

## 14: JAPAN'S RAPID TRANSITION INTO DERIVATIVE HIGH CIVILIZATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES<sup>1</sup>

*a. Under what external and internal contexts did the Yamato state complete its transition into high civilization? In what sense and at what point was this transition a revolution? How does your narrative illustrate the differences between derivative high civilizations and original ones like ancient China's?*

*b. What external and internal factors contributed to the indigenization of Japan's derivative high civilization from the 10th through the late 12th centuries? What positive difference did indigenization make? What signs were there by the 10th-12th centuries of a crisis of civilization in Japan?*

Japan completed the last stage of its transition into high civilization relatively quickly. The last stage of the transition began c. 400, with the onset of the Late Tumulus period, and it was essentially complete by the late 6th century. This was later than, but somewhat faster than Korea's, and much faster than China's final transition that occurred much earlier.

We must consider both the external and internal contexts to satisfactorily account for the nature of Japan's derivative first stage high civilization.

### A. External Context

#### 1. Stimuli from China

By around 500 AD, China's Northern Dynasties had sedentarized themselves and matured into double-minded Buddhist-Confucian regimes. Politically, they were ripe for consolidation into one regime in the north and ready to swallow up the Southern Dynasties. By the 580s, the Sui Dynasty had done both.

Sui's recreation of Han's All Under

Heaven was much more of a novelty to its neighbors than you might think. The Chinese universal state had existed only in men's minds since the early 3rd century. Now it had returned, bigger and more elaborately organized than before. This made it much more of an attraction and also a potential menace to its Northeast Asian neighbors.

Though Sui destroyed itself trying to conquer Koguryo, its repeated blows against that northern Korean kingdom sent tremors down the Korean peninsula and across the narrow waters to Japan. Any Japanese state would have to deal with Sui and its successor, Tang, so as to ward off any military threat it might pose and to learn from it how to resist it, if necessary.

Tang replaced Sui in 618. Because it lasted for several hundred years, it proved an even more substantial attraction and menace, and one capable of reaching even further than Sui. By the 660s, it succeeded in destroying Paekche and then Koguryo.

Sui and Tang China never actually posed a direct threat to Japan, but China's several invasions of Korea provoked the weakest of the peninsular states, Paekche, to reach out to Japan.

Of greater importance, a unified China constituted an enormous attraction to Japan, drawing frequent tribute missions from the islands. These missions carried large chunks of China's material and non-material culture back to Japan, and influenced Japan far more than has Western culture since the 19th century.

#### 2. Stimuli from Korea

All three of the major states of the Korean peninsula reacted to each new stimulus, positive or negative, emanating from China, but only Silla, in the isolated southeast, benefited from Chinese culture without being swamped by it.

Silla was just far enough away so that when these stimuli had finished rippling down the peninsula, they were attenuated. They were just strong enough to eventually bring Silla across the line to high civilization by the 6th century, but not so strong as to alienate it from its Korean roots or threaten its stability.

In this sense, Silla resembled Japan. Perhaps it was partly because like repel each other that Silla and Japan had as little to do with each other as possible.

Koguryo began to acquire high civili-

zation earlier and was a larger, stronger state than Silla, but was so exposed to pressures from other Zone A powers and from China directly that its long-run situation was almost as vulnerable as Paekche's. It was also too remote from Japan to exert any direct influence on it.

Paekche, in southwest Korea, was the most vulnerable of the Korean Three Kingdoms. It kept in closer touch with China than Silla or even Koguryo, via the new sea routes across the Yellow Sea. But that meant it received stronger pressures from China sooner. Paekche also faced a strong Silla just beyond its eastern flank, with only the Kaya League statelets along the Naktong as buffers. Koguryo and then Silla gnawed away at the Han River valley, Paekche's original northern border.

Paekche realized its vulnerability, particularly by the 550s when Silla finished expanding to the Naktong to swallow up the last of the Kaya League principalities, including Mimana. Mimana was the most likely place of immediate origin for the supposed "horserider" conquerors of Japan several centuries earlier.

Paekche had much to fear. Within 75 years of 550 AD, a Tang seaborne invasion and a Sillan campaign by land across the Naktong ended its independence. When China shifted its forces to the north against Koguryo, Silla took over Paekche.

Even before 550, Paekche realized that, to compensate for its weakness and isolation, it had to reach out to Japan. Japan, as startled by the fall of Kaya as was Paekche, felt equally obliged to enter into a closer relationship with Paekche.

Paekche began adding cultural to economic goods in its already existing trade relationship with Japan. On speculation, as it were, Paekche began exporting Buddhism to Japan too. It sent gifts of statues, books, monks (its own and resident Chinese missionaries) to the Yamato court. At least some of the Japanese courtiers proved receptive customers of these cultural exports. (see part B below).

By 550 we can at last start talking of "Koreans" and "Japanese" without committing an anachronism. With the fall of Mimana, insular and peninsular political power no longer blurred together. The Straits of Tsushima, which had been as much highway as boundary, became a definitive political boundary. Several high civilized Korean states were now on one side of this border, and a cluster of less developed but almost high civilized Japa-

<sup>1</sup> 1st draft, 10/94; 3rd rev., 9/99. Eddward H. Kaplan

nese states were on the other. Though the two sides would continue to interact, these interactions had attenuated to the point they had become more inter-national than intra-cultural.

This had a wholesome effect on the economic side. As formerly identical groups diverge, the chances that similar goods will gradually assume different places on their value scales increases.<sup>2</sup> This tends to encourage increased true economic exchange between them, each group getting what it needs when it needs it rather than having to accept whatever gift goods the superior culture deigns to give it in exchange for symbolic tribute.

## B. The Internal Context

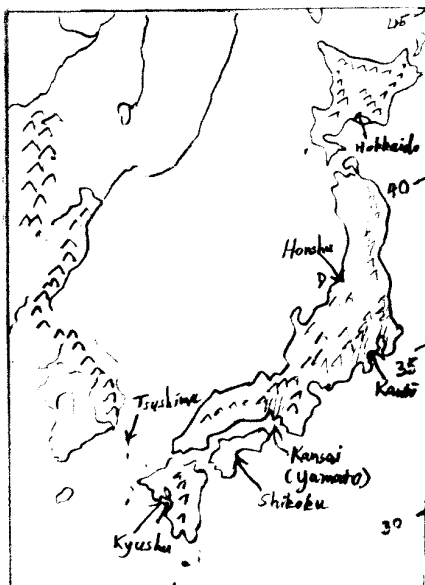
### 1. Consequences of the "Horserider" conquest

If Gari Ledyard's version of the horserider hypothesis is correct, the horseriders landed first in Kyushu during the 4th century and set up the first Yamato state there. In the early 5th century, their inlaws, members of the Japanese branch of the native Wa aristocracy with whom they had intermarried, launched a countercoup against them.

