

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JAPAN; An assessment

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(This is the rough, lengthy (30,000 words), rough draft of a review written in 1993-4 of the last four volumes of the *Cambridge History of Japan*. It contains a considerable amount of material left out of the subsequently published article, "'Japan" in an English Mirror' published in *Modern Asian Studies* and also available on this web-site. Please note that the spelling of Japanese names and the quotations have not been checked, so it should be used with caution.)

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Introduction; the Weberian problem and the comparative method

It has long been realized that there are certain benefits to be gained from two, three or multiple-way comparisons of Japanese history and society and so this attempt fits into a venerable tradition. Before the war, the Japanese economic historian XXX, explicitly and at length compared Japan to Europe. Since then there have been numerous books and essays.

If we start with two-way comparisons, the most obvious comparison has been between Japan and China: a good example of this is Moulder, **Japan, China and the modern world economy** (CUP, 1977), which itself, in note p. ,links numerous previous attempts to undertake such comparisons. The well-known work of Chie Nakane (ref. XXX) is mostly implicitly, but sometimes explicitly a comparison of Japan and India. Since the very influential comparison of Japanese and American culture in **The Chrysanthemum and the Sword** by Ruth Benedict, there have been numerous books making the same contrast.

Monographs have also been devoted to the comparison of Japan and Turkey (Ward and Rustow), Japan and Russia (Black, Jansen et al), and Sweden and Japan (Mosk). Several articles have compared Japan and Germany (e.g. Anderson XXX and Reinhard Bendix, 'Preconditions of Devt: A Comparison of Japan and Germany' in (ed.) Dore, **Aspects of Social Change**). Yet others have compared Japan with "Europe" as a whole, or "Western Civilization", for instance, Landes, Kwabara Takeo, Schooler XXX).

Another tactic is to make a three-way comparison. This allows both contrast and comparison and

is a rather more interesting technique. Examples of this might be Norman Jacobs (Japan, China, 'Europe'), Baechler ('India', 'Europe', 'Japan'), or Inkster (Japan, China, India).

The conclusion that emerges from all of these works is that Japan contrasts strongly with India, Russia, Turkey, China, but that there are some surprising similarities to 'America' and 'Europe' which encourage genuine comparison, as well as contrast. The feelings of that mixture of familiarity and strangeness become even more marked if the comparison is made between England (or Britain) and Japan. This was noted long ago, famously by E.L.Jones, who for that very reason (wince he wanted contrast) excluded Japan from the **European Miracle**. The attempt to pursue this has led recently to a number of fruitful and specific essays, particularly comparing urbanization in these two 'nations of shopkeepers'.

Henry Smith has fruitfully compared Tokyo and London (refs. XXX) and the attitude to City and Country in England and Japan (ref: XXX). Dore has compared smaller towns, Blackburn and Kishiwada (ref. XX). At a more general level, Yamamura has compared 'Pre-Industrial Landholding Patterns in Japan and England' (ref. XX). Hayami has compared the demographic patterns in England and Japan. Winston Davis has compared religion and economic development of Britain and Japan.

In this review of the **Cambridge History**, I would like to continue this approach, not restricting myself to one particular feature, cities, landholding, religion or whatever, but trying to place the first two industrial capitalist societies in their respective regions alongside each other in an impressionistic way on the basis of the detailed picture that has emerged from an immense amount of historical research on the history of England, and the recent explosion of such knowledge partly captured in **The Cambridge History**.

The growing historiography of Japan and the place of Camb.Hist.

Until the 1960's it was not too difficult to keep abreast of research on Japanese history, certainly by western scholars. There were several magisterial surveys (Sansom, Norman, Reischauer et al.) and there were a number of classic monographs. In the 1960's onwards, research exploded and the characteristic form of overview for the interested outsider became the collection of essays. This collections which includes Dore (ed.), *Aspects of Social Change* (1967), Hall and Jansen (eds.), *Studies in Institutional History* (Princeton, 1968), Hall, Keiji and Yamamura (eds.), *Japan Before Tokugawa* (1981), Jansen and Rozman 'Japan in Transition', (1986), Nakane and Oishi (eds.), 'Tokugawa Japan' (1990) Miyoshi and Harootyan (eds.), 'Post-modern Japan' and the same (eds.), 'Japan in the World' (1993). It might be noted that all but one of these came from the Princeton University Press and the volumes almost constituted a 'Princeton History of Japan'. The editors of most of the above, Hall, Jansen, Yamamura, ?Rozman, all appear in the **Camb. Hist.**, hence there is a good deal of parallel work.

This work has now expanded into multi-volume collections of essays, often featuring the same authors. One of these is the three-volume 'The Political Economy of Japan': vol. i. The Domestic

Transformation (1987), vol ii The Changing International Context (1988) and vol ii. 'Cultural and Social Dynamics' (1992), though this tends to concentrate on the period after 1945 and particularly after 1973. There are also several multi-volume series on Japanese history published in Japanese, for instance those referred to in Berry review in JJS, p.481, with which Berry compares the Cambridge History. There is also the extremely useful Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan (in XXX volumes), which has recently been joined by the same firm's illustrated Encyclopedia of Japan in two volumes, a marvellous work.

Introduction; my perspective and the danger of mirrors.

- my position as someone whose expertise is outside Japan, either in Europe or Nepal/Assam. Hence nativity, but also, hopefully, some advantages.

There are considerable dangers in an exercise of comparison such as this. What one is doing is basically setting up a mirror - but a two-way mirror. Simultaneously one is using England to highlight some of the structural features of Japan, and using Japan to tell one something about England. One temptation arising from this is to overdo the differences, for contrast is often enlightening. This temptation is alluded to in the **Cambs. History**(6,711). "The construction of the 'other' required that it be portrayed as the mirror image of the indigenous culture. It was this representation of the 'other' that clarified for the Japanese the essence of their own culture." This is one form of 'Orientalism', as analysed by Said et al. There is plenty of literature on Japan which exoticizes it and makes it very different, literally a world turned upside down from an European perspective.

My own temptation, however, is probably more the reverse. Having studied so many civilizations and societies in the anthropological literature which are so fundamentally different from England, and hence only present a set of contrasts, it is a great relief to the mind, as well as a source of considerable excitement, to find one which is at the other end of the world, and yet seems in many ways both different, and yet familiar. It is like finding a long-lost relative. It is particularly exciting intellectually because there can be little contact or diffusion, at least up to the 1860's, to account for the apparent similarities. One is thus left with a series of fascinating puzzles concerning why these two islands should feel so alike. Having established some likeness, one then is sucked into over-doing the likeness. It is thus probably essential to list briefly the immense differences as between Japan and England: language, culture, religion, absence of science, history etc.

- as Jerry suggested, list or construct a table of some differences. The balance of differences and similarities might best be summarized finally in a table of pattern variables in which one does a very simple, three-way, comparison between Japan, China and England, rather like Jacobs. (Construct a table, on basis of Watanabe and my earlier tables?).

The Cambridge History.

- now, the publication of the **Cambridge History** of Japan, allows us to take a long look at its

history. Yet before we do so, it is important to start by assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these volumes.

Since I am not a Japanologist, the degree to which I can assess the technical competence and accuracy of the volumes by comparing them to the vast primary and secondary material is limited. Hence I have to rely on the process of 'peer review' to establish whether, in general, the volumes accurately reflect the current state of place in the rapidly changing world of Japanese history (also advice of H.Watanabe etc.). Hence I am heavily dependent on a number of long reviews of the various volumes, particularly a series of reviews in the **Journal of Japanese Studies** and in **Monumenta Nipponica**. These are all by Japanologists. As far as I know, this is the first lengthy reviews which a) covers more than one volume b) is by a non-Japanologist. It may be that, while crude, the telescope directed from England and Nepal will see things which has escaped the mirrors and microscopes of Japanologists.

PART ONE: THE ROOTS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IN JAPAN AND ENGLAND

Introduction; the deep roots of capitalism

The publication of the four later volumes (out of six) of the **Cambridge History of Japan** in the last five years (1988, 1989, 1990, 1991), some three thousand pages of summary of the latest scholarship on Japan covering nearly one thousand years, is a major achievement. It allows us to take stock of this extraordinary society in its development into the richest and technologically most advanced society the world has ever known.

When Max Weber wrote his vast work attempting to understand the roots of modern industrial capitalism, he only had one example of a society that had pulled itself up by its own boot-straps - England. We now have two such cases, England and Japan. We may wonder to what extent a comparison of the two cases illuminates what appear to be common features of their experience, hence suggesting some necessary, if not sufficient, causes of modern capitalism. Let us look first at a few of the remarks made in these four volumes on the theoretical and comparative methodology.

The first point to make concerns the fact that Japan is a truly separate case, not merely the result of rapid technological diffusion from the West in the later nineteenth century. The dimensions of the first great spurt of growth in Japan are impressive: "By 1920...gross domestic product in real terms (1934-6 average prices) had risen 2.8 times since 1885. Output of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries grew by 67 percent; commerce, services, and other by 180 percent; mining and manufacturing by 580 percent; transport, communications, and public utilities by over 1,700 percent; and construction by 170 percent." (6:386) It is worth stressing, however, that this occurred by liberating the innate dynamism of the Japanese people. "This growth was mainly achieved not by radical technological change but by the diffusion of existing techniques...increasing specialization..." (6:391). Although it was once thought that Japan had 'taken off' because of the importation of western machinery and the starting of new types of factory, recent research shows that "Japan's industrial growth before World

War I was largely the growth of traditional industry." (6:420) (cf. graph of growth in Historical Atlas.)

This is not to say that the influence of the West was unimportant. Japan "adopted from the West a tremendous amount of what was fundamental and essential to modernization..." (5:497) On the other hand, it is quite clear that the really important features were the pre-existing ones; without these, the amazingly rapid growth could not have occurred and we would not now be marveling at the one genuine case of Asian economic boot-strapping. (cf. other quotes on this). This is obviously brought out when we compare Japan and other nations in the world, especially India and China, old civilizations where the 'take-off' is only now starting to occur one hundred years later.

Thus we may conclude that "the roots of modern development in Japan appear to lie more in the thrust of past social change and organization and less in long-standing diffusion from the first countries to modernize..." (5:501) What seems to have happened is that there were a number of pre-existing features in Japan which were released. Thus we are told that "Given this premodern history, it is no wonder that Meiji Japan was dynamic... The new impetus came from legal changes, eliminating occupational and residential restrictions and freeing all groups to pursue their interests". (5:565)

Commentators are convinced that by the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan was already an extraordinary 'pre-industrial' economy, ready for a massive burst into economic development. We are informed that "changes in Tokugawa village conditions left a rural population well endowed for modern development", and that "Levels of agricultural productivity, rural literacy, and local organizational growth were extraordinary for a country just beginning modern economic development". (5:525) It was an "unusual pre-modern society in the midst of internally generated, rapid change", almost every quantitative measure shows it to be "extraordinary for a premodern society" (5:566)

Thus while there was an immense economic surge, which meant that within two generations Japan turned from a relatively isolated 'pre-industrial' country into one that could defeat both Korea and Russia at War and was one of the most powerful industrial nations in the world, this was not a sudden miracle. It was built on deep earlier foundations. A number of trends are discernible, covering the whole period of nearly a thousand years before the late nineteenth century. Thus, for instance, we are told that "Surprising as it may seem, many elements of what we today view as Japanese culture were firmly established in medieval Japan..."(3:4) One of our tasks in this survey will be to look at these.

The continuity of Japanese and English history

One of the marked similarities of England and Japan is that in each there is a great deal of structural continuity over the thousand years leading up to their development of industrial capitalism. Elsewhere I have argued that English history for the last thousand years had been marked by the absence of sharp breaks, revolutionary changes, in other words there have been deep

continuities in law, social structure, language, political organization etc. (cf. 'Revolution' in **Culture**). This is a decidedly odd characteristic when we consider the revolutionary changes that occurred in most European countries in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries with the transformation of an Ancien Regime to 'modernity'. The consequences of this continuity are important. Firstly it provided the steady and secure basis for the establishment of the first industrial revolution. Secondly, it means that in order to understand the present in England we need to understand the past: for a nineteenth century Englishman, the past was not a foreign country. He had roots.

It is one of the more striking similarities about Japan that below the ebb and flow of political events there is the same structural continuity, the same feeling of evolutionary rather than revolutionary change over a thousand years between the tenth and twentieth centuries. This continuity surfaces from time to time in asides in the Cambridge History, though only by placing all the volumes alongside each other does it really have a full impact. Thus in relation to family organization, "Hall's concept of familial organization is a major contribution because it helped to show 'the essential rationality of historical development, the continuity underlying and the integrity discernible in change, the ascendancy of structure over person" (Cambs. Hist., 3,11). Or in relation to ideals of loyalty, "In fact, traditional ideals of loyalty and obligation, solidarity, and duty to superiors, which had deep roots in the family ethics and the feudal experience of Japanese, retained vast social support in Meiji and well into the twentieth century." (Cambs. Hist., 5, 681). Or again, in relation to political events, "Although the political and social order of the mid-Muromachi period may have appeared to differ fundamentally from what it had been at the end of the Kamakura era, the main premises on which Japanese government rested remained basically unchanged." (Camb. Hist.,3,226). Or again, "In China the dynasties frequently changed, whereas in Japan the imperial house reigned in an unbroken line." (4,83). (this next quote used elsewhere? -) Thus we are told that "Surprising as it may seem, many elements of what we today view as Japanese culture were firmly established in medieval Japan, despite the rise and fall of the two bakufu and all the political turmoil and warfare that the political developments of this period entailed." (vol.3,4).

The consequences are the same in Japan: namely, it is important to remember this steady, evolutionary, continuity in order to unravel the later strength of Japan. Like England, it was free from revolutions and foreign invasions for many hundreds of years. Secondly, in order to understand the present in both countries, there is ample grounds for arguing that we need to go back through layer upon layer of history, to watch the development and evolution of their respective histories from at least the eighth century onwards. It is no accident that England and Japan have among the most continuous and fullest sets of historical records of any nations in the world. It will also be important to see how this 'continuity with change' was allowed by their respective social structures and particularly their very flexible systems of precedent-made oral customary law, which allowed them to change rapidly, while apparently not doing so.

The comparative method.

The authors in these volumes are undecided on the question of how far the Japanese case is

similar to that of Western Europe. It is pointed out that there are extreme difficulties in such a comparison, even though it seems attractive. The more we discover, "the more complex the problem of comparison across cultural boundaries appears to be." (4:3) We are warned that Japanese evidence may overthrow all the assumptions about the necessary conditions for economic growth. "If the evidence does not support assumptions based on 'free cities', a 'world economy', 'military pressures, absolutism, popular rebellions, and an equivalent of the 'Protestant ethic', what did produce the social changes of the period before 1868 and that continued to form the background for Meiji policy initiatives and for early modernization late in the century?" (5:,503) Thus "To some it has seemed that the more we have come to know about Japan the more we are drawn to the apparent similarities with Western history...On the other hand, specialists are inclined to point out the dangers of being misled by seeming parallels."(4:vii)

Unfortunately, at this point the help given to us by the **Cambridge History** gives out. After all the massive accumulation of detail, we are still left with no really strong arguments as to **why** Japan has been so economically dynamic. In this brief survey I will try to abstract from only a tiny fraction of the evidence in an explicitly comparative way, in to order to try to go a little deeper into the question of dynamics and causation. In doing so, rather than taking the whole of 'Europe', with its great variety, I will make the comparison more explicitly with the other noted case of rapid internally generation industrialization, England. As one author points out, "Repeatedly, the country chosen as most similar to Japan has been England, which elsewhere in the comparative literature normally appears as a exceptional case..." (5:566) Thus we are dealing with two "exceptional" cases and exploring the question of whether these two unusual cases have anything in common. If they do, we may be led to wonder whether these common elements give a clue to the emergence of capitalism East and West.

The degree of wealth.

One outstanding feature of England since the twelfth century, at least, has been its unusual wealth, and the fact that this has been widely distributed. In terms of housing, clothing, diet and general standard of living, it was an amazingly wealthy society if we compare the mass of the population to that in the majority of pre-industrial societies (cf. Individualism, pp.). This growing wealth, particularly in the period 1520-1720, the two hundred years before industrial take-off, was a crucial factor in the industrial revolution. To what extent was this also true of Japan?

