these revolutions occurred only in special historical conditions of crucial importance, and that such historical conditions can be seen as necessary, if not sufficient, causes of revolutions. The most important condition singled out in the literature involves the relatively early states of transition to modern settings, in which three major aspects of the breakthrough from a "traditional" to a modern setting occur together.

While there is no doubt that these revolutions occurred only in such historical conditions, there remains a crucial problem for comparative analysis: how can we explain that such revolutions did not occur in all societies where the types of conflict analyzed above could be identified, or in all societies making this transition to modernity—especially in our case here in Japan.

Our analysis begins from a simple yet basic historical fact: the first revolutions (in Europe and America) occurred in the decentralized setting of Europe, in what can be designated imperial-feudal societies, while the later revolutions occurred in centralized imperial societies. No such revolutions have occurred in patrimonial societies, whether centralized or decentralized—India, Buddhist societies (Southeast Asia), Islamic countries (with the partial exception of the Ottoman Empire and much later in Iran)—or in centralized feudal-patrimonial ones like Japan. Thus, it was only in some special types of societies that these different movements, conflicts, and protest movements came together and coalesced in the revolutionary patterns and transition to modernity analyzed above.

How can this fact be explained? The conditions that account for the major differences in the patterns of change between the imperial and imperial-feudal societies on the one hand, and the other various patrimonial regimes on the other, cannot be identified in terms of the variables often stressed in recent sociological literature or in the literature on the state referred to above—such as the type of social division of labor, degree of economic development, and the like—which have been heavily stressed in those approaches that tend to reify the concept of the state or of social structure.

The imperial and imperial-feudal societies developed within the framework of some great civilizations or traditions of the Axial-

Age civilizations analyzed above, and they shared some of the basic cultural orientations and institutional premises that developed in these civilizations. These characteristics included—as we have seen—a highly distinct centre perceived as an autonomous symbolic and organizational entity, and continuous interaction between centre and periphery. Another characteristic important for our present discussion is the development of distinct collectivities—especially cultural or religious—with a very high symbolic component in their construction as well as ideological structuring of social herarchies. A third characteristic was the development of relatively autonomous primary and secondary elites—especially cultural-intellectual religious ones—which continually struggled with one another and with the political elites.

These elites, particularly the religious and intellectual—many of which were also carriers of strong utopian visions with universalistic orientations—constituted the crucial element in the development of heterodoxies and in activating the connection between them and different political struggles and protest movements.

Common to all the civilizations within which great revolutions occurred—*i.e.*, imperial and imperial-feudal regimes, as distinct from other Axial-Age civilizations—was the perception of the this-worldly arenas in general, and the political one in particular, as the major arenas in which the attempt to bridge the transcendental and mundane realms—*i.e.*, in which salvation could be achieved—could be institutionalized.

The combination of all these characteristics gave rise in the imperial and imperial-feudal regimes to a tendency toward a high degree of coalescence between protest movements, institution-building, levels of articulation, and ideologization of the political struggle; and toward changes in the political system—*i.e.*, processes of change containing at least some kernels of the revolutionary processes analyzed above.

The basic cultural orientations and civilizational premises inspired visions of new social orders with strong utopian and universalistic orientations, while the organizational and structural characteristics provided the framework to institutionalize some aspects of these visions. The two were combined by the activities of the different types of elites analyzed above.

Cultural Premises

Given the combination and interaction between these structural and cultural characteristics, the different conditions singled out in the literature as causes of revolutions—such as inter-elite and inter-class conflict—could, in the appropriate historical situations attendant on the breakthrough to modernity, engender the form of the modern revolutions. When these characteristics were not combined, the transition to modernity—however far-reaching and dramatic—tended to develop in different and non-revolutionary patterns.[12]

III. SOME SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEIJI RESTORATION

Within this context the Meiji Restoration does indeed constitute a very interesting comparative case study. Many of the structural outcomes of the Meiji Restoration most closely related to the process of modernization—especially urbanization, industrialization, the development of a modern administrative state, and even the deposition of an existing ruling class—are indeed comparable to those of the Great Revolutions, and in some aspects even more far-reaching.[13] Similarly the basic causes of the Restoration were very similar to those of the great Revolution.