To separate themselves from the Korean base of the horseriders, these Wa aristocrats moved across the Straits of Shimonoseki from Kyushu to Honshu and moved up the northern shore of the Inland Sea. Some may have had family connections there. They eventually settled in the Kinai (Kansai) plain, where the myth histories sometimes place Yamato. The later capitals of Japan, Nara and Heian (modern Kyoto) are also within a few miles of each other in the northern part of the Kansai. The great economic entrepot, Osaka, later grew up at the southern end of the Kansai, at the eastern end of the Inland Sea.

The 4th century horseriders could not immediately transmit the germ of high civilization to Japan. Just as Wei Man's invasion of Choson in 200 BC, or Emperor Wu's invasion of Wei Man's state in 100 BC did not immediately create a stable high civilization in Korea, neither did the horserider invasion (or infiltration, if you prefer the anti-horserider interpretation) do so in 4th century AD Japan.

The Late Tumulus rulers started trying to create a larger state immediately. Unfortunately, it took time to acquire a vision of Heaven capable of being represented into a stable high civilization's state and culture.



Once settled in the Kansai, the Yamato state commenced to gobble up surrounding local states at a rapid rate. We get this information from a summary of diplomats' reports contained in the Chinese *Wei History* written in the late 5th century. Unfortunately, post-horserider conquest Yamato was caught in the same sort of dilemma as the late Shang state. The territories of both grew in size at an almost cancerous rate, but the central authority lost control over territory almost as fast as it swallowed it.

Like late Shang's rulers, the proprietors of the Yamato state had not yet formulated a political cement that they could apply at a distance. Localities out over the horizon from the central authority, even those run by relatives, tended to set up in business for themselves after a few generations.

Yamato mixed a native fertility cult with a locally evolved version of ancestor worship (resembling but apparently without any direct connection with ancient Chinese ancestor worship). The Buddhists later baptized this aboriginal religion as "Shinto," the way of the spirits. Apparently this Heaven could not be represented into a stable large territorial state. We can infer this much even from the Japanese myth histories. Though they try to gloss over this disunity, they indirectly confirm it.

The first histories written in the 8th

century turn from myth to somewhat mythicized history for events from the early 5th century on. The new Yamato regime in the Kansai base began to hire officials of Korean origin to keep records then, albeit only in Chinese.

We also know something of the family system of the Yamato local aristocracy from a handful of surviving local records. From these we can infer some of the novel opportunities to break out of these limits eventually provided by the aristocracy's system of tracing descent.

Larger aristocratic lineages or clans called *uji* 氏 became more important. After a few generations of younger sons, new lineages given their own names and seals budded off from a parent *uji*. The heads of a main *uji* encouraged them to remain subordinate to the main *uji* and carry out specified functions for it. Such sublineages were called *be* (pr. "bay") or *tomo*. These functions might involve important ceremonial or military duties.

Some *be* had more mundane duties. Their aristocratic leaders might supervise groups of commoners conquered by the main *uji* in the course of its expansion. These commoners performed more mundane specialized or technical tasks for the *uji*, such as growing rice or making pottery or religious objects.

Because their leaders were of lesser rank, such *be* sometimes allowed the ruling clan to reach around potentially insubordinate local clans to directly control some aspects of a locality's production. But that was not enough to solidify the central government's authority.

More commonly, in the absence of an appropriate religious tradition, high prestige local aristocratic sublineages, could break away from the old central authority to set up independent local states. Apparently the "magic" connected even with a common dead ancestor (*kami* 神) was not strong enough to reach beyond the horizon to compel obedience.

What the Yamato state's ruling *uji* needed was a stronger religion, one possessing a larger and more coherent vision of Heaven. The heads of the Yamato state could then re-present that religion onto Earth in the form of a more complicated state, one that would be capable of inducing obedience from the higher aristocrats located over the horizon from their central authority. Once such a faith arrived, a fully developed high civilization would soon accompany it.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 5, p. 1, and p. 8 below.

## 2. Rise of the Soga

By the middle years of the 6th century, there happened to be a sublineage at the Yamato court that had recently taken on the family name Soga. Its members were as close to being virtual nobodies as aristocrats could be. By the time they had budded off as a separate sublineage, older clans already held all the prestigious court functions. The Soga were left in charge of a minor ceremonial activity.

They were, however, on the make, looking for something new to do that would raise their status at court. They were anxious enough to be open to a new vision of Heaven.

The rulers of the equally anxious state of Paekche were just then offering the Japanese court the prospect of a new Buddhist vision of Heaven. Paekche may have been sending Buddhist icons to Japan since the 520s. By the 550s, with the fall of Yamato's last Korean outpost, Mimana, Paekche finally won some nervous Japanese spiritual customers.

The Soga accepted Buddhist statues from Paekche, then imported Buddhist monks, and some sacred books for the monks to read. Their first success was to convert a reigning empress to Buddhism.

The arrival of Buddhism at court put the noses of the older aristocratic families very much out of joint. This was particularly the case with one of the most powerful of the families in charge of Shinto ritual, the Nakatomi.

From the 560s on, the Nakatomi were wracked by jealousy at the rise of the Soga. They were even more resentful when the Soga converted not just the empress, but her nephew, a brilliant cultural athlete, Prince Shotoku.

By the 580s the prince was becoming very influential at court, and remained the key figure in Japanese politics and cultural life until his death in 622. He never became emperor, but he was always the power behind the throne, and was the Sogas' key backer.

Prince Shotoku is the first great charismatic and individuated figure described in the Japanese histories. He plays a role comparable to that played in China by both the Duke of Zhou and Confucius. Prince Shotoku was, like the Duke, a founding figure of the transition into high civilization, and also, like Confucius, the first "personality" to thrust himself up out of the stereotypical characters of the

mythic background. We even have a small number of apparently authentic near contemporary painted and sculpted portraits of him.



Prince Shotoku and his two sons. (E. Papinot, *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan*, p. 591.)

We are told that Prince Shotoku was the first native Japanese (as opposed to Korean immigrant) aristocrat to learn how to read and write. Of course this meant he was literate in Chinese.<sup>3</sup>

Now the highest of aristocrats, a member of the imperial *uji*, had learned how to read and write, and for cultural more than immediately practical record-keeping purposes. The Prince wanted to read Chinese books so as to understand this new Heaven that Buddhism was presenting to Japan and learn how he might re-present it on Earth in conjunction with a few bits of Confucianism in the form of a stronger state.