It would appear that while perhaps not as extreme as England, there is evidence that in the two hundred years leading up to the rapid economic growth of the later nineteenth century, Japan was a relatively affluent society. It was thought until recently that the Tokugawa period, roughly the seventeenth to mid nineteenth centuries, was one where the mass of the population were miserable and exploited. But "In the 1980s, Marxists and non-Marxists alike found evidence that during the Tokugawa period the standard of living did rise." (4:661) There are "signs of a growing rural prosperity, new and larger houses, improved diet, better clothing" in "most areas of Japan by the middle of the seventeenth century." (4:538) As in England in the second half of the sixteenth century onwards (cf. Hoskins), so in Japan a century later, there was a housing revolution, (4:665) so

that "By the late eighteenth century, some well-to-do farmers lived in houses resembling samurai residences..."(4:664) There was also probably a rise in rice consumption per head. (4:680-1)

The general impression of growing affluence in town and country is well portrayed by the following irritated account of a Japanese village in 1830. "Everyone has forgotten the righteous way. Now everyone is working for profit...In the villages we now have hairdressers and public baths. If you see houses you see flutes, samisen, and drums on display. Those living in rented houses, the landless, and even servants have haori, umbrellas, tabi, and clogs. When you see these people on their way to the temples, they seem better dressed than their superiors". (5:79)

What seems likely is that while the standards of living may not have been as high in the middle of the nineteenth century as they were, for instance, in England in the early eighteenth or Holland in the seventeenth, they were conspicuously higher than in any other part of pre-industrial Asia or Africa. We shall find further evidence for this in the fact that the countryside could support such a large urban population and in the surprisingly low mortality rates in early modern Japan. We might also point to the absence of serious popular revolts in Japan from at least the sixteenth century, which was connected to the relative absence of famine and dearth which we will later note.

If it is the case that we have a population that was steadily growing richer over the two centuries leading up to its economic break-through, how would we account for this? Again we may not see some similarities with England. The first of these is in the growth of the central activity, agriculture.

The agricultural revolutions of Japan.

Historians of England have for long pointed to the importance of the growth in agricultural productivity in England between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, often referred to as the 'agricultural revolution'. This is seen as a necessary factor in explaining England's precocious urban and industrial growth. Surplus crops not only created a wealthy rural population, but helped support the rapidly growing cities. A parallel 'agricultural revolution', or rather set of revolutions, seems to have occurred in Japan.

In Japan, agriculture was mainly based on rice cultivation, and it was rice production that was first increased. In the second half of the thirteenth century, a new variety of rice was imported from Indochina, by way of China. This was known as 'Champa' and being more resistant to both drought and insects, "enabled cultivators in western Japan to double crop and even triple crop their paddies". (3:313, 376-7) This "growth of agricultural productivity was the foundation on which the commerce of these periods flourished". (3:376)

This first agricultural revolution was followed by another from the sixteenth century onwards. There were several constituents to this. There were new and improved crops. The sweet potato and ordinary potato were introduced into Japan at the start of the seventeenth century and were important from then onwards. (4:682) There were other new crops introduced. In the seventeenth

century a growing number of people moved away from subsistence production and produced commercial crops, tobacco, cotton, indigo, madder, rape, vegetables, so that "In some areas, particularly in central Japan, commercial agriculture had become the predominant mode by the eighteenth century..." (4:214)

Another development was in the agricultural tools. It seems likely that the improvement in hoes and ploughs helped to open up the fertile river bottoms to irrigated rice cultivation from the sixteenth centuries onwards (document), and new kinds of highly specialized hoes continued to be invented. (4:508) As in England, farmers took an active interest in experimenting and improving production (cf. Arthur Young on England). Thus "As rice came to be grown as a commercial crop, wealthy, elite farmers, especially village headmen, often kept farm journals in which they recorded the types of crops, amounts of fertilizer, strains of rice, and annual yield for each plot of village farmland." (4:514)

A combination of tools, techniques and crops meant that much more and richer land was opened up to cultivation. Thus we are told that "Providing for a more constant supply of water was only one of many methods used to increase agricultural production during the Edo period. Land was also reclaimed from the bays and shallow tidal marshes." (4:500) The results were staggering. There was a doubling of the area of cultivated land during the Tokugawa period (4:207); merely in the period 1600 to 1720 land use increased by 82 percent. (4:217)

The result was, for instance, that "By the early eighteenth century, Japan's agricultural production was roughly 60 percent more than it had been a century earlier..."(4:449) Thus Thomas Smith referred to changes "of great importance for Japanese history, perhaps justifying comparison with the agricultural revolution in Europe..."(5:517)

The results: famine, dearth and popular revolts.

Of course, such productivity gains have been made in other societies. The impact on wealth will largely depend on two further factors, namely whether the gains are absorbed by a rapidly growing population - for instance whether the doubling of production was met by a doubling of population. As we shall see later, this was not the case. The population hardly grew during a period of rising agricultural productivity. Thus the income per person was rising steadily in the years preceding the burst of economic growth. The same was true in England.

Secondly, often any gains are quickly siphoned off in taxes and rents and spent on war and conspicuous consumption by a small elite of landlords and rulers. Again, as we shall document later, this was not the case in either England or Japan. One concomitant of the growing agricultural wealth can be seen in the absence of those patterns of rural misery and disturbance which are to be found in almost all agrarian societies until very recently, namely famine and popular revolts.

In England, the cycle of famines, which still afflicted much of Europe, Scotland and Ireland until the nineteenth century, had been eliminated by the fifteenth century at least. On the whole, it would

seem that Japan also escaped from repetitive famine and dearth very early. During the whole period from 1500 to 1900 there are only three recorded periods when there were really serious food shortages, in 1732, in the Temmei famine of 1782-1785 and the great Tempo famines of the 1830's. In the first of these, locusts swarmed over much of western Japan and in the resulting period, rice in Edo and Osaka "cost five to seven times as much as it had during the glut of previous years". (4:451) (I am not yet certain, however, whether there was famine as well.) In the multiple year shortages of the 1782-5 period, which "were caused by summer cold spells...due chiefly to the large amounts of volcanic ash thrown into the atmosphere by an eruption of Mt. Asama." (4:496) No-one knows how many people died, but we do know that the shogun's land-tax revenue fell by more than a half. (4:466) In the four years of very bad harvests in 1832-6, we are told that tens of thousands of persons died. (5:119)

Thus the storms, droughts, volcanic eruptions, locusts and other natural disasters made Japan more volatile than England. Yet such was its growing agricultural wealth that it was in a position in 1832 where almost the whole rice harvest could be lost and no serious dearth occurred: "By itself, one bad season was an irritation rather than a tragedy". (5:118) It was only after four terrible harvests that famine emerged. One author points to the "relatively few famines and deadly epidemics during these centuries" and the fact that "two major crop failures of multiple-year duration (in the 1730s and 1780s) plus other poor harvest years did not decrease the population of this already-crowded country." This was because the Japanese "had sufficient surplus in normal or good years so that food could be stored." (4:688)

The relative absence of subsistence crises is linked to another absence, that of subsistence peasant revolts. The periodic absolute food shortages, often combined with landlords demands, leads in the majority of societies to periodic desperate outbursts of violence, hunger marches and attacks on granaries of landlords etc. (cf Mousnier on French, Chinese etc; significantly he does not refer to Japan) No such hunger and tax revolts are recorded for England from the fifteenth century onwards, nor, as far as can be seen, can they be found in Tokugawa Japan. There were some strange mass pilgrimages in difficult years to the Ise shrine. (ref:) Yet no traditional peasant uprisings similar to those, for instance, documented for Burma or other south-east Asian countries are recorded. (cf. Scott et al)

This striking absence can be taken back even further. The fact that the so-called English 'Peasant's Revolt' was in fact not led by or recruiting the poorest 'peasants', but rather the complaint of small farmers and craftsmen and others of the middling level, has long been known.(refs:) There are hints in the medieval volume of the **Cambridge History** that the same was true in Japan. Thus we are told that in 1428 there was a "widespread peasant uprising (tsuchi-ijji)", but the author quickly adds that this "was not in itself a cultivator protest against the shoen proprietor. The leaders of the insurrection were teamsters, called bashaku...". (3:287) There is no evidence in this case, or presented elsewhere, of huge rising of immiserated peasants of the Chinese, French, Russian or Burmese kind. (This would be worth further exploration.)

Taxes and rents.

If it is the case that Japanese agriculture had been yielding increased returns, both absolutely and per holding, over a long period, we may wonder why it was that the usual pressures which come to bear on such increased productivity, namely increased population and increased expropriation by the landlords do not seem to have taken place. Such an absence of pressure left much of the gain in the hands of the mass of the population. Let us look first at taxation and rents.

There are hints that the taxes in medieval Japan were low. Thus we are told that "each tan of land was assessed a grain tax amounting to no more than 3 percent of its total yield" (3:315) If this is confirmed by other sources, it shows an amazingly low proportion. The evidence becomes more abundant for later periods. While the aim of the government and its representatives was clearly to extract the maximum from the population, as Ieasu put it to take so much that one made certain that "they can neither live nor die" (4:494), for various reasons which we will discuss later, this was impossible. Thus we are told that through the Tokugawa period "Although the national output was growing, the bakufu's regular tax income was falling". (5:593)

Likewise, the local magnates, the daimyo and samurai, also failed to keep up with the growing wealth. Various conditions "acted to reduce the actual amount of taxes extracted from the villages" so that during the Tokugawa era "Historians now believe that, on the average, daimyo collected only about 30 percent of the crop in most areas..." (4:107) This was a higher ratio than in pre-industrial England, (ref:) but a good deal lower than in the majority of agrarian societies where 50% or more is the norm (Wolf et al.). This inability to cream off productivity gains also applied to the growing wealth generated in non-farming occupations, both in the rapidly expanding rural industries in the countryside and in the towns. Thus we are told that "Both farmers and merchants benefited by the inability of the samurai elite to tax commercial activities effectively or to capture the productivity gains in agriculture." (4:664) The same was true of England, both as between the Crown and the people, and between the lower levels of the landlords and their tenants.

The growth of crafts and proto-industrial activity.

Another significant feature of the English build-up to industrialization was the rapid development of crafts and small manufactures, particularly outside the main cities and in relation to the textile industry. The 'proto-industrial' phase of growth of England's "industries in the countryside" from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries is a very marked and important phenomenon, something it shares with other advanced areas such as northern Italy or Holland. We may thus turn to the Japanese case to see to what extent the making of things had grown in the period up to the middle of the nineteenth century and to what extent this was an urban phenomenon.

It would appear that from at least the thirteenth century, artisans were paid much more highly than agricultural workers (eg. 3:346-7). From very early on, urban craftsmen found a market for their products in the countryside. (ibid) Yet in parallel from quite early on, and certainly two and a half centuries before the Meiji restoration, many bi-occupational crafts were developing in the

countryside. "Individual rural households began to develop by-employments or simple rural industries, so that even within a single domain certain villages became known for their production of goods such as paper, charcoal, ink, pottery, lacquer ware, or spun cloth." (4:544) Thus by the later eighteenth century, a century before the economic take-off, there was a large semi-rural, proto-industrial base. In parts of central Japan, "the villagers spent more time in spinning, weaving, and trading than in farm work" (5:584) The figures are impressive. In these areas "About a quarter of the rural population was employed in handicrafts and commerce." (5:584)

As in England, where the industrial revolution sprang up as much in the semi-rural hills and dales of Yorkshire and Lancashire as in larger towns, so in Japan the base of the massive change lay as much in the countryside as in the cities. We are told that the "long-run importance of local growth centres of a semi urban character is recognized by specialists on economic development...as an asset important to the modern transformation undertaken in the Meiji period". (5:546) Indeed, it is stated that "most traditional industries began as rural, largely part-time cottage industries". (6:416) It was a trend further encouraged by the activities of landlords who, like their English counterparts (but unlike landlords in most civilizations), took an interest in encouraging commerce. Thus "The new landlords responded to opportunities for commercial agriculture, transferred capital back and forth between landholdings and commercial enterprises, emulated urban practices..."(5:521)

Urban growth and the rise of cities and towns.

On the eve of its industrial growth, the countryside in Japan, like that in England, seems to have been deeply penetrated by urban values. Thus "By the end of the Edo period, the urban popular culture became the popular culture of the country." (4:769) This would appear to be the culmination of another feature to which it is worth devoting considerable attention, namely the impressive growth of cities and towns in Japan from a very early date. Like England, Holland and parts of northern Italy, Japan seems to have been from a very early date a highly urbanized society.

Many points about Japanese urbanism catch our attention. One is the size and dominating position of the three major cities, a phenomenon equivalent to the dominance and importance of Amsterdam in Holland or London in England (cf. Wrigley et al). The first great city of Japan was Kyoto, the seat of the early Emperors. Already in the ninth century its wealth and beauty was staggering, as we can see from literary sources. By the middle of the fifteenth century it is estimated to have had some 200,000 inhabitants, compared, for instance to the 50,000 or so of London at the same time. Its wealth was equally impressive. In 1393, the bakufu began to collect an annual tax of six thousand kanmon from the city and its environs, "a huge sum considering that the cash value of the total annual dues of many shoen was less than one hundred kanmon". (3:377-8)

A description of the city at this time notes the "very large number of persons serving the needs of the temples and shrines", including many kinds of artisans and merchants. (3:378) Alongside this large city, two others arose in the seventeenth century, Osaka based on the growing rice market of western Japan, and Edo (later called Tokyo), harbouring the Tokugawa shoguns. By the end of the seventeenth century, Edo had become the world's largest city, while the populations of Osaka and

Kyoto "approaches those of London and Paris, the two largest cities in the West." (4:519) By the 1720's, the commoner population of merchants and artisans alone numbered over half a million, and the city's total population was over one million. These three cities together provided an immense pulsing heart, pushing out demand and pulling in people and goods. At their peak in the eighteenth century, these three cities numbered some two million inhabitants, of which about half lived in Edo. (5:538)

Alongside these three cities there were many others. The growth of small and medium-sized cities from the medieval period is just as important and impressive. A "guesstimate" of the population of Japanese cities in the second half of the fifteenth century gives the following figures: "Nara, 10,000 to 15,000; Tennoji in Kawachi Province, 35,000; Sakai, at least 20,000; Sakamoto in Omi Province, 15,000; Kuwana and Ominato in Ise Province, 15,000 and 5,000 respectively; Yodo near Kyoto, 5,000 and Hakata in northern Kyushu, 30,000 to 50,000". any of these were larger than all but a very few West European cities. Thus by the early sixteenth century there were more than twenty cities and port towns with populations of over ten thousand. (3:381) (cf. to England at same time).

Many of them were not merely large, but very wealthy and beautiful. For instance, when visiting Gifu in 1575, Luis Frois wrote: "...I sincerely assure you that of all the palaces and houses I have seen in Portugal, India, and Japan, there has been nothing to compare with this as regards luxury, wealth, and cleanliness." (4:521)

There were numerous types of towns and city. There were the cities encouraged by the daimyo, who set up planned towns round their castles. (cf. Hall article). There were towns that grew up at the ports. And there were numerous smaller towns that grew along the highways. For instance, even in the twelfth century, "nearly thirty shikuba - towns that grew up around inns for travellers - developed on the Tokaido, the main route for those making the two-week journey between Kyoto and Kamakura". (3:358)

By the seventeenth century, the situation resembled that described by Defoe when he travelled through the areas around Halifax in northern England at the end of the century. Thus a Spanish traveller in 1608 is cited as saying that "between Sorongo and Jeddo, a distance of 100 leagues, a large city, town, or village, occurred at every quarter of a league, with an average number of inhabitants for each place of 100,000; and that from Sorongo to Miako, also about 100 leagues, the inhabited places were equally numerous and populous." Kaempfer in the seventeenth century wrote that "The highways are almost one continued line of villages and boroughs. You scarce come out of one, but you enter another; and you may travel many miles, as it were, in one street, without knowing it to be composed of many villages, save by the differing names that were formerly given them, and which they after retained though joined to one another." (both in Macfarlane, pp.271-2)

The full impact of this urban and semi-urban growth can only be measured by placing it in relation to the general population. Even by the fifteenth century, we are told that "there is little exaggeration in saying that most of the cultivators...could reach and return from a town within a

day". (3:379) By the end of the seventeenth century, Japan and become "one of the most urbanized societies in the world". We are told that "approximately 5 to 7 percent of all Japanese" lived in cities of over 100,000 inhabitants, as compared to two percent in Europe, where "only the Netherlands and England-Wales could boast of urban concentrations greater than Japan's." (4:519) Only China could match the three cities in excess of 300,000 and no city in China was as big as Edo.

Then, as Thomas Smith (P & P) has shown , the urban proportion remained more or less constant well into the period of rapid economic growth. Some thirty years after the Meiji restoration, the proportion in cities (6 percent) was no higher than it had been at the end of the seventeenth century, and the number of cities of over 100,000 had only risen from five to six. (5:538) If one extends the definition of 'urbanization' to include all towns of three thousand or more persons, then by about 1700, "Japan's approximately 17 percent urbanization...plus one-half the total in smaller but still substantial commercial and or administrative centres...approaches the highest levels in Europe and exceeds by a factor or two or three the levels reached after long histories of city building in Russia and China". (5:547-9).

Just as important as the size, wealth and number of urban centres is their nature. Here there are again several striking similarities to the English and Dutch cities. Firstly, a seemingly minor point, but revealing, is the fact that in neither England nor Japan do city walls seem to have been important in the several centuries before industrial growth. There were castles, and there were symbolic boundaries or remains of walls. But the actively repaired and garrisoned city walls we find in so many civilizations, even in medieval Italy, were absent. (This needs to be checked, for it is certainly the case that many cities were attached to castles.) But in the largest and earliest of cities, Kyoto, we are told that Hideyoshi built an earthen wall to define the boundary between city and country, and that this was "the only city wall to be completed in Kyoto's history". (4:734) (I suspect that Edo did not have a city wall - a fact relatively easy to check.) Perhaps this was one of the features of city-scape which "reminded the first Western visitors of European urban settlements".(4:523) Another may have been a central feature, namely the role and independence of Japanese cities.