Yet the symbolism of the Meiji Restoration was quite different from that of the Great Revolutions. True, the Meiji Restoration "restored" a regime that had not previously existed. Yet, the very definition of the change as a restoration, or national renovation,—probably a more proper translation of the term "*ishi*"—underlined its emphasis on the crystallization of a neo-traditional polity that seemingly emphasized the ultimate non-accountability of the new rulers to the population, and the legitimation of the new regime in terms of the inviolable emperor. In parallel, this ideology did not contain universalistic missionary orientations, but rather emphasized the reconstruction—albeit in seemingly modern terms—of the specifically Japanese collectivity.

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[12] These comparative indications are worked out in greater detail in S.N. Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies, op. cit.*, esp. Chap. 9.

[13] On Japanese "traditional" (premodern) society see E.O. Reischauer, J.K. Fairbank and A.M. Craig, *A History of East Asian Civilization,* Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1965; vol. 1; J.W. Hall, *Japan from Prehistory to Modern Times,* London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970; C. Nakane, *Japanese Society,* London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970; H. Passin, "Japanese Society", in D.L. Sills, (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* New York, Macmillan and Free Press, 1968, Vol. 8, pp. 236-249.

These characteristics of the outcome of the Meiji revolution were closely related to one basic trait of the revolutionary process itself, which distinguished it from the Great Revolutions—namely, the absence of autonomous religious or intellectual elements or heterodoxies. These characteristics of the Meiji Restoration are closely related to some of the basic conceptions of ontological reality and of social order. Before, however, analyzing these relations—and in order to be able to understand them in a satisfactory way—we shall first explore, even if briefly, some institutional complexes or formations in Japanese history. All these complexes have evinced, like the Meiji Restoration, some striking similarities to—and yet, also differences from—their Western European counterparts.

IV. THE STRUCTURATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ARENAS IN JAPANESE SOCIETY: SOME HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Thus, to give some illustrations, as Marc Bloch pointed out long ago, Japanese feudalism[14] never developed full-fledged contractual relations between vassal and lord; Japanese vassals could have only one lord; fully autonomous Assemblies of Estates did not exist—the Emperor or Shogun never relied on conflict or consensus in the formal institutionalized way; and Japanese feudalism was much more centralized than the European version; there were at least two foci—Emperor and Shogun or *Bakufu*, even in many periods neither of them encompassed under his rule all the sectors of Japanese society.

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[14] Mark Bloch, *Feudal Society,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964; P. Duus, *Feudalism in Japan,* New York, H. Knopt, 1976.

Similarly, the Togukawa regime—while exhibiting, as T. Umesau[15] and other scholars have shown, great similarities to European absolutist states—was not based on a definition of the "state" and of the public domain as entirely different from the more "private" or familial domain, and instead of abolishing the feudal it superimposed strong centralist control on the feudal rule of the Daimyo.[16]

Again while many of the Japanese rebellions had causes similar to those of peasant rebellions in the West (or in China), they never developed either strong utopian (as distinct from millenarist) orientations, or a strong class consciousness or linkages with intellectual elites and secondary (*samurai*) groups.[17] Similarly, the strong semi-autonomous and independent castle towns of pre-Togukawa and Togukawa-period cities never evolved—with the possible exception of Jansi—the conceptions and institutions of corporate urban autonomy and self-regulation.[18]

Similarly, in contrast to Europe, Japanese social hierarchies placed less emphasis on horizontal and more on vertical lines as the basis for the organization of groups or strata with autonomous access to the attributes of status and to the centre. Tendencies to horizontal organization were found in millenarian and populist organizations—and often erupted in the various rebellions—but not in more central institutional arenas.