The prince is said to have used this knowledge of Chinese to write the so-called Seventeen Article Constitution. Superficially, this document is Chinese Confucian in form, but more fundamentally it was Chinese Buddhist in its transcendental assumptions. The Prince assumed that Japanese adoption of Sui Dynasty Chinese bureaucratic institutions would be for the greater glory of the Buddhist faith. This was not very far from Sui's own basis for claiming legitimacy. Sui China's court and people and Prince Shotoku's Japanese court were all far more Buddhist than Confucian.

<sup>3</sup> Beginning early in the 5th century, reading and writing of court records became a specialty of immigrant Korean scribes, usually men of modest rank. They performed this function in the only available written language, Chinese.

Prince Shotoku also began to send formal Japanese embassies to China beginning in 607 AD, at the height of Sui power. The first embassy supposedly ended in embarrassment as the letter the Japanese emissary carried referred to Japan as "the land where the sun rises," and China as "the land where the sun sets." (Actually, the emissary may have been from one of the semi-independent statelets on the north shore of the Inland Sea trying to drum up some business to finance its independence.) Nevertheless, this set the precedent for a series of such embassies continuing up through the early 840s latter days of Tang. The monks and aristocrats who conducted these missions brought back large chunks of Chinese civilization, or at least the artifacts and labels associated with that civilization. The Yamato state could use these as both symbols of and instruments for exerting far more power than any Japanese government had ever wielded before.

## 3. Soga falls & Fujiwara rises

The Sogas' initial rise at court was tripped off by their sponsorship of Buddhism. Their long-term grasp on power came by holding onto Prince Shotoku's coattails.

Once the Prince died and Buddhism's popularity widened, the Soga were caught in a paradoxical situation. If they lay low, they would gradually lose their power back to the Nakatomi and other old line *uji*, like the powerful military clan, the Mononobe. If they tried to maintain or increase their power by asserting themselves directly, they would be sticking their necks ever further out.

Nevertheless, the Soga decided the latter course was preferable. Even if they failed, they might as well do so trying to lay hands on the sheep and not just for nibbling on the lamb.

By the beginning of the 640s the current (and last, as it turned out) generation of Soga leaders, the father-son team of Soga Emishi and Soga Iruka, were apparently plotting a full-fledged coup to place themselves on the throne. At least so their successful enemies later claimed. The Sogas had already married one of their daughters to a crown prince, which put them partly within the imperial clan. This agitated the imperial family, who did not want to be swallowed up by the Sogas, and perhaps remembered the coup a few

centuries earlier against the horseriders.

A Yamato prince (who eventually became the Emperor Tenchi) entered into an alliance with the leading old aristocratic families, particularly the Nakatomis, led by Nakatomi Kamako.

In 644, the members of this alliance launched a preemptive coup, thereby fulfilling what one might call the "Brass Rule" of dirty politics: Do unto others *before* they have a chance to do unto you.



Nakatomi Kamako, later called Fujiwara Kamatari. (Papinot, p. 88.)



The murder of Soga Iruka. (Papinot, p. 598.)

The Yamato-Nakatomi alliance not only defeated the Soga, but ambushed and killed Iruka while the Empress was receiving Korean diplomats. The conspirators then murdered Emishi in his house, and wiped out the rest of the Sogas to the last man, sparing only a few of their women. The very name Soga disappears

from Japanese politics thereafter.

You might expect that this counter-coup would have ended not only the Soga but all Buddhist and Chinese influence, since the Sogas had been the original promoters of Buddhism and of the secular Chinese influence that had been smuggled into Japan in the baggage and brains of the Buddhist monks. After all, the victorious old guard were the proprietors of the pre-Buddhist religious ceremonials.

In fact, however, that was not the case. Having stolen power back from the Sogas, the members of the victorious alliance intended to expand and stabilize the institutions laying under that power.

But by this time the way to expand one's power was not to have less but more Buddhism; not to have fewer political institutions copied from Chinese models, but to have more such institutions, and to use them more widely.

So the victors of 644 stole both Buddhism and Chinese institutions from the Soga, and then promptly used these stolen cultural goods to create a bigger and ultimately more stable state, one capable of engrossing more resources from ever broader territories. Under their rule, Japan became far more Buddhist and far more like China than even the Soga would have dared imagine two generations earlier.

The very next year the rebels of 644 brought in the Chinese system of naming year-periods. Emperor Wu of Han had formalized this practice during the 2nd century BC. Chinese rulers would give each grouping of years a label, called a year-period, either symbolic of what had just happened to evoke a change in year-period or what it was hoped would happen during that period.<sup>4</sup>

What in our chronology is the year 645 became for the Japanese Taika 1. Taika (Ch. *Dahua* 大化 is a Sino-Japanese word (i.e. a borrowed Chinese word pronounced Japanese style) meaning "Great Transformation." Its adoption as Japan's first year-period name was a promise that Japan was to be radically transformed along Chinese lines.

Living up to that label, the new-old rulers proceeded from that time on, stage

<sup>4</sup> We do roughly the same sort of thing more informally when we name political eras such as the "New Deal" period, 1933-38 at the very beginning of the New Deal. The only difference between our custom and the Chinese is that we have also kept the AD-BC numbering of years, and did not use the label New Deal 1 instead of 1933, New Deal 2 for 1934, etc. in dating our checks or newspapers.

by stage, to further sinify the structure of the state so as to increase its and their own power.

The Nakatomi, who were Emperor Tenchi's key co-conspirators in 644, changed their family name to Fujiwara—meaning Wisteria Grove. The conspiracy to overthrow the Soga was launched by a clandestine meeting in a grove of wisteria trees.

Japanese historians reckon the changes that began with the Taika year-period in 645 to have been as revolutionary as those that got under way in 1868 with the beginning of the Meiji year-period. Indeed, both changes fit the definition of revolution I use in this work:

*A revolution inaugurates a new or culminates an old stage of civilization. It is carried out either by a class which enters the ranks of the ruling class by driving out or destroying the old ruling class (in which case I call it an "excluding" revolution), or by one segment of the old ruling class, which then redefines itself in terms of a new Heaven (in which case I call it a "non-excluding" revolution).*

The Taika era's revolution inaugurated or at least punctuated Japan's transcendence of its early civilization and begins its full entrance into the first stage of high civilization. It was carried out by one portion of the old aristocratic ruling class, which then redefined itself in terms of that Chinese-style high civilization. That would make the Taika, like the 19th century Meiji, a non-excluding revolution. By contrast, the revolution China underwent during the 20th century, was an excluding revolution.