In his great work on **The City**, Max Weber drew a basic distinction between the 'free' cities of north western Europe and particularly England, and the usual form of 'dominated' cities of Asia and much of southern and eastern Europe. Many theorists, from Marx through to Pirenne and onwards have seen the rise of 'free' cities, protecting the activities of their merchants and artisans in a sea of hostility from lords and peasants, as a necessary and important element in the development of capitalism. (refs:) Certainly the tradition of proud independence of cities in Holland and England and northern Italy is notable. It is thus worth looking to see how free and independent were Japanese cities.

It would appear that there was indeed a long tradition of urban self-government in Japan. We are told that administrative units at major cross-roads "enjoying a degree of self-government" appeared in the fourteenth century and proliferated in the fifteenth.(3:377) With the growth of market towns in the sixteenth century, there was the "emergence of what many historians refer to as urban self-government...Many 'jinaimachi', or temple towns, also enjoyed the prerogatives of

self-government". Thus, "So-called free cities or merchant self-governing organs associated with the dynamism of medieval Europe may have had clear counterparts among the ports and commercial centres of sixteenth-century Japan..." (5:501) What did such self-government imply? "The sphere of self-administration included the rights to arrest criminals and adjudicate crimes, to verify the coverage of debt cancellation edicts, and to negotiate contracts for rents and taxes levied on the town as a whole. Private possession of land was also recognized, and the towns maintained their own defences." (4:111)

When the powerful centralizing Tokugawa came to power, many of these earlier partially independent cities were absorbed to a certain extent. They were "fully incorporated into the directly administered territory of the shogun or into the various domains (han)." (5:501) Yet it seems that their new rulers did not seek to stamp out all the freedom and independence, but rather to encourage and profit from it. Thus we are told that Nobunaga in the later sixteenth century "was obliged to recognize the special status of the merchants in self-administered cities like Sakai and Hiranogo..."(4:113) and that the ordinary commoner population of the cities "were free to follow their self-interests in making money and spending it", they "had the freedom of the city..." (4:710, 701) The loss of certain autonomy was soon compensated for by the growth of new cities, so that "especially in the commercialized Inland Sea area", cities "managed to win a measure of independence". (5:546) What seems clear is that trade, commerce and production was relatively free and that the stifled cities which Weber describes for many civilizations are not characteristic of either Japan or England.

It is impossible to state briefly what the effects of this very large urban and semi-urban population must have been over these centuries. In relation to England, Wrigley has graphically described the economic effects of London's growth. (ref:) It seems likely the same was true for central Japan. In the mid-thirteenth century, the elites living in the capital era of Kyoto "were obtaining...most of their daily necessities from the shoen located in and around the capital region". Conversely, those in the countryside depended increasingly on the towns. Thus "medieval shoen proprietors came to rely more and more on Kyoto and other markets to supply many of the commodities they needed". (3:101) The rapid urban growth of the seventeenth century, "increased the demand for cotton and other commercial crops". (4:511) Hence it is not surprising that economic historians trying to account for the rapid acceleration of the economy in the later nineteenth century see this high level of urbanization as an important factor. (5:566) There can be little doubt that this pattern of urbanization, with a family resemblance to that in northern Italy, Holland and England, is linked to their respective periods of dynamism and economic growth.

Guilds

In Italy, England and elsewhere in Europe, it seems to have been important that in the early phases of rapid economic growth producers and merchants be protected against under-cutting competition. Hence the establishment of the famous guilds of Sienna, Florence or London. Later, however, when activity had reached a high level, such monopolies became restrictive and needed to be broken down; this is indeed what happened in England. We may wonder how far this pattern is

discernible in Japan.

It is clear that guild-like organizations started early in Japan. "Recent studies by Japanese scholars show that as early as the mid-eleventh century such artisans as paper-makers, weavers, scroll painters, smiths, founders, and several other highly skilled specialists who had been protected by the government and the highest-ranked nobles began to produce their products 'privately' and to sell them in the market". (3:352) By the end of the eleventh century, the first formal guilds, or 'za' as they were known, began to emerge. (3:352-3) Thus "In the Sakyo...more and more merchants and artisans engaged in trade, and an increasing number of za, to which most of them belonged, congregated". (3:377) These guilds spread rapidly and were not confined to cities and large towns, but as befitted a country where the urban and rural were intermixed, spread to the countryside. Thus we are told that "Za also began to appear outside Kyoto, Nara and Kamakura. These za, first recorded in the Nambokucho period, were called tatoza or inaka-za, the za of the villages and countryside".(3:380)

The importance of the protection which they afforded is stressed by historians of mediaeval Japan. They "enabled merchants to enjoy substantial monopolistic...power that could increase their income and ability to engage more freely in market activities in the capital region and nearby provinces". (3:353) "Given the still-limited demand, free entry and the consequent competition would have caused specialization to occur more slowly". (3:363) They may also have had the effect, as in the West, of regulating standards and ensuring quality.

There were many things to be said for guilds in this early phase, and one can see how the earliest merchants would have been in favour of their protection. Yet it is puzzling that in this early warrior society, the usual tendency for predatory interests to destroy the wealth of groups of merchants did not occur. As one author puts it, "One might wonder why the warriors allowed the court nobles and temples to capture the lion's share of the income earned by the za." (3:363) The answer, as we shall see later, lay in the balance of power between various forces in early Japan, and in particular between the court nobles and the new warrior group. This later shifted in an economically 'rational' way. That is to say, while guild protection was the most profitable way to encourage productive and trading activities, the guilds continued to be encouraged. But as in England, when enough momentum had been generated and the guilds were actually inhibiting growth, the balance changed and the monopolies were bi-passed. Thus, in a particular instance we see that a powerful political group "found it more profitable to forgo a share in the monopolistic profits of a za that had clearly become detrimental to the growth of commerce." (3:391) Gradually the power of the za waned.

Trade and commercial activity.

In northern Italy, Holland and England, wealth was largely based on complex and extensive trade networks, combined with local manufacturing. It would seem that a similar development occurred in Japan. It is clear that the amount of trading activity in medieval Japan was very extensive. The most important part of this was internal. "The heart of the network was the part that linked Kyoto with the rest of Japan. From western Japan, rice, paper, salt, lumber, fish, sesame, sumac and many other

products were shipped to Kyoto via Hyogoseki." (3: 381) From this heartland, the merchant-producers moved outwards in search of new markets. During the twelfth century the "skilled producer-merchants" of the capital region "travelled to more and more distant provinces"(3:347) The bigger merchants often went in groups or caravans, which "typically consisted of tens and sometimes hundreds of merchants". There were also "Itinerant peddlers, travelling shorter distances" who "carried their wares in backpacks". (3:383)

This internal trade in the medieval period benefited, as in England, from various natural and artificial factors. Firstly, it grew at such a rate, and such was the balance of power, that it was never throttled by the greed of powerful gentry with their extortionate tolls, as happened in most agrarian civilizations, such as France, China and elsewhere. Thus we are told that the "swelling tide of commerce was such that even the toll barriers (sekisho) failed to discourage it". (3:383)

Secondly, there was the great advantage of the cheapness of water transport in Japan, as in England, Holland and northern Italy. Japan had the large Inland sea and an indented coastline. Thus we are told that "Most goods that needed to be transported across the nation were carried over water when possible. This is why as many as nine major sea routes were established during these periods". (3:382) Transportation, "especially over water, was indispensable" and there were considerable improvements, as there were also in the land transport systems. (3:365, 382)

This firm internal base in the medieval period, providing goods for a very large and diversified country, allowed the development of an international trade. In the medieval period "Japan exported gold, pearls, mercury, sulfur, scrolls, folding screens, fans and other craft products and imported several kinds of luxury cloth; numerous varieties of incense and fragrances". (3:358) The scale of the imports is made clear when we consider the size of Japan's major export at the time, namely silver.

We are told that "Recent studies of Japan's involvement in foreign trade revealed the surprising fact that Japan led the world in the export of silver during the seventeenth century." (4:27) Indeed, "Japan may have accounted for as much as one third of the world's silver output at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century". (4:61)

Then came the sudden official closing of the country to foreign trade at the start of the seventeenth century, which continued in effect until the Meiji restoration. Instead of stifling trading activity, this seems to have acted in the opposite way. Like a guild on a large scale, it seems to have protected the whole of Japan for two and a half centuries from the undermining competition of European and other goods and helped to build up that commercial base that was already well developed. Thus, alongside the agricultural revolution which we noted earlier, there was, as in England and Holland and medieval Italy, a commercial revolution. We are reminded that "Paralleling the agricultural revolution was a spectacular expansion in the volume of commercial exchange that began during the middle decades of the sixteenth century and continued until the end of the seventeenth century." (4:542) A preliminary indication of the dimensions of commerce is shown by the fact that "By the middle of the eighteenth century, for instance, there were more than

five thousand wholesalers in over four hundred different kinds of businesses in Osaka alone..." (4:573)

Another sign of the rapidly increasing trade was the concern to standardize weights and measures. In the medieval period, "the varying measures of weight, length, and volume being used seriously impeded market transactions." (3:391) Thus, for instance, the measures of volume changed dramatically between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, allowing an invisible form of inflation to occur. (3:392) Individual lords began to try to standardize measures in the medieval period, "to encourage the growth of commerce". (3:393) It was not until the end of the sixteenth century, however, that the standardization of weights and measures for all of Japan was achieved. (4:542)

The market and marketing.

The increase in local and, for a period, international trade is obviously linked to the growth of marketing. It is an outstanding feature of England, Holland and other early areas of development in Europe that the marketing of goods was highly developed from the Middle Ages. Not only were there extensive physical markets, but people were producing for the market, even if they lived in the countryside. In other words, in these societies there had already developed very early on a market-based society, with widely diffused market activities. We may wonder what picture we receive of all this from the **Cambridge History** for Japan.

It is clear that for the medieval period in Japan, widespread commercial marketing systems had developed, with many rural dwellers buying many necessities and producing cash crops in order to enable themselves to do so. "From the mid-thirteenth century, the pace of commercial activities accelerated first in the large cities and then in the provinces. In and around the capital and in a few larger cities, including Kamakura, the number of shops selling specialized products and daily necessities rose". (3:360) This was not just around the major cities, but was penetrating out into remoter regions. Even by the twelfth (?) century, it is argued that "the capital region, the local markets, and these port towns constituted a commercial network". (3:364)

Hence for medieval Japanese peasants, we are told, "...trade was also important to obtaining such necessary items as salt, iron implements used in farming, and pottery to store and water. Many of these items had to be purchased from those specializing in producing them. Markets where such items could be bought were held three times a month on prescribed days..." (3:327) The number of three day markets steadily grew during the Kamakura period, and later six-day markets were introduced. (3:364, 381) As a result of this, rural dwellers in Japan were increasingly exposed to the market and were forced into a cash economy. This was "Not only in the economically developed villages of central Japan but even in the poorer villages" where it "became possible for peasants to acquire coins by producing woodwork and charcoal and collecting firewood for sale." (3: 328)

The need for cash in order to purchase goods in the markets and many smaller towns led to the development of a highly commercialized agriculture and the bi-occupations we have noted. Thus "In some parts of Japan during the seventeenth century, and in most parts of the country after that,

subsistence farming gave way to more commercialized forms of agriculture...The key to this transformation was increased interaction with the marketplace." (4:510) The first major cash crop was cotton, but later, many other crops were grown. Thus in the 1830's "a national market had developed for cotton, silk, indigo, wax, paper, sugar, tea, sake, pottery, matting, hardware, and lacquer ware apart from and in competition with the bakufu's procurement system, and with new market opportunities opening up, industry and trade became increasingly profitable as compared with agriculture". (5:588) Japan at this period must have resembled England when Defoe undertook his celebrated tour on the eve of the English industrial revolution. (ref:)

Property.

One of the most important and early features of English development was the freedom to alienate land and other immovable property. The peculiar English institution of private property, which Locke and others saw as the basis for modern society, was present from at least the twelfth century in England. It was possible to alienate land and other property from the family. Thus, as Marx long ago noted, this development is the basis of capitalism as we know it. (cf. Individualism) What evidence is there for the development of concepts of property in Japan?

That the Japanese landholding pattern, with individual ownership and a separation of the family from the land had occurred by the eve of the Japanese period of rapid development in the later nineteenth century is not in doubt. Thus Yamamura is cited as concluding that in both Japan and England "landholding patterns and contractual arrangements were changed to make agriculture increasingly efficient". (5:518) The rapid turn-over of property consistent with private ownership and the treatment of land as a commodity has been shown by Thomas Smith, who "found that 50 percent of the holdings in the village that he studied increased or decreased by more than 20 percent from one tax register to the next, an average interval of twelve years". (5:553) Thus one author concludes that "Feudal variety in landholding obligations had given way to individual ownership with firm legal rights and equally firm tax obligations". (5:4)

Yet we may wonder when this happened. Are there traces that this was an early feature of Japan's transformation into a flexible and powerful economy? If we move backwards in time to the Tokugawa era, we find that private property in land, with the rights of alienation from the family, were already well established. At the highest level, as in England, there were centralized proprietary rights, with all land held of the central authority. Thus we are told that under Hideyoshi, "At the highest level, all proprietary rights became securely lodged in the hands of the national hegemon...This use of the concept of land held in trust for the overlord became the basis for the new centralization of power." (4:103)

At the next level down, also, rights were protected. That is to say, although holding of the shogun, the next level lords also had strong rights. Lordship, as in England, gave immense **de facto** power. Thus under Nobunaga "complete proprietorships" were developed. We are told that this meant that "within their domains, the daimyo, as proprietary lords, held the right to assign fiefs, command military forces, and exercise police and judicial authority." (4:101) The effect of this, and the fact

that it was not something newly introduced in the later sixteenth century, is well summarized as follows. The local landholders "possessed legally protected entitlements to their lands, including the right to buy, sell, and bequeath their holdings. Landownership was transferable...small-scale private land-holders...could buy and sell land, expand agricultural production, and open markets." (4:479) What Nobunaga and his successors did was to simplify and strengthen the pre-existing system. For instance Hideyoshi's surveys, we are told "established the principle 'one cultivator per parcel of land.'" (4:51)

It would appear from hints in the medieval volume of the **Cambridge History** that there was a similar multi-layered feudal model of ownership to that in England. Thus we are told that the "organization of proprietary rights or tenurial hierarchy in the shoen system was complex and multilayered". (3:261, cf. pp.264, 100) Within this system, those at the bottom technically had user rights, but, in fact, as in England, their practical power was much greater. In the early modern period the small tenants were "given certain rights to the use of land. In a technical sense, these might be called...'user rights', although in actual practice they amounted to a close equivalent to what we would style ownership rights." (4:124) Likewise "In the early medieval period, peasants did not hold land as private property in the true sense of the word. The shoen proprietor formally registered myoden and isshikiden in the land registry, and because this land was the basis for nengu and zokuji, peasants were forbidden to buy and sell it without permission". (3:329) The same description could be applied to a customary tenant on an English manor, who had to come to the lord's court to transfer his land; in practice, however, he had considerable rights in the holding. Thus, in Japan, it is noted that "the peasants' rights to cultivate myo were protected, and the fields could be passed on to their descendants as heritable myoden". (3:122)

Potentially such land could be sold off. For instance, in villages near the cities of Nara and Kyoto, "the sale of the peasants' right to possess arable land began early. This included selling land outright, using it as collateral for a loan, and, in many cases, becoming a tenant on the land as a result of debt default". (3:329) Land became increasingly viewed as a valuable commodity, and not merely as a family entitlement. Hence, we are told that "In the mid to late medieval period in central Japan and other nearby economically advanced areas there was a great change in the perceived value of land". (3:329)

As we will later note when we look at the question of inheritance, , there is a very striking similarity in the power to alienate land and other property away from the 'heirs' in both Japan and England. The complex web of multi-layered tenures which were thought to be unique to England with its peculiar land law also seems to be found, obviously with some variations, in Japan. By a paradox which applies to both cases, the fact that all land was held in a firm contractual and mutual relationship between superior and inferior in theory, made it relatively easy to alienate the land in practice. Ultimately, in both societies, political and then economic forces had displaced the family as the determinant of what happened to land. In most civilizations, including China, India and countries under Roman Law, the first call on land is the next generation, the blood line. In these two islands the controlling interest was the lord. Such a lord could be paid off with cash, hence leaving the current holder free to do what he or she wished with the land in his or her lifetime and dispose of

it at will at death. This is one of the most important keys to the eccentric economic and social developments of the first two cases of autonomous industrialization.

Cash and finance.

It is well known that England's precocious development into industrialism must have been linked to the growing use of money from a very early date. From at least the twelfth century, and probably well before, monetary values had penetrated deep into the English economy and hence there was a large demand for coinage. It was no accident that from Anglo-Saxon times, England had the best silver coinage in Europe. (ref:) We may wonder how widespread the use of coins and monetary reckoning was in Japan and from how early.