The common denominator of all these arenas that were structurally similar to those of Western Europe was that they were not defined in terms that differentiated them sharply from those of other arenas. Instead they were defined in some primordial, sacral, or "natural" terms and were seen as embedded in the overall societal contexts. They were regulated not by distinct autonomous, legal, bureaucratic, or "voluntary" associations—or by the market—but mostly usually through various less formal arrangements and networks, usually embedded in various ascriptively defined social frameworks—even if the access to such frameworks was often attained by achievement and performance.

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[15] T. Umesau, *La formation de la civilisation moderne au Japon et son évolution*, Leçons données au Collège de France, 1984.

[16] M.E. Berry, "Public Peace and Private Attachment: The Goals and Conduct of Power in Early Modern Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12:1, 1986.

[17] W.W. Kelly, *Deference and Defiance in Nineteenth-Century Japan,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985; A. Walthall, *Social Protest and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Japan,* Tuscon, Arizona, The University of Arizona Press, 1986.

[18] S.N. Eisenstadt and A. Schahar, *Society, Culture and Urbanization,* Beverly Hills and London, Sage Publications, 1987, ch. 11.

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A basic institutional corollary of this specific mode of definition and structuring of major institutional arenas in Japanese society was that in Japan different institutional arenas were less separated than in other, structurally similar societies. The different sectors of society—be they feudal domains, companies, or patterns of patron-client relations—were defined in some overarching contexts in interactional or primordial terms. The linkage between such arenas and markets has been very heavily dependent on various informal behavior arrangements and networks and much less on explicit, abstract, formal rules and perceived, functional frameworks.

They expanded into Japan relatively early and were of crucial importance there. They were, however, transformed in ways that changed some of their most important Axial orientations and institutional implications.

On the institutional level, this transformation was manifest in the absence, in Japan, of the *literati* and the examination system (so important even if in different ways in China, Korea and Vietnam), as well as by the prevalence of a new type of Buddhist sectarianism characterized by strong group adherence with tendencies to hereditary transmission of leadership roles.

Parallelly some of the major premises or concepts of Confucianism and Buddhism were transformed in Japan. Here (following, for instance, Umehara 1987 and Nakamura 1964) we can note the transformation of transcendental and mundane orders into a more "immanentist" direction—as evident in the transformation of the conception of a chasm between culture and nature into a much stronger emphasis on the mutual embedment of the cultural and natural orders and on a very heavy emphasis on nature as a basic given. Such transformation had far-reaching impact on some of the basic premises and concepts of the social order—such as the Mandate of Heaven (Kemper 1967), with its implication for the conception of authority and the accountability of rulers, as well as conceptions of community. Unlike China, where in principle the Emperor, even if a sacral figure, was "under" the Mandate of Heaven, in Japan he was sacred and seen as the embodiment of the sun-goddess and could not be held accountable to anybody. Only the Shoguns and other officials—in ways not clearly specified and only in periods of crises, as for instance at the end of the Tokugawa regime—could be held accountable.

Similarly, the transformation of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan had far-reaching implications for the relations between the conception of the nation and the potentially broader religious or cultural (such as Buddhist or Confucian) communities. The strong universalistic orientations inherent in Buddhism, and more latent in Confucianism, were subdued and "nativized" in Japan (Kitagawa 1987, p. II, III, IV). When Japan was defined as a divine nation, this meant a nation protected by the Gods, being a chosen people in some sense, but not a nation carrying God's universal mission (Sonoda 1987; Okada 1987).

Yet, contrary to many non-Axial civilizations (*e.g.*, Ancient Egypt, Assyria, or Mesoamerica)—which unlike Japan were, however, also pre-Axial civilizations—Japan evolved sophisticated intellectual, philosophical, ideological, and religious discourses, as manifest, for instance, in the development of the intensive debates between different Neo-Confucian schools and schools expounding the so-called nativistic learning in the Tokugawa period.

The transformation of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan represents the de-Axialization of Axial religions, not in the local or peripheral arenas or "small traditions" of Axial societies, but in the Great Tradition of a "total" society.

VI

One of the most interesting aspects of this specific mode of definition of institutional formations and behavior has been the patterns of protest and the modes of conflict and conflict resolution that developed in Japan. Contrary to many prevalent assumptions, Japan was not a conflictless society—based on some naturally given harmony and group consensus.

