

# Japanese Society Today

## Some Conceptual Maps

David L. SWAIN

LIKE A COMPUTER screen gone haywire, diverse images of Japan have careened wildly across the public consciousness in recent months. Reckless Japan-bashing in the United States and mindless counter-slurs from Japan have done much to amplify Japan's international exposure but little to deepen understanding. Watching this crazy kaleidoscope made me wish for a steadier gaze at enduring realities of longer historical and broader social scope—what might be called the basic dynamics of Japanese society. In this essay I attempt to fulfill my own wish by focusing on certain basic dynamics and by providing figures as “conceptual maps” in which readers can perhaps find some coordinates of their own experiences.

The ideas presented and the figures used are my own. They first took specific form and were gradually refined in talks made over the years at various schools, churches, seminars, and conferences. The principal sources are of two kinds. Most important are

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the scholarly labors of others, gleaned primarily through a prolonged study of Japanese science history with physicist Sugimoto Masayoshi and later others,<sup>1</sup> and urban studies under the guidance of former Keio University professor Yazaki Takeo.<sup>2</sup> These two areas of study indicate my conviction that modern Japan is marked by its extraordinary success in adopting and adapting modern science and technology, as well as in developing the cities required by its large population and limited inhabitable land space.<sup>3</sup> The other source of ideas and perspectives is simply my four decades of life in Japan, including thirty work camps, countless committees and conferences, widespread organizational ties in and beyond the Christian community, and extensive travel by foot and every means of vehicular transport except the fabled *jinrikisha*.

It bears repeating that this is an essay, not an academic thesis; citations are made to illustrate, not to “prove”, a point and to suggest collateral reading. Moreover, I offer no final conclusions, only some reflections on missional implications for Japan. With that said, I turn now to the first part of a structural depiction of Japanese society, and later to a broad-stroke historical perspective.

### BASIC COMMITMENTS

The term “commitment” is used here to resolve the choice, when trying to analyze a

society, between focusing on its value system or its material conditions. The value claims of a people can perhaps best be tested by asking how the society's human and material resources are situated and used. "Commitment," then, is meant to embrace both focuses. Specifically, one needs to know how population and wealth are distributed, and how power and controls are managed. Then one can measure material evidence against values and ideals to see how faithfully the latter are followed.

Before turning to these specifics, I first introduce a larger frame of national commitments that encompass and guide all questions of population, wealth, and power.

#### *Social commitments*

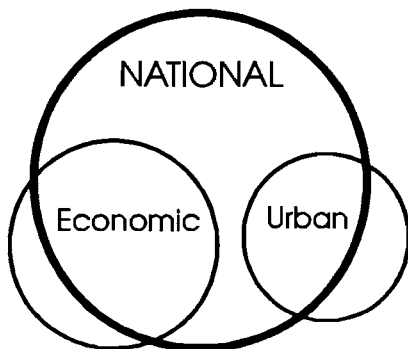
The overarching commitment of virtually all public organizations in Japan is to preserve the territorial integrity of the Japanese nation and promote the interests of the Japanese people. Every political party, including the Socialist and Communist parties, must make clear its allegiance to this basic commitment, which is represented by the largest circle in figure 1.

The economy is organized to pay for, that is, to maintain and prosper, the overall na-

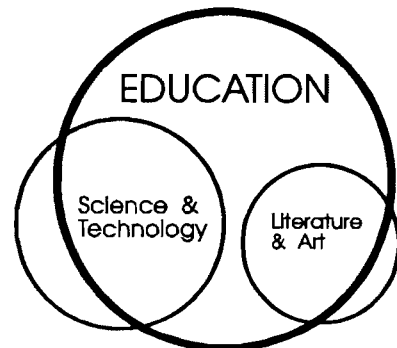
tional commitment. While economic activity extends far beyond Japan's national boundaries, the economic commitment is, in my judgment, almost exclusively structured and administered to serve the national commitment. So the circle for the economic commitment is drawn so as to protrude only a little beyond the main circle of national commitment.

Although the Japanese idealize their rural past (as Americans idealize theirs in Christmas cards and "western" films), any realistic appraisal of the placement of human and material resources will show the primacy of the urban commitment: it is the primary locus of economic activity, the primary social structure of the national commitment. Japan's cities do not exist in complete isolation from the rest of the world; quite the contrary, they are the central nerve system for Japan's world-encompassing economy. Even so, they function primarily to preserve and prosper the national commitment, so this circle too is drawn almost wholly within the circle of national commitment.

It is essential to understand that these social commitments, like the cultural counterparts that follow, involve not only official structures, organizations, and policies, but



**Fig. 1 Social Commitments of Japan**



**Fig. 2 Cultural Commitments of Japan**

informal group and community ties, and general public ethos as well.<sup>4</sup>

### *Cultural commitments*

Education is the overarching cultural commitment, as shown in figure 2. Its basic function is to tell the Japanese people who they are, that is, to maintain national identity. It fits them into the national commitment.<sup>5</sup> Education is also the primary means for preparing persons to find and fill a place in the economic and urban circles. (It is by no means strange that the major long-term Christian investment in Japanese society is precisely in this circle of primary cultural commitment. And it is this area, as noted later, that is pregnant with implications for Christian work in Japan.)