There is very considerable evidence that from a very early period there was a large demand for cash and wide and rapid penetration of monetary values in Japanese society. Let us start from the centre, the cities of medieval Japan. Here, we are told, "There is no doubt that by the middle of the thirteenth century, coins were being used daily by residents of the capital and other large cities as the principal medium of trade". (3:366) Or again, "In the thirteenth century, coins imported from Sung China gradually came into common usage, and by the end of the century, this practice had spread to the village level. Merchants from the capital purchased with coins products from the villages. In the fourteenth century it became common practice to exchange nengu (i.e. rent) for coins and submit it to the proprietor in that form". (3:328) Nor was this confined to the central part of Japan for "as early as the 1240's, coins were used in the remote Ou region in the north" (3:366)

The amount of coins that were needed, even when rice was often used as a medium of exchange, can be seen from the imports of Chinese coins from an early date. So large was the import trade that in 1199 the Chinese issued "an unsuccessful decree to prohibit the export of its coins to Japan". (3:359) One example was a high noble who in one year (1242) imported 100,000 kan of Sung coins, "an amount equivalent in that period to the cost of building the complex of a dozen or so buildings needed to establish a major Buddhist temple". (3:359) An increasing amount of coinage was becoming "indispensable" for the rising warrior class by the early thirteenth century "with which to buy goods and services". (3:373) By the middle of the thirteenth century, "documents show that nobles and temples paid cash for most wages, stipends, clothing allowances, ceremonial costs, some transportation costs, and the like". (3:367)

Likewise, land was being bought and sold for cash. A particular study of land sales at the end of the twelfth century, showed that of 187 sales, "139 were conducted using rice as the medium of exchange, 7 using cloth, and the remaining using cash". (3:367) As the flow of Chinese coins continued, the "money sickness" as contemporaries termed it, spread rapidly. (3:359) Thus by the early fifteenth century a Korean envoy "was surprised to discover the prevalent use of money. Even those travelling from one end of the country to the other, he noted, did not carry provisions because coins were accepted everywhere at inns and post stations and even by toll collectors at bridges...He was especially amazed to find that people were paying feeds in cash for public bathhouses". (3:384) By the early sixteenth century, it is concluded that Japan had "inherited

a highly commercialized and monetized economy..." (3:395)

In England, the penetration of cash had meant that very early, from the twelfth century at least, rents in kind had been 'commuted' into cash, with immense consequences for the flexibility and commoditization of land. (refs:) It appears that the same happened in Japan, perhaps, as usual, about a century later than in England. Commutation, or 'daisenno' as it was known, "became prevalent during the latter half of the Kamakura period", i.e. the twelfth century onwards. The precise progress of this trend is given by a particular study that is cited. "Sasaki Ginya collected 170 historical records of the 1230-1350 period containing references to at least partial commutation and classified them by date. He found that only 6 of these records belonged to the 1230-50 period, 38 to the 1251-1300 period, and 126 to the 1301-50 period". (3:368) This commutation, among other things, enabled the cultivators "to plant more efficient mixes of grains, vegetables, and other cash crops". (3:361) This was paralleled more generally in trading, where "the continuing monetization of the economy...spread from cities to villages with profound effects", for instance, the "use of coins made trading much more efficient". (3:361)

Given this rapidly growing tide of monetization, we might expect that, as in England, Italy or Holland, where banks and paper money were relatively early developed, we would find some interesting financial developments in Japan. This is indeed the case. One aspect of this is the development of the currency. At first sight, given the huge demand for coins in medieval Japan, we may ask, as one author does, "Why did the bakufu not mint coins, especially when the need for them was obvious and when Japan had both the raw materials and the technological capability to do so?" (3:385) The two answers given by this author, firstly that Japan still felt linked to China and happy to accept its coinage, and secondly that no single power was great enough to mint coins for the whole of Japan, are not very convincing. It is, however, true that when Japan was re-unified, from the 1580's onwards, Japan for the first time minted its own gold and silver coins. (4:61) Another possible reason for the delay, apart from possible economic advantages which lay concealed in the strategy of exporting the raw silver, letting China 'add value' by stamping it, and then re-importing with some of that value still attached, may have been that there were a number of unusual alternatives to metallic money available in early Japan. One was a form of paper money or bill of exchange.

The oldest surviving evidence of a bill of exchange is dated 1279, and they began to be used from the second half of the thirteenth century. (3:367) They were used "to alleviate the costs and risks of transporting cash over long distances for trading, paying dues in cash..." (3:367) Such bills were very similar to English bills and bonds. They were just one form of sophisticated monetary device. Another kind of paper money was developed by the daimyo. "By the middle of the seventeenth century, it had become a standard practice...to pay samurai with certificates, good for the amount of their stipends and collectible from the daimyo's granary." (4:547) A third device was the development of rice futures. In Osaka in the early eighteenth century, "there were already some thirteen hundred rice brokers...in the city...Soon they also started to deal in futures by buying and selling rice certificates as negotiable instruments that entitled the bearer to withdraw a specified amount of rice from the warehouses." (4:562)

The rapid monetization of the economy was reflected, as in medieval Italy, by the impressive development of a banking system. Part of the roots of this lay, as in parts of western Europe, with religious foundations. "These moneylenders, who were called kashiage or kariage and who usually took pawns, consisted of sanso (literally, 'mountain monks', monks of the powerful Enryakuji temple on Mount Hiei in Kyoto), some toimaru of larger port towns, some monks from other temples, and a number of richer merchants". (3:368) As well as these early proto-banks, in the later eighteenth century, "mutual trust cooperatives" were set up in Japanese villages, somewhat similar to the English Building Societies it would seem, and "these cooperatives came to function as commercial banks for commoners". (4:653) In parallel, "the domain administration developed a banking system by establishing a depository that issued certificates of deposit, offered loans and stored goods and promises of future goods". (5:77)

What all these different institutions show is the huge demand for cash and credit in a rapidly developing economy. This trend in "rapid monetization", was noted in "an official bakufu document issued in 1255" which noted the "visible increase in the number of moneylenders". (3:368) What is of particular interest is that, reflecting the large number of lenders and the relative security and orderliness of the society, the interest rates were so low. We know that very low rates of interest were prevalent in England and Holland in the early modern period, of the order of 3-6% per annum, as compared to characteristic rates of between 30-100% which are characteristic of many pre-industrial economies. (refs:) In Japan, for instance, we are told that in the later seventeenth century, the interest on debts was between 5 and 7 percent per annum. (4:223)

This availability of relatively very cheap credit must have been a great encouragement to economic growth and may have been complemented by relatively low inflation over long periods, again rather in line with England and Holland, and with not too much rapid variation. For instance, despite a relatively rapid rise in the money supply and a period of acute harvest failure, "the underlying rise in prices in Edo" over the period 1816 to 1841 was "of the order of 50 to 60 percent, or a rather modest 2 percent a year." (5:593) (It would be interesting to know what it was in earlier periods.)

Conclusion.

So what general comparative impression of the Japanese economy between the eleventh and the nineteenth century does the newly available scholarship give us? It would appear that despite significant differences, such as its rice agriculture, dependence on Chinese coinage for a long period, and closure to most foreign trade during the Tokugawa period, Japan seems to have many features in common with dynamic periods of the European experience, whether late medieval Italy, or early modern Holland and England. Over the five centuries leading to its rapid growth of the nineteenth century, it was becoming richer, more commercialized, more productive in its agriculture and crafts. Since this continuous and relatively uninterrupted growth is uncommon - only a few parts of western Europe and Japan seem to have experienced it - we are still faced with the puzzle of **why** there were these similarities. In order to pursue this question further, we need to move to another

level, namely the demographic and social. In the following chapter we shall look at three of the key factors, population, stratification and education.

PART TWO: BACKGROUND FACTORS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE DEVELOPMENT

Population.

It has for some time been apparent that one of the keys to the economic break-through in England and parts of north-western Europe lay in the unusual demographic pattern. In essence the connection is as follows. Almost all agrarian societies have suffered from what is known as a 'crisis' or 'high-pressure' demographic regime, namely one where the Malthusian predictions hold good. If there are gains in resources, these are soon swallowed up by rapidly rising population through a high fertility rate. There is then a rise in mortality through war, famine or disease, or a combination of these. This cycle inhibits long-term and sustained economic growth. It was characteristic of much of India, China and continental Europe up to the nineteenth century. (refs:)

Only in parts of north-western Europe did this not occur. In these areas a 'homeostatic' or 'low-pressure' pattern emerged whereby population remained almost static for long periods even though wealth was increasing in a sustained way. High mortality did not suddenly emerge to cut back the population. The mechanisms to achieve this slow growth were, in England and other areas with the pattern, a less than maximum fertility. (refs:) Where does Japan fit in?

It is worth noting first that Japan almost exactly paralleled England's pattern in terms of its overall growth of population, although the changes occurred about a century later. In England there was a considerable growth of population in the sixteenth century, which then slowed down. For the one hundred and fifty years before the industrial break through, the population grew hardly at all. In Japan there was considerable growth in the seventeenth century. We are told that "Although accurate statistics were not kept at that time, some demographers and historians place the growth rate in the range of 0.78 to 1.34 percent annually between 1550 and 1700...the country's total population grew from roughly 12 million persons to approximately 26 million to 30 million at the time of the shogun's census in 1721." (4:539, cf. also p.664) But then the population growth rate slowed down over the next 150 years, so that it only grew to xxx in 1870, a growth rate of only xxx percent per year. It then began to rise again rapidly during the early burst of economic activity (5:560), as the growing economy required more labour.

The over-all effect of this unusual pattern was that, in the precarious build-up to rapid economic growth, gains in productivity were not eaten up by runaway population. People became conspicuously richer, but did not invest their growing wealth in children. Thus it is noted that "remarkable fact is that the overall population appears to have remained at roughly the same man-land ratio throughout the Edo period." (4:26) This in itself would not at first seem to be so remarkable when we remember that the area of cultivated land doubled in this period. Yet the curiosity becomes apparent when we add the further fact that there was a huge growth in cities and

towns and in the productivity of land as well as a growth of crafts and manufactures. Thus while the land-person ratio remained roughly constant, the population was conspicuously richer at the end than at the beginning, and this wealth was widely spread through the population.

Just as revealing as the absolute curves of population and resources are the mechanisms by which this balance between the two was maintained. Instead of the 'high-pressure' demographic regimes to be found in all other Asian civilizations and most of Europe, England and Japan both enjoyed a 'low-pressure' regime, with relatively low mortality and fertility rates. Thus we are told that the "demographic rates in the late Tokugawa villages were remarkable for a premodern society. After falling from seventeenth-century levels, the crude birth and crude death rates were in the twenty to thirty range rather than in the forty to fifty range often observed in the recent history of less developed countries before death rates plummeted". (5:555)

If we start with mortality rates, we find that in Japan, as in England, death rates were surprisingly low for a pre-industrial society. We learn that in sample villages from the later eighteenth century onwards "most crude death rate averages were in the twenties per thousand, even in years of hardship. Death rates were more frequently below twenty than above thirty." (4:698) If we remember that such rates are characteristically in the upper thirties or mid forties per thousand in many agrarian societies, we can see how impressive this was. Indeed, so low were the mortality rates, that "Estimated life expectancies for the same samples are higher than many Japanese scholars find believable...". The expectation of life at birth in the later Tokugawa period was in the forties, and this meant that two year old children "had a life expectancy similar to those in Western Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, and one not much different from that in Japan in the early twentieth century." (4:699)

The improved diet which we noted earlier was probably one cause. Another was a combination of good sanitary arrangements and the possibility of quarantining this island against epidemic diseases from the mainland. On what was, in many ways, a very crowded island there was a surprisingly low incidence of those diseases which are associated with density. "The net result of Japanese customs with regard to sanitation was a much lower incidence of epidemic diseases than in Europe and other parts of the world. Cholera was absent until the mid-nineteenth century and then was readily contained, and typhoid seems not have been a problem...Even dysentery...was not the killer of children that it was in the West in the nineteenth century." (4:698) Among the possible contributors may have been the custom of carefully storing night-soil and then using it in agriculture. The absence of plague (did China have plague ?? A.M) and smallpox, is remarkable, and must have been related to Japan's geographical position.

Thus not only were perennial mortality rates low, but the periodic major scourges which cut back numbers in other pre-modern populations, whether in Mediterranean Europe, Russia, India or China, were even more conspicuously absent in Japan than they were in England or Holland. Like England, for a period of five hundred years before industrialization, there were no huge losses through war or foreign invasion. Such absence of war was clearly related to the absence of major epidemics. As we have seen, there were hardly any major famines in Japan during the same five

hundred years.

Given the absence of the usual checks to rising population, we may wonder how population was held back. As one author puts it, "The question, then, is why the Japanese had low birthrates during centuries of gradual but clear upward growth of the economy, a rise in income, and an improved standard of living. The answer is that Japanese were limiting family size through a variety of measures, and they were doing so to maintain and improve their standard of living, rather than as a means of coping with dire circumstances..." (4:699) Let us examine this important suggestion a little further.

The major mechanism for lowering fertility in western Europe and particularly England was the 'west European marriage pattern' of late and selective marriage. (cf. Hajnal) Although not as extreme as England, it is now clear that Japan had roughly the same pattern over the several hundred years leading up to its economic spurt. As regards age at marriage, it would appear that with first marriage for females there was a "tendency to late marriages" in the Tokugawa period, though not as late as those in England. Women in Japan married for the first time "in their early to mid-twenties" (4:700), while in England it was usually in their mid-twenties. There was also selective marriage, with large numbers of persons never marrying. Thus we are told that "Birthrates dropped along with nuptiality in the eighteenth century as increasing numbers of individuals failed to marry and as women married late and shortened their span of childbearing". (5:554) Not only were marriages postponed even later in "years of economic hardship", but "It was also the custom for only one son in each household to marry", (4:700) for "marriage was largely restricted to the head of the household or his successor". (5:553) Even in the early seventeenth century there is evidence that "a sizable number of agricultural labourers dependent on and perhaps residing with patrimonial landlords did not marry". (5:553) This trend continued. Thus "Various village studies have demonstrated a gradual and long-term decrease in the percentage of married women that accompanied the decline in household size." (ibid)

Even relatively late age at marriage and large proportions not marrying was not sufficient to keep the fertility rate low enough, given the low mortality and the aspirations of the Japanese. In England and parts of western Europe, the main supplementary technique used was probably some form of 'family limitation' or contraception. In Japan, another method, which is still much preferred, was used, namely abortion and infanticide.

We are told that "All scholars agree that the Japanese resorted to abortion and infanticide as a means of limiting the number of children within marriage". It appears that "descriptions of abortion, abortionists, and the effects of this practice are abundant, this form of birth control is known to have been widely practiced throughout Japan. Abortion was an undesirable practice but was not a 'sin'." Indeed, it was condoned by the belief that infanticide was a "a means of 'returning' an infant at birth before it had become an individual and a part of society. That is, it was thought of as a form of postpartum birth control." Of course, a number of societies practice abortion and infanticide in periods of acute shortage and desperation. What is really significant is that it was not this pattern that we observe in Japan. Various studies reveal that "these methods were practiced equally in good times and bad, in villages with growing economies, and in those with limited resources for growth."

(4:699-700)

The result of delayed marriage, selective marriage and some form of family limitation was that completed family size was well below that encountered in most agrarian civilizations. Whereas in the majority of peasantries completed family size is of the order of between four and six, in Japan we are told that "In rural village samples, the average number of children in the completed family from the end of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteen was only three and a half children." As the same author points out, this "would have ensured a male heir for most but would have prevented numerous children..." (4:699)

As we shall see later, the ease of adoption of heirs lessened the need to have large families, particularly sons, and was hence an important factor behind this unusually low fertility. It was part of the answer to the much wider question of why there should have been such a pressure against 'natural' fertility.

In my work on English marriage and childbearing, I advanced the argument that the main reason for the control on childbearing in England was that the capitalist and money-conscious society had converted children into commodities; they were to be considered as 'goods' which one might 'afford' or not, as they case might be. They had 'costs' as well as 'benefits'. (cf. Marriage) If we look at the Japanese case, we are struck by an almost identical attitude. Thus one author writes that the "measures taken to lower to the minimum the number of nonproductive members in the household lead us to conclude that Japanese were seeking to create a population favourable to economic production." (4:700) Another tells us that "...the viewpoint appears to have prevailed that additional children represented a burden to be avoided if possible. Wealth must not be dispersed; status must be maintained." (5:554) Children began to be compared with other goods. Thus people "...began to choose to 'trade off' additional children for goods and services for the accumulation of wealth needed to improve or maintain their standard of living and their status within village society". (5:555)

The Japanese, like the English, were carefully calculating their labour force requirements in a very unusual manner. "Analysis of household registration data, albeit for a small number of villages, strongly indicates that Japanese households deliberately limited the number of children they had and controlled the timing and sexual distribution of those that survived". (5:554) Thomas Smith believed that the objectives of those who practiced infanticide in the villages he studied were to achieve "an equilibrium of some sort between family size and farm size; an advantageous distribution of the sexes in children; possibly the spacing of children in a way convenient to the mother; and the avoidance of a particular sex in the next child". (quoted in 5:555)

This is precisely the attitude which Malthus had advocated for Europe. It is the motivation which seems to lie at the heart of the rapid fertility decline we are now seeing in parts of south-East Asia and elsewhere. The attitude sought to maintain a balance between resources and population, rather than an unquestioning drive to seek maximum fertility. The high degree of flexibility, security and relative affluence that is needed as a pre-condition for such a view has often been stressed by demographers. Thus it tells us a good deal about the conditions in early modern Japan and England.