A closer look at the abundant materials about conflict in Japan reveals a rather paradoxical picture with respect to the place of ideals of harmony and group consensus in the context of conflict in Japan. These ideals are evident in the definition of conflicts and of conflict resolution that have been prevalent in Japan: first, in the strong tendencies to minimize the legitimacy of direct, open confrontations; second, in the tendency to minimize the definition of differences of interests and opinions in terms of outright conflict or confrontation, and third, in the tendency to resolve many such differences in seemingly informal ways based on presumptions of solidarity and harmony between the contestants.[19]

But the existence of such themes of harmony and consensus does not mean that they "naturally" permeate all sectors of Japanese society so as to minimize the development or expression of conflicts. Rather, as Upham in his recent analysis of *Law and Social Change in Contemporary Japan* has shown[20]—and as has been illustrated in some studies of industrial conflict in Japan—such ideals of harmony, or of the benevolence of the rulers (Smith 1984) (or of the "bosses") constitute models and symbols that are activated *in situations of sometimes very intensive conflict,* mainly by different groups of elites or of influentials, in order to bring about a certain mode of resolution, or even of suppression, of conflicts.

But this is not the whole story. These themes are also often used by the non-elite sectors, in situations of confrontation with the elites, and serve to justify demands made on the elites. This can perhaps be best seen if we look closely at ideologies and symbols of protest and of rebellion, especially of peasant rebellion, which have been endemic in Japanese society.

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[19] R. Smith, *Japanese Society - Transition, Self and the Social Order,* Cambridge University Press, 1983, ch. 2; J.O. Haley, "Sheathing the Sword of Justice in Japan:—an essay on law without sanctions," *Journal of Japanese Studies,* 1982, Vol. 8.2.

[20] F.K. Upham, *Law and Social Change in Postwar Japan,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1986.

A very common theme to be found in these ideologies and often seen also in other situations of protest and of confrontation is, to follow T. C. Smith's[21] felicitous expression, the "right to benevolence" from the leaders, elites and bosses. Such claims have often been connected with communitarian and millenarian orientations[22] but not, as in many European or Chinese rebellions, with strong utopian visions and strong class consciousness. Nor have such protests or rebellions usually been closely linked with intellectual elites and secondary *(samurai)* groups.

These themes have also been very important in the development of industrial conflict in Japan.[23] However much the picture of the "benevolent" patterns of industrial relations in Japan has been exaggerated—there can be no doubt that, despite many attempts by various radical and militant groups, especially in the twenties and during the late forties and fifties—the more "harmonious" company-union type of industrial relations has been the predominant mode of resolving industrial conflict in Japan.

These modes of conflict are, of course, very closely related to some of the ideologies of the Meiji Revolution—especially to the absence within it of conflictual, above all class, ideology—as well as to many of the consequent aspects of the Meiji regime which distinguished it from other modern industrial Societies.

VII. CULTURAL PREMISES AND STRUCTURE OF ELITES IN JAPANESE SOCIETY

Many scholars, even those who have emphasized the importance of conflict in Japanese society, have inquired about the possible relation of the frequency of these specific modes of definition of conflict and of conflict resolution to some cultural orientations or premises prevalent in large sectors of Japanese society in most periods of Japanese history.

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[21] T.C. Smith, "The Right to Benevolence: Dignity and Japanese Workers, 1890-1920," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol. 26, Oct. 1984.

[22] I. Scheiner, "Benevolent Lords and Honorable Peasants: Rebellion and Peasant Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan," in T. Najita and I. Scheiner, (eds.), *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978; W.W. Kelly, *op. cit.*, 1985; A. Walthall, *op. cit.*, 1986.

[23] G. Garon, *The State and Labor in Modern Japan,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987.