Science and technology are without question the major emphases of education (and of most training beyond formal schooling). This primacy derives from the economic commitment in all its industrial, commercial, informational, and other dimensions. Japan shares with the rest of the world the modern science and technology that evolved from Western roots, but modern science and technology today involve universal and global modalities in concept and method. Not all Japanese investments of time, energy, and money in science and technology can be kept completely subservient to the national commitment. So the science-technology circle protrudes even farther outside its overarching circle. The circle of science and technology represents, then, Japan's foremost opening to "internationalization" in the sense of transcending the constraints of the national commitment and fostering fuller participation in the global community.

Literature and art in the estimation of some might call for the largest circle of all. In my view, art and literature have a lesser place in Japanese life and society than do science and technology. So the circle repre-

senting literature and art is smaller. Moreover, despite the remarkable quantity of works translated from other languages into Japanese, this circle of activity strikes me as more within the bounds of education's servicing of the national commitment. That is, art and literature play a large role in fostering the national identity, but only a minor role in helping the Japanese relate to other lands and peoples. So this circle too extends only slightly beyond the main circle.

It would be a serious mistake, however, to confine this literature-art circle entirely within the education circle, given the extent of English language-learning from middle school on. There might be a distinct implication for Christian mission here. Foreign-language teaching in Christian schools has, by itself, little potential for introducing and nurturing Christian faith, values, and action as expressions of a universal commitment. Language-learning at elementary levels is, after all, but a limited means of dealing with ideas, even on practical, matter-of-fact levels. But whenever learning a foreign language opens avenues for serious scientific or literary work, indeed, for any in-depth encounters with other peoples and cultures, then the potential increases exponentially.

Another implication may be that missional attempts to deal directly with economic issues will encounter more nationalistic resistance than similar efforts in matters scientific and technological. For example, coping with threats to our common living environment is perhaps a better point of missional entry into responsibility for world hunger than would be a frontal attack on economic greed (though the latter cannot be indefinitely ignored).

### THOROUGHLY URBAN JAPAN

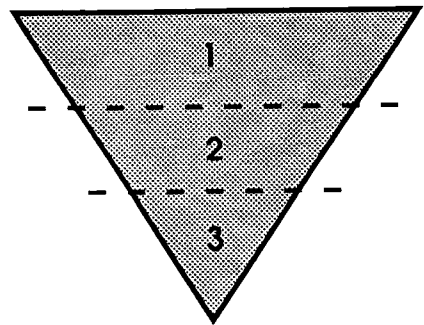
The Tokyo metropolitan region is the epitome of urban Japan. It is the direct

descendant of Edo, former center of the samurai (military-administrator) system of nearly 300 provincial domains under Tokugawa hegemony for 265 years (1603–1868). Throughout this period Edo was the pinnacle of population, wealth, and power. The radial pattern of roads leading up to and away from the castle center symbolized Edo's primacy.

When Japan entered its modern era in 1868, the castle grounds of the shōgun became the palace grounds of the emperor, and Edo became Tokyo. Under the restored imperial system, the radial pattern remained dominant, as the capital city vastly increased its capability of attracting and integrating population, wealth, and power. One continuing symbol of the capital's centrality is that all trains going to Tokyo are called "up" trains, while all trains leaving Tokyo Station—even when headed north or ascending to mountainous regions—are "down" runs.

What holds for Tokyo in relation to the whole country is true for the other metropolises in their respective regions, and on a lesser scale, for smaller cities in relation to their surrounding districts. Long established patterns, confirmed by recent data,<sup>6</sup> yield an inverted "Mt. Fuji" triangle (fig. 3) that symbolizes the heavy concentration of population in the "Big Four" metropolises of Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and Kitakyushu, the proportionately lesser population distribution in medium-size cities, and finally, the minor place of the rural sector in the population scale.

During modern Japan's prewar and wartime span (1868–1945), most Japanese people lived in smaller cities, towns, and villages, and according to one study, 80 percent of them were poor (impoverished by industrializing and war-making).<sup>7</sup> In the early postwar years the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ)<sup>8</sup> put high priority on rural



**1 "Big Four" Metropolises: Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kitakyushu**

- dominate 11 prefectures, with 2/3 of total population
- 1/3 of all Japanese live in Tokyo metropolitan region

**2 Medium-size cities: Sapporo, Sendai, Hiroshima etc.**

- dominate respective regions
- each prefecture has its largest city, each district its largest town

**3 Rural sector**

- 3/4 of Japan's total area is mountainous; only 1/7 is cultivated
- farmers are only 5% of work force; 86% are "part-time" farmers
- 2/3 of farm workers are men over 60, women, and children

**Fig. 3 Sectoral layers of urban-rural Japan**

evangelism, partly to compensate for the general prewar failure of Protestant Christianity to penetrate the poor farming and fishing areas.<sup>9</sup> From the early 1960s, recognition by church leaders of the massive demographic shifts to Japan's political, commercial, and industrial centers led to new programs of "occupation" and "labor" and then "urban" evangelism in the UCCJ and other churches. The inequities between urban and rural sectors led others in the late 1960s to a more radical interpretation of

“metropolitan centers vs. the periphery.”<sup>10</sup> This view has been superseded by a more integrated *urban-rural* concept in ecumenical circles such as the Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches.