There was the widespread possibility of hiring non-family labour through the institution of servanthood and hence the non-necessity of a large family labour force. There was the flexibility of adoption in the Japanese case. There was the relative affluence and the possibility of protecting oneself in old age through savings. There was the political security. There was the expectation that those children one did have would live. All this was, of course, circular. There was a 'virtuous circle'. People could plan and limit; they became richer; it was then easier to plan, just as Malthus had argued. Yet it was a very unusual situation in the world until recently.

The result was that the Japanese demographic situation was unusual by Asian standards, but remarkably like that of western Europe. Writing of Japan, Yamamura concluded that "all evidence points to a remarkable similarity with pre and early industrial population trends in Europe and no similarity at all between Tokugawa Japan and the other nations of Asia today". (quoted in 5:555) More generally "Social indicators such as mean household size, birthrates, death rates, life expectancy, sex ratios...increasingly came to resemble those in modern societies" (5:562) The consequences in both north-western Europe and Japan were immense.

Migration

One feature which is usually considered a component of demographic analysis also deserves attention; that is migration rates and patterns. It is usually the case, whether we consider much of Ancien Regime Europe or Asia, that there is very little life-time migration, except in certain pastoral areas or in periods of extreme dislocation, in other words famine, war or epidemic. Usually, most of the population remain close to where they were born, often dying in the same community as that of their birth.

One of the greatest surprises emerging from the recent study of English social structure in the later middle ages was the discovery that this was not the case then. It has been found that most people moved to other villages and towns during their lives. The high geographical mobility is characteristic of England from at least the twelfth century.(cf. Individualism) We may thus wonder about the situation in Japan.

Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of discussion or evidence for the medieval period in these volumes of the **Cambridge History**. But from the seventeenth century, at least, there is a large amount of migration. One author writes of the "extraordinary urban-urban migration...the high levels of rural-urban migration necessary to produce and to sustain the unprecedented Tokugawa urbanization, and the massive rural-rural and small-town migration that emerged in the second half of the Tokugawa period". (5:559) Partly this was due to the "massive flow of population to the cities" during the seventeenth century (5:557), but there was also more local migration. "Increasingly during the second half of the Tokugawa period, high rates of migration became evident also in the villages, much of it directed to other villages and to local towns other than the castle cities". (5:556) Thus even in the countryside, despite the ideals of closed community life, "the high rates of migration" made the realization of this ideal impossible. (5:557)

The causes for this high migration need to be established. At first sight it would seem that, as in England, there was a combination of a high degree of commercialization, the flexibility of the family, inheritance customs, the presence of institutions such as servanthood and apprenticeship. This meant that there was a sophisticated labour market totally unlike that in most Ancien Regime peasantries such as those in India, China, eastern and southern Europe. The effects of this high migration were certainly dramatic. As has been pointed out "These conditions of large-scale migration figured importantly in the transformation of social stratification and of the urban system as well as the decision making of households". (5:559) As Marx pointed out long ago, a flexible labour market such as this is a pre-condition for industrial capitalism. It seems to have been present in both England and Japan in the centuries leading up to their more rapid development.

Stratification.

Equally important is another form of mobility, namely social rather than geographical mobility. Here lies one of the very most important areas for possible comparison between England and Japan. In essence, we can follow Tocqueville in distinguishing between two major types of society which one might term 'closed' or 'caste-like' societies, and their opposite, namely 'open' or competitive societies. As Tocqueville noted, the major difference between England and much of Ancien Regime Europe by the eighteenth century was that in England, though there was much status and wealth differentiation, there was the possibility of social mobility. (cf. Individualism...) This openness between groups, between the landed wealth and the new merchant wealth, between towns and country, between an infinity of competing status groups, was a central feature of the burgeoning English society. We may wonder what we find in Japan.

Between the twelfth and late sixteenth centuries, it would appear that Japan was an unusually 'open' society. It is difficult to speak of castes, classes or even estates. Thus one author writes that "there was as yet no particular differentiation among an artisan, manufacturer, peddler, merchant, or a worker engaged in providing services, except perhaps in their economic success or failure." (3:514) Neither in theory nor practice was there rigidity in the large urban and commercial sector. The same was true among the large numbers of those who worked on the land.

In England we know that one of the unusual features of medieval society was the absence of slavery and the unusual fact that even serfs were 'free' men with individual rights in relation to all but their masters. (refs:) One obtains a very similar impression in Japan. The situation there was complicated because there were numerous different sub-groups "based on a complicated status system", with each group having a different name "indicating the group's relative degree of freedom or subordination". The largest group, that is the normal workers on the land, what Japanese historians term 'peasants', were relatively free. We are told that "from observations of the various representative shoen, it is clear that the shoen peasants could act fairly freely and that on occasion they both allied with and resisted the jito and shoen proprietors". (3:120) Thus the same author concludes that "the medieval peasant was basically a 'freeman' (jijymin). Under bakufu law, this kind of freeman was defined as a hyakusho, as distinguished from those who were not free, such as

servants (genin) and retainers (shoju)". (3:121) A 'free' peasantry of this kind is very unusual, only to be found in parts of western Europe and Japan at this early date. It remained free in England and Japan over the centuries that followed. This is of great importance.

The only groups who were not 'free' were the servants and retainers. Thus servants could be bought and sold, and their children removed. Yet, we are told, "they were not accumulated in great numbers or forced to work under cruel conditions but, rather, were treated as part of the family in the patriarchal system". (3:309) They could even be adopted as heirs. Thus begun the institution of servanthood, which is again only found in a developed form in parts of north west Europe and Japan. This institution, providing vital labour mobility, was to flourish in later periods in both areas. Thus "from the eighteenth century onwards, income rose, as it became common for young men and young women to work away from home, often for several years before marriage". (5:559)

Thus we are dealing with something that is far from slavery, though it does imply tied labour. Another form of household labour which is again found in abundance in England and parts of north-western Europe and Japan, but not on any great scale elsewhere, is apprenticeship. In the early modern period, we are told, the "son of a merchant or craftsman began to learn the trade from about the age of ten by becoming an apprentice (detchi), either at home or, more commonly, in another household. If he were apprenticed out, the term was usually ten years. He would live as a member of his master's household with the other apprentices and servants and would receive only his meals and, twice a year, a seasonal change of clothing. His own family was expected to provide pocket money and other necessities." (4:721) This account is almost word for word applicable to England, which only varied from it in details, such as the fact that the term of apprenticeship in England was usually seven years, rather than ten.

At the end of his apprenticeship, an apprentice in Japan was expected to stay on for another five years or so to express his gratitude for the training he had received. He might in this period be promoted and kept in the firm. He "might be given his own shop as head of a branch family (**bunke**)."

Furthermore, "Should the master lack a male heir, a marriage might be arranged between a daughter of the house" and the young man who "would be adopted as heir to the business and house". (5:722) This was all very similar to the situation in England, for instance as immortalized in Hogarth's 'Good Apprentice'. The functions of the institutions were also identical. The description for Japan could well apply to England. "For richer merchants (and rural landowners also), apprenticeship was a way to make a man of a son who might be spoiled at home." For the young man himself, he would be exposed to the realities of life - hard work and discipline, getting along with strangers, the value of money - as well as the experience of learning a business in operation." (5:722) It is all very similar to the English case.

Returning to the general question of social stratification, as in so many features the reforms of the early Tokugawa seemed to change all this. They aimed to impose, for the first time, a rigid system of social stratification. We could note that the four major strata into which Japan was to be divided was unique, the normal system is warriors, priests, townsmen and peasants (as in the Indian caste system or medieval Europe), while the Japanese system left out priests and divided the townsmen into

merchants and craftsmen. Nevertheless, the actual fact of stratification seems at first sight to destroy the openness of the medieval period. Thus we are told that "Of course, status distinctions had existed in the medieval period, but during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the shogun and daimyo sought new ways to bring about a more complete separation of peasant from warrior and peasant from merchant." (4:123) Thus marriages between the different groups were prohibited and the groups were to be residentially and occupationally distinct and have a separate life-style. (4:123, 5:506) In other words, the Tokugawa were trying, as most rulers do, to institute a form of caste-like structure, though without the ritual purity aspect of the Hindu varna. The closure was meant to prevent all kinds of mobility, not only social, but occupational and geographical. Thus "Peasants were barred from entering the samurai class, and in principle, from moving to the cities, from switching to non-agricultural pursuits, and from selling or using their land as they might see fit". (5:516)

In many societies such a policy would have been effective and was. How about Japan? It is recognized that while the government and neo-Confucian thinkers recommended this four-order system, "it was never given a legal basis, and its artificiality and imprecision must be kept in kind." (4:708) The outward signs of the failure to create and maintain rigidity are numerous. We have already seen that in relation to geographical mobility it failed; there was massive mobility. Furthermore, we have seen that there was much movement between occupations, with many farmers having bi-occupations. This fluidity was shown in externals such as dress. Thus "one would expect to find that dress varied by class and income in a highly stratified society" yet "what is remarkable for Tokugawa Japan is how similar the basic cut of the clothing was for each class." Thus we are told that the "daily wear of men of both the samurai and merchant classes was remarkably similar in basic style...dress in fact was gradually being standardized and class differences minimized." (4:692-3) The blending emerged as a result of a number of factors, some of which may be briefly mentioned.

Firstly, it was impossible to maintain the supposed distinction between the two classes of craftsmen and merchants. "In practice, no attempt was made to distinguish craftsmen from merchants: both were treated as a single group..." (4:709) Secondly, within each supposed 'class' there were great differences in actual wealth and hence instability was introduced into the classification system. We are told that "Bushi included not only the shogun and the daimyo but also the humble servants of samurai. Farmers ranged from rich landowners and village headmen to tenants and agricultural servants." (4:711) Thirdly, the distinctions between the supposed top group, the samurai, and the rest were soon blurred. For instance, while "Intermarriage between samurai and commoners was considered inappropriate", in fact "bushi were permitted, not uncommonly, to take commoner wives" and hence "A kind of cultural levelling occurred..." (4:711) The mechanism of adoption added to this fluidity; many rich commoner's children were adopted into the samurai ranks. The alliance between ancient blood and new wealth which was such a characteristic of late medieval and early modern England, was also common in Japan.

The fact that the samurai as a group were unable to maintain their relative economic position during the Tokugawa period undermined the ideal structure. "The meaning of class was undercut

most of all by the gradual erosion of the financial position of much of the samurai class in the middle of the seventeenth century, while at the same time the income of urban commoners was rising..." (4:711) Thus it is suggested that "a major cause for the blurring of class lines was economic. From the eighteenth century on, if not earlier, social class determined occupation, but it did not determine income." (4:704) Thus there was a growing mingling and mixing of groups as wealth increased. The tendency of money to undermine the supposed estates, a phenomenon apparent in England from at least the thirteenth century, is summarized by a number of authors. Thus one concludes that "In both the city system and the class system, one finds an initially highly rigid, planned arrangement persisting in important respects, whereas in other less obvious, but perhaps no less important, respects, it yielded to a highly competitive, fluid arrangement. Increasingly the forces of competition spread until even the countryside was engulfed". (5:547) Thus Yamamura noted that under the pressure of economic necessity, class distinctions became "virtually nonexistent" (5:531)

Finally, everything became purchasable on the market - including the highest ranks. For instance, as early as 1783, "the han provided the convenience of a price list for status, from 50 ryo for wearing a sword to 620 ryo for full warrior standing". (5:79) This was merely regularizing what was already in place; the possibility of easily exchanging wealth for status, the hallmark of the stratification system of modern societies. All this helps to explain why, at the Meiji restoration, the remains of the system of separate estates evaporated so very quickly. A summary also captures the gap between the formal rules and the practice. "If we look only at how Japanese society was supposed to operate, we will find a rigid class society in place throughout the Tokugawa period." On the other hand, in practice, "Japan lost its class distinctions far more quickly and far more thoroughly than England did". It seems very likely that "much of the reason has to be the blurring of class lines before the Meiji Restoration..." (4:703-4)

Indeed, we might argue further that it was precisely the tension between a formally instituted ladder of status, with honours and privileges, combined with a widespread ability to move up and down this ladder, that was a key component of the activity in both Japan and England. As one historian put it, a "high degrees of social mobility combined with intense consciousness of social status" is one of the central contradictions of Japan at this time. (5:533) The same was true of medieval and early modern England. There was a dynamic tension which encouraged people to strive for status markers. Malthus long ago saw such status insecurity, the fear of loss of status and the desire to rise, as the only force strong enough to combat the powerful natural urge to procreate. (ref:) It is indeed a powerful drive, and both Japan and England seem to have contained just the right balance of instituted inequality and the possibility of mobility. A set of parallel status and wealth ladders were in place up which people were climbing and falling. The rungs on the ladder were close enough for people to move from one to the next within their life-times, and for their children to be pushed on up the ladder. Such a situation is relatively unusual, only to be found in parts of western Europe and Japan in the early modern period.

Education and literacy.

Another pre-condition for the development of modern industrial capitalism is often thought to be the presence of widespread literacy and numeracy. In England, for instance, the use of paper and writing, for accounts, for legal transactions and for many other purposes, was very developed by the later middle ages. Then, in the three centuries leading up to the industrial revolution there was a spread of educational facilities; the funding of many schools, the development of printing, the spread of popular reading, all have been documented (refs: Spufford et al). The relatively high levels of general education and literacy are often thought to be a necessary pre-condition for the development of a complex urban-industrial civilization.

The situation in England, Holland or Scandinavia is often contrasted to that in the characteristic Ancien Regime society, where a tiny proportion of the population, the **litterati**, govern in the midst of a sea of illiterate peasants, as in much of Europe, Russia, China and India until the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. The contrast is thought to be significant. If indeed it is more than an accident that literacy and economic progress are linked, then we might wonder what is to be found in the Japanese case.

If we start with the very rapid developments of the later nineteenth century, it is widely recognized that the important component was an unusual degree of education and literacy by the second half of the nineteenth century in Japan. We are told that the "legacy of the earlier spread of education was vital to the new society in many ways". (5:561) Such literacy meant that the central government even before the Meiji restoration could communicate with the population, and the volume of information that could be transmitted "seem to have been exceptional for a society at such a comparatively low level of per capita income." (6:398)

There are various ways to gauge the length and depth of this literate tradition. One is to look at the formal educational provision. For the later period, "Ronald Dore has traced a chronology of change and wrote that by 1868 Japan was transformed into a literate society". (5:560) This was related to the rapid growth of schools and academies in eighteenth century Japan. "Domain schools were being founded more rapidly than ever before; private academies mushroomed throughout the land; and over a thousand parish schools for commoners appeared". (5:72) Thus "Samurai and official literacy was advanced nationwide by increased enthusiasm for founding schools throughout Japan...59 domain schools were established between 1781 and 1803. But soon the pace accelerated." (5:57)

In England, the Protestants stressed the importance of education so that each individual could read the bible and be an intelligent believer. Likewise in Japan neo-Confucian and other pressure seems to have led to a favourable attitude towards the rather unusual idea that it would be good to have an educated populace. Evidence of this attitude is widespread. For instance, the noted Confucian scholar Jinsai, who was himself the son of a lumber merchant, observed: "It will not do for chonin and farmers not to have learning". In another book for merchants he wrote, "It goes without saying that those of low status should also learn writing and arithmetic and should also learn to read a little." (4:718) Thus "education, particularly that of the common people, remained a matter of concern" in eighteenth century thought. (4:455)

Of course, there are different types of education, and it is equally important that the education should be of a particular, type. Many agrarian societies encourage some education among the literati, but it is largely directed towards the study of ritual and of religious texts. Hence it may have little practical effect, as in India or Tibet. What is particularly interesting in the Japanese case is that the education was secular and practical. We are told that "Popular acceptance of schooling hinted on its relevance to mobility aspirations". In other words, it was linked to that high social mobility which we have already noted. Hence "Secular and practical, popular education responded to the widespread desire for self-improvement and to opportunities to apply improved skills". (5:560) The Japanese who in the later nineteenth century took Samuel Smiles and his **Self-Help** to heart, had long been interested in practical, useful, education.

The evidence for widespread literacy early on in the Japanese population is available in the vast amount of writing that still survives down to the village level. Thus "writers have pointed to the accumulation of village achieves, administrative and legal documents of all kinds, and commercial records." (4:715) Or again, the statistics of printing and the book trade tell their own story. Before 1590 there was almost no printing in Japan, except in Buddhist monasteries. Yet "within a century, well over ten thousand books were in print, sold or rented by more than seven hundred bookstores." (4:725-6) Even allowing for the relative size of population, this was probably a higher ratio of books in print and bookstores to the population as a whole than anywhere in Europe, including England. Particular books were published and re-published for a voracious audience. Thus a dictionary originally made in about 1444 saw about eight hundred editions between the late sixteenth century and the early Meiji period. (4:721)

The rapid expansion of the book trade is quite staggering. For instance "By 1659 the publication and sale of books had so expanded that Kyoto dealers began to publish, for the benefit of booksellers, lists of works currently available. Starting with 1,600 titles in twenty-two subject categories, the classifications expanded to seventy-two as more and more different kinds of books were published..(a list in 1696)...ran to 674 pages...7,800 titles.." By about 1720, we are told, there were about two hundred publishers in Kyoto alone. For the whole of the Edo period, some 3,753 publishers have been identified. (4:731) This must be many times the number found in Great Britain, Italy or elsewhere in the early modern period.