Victor Koschmann, in his introduction to the book *Authority and the Individual in Japan*,[24] addresses this problem. Ellis Krauss presents Koschmann's views as follows.[25]

Koschmann presents the view that Japan's early sociopolitical development and escape from foreign invasion provided no alternative examples of political authority such as Europe experienced, and resulted in authority being perceived as a "given", "as an inalienable part of the natural order" (pp. 6-7). Thus, no philosophy of transcendence and negation developed as in the West, and little differentiation between the sacred and the profane. The sacred and the profane were seen rather as immanent in group life and the heads of group acquired the role of intermediaries between their group and the gods.... The givenness of authority and its association with higher, sacred ideals therefore made individuality and opposition in the name of a transcendent principle exceedingly difficult.

A second characteristic of Japanese authority patterns is their basis in "soft rule" (giving rise to expressive protest) (p. 12). In the West, force was frequently used to subjugate populations, whereas in Japan the tendency was to rule through ideology and persuasion, by faith rather than fear. Under the hard rule of elites in the West, conflict came to be taken for granted and contract became the device developed to achieve cooperation; under Japan's soft rule, conflict came to be denied in the name of group unity and conciliation was the preferred means of conflict resolution.

Soft rule and given authority usually have been resisted either by separating oneself from the community, "retreatism", or by private dissent but outward obedience, "ritualistic conformity"

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[24] J.V. Koschmann, (ed.), *Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen Protest in Historical Perspective,* Tokyo, University of Tokyo, 1978.

[25] E.S. Krauss, "Authority and the Individual in Japan," (Koschmann, ed.), *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 1981, pp. 165-180.

(pp. 20-21). Active forms of protest that have occurred tend to be the expressive rather than instrumental kind. Expressive protest brings outward behavior in conformity with internal belief, but more for the sake of proving one's sincerity of commitment than for accomplishing a particular goal through rational, organized action. Thus only the release of frustration is attained by meaningful social change. Although Koschmann believes such patterns of authority and protest to remain influential through contemporary times, he sees more recent forms of dissent like citizens' movements as possibly breaking the mold of the Japanese political ethos.

VIII

These themes as analyzed by T. Smith, Koschmann and many others[26] are related to some of the basic cultural orientations that can be identified as predominant in most periods of Japanese history and in most sectors of Japanese society.

From a broader comparative civilizational perspective, the most important of these orientations have been: the relatively low level of tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders; a strong combination of this- and other-wordly orientations together with a strong emphasis on delineation of realms of purity and of pollution and an emphasis on ritual activities as bridging between these realms; a strong commitment to the social and cosmic orders, extending from the family through various wider circles, in principle to the centre of the collectivity as a whole; a strong emphasis on group identity and on social contexts in general and on special combinations of vertical and horizontal loyalties in particular as basic components of personal identity.

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[26] T.S. Lebra and W.P. Lebra, *Japanese Culture and Behavior,* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1986.

IX

These orientations, and the concomitant themes of harmony, benevolence, and the like, did not float in the air, generating the general ambience of Japanese society. They have been articulated by the major primary and secondary elites and counter-elites, by different influentials that have been prevalent in Japanese society and history, at least from the Kamakura period on. These orientations were closely related to some of the basic characteristics of these coalitions of elites and interwoven with the modes of control exercised by them.

These coalitions were composed of many different actors. The most important among these were the "functional elites"—political, military, economic, and cultural-religious—as well as representatives of the family, village, feudal, or regional—or, in modern times, different economic and bureaucratic sectors.

The common characteristic of these elites and of their major coalitions was their embedment in groups and settings (contexts) that were mainly defined in primordial, ascriptive, sacral and often hierarchical terms, and much less in terms of specialized functions or of universalistic criteria of social attributes.

The various different specialized activities—economic, cultural or religious—were also often combined with strong achievement orientations,[27] but these were ultimately oriented in broader contextual settings imbued with strong solidarity and expressive dimension.

These structural characteristics of the major coalitions and counter-coalitions and the cultural orientations and themes articulated by them led to continuous recrystallization of such coalitions and to the crystallization of new alliances. Such alliances usually led to a reconstruction of primordial, sacral and interpersonal, contextual orientations as criteria of membership of such coalitions (Hamaguchi 1985), but not to their transformation into more functionally specific or universalistic directions.