## C. Evolution of Japan's High Civilization From c. 600 to c. 1,000

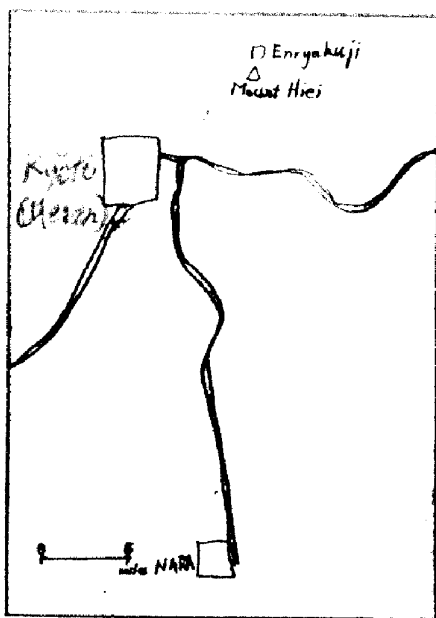
If you do not believe that Japan jumped fully into the first stage of high civilization when the Sogas first brought in Buddhism in the 560s (though it would be plausible to do so), and if you don't believe that Prince Shotoku's generation did so between the 580s and 620s (though that is even more plausible), you have to concede that the threshold to high civilization was finally crossed by 645, so explicitly did Japan's rulers in that year proclaim their intention to radically change their ways thereafter.

We can now, therefore, turn to exami-

nation of the periods into which this first stage of high civilization in Japan may be divided.

Whenever the first period began, and whether we name it after the Sogas or the Taika year-period, it surely ended when the government occupied its first permanent capital, Nara, in 710.

The second or Nara Period runs from 710 into the 780s, when the court abandoned Nara as its political capital and moved a bit up the road to Heian (the old name for Kyoto).



The third period, named after Heian, runs up through 1186, when the feudal process began. Heian's first subperiod, the Early Heian Period runs up to around 900 AD. Its second subperiod, from 900 to 1,000 is the Mid Heian Period. Late Heian comprises the 11th and 12th centuries.

Each of these periods in the development of Japan's first stage of high civilization can be characterized in terms of the state's size, powers and direction of development during each period. In this section, we will confine ourselves to the Nara, Early and Middle Heian periods, because after Late Heian Japan's first stage high civilization, by then half a millennium old, began to enter its crisis of the first stage of high civilization.

## 1. Nara

A key event in the institutionalizing of Chinese political practices occurred even before the Nara period began in 710. This was the adoption of the Taiho Law Code in 702. Taiho (Ch. *Dahe* 大和) was the

name of the year period beginning then. It means "Great Harmony" or "Great Harmonization," which was, of course, the aim of the new law code. It aimed at indigenizing Chinese laws of the Tang Dynasty—i.e. adapting them to Japanese conditions.

The learned monks had to substantially rethink Tang laws to let the Japanese aristocracy continue to run the state without having to put up with the increasing meritization that was proving to be the bane of the Tang Chinese aristocracy. This new law code helped settle the ruling class down. It reconciled those of its members who lived over the horizon from the capital to the greater power the central administration was beginning to wield over them.

The growing realization that Buddhism had more "magic" than the old native faith began to stabilize administration. Even aristocrats took this magic more seriously than the fancy metaphysical musings of the monks. These higher explanations were hardly accessible to a Japanese aristocracy that was still learning how to be fully literate in Chinese. Indeed even most Chinese intellectuals were themselves not yet cognizant of Buddhism's metaphysical subtleties, since the translations into Chinese from the Sanskrit embodying them were still less than a century old.

One great practical problem involved the *kami*—the spirits, including those of the dead, as well as those embodied in natural objects—in the old native religion. The old faith could not "cleanse" an area where an aristocrat had died because his *kami* was too strong and could still hover about in the form of a demon-like manifestation ready to make mortal mischief for any of the living who dared remain within the spirits's range.

The only remedy was to abandon such a spiritually polluted location, even if it was the capital. Workmen would take down the buildings, move their beams and rafters a few miles down the road, and rebuild the official buildings in a location not polluted by the dead aristocrat's *kami*.

Though they did not have to move the capital very far, it is hard to run a complicated Chinese-style bureaucracy if you have to carry the capital of such a government on your back to a new place every dozen or two dozen years, or even more often if the death rate at the top of the ruling aristocracy increases.

Buddhism could promise a much more powerful magic than Shinto. Buddhism co-opted the old native religion by naming it with the Sino-Japanese name Shinto (Ch. *Shendao* 神道), meaning "way of the *anima*" or *kami* (*shin* 神 in Sino-Japanese), by which it has since been known. The Buddhist monks claimed they could purify a location from the baleful influences of Shinto *kami* so that it would not be necessary to evacuate the area.

The answer to the problem of a permanent capital was for the state to first build several big, richly endowed Buddhist temples in a suitable location, and then put up the downtown of the capital around them. That is how it became possible to build and occupy Nara, the first permanent capital, at a site within easy commuting distance of the area within which the temporary capitals had shifted.

Unfortunately, this cure soon proved almost as destabilizing politically as the disease it was designed to treat.

## 2. Establishment of Heian

Though they had rid themselves of dangerous *kami*, the proprietors of the state soon found themselves saddled with mobs of obstreperous monks led by politically ambitious aristocratic abbots. These people insisted on acquiring ever larger quantities of wealth and power from the state they were protecting, and would riot at the drop of a hat, or a sutra, if refused or if any delay in delivery of the patronage they expected was imposed.

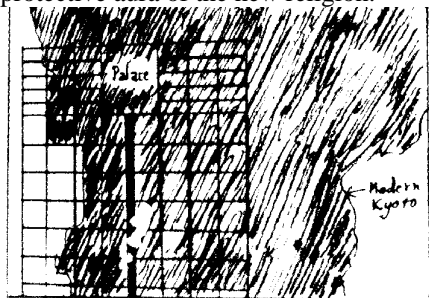
In the middle of the 8th century one Rasputin-like monk wormed himself into the affections of what turned out to be (partly for this reason) the last of the Japanese empresses. To keep this from happening again, from then on (with only one exception in the 17th century) only males were allowed to be emperors.

The Fujiwara (originally the Nakatomi) and the imperial family decided to move the capital again rather than give up to the priests the power their ancestors had won back from the Soga in 644. This time, however, they would be more sophisticated urban planners. They would not place the monasteries inside town where the monks could raise Cain with the government.