Individuals collected impressive libraries. For instance, "a book inventory of the fertilizer dealer Sanda of Kashihara, compiled about 1730" listed the 803 volumes that his family had acquired in the previous two generations. (4:732) Books were not only read in the central area of Japan, but penetrated to the remotest areas. For instance "Takizawa Bakin, perhaps the greatest and most successful of the authors of lengthy 'reading books' (yomihon), wrote that his books were read even in distant Sado Island." (5:68) Such books may have reached these areas on the backs of peddlers who "went about the streets and into the countryside with book frames on their backs piled high with books for sale or rent." (4:732) Just as the Japanese may have been the first to develop sophisticated futures markets, so they were developing the lending library well before Benjamin Franklin introduced the concept into America. The peddlers rented out books, while in Edo there were in the eighteenth century some eight hundred book-lending shops (kashihonya) which were

organized in twelve guilds...and they rented books for periods of fifteen days." (5:68)

Thus, an initial impression is that if we were to compare Japan and England, it seems likely that we would find that Japan had even higher rates of general literacy, more schools, a larger and more active book market in the two hundred years leading up to its economic take-off. Certainly, both societies were relatively well educated and very dependent on writing and reading down to the village level in a way which was not to be found in the majority of pre-industrial societies.

Science and technology.

While almost all the conditions for the development of industrial capitalism are present in both Japan and England, there is one central area where their history appears to have diverged in a way which made it unlikely that Japan would have autonomously industrialized. This is in the area of science and technology. What appears to be missing in Japan was that famed growth of an experimental science and a rapidly developing technology, often termed the 'scientific revolution', without which the English industrial revolution would not have occurred.

This is a large topic which deserves fuller discussion, probably in a separate chapter. In the following account I will concentrate almost exclusively on science, largely for the revealing reason that there is very little indeed in the **Cambridge History** on the development of technology in Japan. Apart from allusions to improvements in agricultural tools and improvements in craft activities, there is very little attention paid to important technological break-throughs in Japan. This omission may well reflect the reality, namely that there were none. Further investigation will probably confirm the impression that in so far as there was innovation, it consisted in refining techniques which had come from China. It would appear that, between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, there were no major internally generated revolutions in technology in Japan. This is one of the ways in which it differed from northern Europe and in particular Holland and England. This needs to be explored. For the moment we will concentrate on what lay behind this, namely 'science' or the knowledge base.

In the light of recent research on eighteenth and nineteenth century Japanese thought, it is not difficult to make a preliminary case that there are some elements which were necessary constituents of an open, experimental, scientific tradition and which parallel the scientific tradition in the West. A few of these may be noted.

Firstly there was a growing theory that society was unstable, constantly changing, was artificially created, not a natural organism. This fundamental realization meant that like any other artificial creation it should be studied in a dispassionate way. "History, Nakamoto reasoned, underwent constant change. Language and the meaning of words also changed. Each historical present was continuously interpreting its past and changing its mind about basic philosophical ideas." (4:613) This relativity and objective 'scientific' approach to time and change reached its highest expression in the work of the eighteenth century thinker Sorai. His famous dictum that "The ultimate form of scholarly knowledge is history", was related to his belief that "human history was not 'natural', but

was 'created', fashioned with artificial means." (4:601,604) It appears that he did not see society as natural, organic, but rather artificial and based on contract. He called on scholars to examine the tension between the natural and the artificial, on the discrepancy between the two and "not on stable continuity". (4:608)

This critical and questioning attitude, which is essential for science, found other expressions. Baien argued that the "fundamental approach to knowledge" was based on the need to "introduce constantly an attitude of doubt, so that nothing would be accepted as unequivocally and self-evidently true." (4:636) There was already an implication that new things could be discovered, an idea of an expanding universe of knowledge, which is a main feature of Renaissance and Enlightenment thought in Europe. Thus one writer argued that the "human mind in every present age, therefore, takes part in an ongoing process of uncovering insights into nature as an inexhaustible source of knowledge. In this continuing process, knowledge once believed to be unshakably true will constantly be altered through the exercise of doubt." (4:625) This axiom of doubt and the relativity of thought it implies is, of course, a fundamental presumption of science.

The aim of the thinker was thus to grasp the principles of things. Sakuma, for instance, was involved in the "investigation of principles". Thus "Rather than investigating to satisfy the needs of ethics, he emphasized grasping the 'principle of things' in the natural, material world." (5:245) It is significant, however, that he did so consciously in relation to the new western science, mediated through the translation of Dutch books, which was beginning to influence Japanese eighteenth century concepts. His thought, in fact, is a vivid illustration of the large gap between traditional neo-Confucian philosophy and western scientific thought. "What he proposed was a 'correspondence' between Chu Hsi Confucianism, which he never rejected, and Western natural science." (5:245) In other words, he tried to find one thread of Confucian thought which would correspond to the powerful scientific thought of the West. "He now tried to restructure Neo-Confucianism by rescuing an earlier tradition of philosophic monism and by superimposing the idea of Kyuri on Western natural science". (ibid)

Two things can be noted here as particularly significant. Firstly, the essential separation of thought from its dominance by political or religious forces seems to have been occurring in early modern Japan. Thinkers could begin to pursue their own goals without being dominated or destroyed by political or religious forces. Something similar had occurred in parts of Europe, despite the returning force of the Catholic Inquisition. A work of 1713, for instance "argued for the disengagement of the empirical study of nature from its moralistic and political uses". (4:622) The causes for this separation are unclear; the "development of thought in a form independent from religion is explained as the result of the separation of religion and thought, or even as the result of a trend towards rejection of religion", though the author who summarizes these arguments takes a contrary view. (4:396) What is not in doubt is that the separation was occurring.

The second major feature was the belief in an objective, external, reality. There is a plausible view that the reason for the non-development of science in China was the growing dominance of Buddhism from xxxx, which turned all physical things into an illusion, **maya**, and hence made

empirical science impossible. Introspection and the interpretation of states of consciousness were the only valid forms of 'science'. A kind of subjectivism flourished which undermined any sustained analysis of the physical world. (cf. Needham) Hence we are told that "Buddhism, for example, advanced a philosophy that nature could not serve as a stable ontological reference because it was in a constant state of impermanence and flux." (4:628)

For complex reasons, the forms of religion which flourished in Japan, unusual blends of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto, do not seem to have had this debilitating effect. In fact, the particular type of neo-Confucian thought in Japan gave confidence that there was an external physical reality and encouraged a desire to study its principles. We are told that neo-Confucian thought allowed objective knowledge. "Above all, it was theorized that this cosmology could be verified through the diligent and disciplined observation of things close at hand..", through the use of "universal reason". (4:599) Thus the writer Ekken focused "on the physical world as theoretically central and not relative to another metaphysically conceived reality..." (4:624) In this way the seeds of a scientific approach were sown, though it is difficult at this period to disentangle the influence of western mathematics and science on Japanese thought.

There is also evidence of an interest in practical knowledge or experiments, very similar again to the handbooks to be found in western Europe but absent, I suspect (check) in China in the same period. Thus in the eighteenth century Yasusada wrote in "the easily accessible language of the day about the fundamentals of scientific farming, the accurate assessment of seasonal, weather, climatic, and soil conditions to maximize agricultural production. Handbooks based on Yasusada's work proliferated among the Tokugawa peasantry..." (4:630) Thus we could argue that the Japanese were on the verge of a scientific and technological break-through. We shall, however, never know, because at this point the situation was abruptly changed by the wholesale importation of western science and technology.

What we can see, however, is that even if some of the pre-conditions were present, there is little sign of any real internally generated technological or scientific revolution beginning to occur in Japan any more than there is in China. Contemporaries pointed to the fact that "what distinguished Western societies from Japan was their discovery and development of science and technology". (5:237) It is really impossible to argue against this conclusion. Another sign and cause of the difference lies in the institutional background to scientific thought in the two areas.

In Europe, from the twelfth century at least, a vast, well-endowed and separate set of institutions had grown up to pursue knowledge as an end in itself. These were the Universities, later to be supplemented by a host of other institutions such as the Royal Society. Europe was covered with these 'research laboratories in the making'. Though much of the most important work was done outside them, there can be little doubt that both symbolically and in practice, they were important. Just to take one of them, Cambridge in England, it is not difficult to maintain the view that while the major discoveries of many of its **alumni** were done later, and away from the University, without its presence we would not have the fundamental discoveries associated with the names of Francis Bacon, Newton, Locke, Babbage, Darwin, Keynes, Crick and Watson and others. We may then ask

where the equivalent institutional centres for promoting knowledge were in Japan. The answer, of course, is that they were absent.

The nearest to centres of learning were the monastic institutions of Japan, virtually eliminated in the later sixteenth century and never significant as centres of practical science. After their elimination, until the founding of the first universities after the Meiji restoration (when Tokyo University ???), there were no real institutionalized "think tanks". The organized pursuit of the deeper principles of knowledge as a full-time occupation, and the teaching of these methods to each generation, does not seem to have been considered as a necessity in Japan.

Thus one might argue that Japan had almost all the necessary ingredients for modern industrial capitalism. The one feature was lacking, a powerful science and technology, was easily and rapidly absorbed because it was congruent with what was already present in embryo in Japan. The fact that it could be imported from the West saved Japan from the many centuries of thought and experiment which had been required over the whole continent of Europe, and based on Greek achievements. Given the effort in the West, and what we see had been achieved by the eighteenth century, it is very doubtful that such a development had even started in Japan.

We have now seen some of the economic manifestations of the similarities between Japan and Europe. Moving to the level of the social and intellectual, we have looked at some of the associated features, demography, social stratification, education. Yet even after this we are still some way from explaining why there are such curious similarities in these two cases, which are all the more peculiar because as has been stressed both cases deviate so far from the normal trajectory of Ancien Regime agrarian civilizations. In order to move further in our explanatory quest, we need to move down to another level again, namely to look at the three fundamental institutional features which are both shaped by, and influence, the economic and social levels of which we have written.

PART THREE; SOME INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS BEHIND JAPANESE AND ENGLISH GROWTH

Kinship and family.

There is no doubt that the Japanese family system had important effects on economic development. Its influence lay in its unusual nature when we compare it to the majority of kinship systems. Three peculiarities emerge from the **Cambridge History**, though they are nowhere explained or discussed.

The first is the flexible, contractual and artificial nature of the Japanese family. In almost all civilizations, the central family unit, the clan or lineage, is a 'natural' grouping, a 'community' of blood-relatives. In Japan we are given the impression "of an extraordinary family system that is both demanding in its concern for status and flexible in its acceptance of adoption and family limitation as means to these ends". (5:552) While the 'ie' or 'house' is the "characteristic feature of Japanese society...", this was not a natural unit, based on blood ties, as it is, for instance, in India or China. We are told that the "house was not identical with a consanguineous family unit; it incorporated as members unrelated persons such as employees (hokonin), and it was possible for an adopted heir who had no blood relationship to the other members to succeed to its headship." Thus, rather than being a natural kinship group, the 'ie' "may be described more accurately as an artificial functional entity that engaged in a familial enterprise or was entitled to a familial source of income." (4:373)

The family in Japan seems to have been the result of a curious mixture of status and contract. "On the one hand, the house was expected to carry out a particular function, to act as a *gesellschaft*. At the same time, it also had the characteristics of a family like organic social unit, or *gemeinschaft*." (4:376) This artificiality, whereby links between blood relatives rapidly weakened with time, can be seen, for instance, in the link between the family's main line (*honke*) and its branch lines (*bunke*). The relations tended to weaken "as the latter formed strong ties with other warrior houses in their geographical areas, becoming in the process more independent of their former blood relations". (3:130) This flexibility and artificiality seems to have been one of the principal reasons why it was later possible to expand the family principle into entirely non-blood organizations such as business firms. Family-like, but artificially created, these quasi-groups have played an enormously important part in providing cohesion for Japanese commercial and industrial society. Thus there is a model of how to provide links between organizations. There was in medieval Japan the "extended 'ufi' system in which family and 'family-like' bonds extended over branch (*ichimon*), allied (*fudai*) and even subordinate (*kenin*) families surrounding the main line of an aristocratic lineage. This ufi-type structure lay at the heart of any power-holding arrangement, providing the basic framework through which authority was exercised". (3:10-11) Something similar can be found in Japanese organizations in the later twentieth century.

One mechanism which led to this peculiarly flexible situation was the widespread possibility of

non-kin adoptions. "Adoption was readily accepted as a means to provide continuity or to bring a meritorious successor into an important post. Continuation of the blood line clearly was a lower priority than was perpetuation of the ie." (5:550) Such adoption in turn was but one feature of the unusual system of inheritance in Japan.

In almost all civilizations, inheritance is automatic; all (male) children receive an equal share in the family estate. In fact it is often misleading to use the word 'inheritance' as such, since there is always joint ownership by all the living members of a family. The idea of 'disinheriting' one of the children, or of selecting one of them, or of bringing in non-kin to succeed, is quite inconceivable, since it immediately implies private ownership by the older generation. In fact, all children have a fixed birth right in the estate.

Thus we are in a different realm of ideas when in England we enter from the twelfth century an era when disinheritance becomes possible, male primogeniture spreads through the general population. This pattern, which has so many consequences and indicates so much about concepts of property, is not to be found in any large civilization outside Europe, except Japan. We are told that in the early medieval period, up to the twelfth century, as in England, partible inheritance was the norm. "In the early part of this period, partible practices were the norm, with women included in the regular inheritance pool. Because distinguished families might hold multiple 'jito' offices, children sometimes received individual titles and established separate lines that gained recognition from Kamakura." (3:86)

Yet, during the real feudal phase in Japan, as in England, the pressure away from lateral to vertical inheritance, towards the nuclear family and away from brothers and their children, developed. Thus "During the Kamakura times, the tendency was strong to eschew lateral for vertical inheritance, which meant that clannishness in property matters remained relatively undeveloped." Thus we are told that "In place of unencumbered, alienable rights to daughters, for example, life bequests and annuities were set up, with reversion to the principal heir or his heir as part of an emerging system of entail". (3:86) Along with this, partible inheritance gave way to impartible inheritance, with one heir alone inheriting. So "divided inheritance gradually gave way to unitary inheritance, which granted the entire family holding to the head, to whom his siblings were then required to subordinate themselves." (3:130) The pressures against the other siblings increased, as in England. "Fathers, moreover, began enjoining inheriting sons to maintain the integrity of family holdings and to reduce or eliminate secondary recipients". (3:86)

Although these practices did not become universal, there was effectively a change which is almost exactly similar, both in nature, timing and perhaps cause, to the English case. In other words, it became possible and indeed necessary through wills, adoption and other mechanisms to direct the inheritance in a certain way. There was no longer automatic heirship. Bracton's famous dictum, **nemo est heres viventis**, no-one is the heir of a living man, was as true in Japan as it was in England. We are told that "fathers (and mothers) could write and rewrite wills and progeny might be disinherited...it was left to the house head to select a principal heir, who might be a younger son." (3:86) This was a tradition that was unchanged until the twentieth century.

The similarity in the system of inheritance was reflected in the shape and size of the domestic unit in Japan. With single-heir inheritance and the shedding of the other children, who either migrated away or remained unmarried, the Japanese household, like the English one, was relatively small and simple during the three centuries leading up to the spurt of economic growth. If we wish to trace the earlier shape of the household, it is difficult to know whether here, also, there was a change at the end of the medieval period. Such a change is implied, though not documented, by the Cambridge History. It is implied that it did. We are told that a "decree promulgated by Hideyoshi in 1594, for instance, forbade a peasant family from living with a collaterally related family if both families had independent incomes, and it further ordered such families to construct separate residences." (4:482) This both implies that more complex families existed, and provides an extraordinary case of a government intervening at this early date to bend the family in the direction of simplicity.

It is also implied elsewhere that there was a change when it is stated that the "small-household pattern, usually characterized by only one married couple, spread from one area to the next until by the early nineteenth century it had blanketed the areas studied", (5:553) and that changes in the numbers of households "indicates a rearrangement of household configuration away from a complex, extended family toward smaller nuclear families..." (4:539) Without any accurate listings for the period before the seventeenth century, it is impossible to be certain whether there was a real shift. All that we know is that from the later seventeenth century, at least, when such listings do survive, we are immediately confronted with a situation very similar to that in England, with relatively small and simple households. There is, however, one difference. In Japan, but not in England, there was often a 'stem' family arrangement whereby the elderly parents would live with the inheriting son and his family. This made the household somewhat more 'complex' and on average about one third of a person larger than the English household. In comparison to the joint and extended families created by partible and joint ownership in China and India, however, the Japanese household structure is quite unusual.