Simple depiction of urban concentration, however, is inadequate to analysis, much less social action. An additional differentiation needs to be made.

*Concentration vs. control*

That power and wealth are concentrated in the great urban centers does not mean that control of power and wealth is equitably distributed among the population mass also concentrated in those centers. Indeed, the opposite is true: *the higher the level of power-wealth concentration, the fewer the people who are in control*. This stark contrast is represented in figure 4.

Note that the left triangle in this figure is a replication of figure 3, where the concentration of population still coincides with power-wealth concentration. The right triangle is added to show that in the control of power and wealth, the “shape” of the population mass is inverted because the relationship is inverted: the more that wealth and power are concentrated, the more people are removed from their control. (Figure 5 will

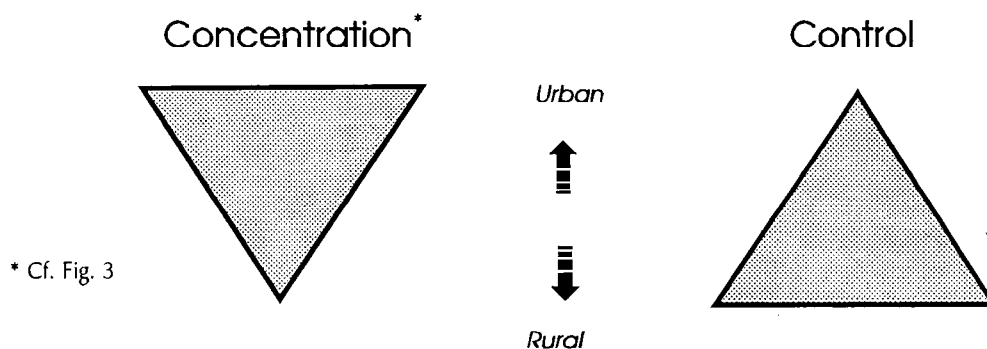
complete the picture by overlaying the left and right triangles.)

For all its formal democratic structures, Japan is clearly a hierarchically ordered society that in virtually every aspect stresses vertical ranking over horizontal linking. Readers can conjure up their own examples, whether among banks, universities, or churches. In prewar Japan, the seat at the top of the “control” triangle was occupied by the emperor, and the imperial family was reputedly the nation’s wealthiest. While this is not true today, imperial symbols are increasingly employed to legitimize the small oligarchy that is in top place.

The critical importance of the revival of the imperial cult, especially as evidenced in the attempt to re-nationalize the Yasukuni Shrine for the war dead, is stressed by virtually every Christian group in present-day Japan.<sup>11</sup> It is a great pity that so many Americans, who have reasons enough to want to know more about Japan, would largely neglect the corpus of Japanese Christian critique of this and other crucial issues in favor of their own shallow Japan-bashing.

*Class differentiations*

“Class” is not a popular term in some circles; here it is used, without any particular ideological connotation, to mean simply groups



\* Cf. Fig. 3

Fig. 4 Concentration vs. Control of Population-Power-Wealth

of people in various sectors of the overall social configuration. The vital point is to grasp what is suggested by overlapping the inverted "concentration" and the upright "control" triangles, as in figure 5.

This figure, it should be remembered, is a highly abstract representation of social reality. Note, for example, that the uppermost point labeled "A" (for the national power élite) is not only above but also outside the level of the Big Four metropolises. This does not mean that the élite actually live anywhere other than in the metropolitan areas (or major regional cities). The point of the above-and-outside position is that the national power élite exercise control over the entire society. The "A" point is a sectoral indication of elevation to high positions of power and control affecting the whole country.

Another differentiation is brought into focus by the "Star of David" configuration: middle-class people in the metropolitan layer of society ( $B^1$ ) are somewhat different from their medium-size city counterparts ( $B^2$ ). Their lives, that is, are different, for the concentration of greater wealth and power in the metropolitan areas yields many advantages in areas such as transportation (rail, air, highway), information access (libraries, museums, media), education (all

levels), and so on, not to mention job and wage possibilities. (For those who find metropolitan life oppressive, the mid-size urban middle class may have a psychological advantage.)