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[27] G. De Vos, "Dimensions of Self in Japanese Culture," J. Marsella, G. Devos, and F.L. Hsu (eds.), *Culture and Self-Asian and Western Perspective,* New York and London, Tavistock Publications, 1985, pp. 141-185.

This tendency to define membership in coalitions in terms of some combination of primordial and sacral attributes and of achievement set within expressive solidary settings was closely interwoven with a strong predilection to the development of vertical, rather than horizontal, ties and loyalties, even if it did not necessarily negate the existence and consciousness of such horizontal divisions within Japanese society.

Linked to these characteristics of the coalitions and counter-coalitions prevalent in Japanese society was the relative weakness of autonomous cultural elites—which we have already noted above—with respect to the Meiji Restoration. True, many cultural actors—priests, monks, scholars, and the like—participated in such coalitions. But with very few exceptions, their participation was based on primordial and social attributes and on criteria of achievement and of social obligations according to which these coalitions were structured and not on any distinct, autonomous criteria rooted in or related to the arenas of cultural specialization in which they were active. These arenas—cultural, religious, or literary—were themselves ultimately defined in primordial-sacral terms, notwithstanding the fact that many specialized activities developed within them.[28]

X

The combination of the basic cultural orientations, the characteristics of elites and coalitions (and their interaction with broader strata), connected as it was with the basic cultural orientations prevalent in Japanese societies and articulated by the major members of the coalitions and counter-coalitions that were predominant in most sectors of Japanese society, have also shaped some of the basic characteristics of institutional formations in most periods of Japanese history to which we have referred above.

These elites and their coalitions, as they emerged in different periods of Japanese history and in different sectors of Japanese society, attempted to mobilize the resources of the periphery and resolve social conflicts in the direction of the ideas and of groups harmony—as interpreted by them.

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[28] The best illustration of the weakness of such actors is the Meiji Restoration, where no groups of this sort played an independent, formative role.

Yet, obviously enough, they were not always successful in this. These specific definitions of institutional arenas as well as the modes of control exercised by the elites often generated distinct foci and loci of conflict.

Thus, conflict tended to emerge in Japan between the hierarchical principles of any group represented by its designated (ascriptive or elected) leaders and the more egalitarian, horizontal tendencies within it. There was conflict between the concrete application of such principles and the interests of various subgroups within any broader setting—family, village group, or company. There was conflict between the internal solidarity and interests of any such group or company—defined mostly in terms of some hierarchical vertical order—and broader settings that necessarily extracted resources from the family or the village, or the workers in a factory, and there was conflict focused on specifying the exact locus of vertical networks and the mutual obligations of lower and higher echelons within them.

The very fact that so much in the structure and working of Japanese society depended on such multiple, often informal contexts and vertical coalitions meant that when these broke down—or were not yet crystallized—intensive confrontations might emerge that could not be dealt with within the existing frameworks. Just because the overt ideology of such obligations tended to stress mutual harmony and benevolence, and because the emphasis on harmony prevented readiness to admit that conflicts existed in situations of sharp confrontation, there were few institutional mechanisms to cope with such situations.

Indeed, whenever different vertical links were weakened—as for instance after the occupation, when the pinnacle of these links was removed from his former symbolic role[29]—when combined with the ideological emphasis on harmony and avoidance of conflicts, this could exacerbate the situations of confrontations and breakdown that develop in many situations of social change or upheavals.

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[29] T. Ishida, ''Non-Confrontational Strategies for Management of Interpersonal Conflict: Omote-Ura and Uchi-Soto,'' in Krauss & Rohlen, Steinhoff, *Conflict in Japan,* 1984, pp. 16-38.