Instead, they "zoned" the new capital's major monastic establishment onto a hill, Mount Hiei, just northeast of the proposed site of the new capital. Northeast

was a good direction in which to shift the monastic establishments anyway. The most dangerous of the *kami* were not necessarily dead aristocrats, but the whole army of spirits of the dead always out there and ready to cause a variety of mischief for men. Most of these came out of the northeast.

By putting the Mount Hiei monasteries outside of town to the northeast, the state hoped it could free itself of monkish interference and yet remain within the protective aura of the new religion.



If you overlay maps of ancient, medieval and modern Kyoto, you will see that it has grown toward the northeast into the shadow of the monasteries' protection. Only recently has it filled in most of the southwestern areas of the old Chinese-style grid layout borrowed from the city plan of the Tang capital, Chang'an.

As it turned out, the monks were able to commute to the city center from Mt. Hiei for their riots, but did so somewhat less frequently than the Nara monks had done from downtown. This, and the state's growing power as it indigenized the foreign institutions, allowed the new capital to function better than Nara.

### 3. Mid Heian cultural indigenization & physical expansion

While they were solving the problem of establishing a permanent Chinese-style capital, the court also worked on indigenizing other aspects of Chinese culture. Like the Koreans before them, the Japanese figured out a way to use Chinese characters to represent the sounds of the Japanese language.

Their first attempt, called *man'yōgana*, like the Korean *idu* script on which it was undoubtedly based, used Chinese characters to represent the sounds of Japanese rather than what a character meant in Chinese.

This system was first used for the

*Man'yōshū*, a collection of ancient and contemporary, sacred and secular poetry. In poetry, of course, sound counts as much as or more than sense. This justified the awkwardness of using many-stroked Chinese characters to represent two-phoneme syllables. If we had no alphabet, and were in touch with Chinese culture, we could use a similar system to write my name, "Kaplan" as 柯普論 (*Kepulun*).

Despite its awkwardness, the capital scribes even used this awkward script for one of the first mythic histories, the *Record of Ancient Matters (Kojiki)* in 712. But this proved so ungainly that they lapsed back into using Chinese characters to represent meanings in Chinese for the next mythic history, the *History of Japan (Nihon shoki)* in 720. It was not until Late Heian times that the next step, the creation of syllabic symbols by simplifying Chinese characters, was taken.

During the Mid Heian Period, the state's borrowed Chinese political institutions were, like the Chinese characters, still strong enough for the Japanese state to use to keep expanding.

As the state expanded to the north and northeast, it tended to organize the new lands Chinese fashion, under the *handen* or Equal Fields System used by the Northern Dynasties and early Tang China. Like the Chinese, the Heian government tried to redistribute the land to each new generation. Its aim was to assure equal access to land per cultivator. This in turn would permit roughly equal burdens of taxation in kind and in labor to be exacted from each family. This Chinese style tax system was the source of most of the revenue and labor used to finance the further expansion of the Mid Heian state.

It is just as well that the supply of *handen* land was increasing so rapidly as Japan's state conquered ever more land ever further north into Honshu, since the *shoen* or manorial system, also parallel to China's, was growing almost as fast. The state gave away increasing amounts of land in permanent tenure as manors (*shoen*), particularly in the regions nearest the capital, to Buddhist religious establishments and to aristocrats. Naturally, land acquired by such influential people would not be redistributed in each generation. Nor did its proprietors pay taxes on it. If the increase in this *shoen* land had not been balanced by the growth of *handen* land as the state's territory expanded up into the northeast toward and then into

the Kanto Plain, the tax base would have been shrinking.

Trouble with the tax base only set in when, during Late Heian times, increase of agricultural land finally began to taper off. The expansion by then had passed beyond the broad Kanto plain into the hilly country to its northeast. From then on, the quantity of manorial land expanded much faster than new equal fields land could be created near the frontier.

## D. Differences Between Derivative and Original High Civilizations

### 1. Derivative civilizations are not inferior, just later

We are now in a position to evaluate some of the differences between the evolution of the original high civilization in China and the first stage of derivative high civilization in the pastoral-nomadic regions of Zone A, and in the sedentary cultures of Korea and Japan. I do not mean "derivative" to be taken as a polite synonym for inferior. After all, every surviving civilization is now to some degree derivative. A derivative civilization merely comes later than and derives its civilization either from an original civilization or an earlier derivative civilization. Sooner or later all civilizations become derivative, and later, derivative civilizations tend to become more powerful than earlier, original civilizations.

Each of the earlier stages of development of the pastoral-nomad cultures and of Korea came later than the corresponding stages in China. Though it began independently of China, part way through its early civilization stage Korea began to derive traits from China. It is in that limited sense of the word that it became "derivative."

Similarly with Japan: Each stage of its development came later than the corresponding stage in Central Asia, Korea and China. Though it too began independently during the Jomon stage, it eventually came to share traits with "cousin" cultures on the southern end of the Korean peninsula. It then also began to derive some traits from China. At first, it did so indirectly, by way of Chinese-influenced conquerors or relatives from the peninsula, and then via people coming directly from

China.

Though it always starts later, a derivative civilization eventually catches up with its donor culture. It then becomes as sophisticated as the donor, and may even move ahead of it. In most respects Japan moved ahead of China a century and more ago. Recently, at least the southern half of Korea has also shot ahead of contemporary China, at least in economic strength.

## 2. Telescoping of stages

There are advantages to coming later: Latecomers can "telescope" stages. They can skip altogether or shorten a Bronze or an Early Iron Age. Korea jumped into its Iron Age after only 5 centuries of Bronze Age, while China took 15 centuries to work through its Bronze Age. Japan did not even bother with a Bronze Age.

Some aspects of civilization are more easily telescoped than others. At the purely material level, it is easy to import specific products and almost as easy to import the technology for making them. It is harder to make changes involving market relationships. Internal markets hardly existed in Korea and Japan up through the end of the first stage of high civilization. The economies of both remained at the political redistributionist level of organization well into high civilization.

If there are no markets, there cannot be money, nor any possibility of a plutocratic sector of the ruling class arising. If a plutocracy begins to form through external market relations, as happened in late Unified Silla Korea, even an archaic (because monolithically aristocratic) ruling class can probably choke it off, as the "bone ranks" aristocracy of Silla did by murdering Chang Pogo in 833. In early to mid Heian Japan, there was not even that much of a challenge, since Korean and Chinese merchants monopolized Nara and Heian Japan's external markets.