If the metropolitan middle class is favored by physical proximity to power and wealth concentrations, then the marginal classes in metropolitan areas ( $C^1$ ) may be said to have certain advantages over marginalized groups in the medium-size cities ( $C^2$ ), and even more so over those in the rural sector ( $C^3$ ). The "advantage" factor boils down essentially to improvement opportunities, whether educational, economic, cultural, medical, or whatever.

The small arrows in figure 5 represent upward mobility, that is, efforts made by people to move from their given class into a higher one. One function of the educational system, of course, is to enable aspirants to acquire the skills needed to do so. Or, put differently, the educational system's key functions are to socialize young people for urban living and to train them for useful roles in the economy. In the process, educational institutions help identify talented youth for advancement. And schools naturally are ranked by their success in advancing careers.

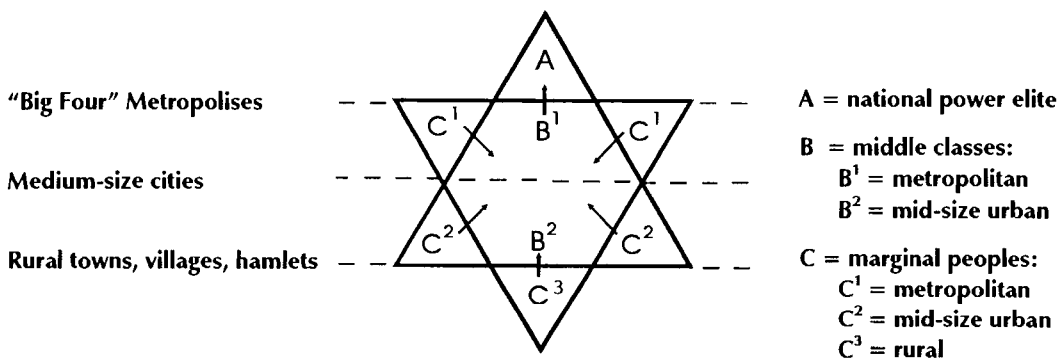


Fig. 5 “Star of David” configuration of elite, middle, marginal classes

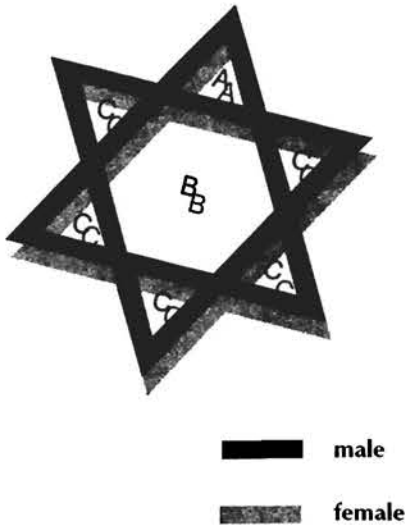


Fig. 6 Female undercaste in all classes (A, B, C)

What I wish to emphasize here, however, is not relative urban-rural advantage, but the fact that *all* marginalized minorities share the disadvantages of their place in the social configuration. The "C" classes include not only large resident ethnic minorities such as the Ainu, the Koreans, and other Asians living in Japan, but also many other foreign minorities (migrant workers are a noticeably growing group). Not only the segregated Buraku people, but all the poor, the mentally ill, the disabled, and other disenfranchised groups share various disadvantages of being marginalized.

To reiterate, this hexagram configuration is highly abstract; the "C" sectors are not physical places where marginalized peoples live. They are sectoral indications of displacement from power, and from control of power in society. That is the intended meaning of "disadvantage" as used here. But there is one majority group that, as a group, suffers subordination throughout society, and can-

not therefore be adequately represented by the "C" sectors.

#### *The female undercaste*

Women are an undercaste in all classes of the social configuration, as I have tried to show in figure 6. Women in "A" class may enjoy many luxuries, but they are nonetheless subordinate to men in that class. The same holds for all "B" and "C" classes and subgroups. Japanese society is doubly hierarchical, and women are doubly disadvantaged, that is, doubly disenfranchised. More precisely, Japanese society is generally hierarchical, and specifically patriarchal.

What difference this makes can be illustrated by reference to any number of factors, but the most telling item is perhaps employment, since social equality is difficult to support on a weak economic base.

On a macro scale, fully half of Japanese women were employed in 1989, and they constituted 40 percent of the total working force in Japan, though their average annual pay was only half of the male average (¥2.6 million, for females; ¥5.2 million for men).<sup>12</sup> Employed women exceeded full-time housewives by 20,000 in 1984, but by 1989 the gap had swelled to 2.27 million.<sup>13</sup> The situation, however, is far worse than these figures suggest. Traditional patterns of life-time employment and promotion by seniority are considered (by male managers) too costly to extend to the rising number of women workers; corporation policy today is to hire "regular workers" with these perks for only core positions, and to fill all other work needs with part-time, temporary, sideline, and at-home workers. The rapid increase in the number of employed women has been accompanied by an equally rapid rise in the number of female workers channeled into these unstable positions.