Yet, such confrontational situations and breakdowns did not lead—at least for any length of time—to the institutionalization of entirely new modes of conflict resolution—in more formalistic legal or universalistic directions—even if some institutions structured according to such criteria were adopted. Such openings and the more formal modes of conflict resolution expanded with the development of bureaucracy were usually ‘‘closed up’’ relatively quickly by some old or new coalition or counter-coalition. Most of these coalitions were restructured according to some version and recombinations of the primordial-sacral and ascriptive symbols and criteria and of achievement orientations embedded in solidary frameworks. The resolution of the conflicts that emerged in such situations tended to re-establish some of the vertical hierarchical principles, even if in new—often more formal—organizational or institutional configurations and with different ideological underpinnings and definitions. Horizontal or egalitarian solidary-communitarian orientations—often imbued with millenarian but only very rarely with utopian themes—were indeed evident in peasant rebellions, or, in modern times, in different protest movements, such as, for instance, the movements of citizens rights.[30] They constituted a reservoir of cultural themes and served as important components of collective actions, but they were not on the whole effective in changing the basic premises of Japanese society and the patterns of regulation of conflicts prevalent in it, although they constantly necessitated the reformulation of such premises.

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[30] J.L. Huffman, ‘‘The Popular Rights Debate - Political or Ideological,’’, in H. Wray and H. Conroy (eds.), *Japan Examined - Perspectives on Modern Japanese History,* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1983, pp. 98-107; R. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan,* Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1980.

The success of the elites and influentials in activating these themes of harmony as components of modes of conflict resolution and their closely related ability to build on very strong predispositions, is rooted in the basic conceptions of self, society and nature inculcated through socialization, education and communication. But these conceptions do not assure, as it were, the automatic compliance of the different sectors of the society and the wishes of the elites.

Rather, these conceptions define the criteria of legitimation of elites; hence on the one hand they limit and direct the ways in which they exercise power, while on the other hand they influence the demands made on them. It is only in so far as the elites and influentials exercise their power accordingly and accede to the demands made on them, and sectors of Japanese society do engage in specific modes of interaction and exchange of ritual and liminal situations analyzed above, that themes of harmony and consensus may become effective in a process of resolution of conflicts.

It is through such processes of interaction that the various components of the picture presented above—namely, the basic cultural orientations, the institutional premises, the symbols of harmony, and the structure of elites—are brought together and they explain the specific characteristics of Japanese society which distinguishes it from those of the industrial societies; in which different configurations of these components are predominant.

XII

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 convergencies have indeed generated common problems but the modes of coping with these problems differed greatly between these civilizations—and these differences are to no small degree attributable to the different traditions—or basic premises and basic values—which became crystallized and continuously reconstructed in these civilizations and on their historical experience.

Thus in greater detail these different symbolic and institutional modes of coping with the common problems of modern societies, the different symbolic and institutional formations, were shaped by a combination of the following factors. First they were shaped by the basic premises of the civilizations and societies within which these institutions developed, or in greater detail, by the basic definition of the relation between the cosmic and social orders; of the social and political orders; of authority, hierarchy and equality that were prevalent in them. Second, they were shaped by the structure of the elites which were predominant then; and by the modes of protest as articulated by different counter-elites in different sectors of the society.

As in all cases of historical changes, a crucial element in the crystallization of the new symbolic and institutional formations were various elites, both old and new. These groups were of crucial importance in shaping the modern institutional and symbolic formations as they evolved in different modern societies.

As with the different heterodoxies, these groups were not uniform. The new elites were more influenced by the existing traditions of response to change, heterodoxy, and innovation than has been often assumed and the old ones were greatly transformed by the new situation.

The responses to change were not shaped by what has been sometimes designated as the natural evolutionary potentialities of these societies, nor by the natural unfolding of their tradition, nor by their placement in the new international setting—if indeed it makes sense to talk of such potentials without reference to specific historical and international settings—but rather by the continuous encounter and feedback between the various aspects of the societies analyzed above and the different modern international systems. This encounter entailed a strong element of choice with respect to the crystallization of symbolic and institutional formations.

Whereas in any historical situation the range of such choices is limited, the course adopted in any specific situation of change in general, and of modernization in particular, is not entirely predetermined either by the international system in which they are structured or by the tradition of the respective societies. In situations that seem to be structurally similar, there is always some range of possible alternatives out of which choices are being continuously made.

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