A derivative high civilization might not even add much of a meritocratic sector to its ruling class well into its second stage. One of the key tasks of a meritocracy is to create a government capable of ruling the more complicated society that markets help bring into existence. If there are no internal markets, the society of a derivative first stage high civilization may remain so simple that a meritocracy is not needed.

Without a meritocracy, not just secular intellectual life, but the more intellectual

aspects of religion will tend to be neglected. That is why Silla Korea and Taika through Heian periods Japan absorbed so little of the more abstract aspects of Confucian thought. The Chinese Buddhist missionaries could have taught such Confucianism to Japanese meritocrats, if only Japan had possessed any.

## 3. Indigenization

In any event, the vigorous and able conquest aristocracy of the pastoral-nomads and the pure aristocracies of Silla Korea or post-Taika Japan were capable of indigenizing the political forms they borrowed. Where necessary, they simplified these forms, so that they could be run by a versatile aristocracy that had no need to bother much about meritizing any but its lower ranks.

Indigenization made Japan and Korea look, particularly to Chinese observers, more primitive, more like aborigines "going native" after limited contact with the superior outside Chinese culture. Hence the Chinese continued to call the Japanese "dwarf slaves," sometimes still referred to Koreans as "monkeys wearing hats," and questioned the body odors of pastoral-nomads.<sup>5</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that these derivative high civilizations were "indigenizing" Chinese institutions all along, and that this was not the same thing as "going native." When you "go native" you are presumably giving up altogether on the traits laid upon you by the old imperial power. But when you "indigenize," you are *keeping* these borrowed traits while adapting them to fit your native institutions.

Once indigenized, the resulting derivative hybrid civilization may well eventually jump ahead of the original civilization from which the derivative people had once borrowed these traits.

China itself became partially derivative when it adopted Buddhism after the fall of Han. It has become seriously derivative of Europe during the last century or so. Presumably, once it has finished in-

<sup>5</sup> The ancient Romans made similar disparaging remarks about the Northern Europeans once the natives began to slip out from under their imperial control. Fifteen centuries later, the descendants of these Europeans were calling their non-Europeanized African colonial subjects *macaques* (monkeys) and the educated ones *evolúés* (evolved ones), or their educated Hindu subjects, *babus..or wogs* (westernized oriental gentlemen).

digenizing these new European traits, and has finished recovering from its totalitarian socialist episode, it will have a chance to shoot ahead once more.

To borrow for other purposes President Nixon's fatuous remark of 1971 that "we are all Keynesians now," we must concede that all of our civilizations are derivative now. So we had better be careful about sneering at the pioneering derivative high civilizations of East Asia.

## E. Heian's Crisis of Civilization: External Context

A derivative civilization sooner or later indigenizes the features it borrows. As it indigenizes, it changes these borrowed features to make them fit local conditions better. However, the more thorough and successful the indigenization, the more likely it is that the civilization will grow out from under the vision of Heaven that gave rise to it and fall into a crisis of civilization. By the beginning of Late Heian times, the first signs of such a crisis show up in Japan. Its external context shows up, at least in retrospect, by the Mid Heian period.

### 1. Korea

The murder of Chang Pogo by court aristocratic conspirators in 833 undermined the positions of other Korean sea-going merchants. Thereafter, the lucrative carrying trade between China and Japan gradually fell out of Korean and into Chinese hands.

Silla turned inward. The jealous Silla aristocrats were content to ruin their country's international trade through neglect, and to allow it to gradually fall into the hands of private Chinese merchants rather than risk having to share power with a Korean plutocracy.

For a time during the late 9th century, this trade deteriorated, since late Tang China was itself also turning inward after the 840s, and the Japanese stopped sending official tribute missions to China. This ended the string of tributary missions that had regularly gone to China during the years from 607 to 844. That meant the demand for either Korean or Chinese vessels by Japanese *official* travelers had disappeared.

Korean and Chinese official indifference constituted negative encouragement for Japanese politicians to turn inward as well. The Korean transmission belt between the Japanese state and the original high civilization, China, had broken.

This state of affairs continued during the 10th century, when Wang Kon founded the Koryo Dynasty. But it was not just institutionalized habit that led Koryo to continue to turn its back on Japan. Japan was no longer interesting to the Koryo Dynasty. Japan was not far enough advanced to provide the kinds of stimuli to help Koryo finish crossing into the second stage of high civilization. Only China could do that. Hence China was of far more interest to it than Japan.

Koryo had another reason to look toward Song China. It worried about the rise of the powerful kingdoms of Liao and Bohai just to the north of its territory. Since Koryo was advancing its northern boundary from the Taedong River north toward the line of the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, it was bound to be ever more concerned with the other powers of Zone A, and still less concerned with Japan.

## 2. Tang & Five Dynasties China

A similar pattern of growing mutual indifference held in Japan's relations with China. Like late Silla Korea, the Tang Dynasty was also turning inward during its later years as its still enormous though phony universal empire fell apart. By the 840s, Confucian and Daoist envy of Buddhist influence on the central government had broken through into a great persecution of the Buddhists.

What turned out to be Japan's last tribute mission to China was disrupted and cut short by this event, and a generation later by the horrors of the rebellion launched by Huang Chao in the 870s. Huang Chao, a former salt merchant much dependent on the Chinese state, was a great xenophobe—hater of foreigners. He could not stomach Korean control of so much of the coastal trade of China, or the great influence of Korean settlers in the ports of his Shandong home province. Since Korea's grip on that trade was slipping, he was emboldened to rebel and to strike out at them and at foreigners in general.

Huang went rampaging all the way down through C1 and C2 to the top of

subzone C3. He killed 100,000 Persian and Arab mercantile settlers living in the port of Canton. The word of this horror spread by way of the Arab and Persian chroniclers all the way to the Mediterranean basin and undermined Chinese participation in intercivilizational trade for more than a generation.

One of the northern border potentates who had been undermining Tang's power finally overthrew Tang a generation after the great rebellion. The subsequent Five Dynasties of the north turned their backs even on nearby parts of the continent. Their proprietors had their hands full trying to hold their governments together for more than one generation. They had no time to spare for cultivating relations with Japan.

Most of the Ten Kingdoms of the south were in the same sort of desperately unstable political situation. But the Kingdom of Min on the east coast across from the island of Taiwan thanks to its mountainous hinterland could turn its back on the troubles of the interior and quickly become a great maritime state.

Often called "China's Portugal" because of its maritime orientation, Min's merchants forged China's first sustained trade links with Southeast Asia and slowly increased their trade with Japan as well. So precarious was its hold on power at home that the Min state was happy to be able to tax a part of its overseas merchants' profits, and dared not risk extensive state interference with their business overseas lest they sail away to Southeast Asia forever.