Further differences discriminate against women workers. Restrictions on working

hours have been relaxed so that women can work the long hours common among male workers. Introduction of a two-track system opened an "executive track" to career-oriented women willing to work the killing hour-loads, with a "clerical track" open to women less bent on careers<sup>14</sup> but also willing to work long and hard. Women unable to work the long hours expected in these two tracks are shunted into part-time or temporary posts that offer no job security. How important are the part-timers? It is said that the Japanese economy would come to an abrupt halt if they went on strike for a week.<sup>15</sup>

There is much more to the overall situation of female workers in Japan, but the above is enough to indicate their subordinate situation. A woman may be able to enjoy a comfortable middle-class life because she has a job, but in that job will usually find herself in a marginalized class "C" position. The larger lesson is that there simply is not room in the pyramidal structure of power-control to admit more and more aspirants, least of all more women—or, more precisely, it is *not likely that room will be made for them*.

The differentiation among employed women suggests (although I have yet to think through this possibility) a smaller hexagram of differentiation among women *within* each marginal "C" sector. In this case, the "C-within-C" class would consist of migrant women workers seeking employment in Japan, and the "C<sup>3</sup>" women workers at the bottom would be those in Japan's exploitive sex industry.<sup>16</sup>

#### AN INTERIM TALLY

If the picture of Japan thus far seems rather negative, it is important to remember that it could be far worse. On the other hand, some images of Japan are too good. One might well ask, does the social system work pretty well

for most people in Japan? The answer, of course, depends on the criteria of judgment.

In an incisive article on "The Disorders of Peace,"<sup>17</sup> Richard J. Barnet takes a hard look at contemporary America and then asks what the people want of life, if its quality is measured by "job security, educational opportunities, prospects for adequate and affordable health care, confidence in the banking and insurance systems, habitable and convenient places to live, and breathable air and drinkable water." On this scale, how does Japan measure up?

Applying Barnet's yardstick to Japan would need a separate essay. As I wish to focus on the educational issue, I shall skip lightly over the rest. Job security is seriously unequal, and especially discriminatory toward women and other marginalized groups, though the overall unemployment rate at 2.1 percent for 1990 is one of the world's lowest. The employees' medical care insurance and the national medical care insurance programs together cover the total population. The health care system has one physician for every 609 persons, one hospital bed for every 74 persons.<sup>18</sup> The financial world, however, "needs to restore investor confidence, which has been lost through a series of market scandals."<sup>19</sup> Air and water are safe, if not always "good." Housing is usually cramped and overpriced.

Japan's educational system is well-known for its general ability to lift all classes to basic levels of competence, yet is constantly criticized for stifling individual creativity. Indeed, Gakushuin University professor of sociology and futurology Koyama Ken'ichi recently wrote that Japan's educational system is under the same kind of central planning and control (Gosplan) that has finally collapsed in the former Soviet Union and East European states. He adds that the Japanese Ministry of Education's own Gosplan "does more harm than good to the future of



Japanese education and international exchange."<sup>20</sup> (We shall return to this problem later.) Still, the nation's near-100 percent literacy is augmented by a like level of radio and television diffusion, and Japan leads the world in per capita newspaper circulation. The key point here is a very high degree of information diffusion—an essential condition for promoting alternative views and social change.

So the system works fairly well, but, as we have seen, it works best for the upper classes and only good enough for the lower and marginalized classes, perhaps, to keep them healthy and hard at work. If this be true, is it a prescription for long-term stability and healthy international relations?

I do not believe this question can be answered by confining our consideration to the structural discussion developed around figures 1–6. For Japanese society cannot be properly assessed in isolation from the larger international context and Japan's stance toward the outside world. For an overview of Japan's external relations, we shift from a structural to a historical frame.

#### RHYTHMS OF MODERNIZATION

Japan has, by its own choices, experienced a rhythm of closed and open relations with the outside world for two millennia, as table 1 shows. That there was, several centuries before the fabled Tokugawa era of national isolation, a much longer half-millennium of "semi-seclusion" from continental Asia may surprise some readers.<sup>21</sup> These two closed periods, however, are probably familiar ones to students of Japan. For in explaining Japan to themselves and other peoples, the Japanese tend to stress the "great things" of the closed periods as the achievements of "native" talent—the *Genji monogatari* and other early literature, developments in Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, the tea ceremony, and swordcraft, for example, of the earlier closed

era; the literature, drama, martial disciplines, and Confucian studies of the Tokugawa isolation. The examples are endless.

The open periods were all times of "modernization," though the term is used here in the broad sense of social transformation according to some updated model. This sense of the term is partly evident in something one of my undergraduate teachers often said in connection with the literature of bygone ages: "The ancients never knew they were ancient." Each generation is the latest one, the "modern" one. But it is the overt decision to undertake a broad transformation according to some foreign model(s) that I wish to stress here.