Feudalism and power.

The characterization of the political structure of Japan over the last thousand years, and the ways in which this compares with England, is both complex and important. It will require separate and longer treatment since it is probably one of the two or three keys to the mystery of the origins of capitalism as well as the similarity of Japan and England. It is particularly difficult to deal with this subject because we are dealing with an unusually dynamic and contradictory system in both cases. So what follows must be treated as only a few shreds and patches of a preliminary sketch on this subject. These are hints which will be followed up at greater length later.

We may start with Tocqueville's elaboration of the problem, namely that there are two extremes to which societies tend to gravitate, complete fragmentation (Bloch's 'dissolution of the state') or complete integration (Wittfogel's 'Oriental Despotism'), and that it is almost impossible to maintain a balance between them. The normal tendency is for a powerful government such as that which had been established in Japan by the tenth century, or England by the eleventh to increase its monopoly

of power, to eliminate all competition and to create a patrimonial and absolutist political structure. We may wonder how far this happened in Japan.

In the Japanese case, we are told that in the medieval period "Hakuseki identified two crucial trends...One was the steady decline of imperial authority all through the tenth and eleventh centuries...The other was the ascendancy of the aristocracy of the sword and, with it, a comprehensive tradition of non-centralized rule..."(4:615) Thus "It has often been observed that centrifugal tendencies were strongly evident in every social phenomenon of medieval Japan..."(3:93) Many historians locate the period of authentic feudalism from the later twelfth century, with the Kamakura bakafu, and in particular Minamoto Yoritomo who created the offices of military governor and military estate steward, which "represented no less than a merging of the systems of vassalage and benefice". Yoritomo "became a feudal chieftain, and Japan was thereby launched on its medieval phase. Japanese history was part of world history, with east and west exhibiting similar patterns". There was "the emerging dominance of warrior authority and the declining power of the central proprietor over the land, its revenues, and inhabitants". (3:260)

Throughout the following centuries, not only was there a division of power at the centre, between Emperor and Shogun, with their separate courts and authority, but also power grew at the periphery. Thus the local governors gradually built up their local power bases. The shugo or military governors consolidated their military power in the medieval period and later the "sengoku daimyo drew their primary authority from their ability to exercise power and to maintain local control..." (3:278, 226) These developments reflected their increasing power and the decentralization of authority. This tendency towards the fragmentation of power increased in the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries. Thus "...from the time of the Onin War (1456-77), the shugo's increasing separation and independence from the bakufu became undeniable, and the decentralization of local authority proceeded apace". (3:231) Each warrior lord built up his separate domain.

It thus looked as if Japan, like fifteenth century England during the Wars of the Roses, was disintegrating, moving towards the anarchic feudalism that plagued France, with over-mighty subjects breaking away from the centre. Instead, in both cases, a dynasty arose which through its ruthless and efficient exercise of power created a form of late, centralized, 'feudalism'. In England this was the Tudors, in Japan the Tokugawa shoguns. The mixed forms which they created, a blend of centralization and delegation, continue to puzzle historians.

If we turn to the Japanese case first, Japanese scholars find it difficult to characterize the years between Nobunaga in the late sixteenth century and the Meiji restoration. On the one hand, the political system looks like a form of restored Kamakura feudalism, after the interruption of the Onin wars and their fragmented aftermath. Thus Nakamura Kichiji "concluded that the 'kinsei' age witnessed the reformulation under the Tokugawa shogunate of the essential components of medieval feudalism in a more politically stable and highly organized form." (4:97) Western scholars have used such phrases as "late feudalism" or "centralized feudalism" as labels to translate 'kinsei'. (4:8) Yet the ambivalence is shown by the fact that Japanese scholars tend to think of the Edo period as "being more feudal than modern, whereas the Western historians think of the same era as more

modern than feudal." (ibid)

The problem seems partly to stem from the fact that, as Maitland said of England, Japan at this time could be seen to be either the most feudal or the least feudal of societies. On the one hand, the fact that the whole of Japan was unified under powerful shoguns during the Tokugawa era, who required the allegiance and attendance of their feudal lords, seems to suggest centralization. For instance, not only did the principal lords have to reside in the capital in alternative years (?), but also the "sixty-eight provinces were divided among 250 feudal lords, or daimyo, all to some extent autonomous but all having sworn...undying loyalty to the Tokugawa Shogun." (4:425) Moreover, the power of the centre was re-enforced by the fact that in Japanese feudalism, as in English (but not French), inferior lords owed direct allegiance to the centre, rather than to their own Daimyo. Thus "...it does appear that the Shogun could go over the heads of his shugo by relying on less powerful but more directly controlled provincial houses". (3:201)

On the other hand, the alternative tendency, that is towards the destruction of all local autonomy, towards absolutism, was also not found. As one writer puts it, perhaps thinking of France or Germany, "By comparison with European societies under similar circumstances, one is struck by the lack of effort on the part of central authority, the bakufu, to increase its powers after the mid-seventeenth century." (4:30) Thus there were many checks on absolute power during this period. Thinking of the period, "We think immediately of the balance of power within the political structure - the remarkable network of checks and balances at almost every level." (4:23)

What is more difficult to understand is why this balance was maintained. What is clear is that the "central fact of Tokugawa history was the bakufu's inability to improve the imperfect political controls with which it began the period throughout the two and one-half centuries of its rule." Consequently it was forced to accept "its role as the greatest of the feudal lords", thus closing itself "off from the possibility of devising a more rational centralized structure". (5:72) Perhaps this gives one clue; after all, the role of greatest of the feudal lords was dependent on the presence of an Emperor, an alternative fount of power. Without the dualism of Emperor and shogun in Japan, just as without the dualism of Crown and Parliament in England, there would have been a greater tendency towards absolutism.

Another hint as to why the daimyo were, in practice, "left with considerable freedom in the administration of their domains" is suggested. "The bakufu found itself caught between the desire to reduce daimyo military capacity so as to lessen the likelihood of rebellion, and the necessity, for purposes of defence and the maintenance of domestic peace, to keep a certain level of military force in readiness." (4:159) The fact that the threat of external invasion was minimized by sea defences on both these islands is clearly of great significance here in altering the balance between the centre and the periphery.

Whatever the reason for the unusual balance of power, it is agreed that up to the later nineteenth century there was in existence a centralized, yet decentralized, modern, yet feudal, political system, both overlapping with, yet different from, its predecessors; "although the early modern sociopolitical

structure can be considered feudal, it was different from that of the medieval period." (4:125) At the Meiji restoration, this balance of power was modified, so that "the decentralized structure of early modern feudalism with a central state under the aegis of the traditional sovereign", was transformed into what would increasingly become visible as a modern absolutism. (5:308)

The tension during the Tokugawa period, a political structure that was neither absolutist nor disintegrated, has a considerable familiarity for those who have observed the constitutional monarchy of England, both powerful and centralized, yet balanced by the lords and commons and believed to rule under the law. These appear to be the two known instances where neither Yeats' prophecy that "the centre cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world", nor the centralized absolutism of a Philip II or Louis XIV came into being. Perhaps, for example, this helps to explain the curious nature of the discussions of power in medieval Japan. For instance, "One is struck by the pragmatic spirit of these general statements on government and state craft. They clearly stand on a middle ground in placing military rule into the context of a polity that included both an emperor and a large court (kuge) community. No model excluded the emperor". 3:191)

In terms of our earlier puzzle concerning the emergence of a modern capitalist economy, this dynamic tension between centre and locality and between ritual ruler (Emperor) and military commander-in-chief (Shogun), provides a particularly propitious setting for economic growth. Again reverting to Tocqueville's **Scylla** and **Charybdis** arguments, there are two overwhelming threats to a growing economy. One is too little order; the other is too much. Too little order, as Adam Smith pointed out, in other words a world of disintegrated anarchy, absence of predictability and enforceable contracts, of marauding bands and war, makes the development of economic enterprises of any scale impossible. A firm, unified, political and legal system is need on which to build a modern economy.

It is clear that both these examples provided this, and the very low interest rates on loans, among other things, bore witness to the security. 'Peace' was one of the **desiderata** in both islands. With no foreign invasions and a powerful enough centre and an unified law, contracts would be honoured and plans could be made. There was enough order over a period of more than five hundred years, something which was absent in the majority of civilizations. But while plants need water, as businesses need order, so too much water will kill plants and 'too much' order is equally dangerous.

By 'too much' order, I mean the situation of centralized predation by an absolutist and powerful State, which we witness so often in the history of India, China, Russia, France or Spain, where the State or local lords become so powerful that they over-tax the burgeoning trade and productive enterprises. So often, when wealth accumulates, the State, Church or local lords batten on it and finally kill the goose which lays the golden egg. The curious balance of power in these two islands, however, created a situation where this other extreme was also excluded. One aspect of this, the emergence of guilds (**za**), has already been discussed, but the matter is worth a little more exploration.

In that very important period while an economic system is becoming established, when it can

easily be crushed, it would seem that Japan was in a period of dynamic tension between several almost equally powerful contending forces, and in particular between the older, Emperor and court based system that had existed between the seventh and tenth centuries, and the newer power of the Shogun and the warriors, a 'feudal' order that was gaining power. Just at this point, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as we have seen, there was a burst of activity in the growth of cities, trade, monetization and craft and other production. The fruits of this would probably have been creamed off and the developments crushed if there had been the usual absolutist and unified political system in place, as in China for long periods. Or it would not have emerged at all if there had been anarchy. Yet neither extreme was true in Japan. Consequently, "the warriors had to allow the court nobles and the temples to profit from the za as the price for supporting the imperial authority in this delicate balance". In other words "the power of the ascending warrior class was still insufficient during the thirteenth century to permit it to capture the gains from the za's expanding activities." (3:363)

For these precious centuries, the guilds were protected, the farmers became richer, the serfs became free, trade blossomed and the cities grew. By the time of political re-integration at the end of the sixteenth century, continued division of power between centre and locality and the fact that already it was becoming obvious that the profits from manufacture and trade were so great and the merchants so rich that it was better to milk them, rather than kill them, meant that daimyo and shogun, like the English Kings and gentry, encouraged a growing economy. The economy was lightly taxed, rather than bled dry as it was in so many other instances. The fact that no large standing army and no top-heavy central bureaucracy developed in either country, again related to the absence of open land barriers, also helped.

The political balance, with its absence of absolutism and dynamic tension between the different and competing power centres may also have had other effects, for instance in the realms of culture. For instance, the fifteenth century "has been seen as a time of political weakness and social unrest", yet it is also recognized "as one of Japan's most creative periods of artistic achievement". There is no contradiction between these facts. (3:175) Another effect was on the whole development of a landholding system and concept of property rights, whereby out of multi-level and layered tenancy, there emerged a very flexible system which, **de facto**, encouraged private and individual property rights. This has been discussed earlier.

Law.

Again this subject will probably finally be dealt with in another separate chapter, but it is worth jotting down some first impressions from the **Cambridge History**. One of the most unusual features here is the way in which 'law' as a topic, while discussed in the medieval volume, almost totally disappears as a subject from the later three volumes covering the sixteenth century to the present. We will discuss this later.

It would appear that as the period of 'true feudalism' emerged in thirteenth century Japan, Japan's legal system became remarkably similar to that developing in England about a century earlier. In the first place, both the Japanese and the English rulers tried to make sure that legal process replaced

war as the major mechanism for settling disputes. "Indeed, it was Kamakura's objective to bottle up potentially explosive situations in litigation; that elite warriors subjected themselves to long-running encounters on the legal field of battle rather than on military battlefields proved to be one of the bakufu's most enduring accomplishments". (3:78) This was because the "dispensing of justice emerged as the essence of Kamakura's governance and as societies' greatest need during the thirteenth century". (3:56) As in England, this was achieved through a double process. On the one hand the ruler's council became the fount of justice: "from its beginning the council became the arena for a rapidly modernizing system of justice".(3:75) On the other, there was the delegation of jurisdiction to lower levels in the power structure, directly parallel to the English manorial jurisdictions. "The right of jurisdiction in criminal matters, the third area of proprietor rule, combined police and judicial powers. This included the authority to take punitive action against shoen peasants who violated the law. In addition, it allowed the proprietor to enforce criminal sentences, including acquiring confiscated land and property for himself". (3:320)

As in England, the system was not primarily based on a written code of laws derived from some foreign model. In England the Roman Law principles were largely rejected, in Japan likewise the earlier Chinese codes were replaced by internal principles. In both, the law was built up piecemeal from local customs. "Because Kamakura had no written laws at first or any philosophical traditions and because the country's estates were accustomed to having individualized precedents (senrei) made the basis of judgments, it was natural for the bakufu to stress procedure over principle". (3:75) Thus "confirming local precedents served as the foundation of Kamakura justice", and from this came "basic attitudes toward impartiality, modes of proof, due process, and the right of appeal". The general description of the ensuing law could be applied word for word to England at the same period: "the system was thus closely calibrated to the needs of a society that was lawless yet litigious, restive yet still respectful of higher authority." (3:75)

The results of this process of gradual, local, assemblage of law on the basis of custom were, not surprisingly, very similar in Japan and England. One effect was that both systems were flexible and worked on an **ad hoc** basis. In the Japanese case, for instance, "Because the society of the vassal was itself ever-changing, it was readily anticipated that the code, like a constitution, would be supplemented by legislation". The flexibility was needed to deal with the "limitless variety of estate-based customs". (3:79)

The major sanction in such a legal system was not the power of an absolutist state, but rather the attraction of a reasonable and fair system. In both England and Japan the appeal was to reason and self-interest, rather than to fear. In Japan, law "represented not so much the creation of binding rules as the establishment of standards; its underlying principle, 'dori', conveyed reasonableness, not literalness." (3:78)

Furthermore, justice was not primarily a matter of the exercise of State power to benefit the State, but rather a service which the rulers provided to improve the life of those who lived in the society. This is rather unusual. Thus a "case in 1187 demonstrates the enormous potential of a system of justice whose principal objective was equity for the litigants rather than aggrandizement by their

judges". (3:75) The system of law that was developing was thus not of the inquisitorial type, the State versus the citizen, a type which is characteristic of absolutist political systems, whether under Roman, Chinese or other legal structures. Rather it was of the adversarial or confrontational kind which is also the basis of the English system: there were suits before the judges, the "system was accusatorial, with litigation initiated by the plaintiff." (3:76)

Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, the legal systems of Japan and England looked as if they were heading in the same direction. But then, just as in the case of trade, when Japan suddenly shut off the long-distance and flourishing trade under the Tokugawa, so the Japanese seem to have switched off the further development of this effective adversarial system. The consequences and the nature of this difference are described in a separate chapter, on law and custom in England and Japan.

Religion.

It has been suggested that one area where there is a similarity between the Japanese and English experience is in the field of religion. There are those, most famously Robert Bellah, who have argued that Japan confirms Weber's suggestion that a certain form of religious ethic has an 'elective affinity' to capitalism, while there are others (e.g. Jacobs) who argue that the Japanese case disproves Weber's famous Protestant ethic thesis. Again this is a theme which deserves longer treatment, which will be provided in a separate chapter. In the meantime, what impression do we gain from the **Cambridge History** and does it support the earlier Bellah argument?

A simplified version of the Weber thesis clearly does not work in the Japanese case. As one author points out, "when equivalents were found in Japan, such as a merchant ethic analogous to the Protestant ethic, similar conditions were found to exist in other countries, such as China, where modern economic growth did not occur". (5:570) Of course, this could be taken as only a partial refutation, since Weber's defenders could argue that his view only suggested the ethic was a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for economic success. A second criticism, which is put forward by Jacobs (and later conceded by Bellah?), is that it is difficult to find either in Calvinism or in the religions of Japan any positive dogma that encouraged economic accumulation.

Yet this second criticism does not finish the argument for, as Weber realized, the effects of religion do not necessarily lie in the formal, explicit, statements, but in more indirectly in the unintended psychological consequences of the doctrine of predestination, the unexpected results of locating religious authority in the individual rather than the priesthood, the effects of sectarian differences and so on. We thus need to look at the Japanese religious situation a little more carefully in order to see what the similarities and differences from the English and Dutch case were.

The first thing we notice is the similarity between the monastic organizations of Japan and western Europe. Many have commented on the fact that the real location of early capitalism may have been in the western monastic tradition. Thus Collins describes the Cistercian monasteries in Europe as "the most economically effective units that had ever existed in Europe, and perhaps in the world".

(Collins, 71) It was here that wealth was built up, banks originated, inventions were made, new agricultural methods developed.