## 3. Song China

Northern Song put together a smallish phony universal state in 960 from the territories previously controlled by the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. It thereby inherited the benevolent attitude of Ten Kingdoms Min toward foreign trade. Hence private foreign trade continued to burgeon during Northern Song times, including trade with Japan. The Song state itself was content with taxing this trade.

For several hundred years, therefore, the tilt on the Chinese side was toward tolerating private connections directly between Chinese merchants and Northeast and Southeast Asian foreign customers rather than toward creating public connections with these foreign states (except for tributary links to Korea).

The earlier tributary relations between Japan and China involved political redistribution rather than economic exchange. The ceremonial obligations of political redistribution often obliged one or both sides to accept goods as tribute or gifts which they did not value highly.

Indigenization can in part be defined as the process of a derivative culture developing its own scale or list of values. This value scale will contain many items—many individual "lines" on each person's or culture's list of priorities—that the indigenizer has borrowed from the host culture, but has now rearranged into different ordinal ranks.

This change does not necessarily isolate the indigenizer from the host culture. Instead, it causes the two to become much more likely to engage in *economic* exchange with each other. When two potential trading partners have value scales containing many of the same items but listed differently in ordinal rank, the two of them will be more likely to exchange some of these goods with each other.

This process is self-feeding: As trade increases, each side can risk further rearrangement of its value scales through additional indigenization, confident it can satisfy its new priorities by either foreign or domestic trade.

At a time when Europe's trade across the Mediterranean was still recovering from the rise of Islam, a much more massive Sino-Japanese trade was already flourishing. This anticipated one of the most characteristic traits of the second stage of high civilization: large-scale, private international and then intercivilizational commerce by sea.

Developing nations of the late 20th century are finding (after a generation-long detour into socialism) that the medieval Japanese pattern of indigenization creating value scales that encourage trade, which encourages further indigenization, suits them too. New imported ideas may even help cure civilizational crisis.

## F. Mid and Late-Heian's Indigenization of High Civilization

### 1. Political indigenization

Just as it paid Korea and China to turn their backs on Japan, it also paid for Japan

to turn its back on the continent, except to engage in trade with Song China and Koryo Dynasty Korea.

Once the Japanese state became tolerably sinified, it was powerful enough to expand rapidly in the direction of least resistance. That was to the north and east, up the east coast of Honshu to the Kanto Plain. In that direction, flat land could be gained without too much expense and trouble. The local people, whom the Japanese called the Emishi or Yi barbarians, could easily be conquered.

These Emishi may well have been one branch of the ethnic group that now only survives as the contemporary Ainu. But they may also have been northern Honshu people descended from the same mixture of Yayoi and Jomon gene and culture pools out of which Tumulus and then Nara and Heian Japan's state had formed. The advance of the Heian armies finally brought them by force into the maturing first stage high civilization of the Heian period. Not long after each region's Yi were conquered, most of them appear to have become indistinguishable from the Japanese who had conquered them.

The title shogun first appeared during the Early and Mid Heian period of vigorous expansion against the Emishi. It did not yet have its later feudal process meaning of head of state on the military-political side. The title shogun was first used in its original sense as a Sino-Japanese word meaning "general" or "generalissimo."

The full original title was *Sei-i tai shogun*—"barbarian of the east subduing generalissimo." This was the title of the commander in chief of the Chinese-style centrally controlled army financed via tax revenues in kind and labor (i.e. conscription) derived from the borrowed Chinese Equal Fields System.

This centrally controlled army regularly went out into the field against the Emishi, caught them, and then turned them into Japanese, if at first only by taxing them. After the state took control over Emishi lands, it divided them into Chinese-style provinces and districts, and settled some of the land as Equal Fields with migrants from further south.

However, as Heian Japan's territory grew larger, the old, Chinese political forms grew ever less viable.

As it attempted to rule over this larger territory, the mid to late Heian state found itself changing the rules it had earlier bor-

rowed from China so as to make them fit both the new conditions and the abiding nature of the old ruling class. In the provinces, therefore, this bigger Japan also became more "Japanese" in its ways of doing things.

## 2. Socio-economic indigenization

After conquering this new land by Chinese-style methods, the men of Heian also used Chinese-style methods to render it taxable. They organized Chinese-style provinces and districts in each newly conquered segment of land, compiled records and placed them in the new provincial and district offices. These records specified the location of each tract of land, its quantity and quality for agricultural purposes, which families occupied it, and how many people were in each family.

With the death of the head of the family unit to which the land was assigned, just as the original Chinese Equal Fields (Japanese *handen*) System specified, title to the land reverted to the government. The local offices would redistribute it in formulaically determined amounts to the next generation heads of local families.

Since the government knew who had what land, it also knew who to lay hands upon to squeeze for taxes in kind and in labor. Taxpaying units roughly commensurate in number of adults (including servile dependents) and capital equipment (plows, draft animals), were to have similar quantities and qualities of land assigned to them. Hence, equal amounts of taxes could be justly levied on each taxpaying unit. At least that was the principle the system tried at least to approximate.

To be sure, right from the beginning the court also tended to give some of this land away as *shoen* or manors, i.e. as land that was not rotated among different families generation by generation. As manorial land piled up in the hands of influential families and religious institutions, the Equal Fields System became unviable, just as it had in China.

The Chinese manor (*zhuangyuan* 莊園) gave its name (Sino-Japanese *shoen*) to the analogous Japanese institution, but a Japanese prototype of the Heian period manor also existed. The land held in perpetual tenure by the *ujis* in ancient times may also be considered manorial. Powerful *ujis* still existed, and some of them

(e.g. the Fujiwara) now ruled this Chinese style Japanese government. They thought of the new manors as no different from their ancestors' holdings.

The state could hardly avoid giving away some of the land at its disposition to these powerful families, particularly land near the capital where they now served. Gaining manorial land allowed these aristocrats to keep enough power in their own hands to prevent the rise of a lesser, meritized wing of the aristocracy. This did not render the government less efficient, because to the extent that the Equal Fields system was rendered impotent, the need for men of merit to administer it was also lessened.

Some land was given away as manors on the frontiers in order to attract settlement by lesser *uji* and their *be* (subordinate corporate groups) of specialized farmers. Frontier manors were also given to newly established *uji*, branches of the imperial clan for example, whom the government wanted to settle as far away from the capital as possible so as to keep them out of mischief in court politics.

Much more land was given away nearer the center to the main branches of the great aristocratic families themselves and to the main branch of the imperial clan. Manorial land in all regions was given away to the high aristocracy's spiritual advisers in the great Buddhist temples and monasteries.