Thus the epoch of the Nara and early Heian eras (Chinese Cultural Wave I in table 1) was a time of overall reshaping of Japanese society to reflect the standards of Tang China, the most advanced society then known to the Japanese. Boatloads of secular and religious scholars joined the voyages of official envoys sent to China to learn the ways of government, law, science, religion, music, and art that would turn a society of loosely ordered village states into a centralized imperial system, all under central government tutelage. Saturation with things Chinese eventually led to the five centuries of government-enforced semi-seclusion.

The second "modernizing" phase (Chinese Cultural Wave II in table 1) involved little government guidance. A wide variety of Japanese religious leaders, scholars, physicians, and merchants sought from China the knowledge and skills needed to resolve problems defined by themselves. They sought (through trade relations reopened in 1401) to catch up with developments in China during the half-millennium of semi-seclusion. This alternate mode of transformative effort was nonetheless effective in reshaping Japanese life: innovations of lasting impact

TABLE 1. Japan's Alternating Closed/Open Periods

ca. -8000 . . .	ca. -250	ca. 600	894	1401	1639	1854	1992
Late Stone Age	Early Agricultural Society	CHINESE CULTURAL WAVE I	Semi-Seclusion Period	CHINESE CULTURAL WAVE II	Isolation Period	MODERN ERA	
ISOLATED	SEMI-OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	1937-45
Migrant communities	7-8 centuries	294 years	507 years	238 years	215 years	130+ years	
Isolated from continental culture	Settled communities	Centralized government under emperor, with bureaucratic system	Rise of large estates; central government weakens	Feudal system under samurai	Centralized shogunate	Restoration of centralized imperial system	
Hunting, fishing, plant-gathering	Initial influx of Chinese material culture	Sophisticated Chinese culture imported: Chinese language, art, law, science, Confucianism, Buddhism	Chinese science & learning declines; growth of native literature, art, tea ceremony, swordcraft	Renewed influx of Confucianism, science & technology: medicine, mathematics, astronomy, Confucian studies, literature, art, drama, etc.	Japanese science & learning flourish: medicine, mathematics, astronomy, Confucian studies, literature, art, drama, etc.	Introduction of modern science & technology	
		Zen influence on learning, crafts, politics	Initial influx of Western culture: Christianity, astronomy, navigation, gunnery, surgery	Growth of cities, economy, sea & land transportation	New ventures in commerce & banking, international trade, foreign wars & colonization		
Key cities:		Nara, Kyoto	Kamakura	Kyoto, Nagasaki	Edo, Osaka	Tokyo, Osaka, etc.	

Adapted from Masayoshi Sugimoto and David L. Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan, A.D. 600-1854* (M. I. T. Press, 1978; reprint by Charles E. Tuttle, 1989), 400-03.

N. B. Time line not drawn to scale

included paper and printing, mining and smelting techniques, and advanced levels of medicine and mathematics, as well as the introduction of the Neo-Confucianism later used by the Tokugawa household to give cohesion and direction to its long rule.<sup>22</sup>

The Meiji Restoration of 1868, inaugurating the Modern Era (table 1), was, of course, a restoration of the centralized imperial model of state first forged in Nara-Heian times. But the Meiji Reformation was far more; it launched a sweeping transformation of Japan into a Western-style industrial state buttressed by a powerful military establishment, with new ventures in international banking and trade, and sadly, wars and colonies.

Japan and the Japanese today are not the direct descendants of the ancient past; there have been many "intercultural marriages" in the successive open periods. I would argue that the open periods have done far more to advance the best interests of the Japanese people and nation than have the closed periods, despite the apparent preference for the latter as somehow more "typical" of Japan. This view is ventured despite the obvious cost in pain inflicted on others in the current open period.

#### NURTURING THE FUTURE

Now we return to the question of viability: whether the present order and management of Japanese society hold promise of long-term stability and healthy international relations.

#### *Japan refigured*

Figures 1-3 definitely indicate long-term domestic stability; the smaller circles function well within the larger ones. The system appears extraordinarily stable and productive. The next three figures (4-6), however, indicate systemic instability because of the fun-

damentally unfair treatment not only of marginalized minorities but also of the female majority (about 51 percent of the total). Of course the educational system and the media generally work hard at convincing the public that the present arrangement is satisfactory. But the nation's enormous information flow includes the increasingly strong current of an alternate view that urges a shift to horizontal linking based on greater mutuality and inclusiveness.

The international community stands in awe of Japan's postwar economic success. But the very condition of openness that gave Japan global access to the world's pool of industrial know-how and trading opportunities has simultaneously put Japan, like its advanced colleagues, under increased international scrutiny. Overseas enterprises of Japanese corporations, for example, leave the same kind of environmental mess that those of other major economies do. Moreover, with its inbred ranking mentality, Japan is constantly ranking itself in relation to other countries—an unpleasant experience for the many not put on Japan's own level, and an acute aggravation when experienced as discrimination.