If this is true, we may wonder which other civilizations developed powerful monastic organizations. My present guess is that apart from Christianity, only Buddhism creates a flourishing monastic tradition. If we look at the world in the later twelfth to sixteenth centuries, only two parts had a large and wealthy monastic foundations, namely Europe and eastern Asia. Monasteries, as the Anglo-Saxons discovered, are the first places to be pillaged and destroyed by invaders, and such was their fate in China. But those in the West were saved by the Carolingians and those in Japan grew up and were protected. A combination of a particular ascetic, celibate, religion in each case, plus political support, lead to the development of rich and sophisticated pockets of re-investing activity. The wealth of medieval England and of medieval Japan were both tied up with their monasteries. Monastic institutions, we are told were "one of the most important contexts for Japan's artistic, intellectual and even entrepreneurial freedom and originality." (3:507) Indeed, as Collins points out, "Buddhist monasteries, like the Cistercians...acted as corporate entrepreneurs. They provided the leverage to escape from the familistic organization of the economy, and a methodical economic ethic that rationally calculated and plowed back profits into further investments." (Collins, 71)

Yet, like the guilds which they paralleled, even monasteries can become an impediment to economic development at a certain point. Once their wealth has reached a certain level they can become an obstacle. In both England and Japan at the end of the middle ages the monasteries were disbanded by the respective unifiers of these two island nations - by the Tudors and the Tokugawa, and their wealth and land absorbed more generally into the society. This is one way in which the religious traditions of the two areas may have been an essential background feature.

A second part of the explanation lies in the dominant principles of the religions in the two areas. In a very rough sense, both the form of Christianity that pre-dominated in England both before and after the Reformation and the mixed Buddhist, Shinto and neo-Confucian faiths of Japan may be termed 'puritan'. That is to say, they tended to play down external ritual and gave unusually low emphasis to religious mediators (priests), stressed proselytization, put an emphasis on asceticism, simplicity and self-discipline. All these characteristics, as Weber noted, are not unpropitious for the development of capitalism.

These characteristics are well known for England, so let us look briefly at the Japanese case. The proselytising aspect is evident throughout the period and differentiates Japanese Buddhism from Hinduism and Chinese religions (check). For instance, "...all the schools of Kamakura Buddhism actively proselytised among lay people". (3:578) Secondly, the interior, individualized, nature of Japanese Buddhism, with its stress on private salvation of the individual, the importance of faith and belief, is also noted. "They drew their inspiration from their own personal realizations, and they sought a path of salvation that each and every individual could follow". (3:569) Later this individual salvationist approach was widely adopted. "According to Shosan, one's ideal as a human being should be to live in a spiritually free, autonomous fashion." (4:414)

Thirdly, the asceticism and emphasis on the elimination of waste and the superfluous, represented famously in the simplicity and rejection of material objects in many schools of Buddhism, is evident. It affected the merchants as well as other parts of the population. "The Japanese therefore made a virtue of necessity and created a material culture that focused on the simple...The result was an almost total elimination of waste...". As a result "One can see that almost every element of the Japanese life-style resulted from an attempt to live well using the least amount of resources." (4:693) As Weber pointed out, this attitude is especially important as a counter-balance towards the natural tendency towards conspicuous display and destruction as surplus wealth increases.

Another interesting feature was the 'this-worldliness' of Japanese religion. We are told that "In China there was widespread religious faith in Heaven as a transcendental entity that governed human destiny, and this faith had become an important element of Confucianism. The Japanese, by contrast, never developed a religious faith in the idea of Heaven." (4:404) It would not be difficult to argue that English Protestant and even pre-Reformation thought was also very largely this-worldly.

Now, of course, to point to some striking similarities in religious orientation only leads us on to wonder what it was that led to the similarities. The fact that a religion like Buddhism or an ethical form such as Confucianism takes such different forms in the neighbouring countries of China and Japan suggests the way in which beliefs react to a local political, economic, cultural and other ecology. Religion reflects its setting as much as it determines it. We can see this in the similarity and dissimilarity between say, Catholicism in Spain and Protestantism in England.

In Japan, it would seem clear that whereas it was once thought that Zen Buddhism determined many of those unusual cultural features (which seem so similar to English ascetic puritanism), it is now argued that Zen was itself largely a reflection of pre-existing Japanese traits. The same, of course, may be the case in England when we note the similarities between the Puritan sects of the seventeenth century and their predecessors such as the Lollards of the fourteenth. In the Japanese case we are told that "If there is a single point that stands out most clearly in a survey of the culture of medieval Japan, it is that the aesthetics of the age evolved directly from earlier times. The criteria of Zen in the arts - simplicity, suggestion, irregularity- coincided with feelings that were also indigenously Japanese and had always governed native tastes". (3:489) The chronology suggests that it was Zen that was a re-enforcing reflection rather than a cause, for "it was not until the sixteenth century that Zen was truly extolled as a major influence on the arts, especially on the culture of tea". (3:489) If this is the case, the explanation for the tenor of Japanese life cannot be found principally in the religious doctrine on its own.

Another difficulty in measuring the influence of religion is that it is not sufficient to look at the internal structure of the religion, its dogma and practices, but we need also to consider the relation between different religions and between religious and other institutions. In particular we need to investigate the relation between the polity, the economy and the religion before we can infer the role religion plays in economic development. In terms of the relation of politics and religion, two things

stand out in both the English and Japanese cases.

The first lies in the way in which politics and religion were separated at the apex of power in both cases. In Japan, unlike all other absolutist system (cf. Wittfogel), until the Meiji restoration the ritual and religious apex, the Emperor, had little power; force was exercised by the Shogun. The same separation was achieved in Europe, partly by separating the King from the Papacy. When the two tended to merge in the concepts of Divine Kingship and concordats of Church and State at the counter-Reformation, England, Holland and other areas broke away from the caesaro-papist tendency. Though the King was now the head of the Church in England, he was not a prelate and he was under the Law, his power balanced by Parliament. Never, in the five centuries leading up to the major economic transformation, did the ritual and the political coalesce in England or Japan. Indeed, as we see famously in the Becket case and the behaviour of the nonconformists in England, religion and politics often came into an irresolvable conflict. The same was true in Japan, where, for instance, "Nichiren's brand of Buddhism was itself unorthodoxly activist and came close of a Christian-like martyrdom cult." (Collins, 238)

This dynamic tension caused by a balance and separation of powers, which allows for freedom of thought, belief and action, was complemented by a second major similarity. This is the way in which religion itself was fragmented. Usually there tends to be a wide uniformity so that sectarian and heterodox movements are crushed as heresy by the State, as in Spain, Russia, China and elsewhere. In only two areas did the heresies escape to turn into a world of sects.

In England by the later sixteenth century, a major heresy, Protestantism, had spawned many sectarian branches and this tradition of fragmentation grew through the seventeenth century. It was widely acknowledged, for instance by Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Weber, that a central cause of the freedom of thought in England was this tendency. It provided in the religious field an equivalent to 'centralized feudalism' in the political field. There was a central power, Anglicanism, but it was one which could not quell local dissent. The same was the case, but even more so, in Japan.

Japan was the focus of three major religio-ethical traditions. There was Shinto, which was a ritual system, but without any ethical component and hardly any eschatology. It had no dogma was hence a very unsatisfactory 'religion' on its own, but satisfactory when co-existing peaceably, as it could, with other systems. Alongside it was a curious variant of Confucianism, which had reversed most of the tenets of the master. This was the opposite of Shinto; it was an ethical system but had no ritual. Nor did it have a belief in Gods, spirit, the after-life and so on. In other words, it was severely defective as a 'religion'. It co-existed with the third, Buddhism, which provided the beliefs, but was weak on ritual.

Even the 'proper' religion of Buddhism soon developed peculiarities in the Japanese context. Firstly, it fragmented into numerous sects, each competing with the others in an unstable conflict which had a great resemblance to the fragmented political jostling of the medieval feudal period. No single interpretation was able to gain a monopoly, either in relation to the Shinto or Confucian systems, or even over other Buddhist sects. Thus as soon as Buddhism gained any hold it seems to

have automatically generated opposition. "To the extent that these convictions were established in an atmosphere of religious duress, the tenets of Kamakura Buddhism were often framed in opposition to established Buddhist doctrines. These doctrinal divergences only heightened the reputation of the new Buddhist schools as opponents of ecclesiastical authority". (3:565) It would seem that self-generating sectarianism was built into the Buddhist system, just in the same way in which Protestantism by encouraging individual interpretation generated nonconformist sub-sects within itself.

Thus "even the most loosely organized movements of Kamakura Buddhism developed a sectarian structure through fixed institutions where doctrine could be refined and symbols of authority housed." (3:578) For instance, one of the most famous period of the setting up of sects was the founding of the "new religions" in the thirteenth (?) century, the Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren and other branches. These then split. For instance, "Soon after Nichiren's death, his religious organization was divided into six branches, each with a major disciple at its head." (3:575)

The development of Zen was perhaps the strangest but most significant of the peculiarities. Just as Confucianism was a 'religion' with nothing but an ethical system, Shinto a 'religion' with nothing but ritual, so Zen developed into a religion with nothing at all - no ritual, no ethics, no dogma. It was a negation of everything, including reason and the Buddha himself. It was an emptiness or nothingness. What the Japanese in fact managed to create, as did the English with their largely empty "beauty of holiness" Anglicanism or even more the evacuation of all outward manifestations of religion in Quakerism, was a form of religion which remained at the heart of the society, but left people largely free to follow their own consciences. It is this unusual flexibility, modesty and emptiness of religion, its systematic creation of an inscrutable black box, which is perhaps the most significant achievement of the religious traditions of England and Japan. Because what it creates is an absence, the peculiar importance and power of this solution is only visible, as is the singular absence of absolutist political power, or the flexible kinship system, when we contrast them with what might have been, and so often has been, the case. In other words, when we look at the dominating and determining role of religion in state-supported religions in China, Russia, Counter-Reformation Europe or Islamic societies, we are jolted into realizing how much freedom there was for religious belief in these two cases.

It could be argued that an absence such as this is enough to explain the important role of religion in economic activity. It was not what religion was, but what it was not that was significant. It is not difficult to show that neither English Puritanism, nor Japanese religions actively proselytized on behalf of capitalism. Neither Calvin, Luther, George Fox nor Nichiren or others went out to exhort their disciples to make profit. What was needed was much less than this positive exhortation, merely an absence of that powerful condemnation of economic activity which is the more normal message of world religions. What I mean can be explored in relation to that central aspect of economic development, the notion of profit, in Japanese thought.

There is obviously a tension and contradiction in the attitude towards profit in both English and Japanese culture. On the one hand, as a means to an end, social, religious or otherwise, the honest

and diligent pursuit of reasonable profit is ethically acceptable. This was formally discussed at some length in eighteenth century Japan. Thus Banto argued that "Merchants must see their work not merely as the extensions of their virtue but as fundamental to the well-being of the nation." (4:655) Joken argued that "Commerce, for example, was vital to distributing agricultural and handicraft products through a system of exchange. Hardly the expression of human greed, commerce served the well-being of the entire country." (4:631) Seiryō "argued the justice and morality of calculation and profit". (5:86) It would not be difficult to find their counterparts in seventeenth century England.

On the other hand, as in England, there was always an uneasy feeling that private profit, as an end in itself, was immoral. One should not seek profit as an end, but as a means. "Profit should exist only on behalf of the people. 'The usefulness of benevolence...reaches men in the form of profit...To abandon the self is to profit the people. The ideograph for profit is the name for unprincipled (action) when it is used privately. When one profits the people, its use is benevolent'. (5:251) Even until very recently, and perhaps even today, "the concept of the 'invisible hand' was never widely accepted; profit beyond what was necessary for a decent livelihood required some other ethical basis, usually a claim of service to the state, a justification that was fully consistent with Confucian thought." (6:448)

Alongside this, however, both in England and Japan, we can see a constant search for wealth. The world revealed in the literature of later seventeenth and early eighteenth century England, De Foe, Mandeville and others, is very reminiscent of that to be found in the Japanese **Millionaire's Gospel** of the same period.

Nor was this new in either case. Going back three centuries in each society, the world of merchant activities and commercial and entrepreneurial success revealed by Chaucer's pilgrims and the merchants of London in the fourteenth century, is really very similar to the contemporary world in Japan. There, we are told, that the "nouveau riche appear in many forms in medieval fiction, and in some instances the entrepreneur emerges as a cultural hero. Perhaps the most famous such manufacturer-merchant is Bunshō, the salt maker, from the story Bunshōsoshi". (3:516) Or again, stories, comic plays and popular songs of the later middle ages in Japan, "reveal a people down to earth, unwilling to pine away in the face of hardship, entrepreneurial, imaginative, hardworking, combative, ambitious, self-reliant, persistent and even brazen." (3: 515) There could not be a better description of Chaucer's characters.

Both these islands could aptly be described as nations of shop-keepers and, indeed, as in the original quotation, as nations ruled by shop-keepers. It was assumed in both cases that in an insecure world, where birth assured little, where boundaries were not fixed, and where material wealth brought some assurance in the one world which really matter, the pursuit of profit was both natural and reasonable. Adam Smith's world of profit-maximizes was early established. There was in Japan "the belief that ordinary people naturally loved profit and were eager to pursue private interest whenever they were given the slightest opportunity". (5:184)

Thus by the early modern period, one author argued that "Everything, from material goods to

personal service...was a commodity with an exchange value. Exchanges were to be based on a principle of precise calculation, equating name with content, that would permit objective measurement and help determine a just profit or interest". (5:86)

Neither religion, nor politics, nor family, nor a combination of these were so constituted that the usual negative feed-back mechanisms - war, predation, religious inquisition, kin pressures, were powerful enough to halt the growing economies in their tracks. Although Adam Smith's "peace, easy taxes and a tolerable administration of justice" are not, in themselves, enough, they were certainly present and allowed, alongside the other factors which we have noted, the economic systems to gather momentum.

Conclusion.

Thus towards the end of the seventeenth century in the English case, and in the middle of the nineteenth in the Japanese, two rather curious peoples were emerging on their respective islands. The Japanese case has been rather less well known until recently, but with the publication of the four volumes of the **Cambridge History** we can now see, in a first approximation, what happened. On an island that was at that time largely unknown to the world because it had been closed to all foreigners for over two centuries, an unusual economy, polity and social system had developed, very different from that of its gigantic Chinese neighbour.

Japan now had one of the most sophisticated, wealthy and urbanized populations in the world. All it needed was the added ingredient of western science and technology, an opening up of the social structure through the destruction of the largely redundant formal ranking system and encouragement by a new government. It would then grow rapidly into the most powerful country in East Asia and indeed one of the strongest in the world. This momentum, like that of England, had been built up gradually over many centuries. None of this was inevitable, but by comparing their respective histories it is not as difficult as it once was to see some of the reasons why it happened.

This different yet structurally similar history gave rise in these two societies to a different combination of features. This is why it is so difficult to characterize either or both of them. Some of the contradictions in the Japanese case, for instance, are well encapsulated in the following summary. In Japan there are "high degrees of social mobility combined with intense consciousness of social status; emphasis on achievement accompanied by a downgrading of individualism; and an entrepreneurial spirit combined with group orientation".(5:533) In the following chapter(s), I will explore the outcome of the historical features outlined above in respect to hierarchy, individualism, community and rationality in England and Japan.

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One set of criticisms concerns the problems inherent in the form and timing of such a multi-volume exercise. Of volume three, it is stated that "...the volume is not a surprise. This is partly a result of the familiarity of the editors and authors, the time lag in production, and the concern with that 'wide audience' which seems to require a 'standard' (and thus a freshly old rather than boldly new) history', but mainly the result of concern with institutional history". (Berry, 486) The "rather traditional and conservative structure and concept..." of volume four is noted. (Hauser, 494) Volume five is "...a work that is more a summary of an accepted consensus than an effort to break new ground..." (Notehelfer, 209) With volume six, "There is a dated quality to most of the essays..." (Garon, 341)

The difficulties are reflected in the old-fashioned 'modernization' framework which lies behind much of the planning. Of volume three, Berry writes that "...development seems to me the most striking unifying theme in this book" (Berry, 489). Likewise with volume five Smith draws attention to the 'modernization' approach, the attempt to look for 'pre-conditions' of 'modernity'. (Smith, 506) In volume six "...much of the volume is characteristic of what has been called the 'modernization' approach to Japanese history.... That is, most essays are concerned with 'dilemmas of growth' rather than 'contradictions' of capitalist development." (Gordon, 150)

Without some framework, of course, such a large endeavour would collapse. What some reviewers suggest is that the 'modernization' approach is no longer credible, and that the work is left stranded without a real paradigmatic under-pinning. Berry draws our attention to this most clearly in relation to volume three: "...the collapse of one paradigm has not been accompanied by the formulation of another. We appear to be in a moment of drift and disagreement about questions and answers alike." (Berry, ???)

Berry also draws attention to one consequence of this absence, namely that there is no theoretical framework which would link the various themes together, drawing attention to the vital

inter-connections between spheres. "One looks in vain, however, for either a politics outside institutions...or a politics modulated by demography, technology and the resource base, ecology and natural disasters..." (Berry, 490). Of the same medieval volume, Keirstead writes that "questions of how religious, economic, and cultural activity interrelate receive little attention". (Keirstead,138) This is equally true of other volumes; for example Neary notes the compartmentalization of the contributions in volume six and hence the absence of cross-integration. (Neary,123) It may well arise partly from the cause which Berry alludes to, namely that "...missing...are integrating theories of power, social contract, and agency that might encourage answers to (some of) the big questions..." (Berry, 483)

One might have expected that a 'modernization' framework would at least have meant that comparison would have been stressed. In o\cambrid