The historical tension between open and closed stances is seen today most pointedly in the basic clash between global unity and ethnic diversity. It is only natural to cherish the ethnicity, the native language, the ancestral roots, and the spiritual orientation that give substance to one's own national commitment. Yet discrimination against the ethnic identities and pride of others, of outsiders and minorities, is no longer acceptable in today's world. Filipinos, Koreans, and Iranians, for example, may be minority groups in Japan, but they are majorities back home. And the majority of the United Nations' 163 member nations can be expected to push, with mounting zeal, for a more equitable and more just world order than the one

which now allows Japan, the United States, Germany, and half a dozen other countries to live royally while millions go hungry.

Long-term stability and healthy international relations appear to require, then, a *new national commitment* to a global order with horizontal linkings that promote greater equality, justice, and peace. If so, a number of implications emerge for Christian participation in that new commitment. I shall mention only three.

#### *Some implications for Christians*

The first implication concerns the educational commitment. The role of education in advancing careers was noted in connection with figure 5 (indicated by small arrows). As in most developed countries, Japan's educational system seems almost wholly devoted to *upward mobility*—Christian schools included. But a new national commitment to greater equality, justice, and peace will require much more attention to *outward mobility*—education for crossing all kinds of national, cultural, racial, and other boundaries, that is, for nurturing new horizontal linkings. A truly Christian education would give no less attention to *downward mobility*—training and motivation in rescue and development skills as long as hierarchical structures produce the great distresses of poverty, hunger, disease, and all else that snuffs out God-given life. Perhaps the time has come for a concerted effort by Christian schools in Japan and around the world to excel in education for outward and downward mobility as they have already for the upward scale.

The second concerns the rhythms of modernization. In connection with modernization in the Nara-Heian epoch (Chinese Cultural Wave I) we saw that "boatloads of secular and religious scholars" journeyed to China to learn the things needed in a new Japanese order. At the time use was also

made of Korean and Chinese scholars living in Japan; a new academic system based on T'ang institutes was introduced; and many books were imported from China. Intercultural exchange utilizing the same combination of overseas study, foreign teachers, new academies, and imported books characterized the modernization efforts of Chinese Cultural Wave II and the Modern Era. In all these epochs the intended beneficiary was Japan.<sup>23</sup>

Today's affluent Japan, noted for its exporting ability, is in an unprecedented position for promoting a reverse intercultural exchange that would make the time-tested combination of overseas study, foreign teachers, new schools, and more books available to other lands and peoples. Appropriate forms of "modernization" in developing countries could be encouraged in a new Japanese stance of "Do unto others as you once did for yourself." This suggestion goes beyond mere funding to include the active involvement of persons committed to a new future of peace and justice. Again, Christian schools, with their many world-encompassing contacts, might be well-suited for large-scale participation in this effort.

The third concerns the role women have to play in the above. Many are already striving to undo the hierarchical, patriarchal patterns that bind the nation to the past.<sup>24</sup> They have shown more openness and compassion toward others in great distress, especially migrant women workers and most of all those caught in the sex trades. Many women, and particularly Christian women, who have lived and studied overseas have evolved new leadership models based on the values essential to making the crucial shift from vertical ranking to horizontal linking. They are, in other words, preparing for the future. Thus women engaged in education can now pioneer in education for outward and downward mobility, and in developing

new forms of intercultural exchange designed to enhance the lives of others.

It will not be easy to effect change in education or in international relations, for such change challenges Japan's traditional social and cultural commitments. Nor will it be easy for women to initiate programs of change from their present subordinate social level. But the bent of history, I would say, favors those who would try.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Masayoshi Sugimoto and David L. Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978; Tokyo: Tuttle, 1989); Shigeru Nakayama, David L. Swain, and Eri Yagi, *Science and Society in Modern Japan: Selected historical sources* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, and Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1974); and Shigeru Nakayama and David L. Swain, "Scientific thought, premodern," in *Encyclopedia of Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), vol. 7. Table 1 derives from this area of study.

<sup>2</sup> Yazaki Takeo, a noted urban sociologist, was the last prewar student president of the Wesley Foundation in Tokyo, a student center that I was privileged to serve in the early postwar years (after it was renamed the Student Christian Fellowship). I first translated his short monograph *Nihon toshi no shakairon* (1963) under the title *The Japanese City: A sociological analysis* (Tokyo: Japan Publications, 1963), and then his full-length work *Nihon toshi no hatten katei* (1962) under the title *Social Change and the City in Japan: From earliest times through the Industrial Revolution* (Tokyo: Japan Publications, 1968). Figures 3-6 all stem primarily from this area of study.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. fig. 3 below.

<sup>4</sup> A good example of the impact of traditional ethos on Supreme Court rulings, for example, is discussed in David Reid, *New Wine: The cultural shaping of Japanese Christianity* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), chap. 2, "Religion and state, 1965-1990," p. 54ff. See also his "Separation of religions and state: how Japanese religions line up," *The Japan Christian Quarterly* 56/4, Fall 1990, pp. 216-17.

<sup>5</sup> The thoroughness of education's "overarching" role was recently demonstrated by an incident in Yokkaichi, Mie Prefecture, in which the parents of two elementary schoolchildren had them boycott classes for six days (beginning April 6) to protest the required singing of *Kimigayo*, the traditional imperial anthem, at school ceremonies. The school's principal said he thinks it "quite improper to involve children in the parents' ideological thinking." The imperial ideology being revived by school administrators in line with the national government's stance, takes precedence over parental prerogatives in shaping a child's thought and values. (Reported in *The Japan Times*, April 9, 1992.) On the general prevalence of public over private, see Nishikawa Shigeru, "The Daijōsai, the Constitution, and Christian faith," *The Japan Christian Quarterly* 56/3, Summer 1990, pp. 140-42.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Statistical Handbook of Japan, 1991*, issued by the Statistics Bureau of the Management and Coordination Agency. On "long-established patterns," see Yazaki, *Social Change and the City in Japan* (n. 2). A recent report, approved by the Cabinet on June 9, 1992, puts the 1991 population of Tokyo metropolitan region at 39.68 million; with the influx of people into Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture and contiguous Kanagawa, Chiba, and Saitama prefectures slowly decreasing since 1988, the region's population growth has been largely in the next ring of prefectures—Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Yamanashi—made more accessible by new motor expressways and superexpress trains (*The Japan Times*, June 10, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The underside of modern Japan* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), p. 11. See also Toyohiko Kagawa: *Apostle of love and social justice* (Berkeley: Centenary Books, 1988), pp. 40-41, 85.

<sup>8</sup> *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan*.

<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church in prewar Japan was predominantly rural. Cheryl Marie Allam, "The Path to Surrender: Nichiren Buddhism and Roman Catholicism confront Japanese nationalism, 1912-1945" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1988) shows the relevance of Catholicism's rural character to questions of state power in prewar times.

<sup>10</sup> This was, I think, one of the factors that helped set the stage for the church-society debate

in the UCCJ—the ecclesiastical struggle being only a small eddy in the confrontational swirl then affecting society at large. On the church debate, see Nakajima John Masaaki, "The church in dispute over Expo 70," in *Christianity in Japan, 1971-90* (Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1991), pp. 100-13.

<sup>11</sup> For a current review, see Tsukada Osamu, "Yasukuni Shrine and the emperor system," in *Christianity in Japan, 1971-90*, pp. 64-74.

<sup>12</sup> *Statistical Handbook of Japan, 1991*, pp. 103, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Asian Women Workers' Center, *Resource Materials on Women's Labor in Japan*, No. 9 (February 1992), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Female applicants for jobs are, for example, usually asked about marriage plans that might interrupt or scuttle career options.

<sup>15</sup> *Resource Materials on Women's Labor in Japan*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ohshima Shizuko and Carolyn Francis, *HELP Asian Women's Shelter: Japan through the eyes of women migrant workers* (Tokyo: Japan Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1989); Matsuda Mizuho, "Asian migrant workers," in *Christianity in Japan, 1971-90*, pp. 155-70; and for the larger Asian setting, Yayori Matsui, *Women's Asia* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> *The New Yorker*, Jan. 20, 1992, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> *Statistical Handbook of Japan, 1991*, pp. 106, 121, 127.

<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi's comments to the Tokyo Stock Exchange president and the Japan Securities Dealers Association

chairman on April 2, as reported in *The Japan Times*, April 3, 1992, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Sankei Shinbun's* "Seiron" column, March 23; his article appeared in English translation in *The Japan Times*, March 31, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> For details on the "Semi-Seclusion Era" and other premodern periods discussed here, see Sugimoto and Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*; on the modern era, Nakayama, Swain, and Yagi, eds., *Science and Society in Modern Japan*.

<sup>22</sup> The initial influx of Western culture into Japan, notably limited aspects of art, astronomy, navigation, gunnery, and surgery, as well as the first Catholic missions, occurred late in this open period, but these had little impact on the Chinese-oriented modernization of this era. See Sugimoto and Swain, *Science and Culture in Traditional Japan*, chap. 3.

<sup>23</sup> See my "Scholarly sojourners and Japanese modernization," *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, Winter 1972; and in Japanese, "Rekishiteki katei to shite no kindaika: bunka kōryū ni shōten o atete" (Modernization as historical process: focus on intercultural exchange), *Daigaku Kirisutoshu* (The Christian scholar), Fall 1975.

<sup>24</sup> For example, many Christian women are taking new initiatives in reading and interpreting the Bible for themselves, independently of male pastoral/priestly guidance. Cf. Watanabe Mine, "Women's issues," in *Christianity in Japan, 1971-90*, pp. 135-41; and the Christian Conference of Asia publication, *In God's Image* 10/4, Winter 1991.