These manorial lands, particularly those held by lesser clans at a distance from the center, often did not bear very clear titles. Particularly on or just behind the frontiers, the court only intended to grant manorial status for one or two generations so as to encourage settlement. Thereafter such land was supposed to revert to Equal Fields status—i.e. was to begin to be subject to redistribution upon the death of the head of the family.

A family with such land would much prefer to keep it in permanent tenure as manorial land. This would also allow them to avoid paying the taxes that accompanied temporary grants of land via the Equal Fields System.

How could this be accomplished? The holders of such insecurely held manors could *buy* the influence from their social and political superiors to help keep their land off the tax rolls. We still do this in New York politics and have done so since the good old days of Tammany Hall. (I have heard rumors that such things hap-

pen even in the Pacific Northwest.)

In Heian Japan, a minor aristocratic family holding temporary manorial land would find a more influential aristocrat in its home district or province, and “commend” to him a share of the ownership—called the *shiki* rights—to that land. This was the right to a certain percentage of the annual produce of that particular manor’s land. Shading themselves under this commendee’s influence, the commendor could retain this land as manorial land, even though under the formal Chinese-style laws it should have reverted to Equal Fields status.

This higher local aristocrat might in turn buy protection for his newly acquired prerogative by commending a portion of his share of the ownership rights to some really big shot in Heian. Chains of commendation or *shiki* rights grew like the roots of a willow tree. They reached up from scattered localities (and once the principle was established not necessarily just at the frontiers but everywhere) by several stages to the great aristocratic families, including the imperial clan itself, in Heian.

Manors, like the Equal Fields land allotments from which they often descended, were usually not compact stretches of land. Often they comprised individual strips, sometimes isolated from each other. This was partly the result of the haphazard rotation of ownership of bits of land and equally ad hoc attempts to escape such rotation. Mainly it was the consequence of the geographic and hydraulic engineering constraints on the laying out of the flooded paddy fields for growing rice. (It was during Heian that the process of creating artificial swamps for growing rice began to spread.)

Whatever the reason for such fragmentation, you should not think of late Heian manors as resembling the compact Tara-like “plantations” of the ante-bellum American South, the late Roman imperial period manors, or some of the manors of the feudal period in the West.

Until the end of late Heian times, the political lines of power along which *shiki* payments moved ran parallel to the old political structure. The same people—high aristocrats at Heian—ultimately got most of the wealth and power, but they were getting it by a different route.

They were getting their wealth through private channels of commendation, rather than through the Chinese-style

political and bureaucratic hierarchy.

Indeed, many of the provincial and district headquarters faded away. Some of them suffered mysterious fires which eliminated the records which could have proved that manorial land was actually Equal Fields land.

The shift to the new pattern of land ownership caused one awkward problem. Commendation could not mobilize labor directly, only some of the goods produced by labor. Hence the old Chinese-style system, which could (after a fashion) still mobilize labor for public works and defense, had to remain in place until superseded by the feudal political framework, which could mobilize labor for such purposes directly, via the obligations of vassals and their dependents to lords.

Only at that point did this parallel structure of manor-based commendation become the framework within which the Japanese feudal process took hold. In and of itself this did not constitute the feudal process (which I, in ideational determinist terms, define as a *political* relationship), but it did help pay for the new feudal political hierarchy built after 1200 AD upon a lord-vassal relationship established shortly before then for reasons mostly independent of commendation of *shiki* rights.

Town life was mostly still only carried on in Heian itself, which was still by far the biggest town, even by mid to late Heian times. Clear signs of a middle class, and of more extensive trade being conducted by this middle class show up. Nevertheless, even these better off commoners were still being depicted in drawings and paintings of this time as lesser beings, little humpy-backed funny looking homunculi, not at all like the gracile “good people,” as the aristocrats referred to themselves.

At least, however, we at last begin to find some notice being taken of the existence of a townsman class existing in the middle between aristocrats and cultivators. These townsmen engaged in private trade and manufacture. Exchange was no longer solely political redistribution of the products of the specialties carried on by corporate dependents of some *uji*.

Even the richer of the members of this middle class showed no sign of evolving into a plutocratic segment of the ruling class. Before the late 12th century they did not do enough business to make such an attempt plausible. Not much foreign

trade fell into their hands as the Korean merchants faded from the picture. Chinese merchants instead picked up the slack.

Nor did the domestic market undergo very much development. Heian remained virtually the only substantial city. Most of the provincial and district capitals remained little more than military outposts. The provincial temples (*kokubunji*) in each of the provincial capitals were often the only non-military buildings in these administrative centers, most of which hardly deserved the name “town.”

Many of them were in locations not suitable for commerce. The provincial capital of Musashi province (which embraced the Kanto Plain), for example, was in the geometrical center of the plain. It was not near Kamakura, which controlled access to the plain from the south, or near Tokyo Bay, into which emptied a number of rivers reaching out onto the plain.

The old capital of Musashi province never amounted to much. It became little more than a village, called Kokubunji (after the provincial temple, which burned down in Late Heian times). During the postwar industrial boom it finally attained a connection with the political-economic capital of the Kanto Plain. It is now a remote suburb of Tokyo, two hours away from downtown on the Chuo Line.

The aristocrats, as in pre-Taika times, all through Heian still mostly lived off the produce of their own home estates, supplemented by the in-kind *shiki* revenues commended to them. The Japanese domestic market, therefore, was simply too shallow to support a plutocracy.

### 3. Cultural indigenization

During Mid Heian times the old *man'yogana* script evolved into two genuine parallel syllabaries—*hiragana* and *katakana*. Buddhist monks in some of the newer sects had seen and even learned the Sanskrit alphabet which was the original language of some of their holy books. Inspired by this alphabet, the monks created two syllabaries. Instead of using any Chinese character with the right sound to represent the sound of a particular Japanese syllable, the monks decided to pick several dozen Chinese characters for their rough equivalence in sound to the four dozen unique syllables that the phonetically simple Japanese spoken language can be analyzed into. These characters were to serve as symbols for those

sounds.

Then, for *hiragana*, each of these characters was simplified through reducing the number of strokes with which it was written while retaining roughly the same outer and inner “envelopes” of the original character. For *katakana*, the monks abbreviated the characters by selecting for preservation some key portion of the internal structure of the original character.

For example, the Chinese character now pronounced *jia*, in Tang times (contemporary with Heian) was pronounced *ka* in Chinese then. In *man'yogana* it would have been used unchanged for the Japanese syllable *ka*. The *hiragana* version is written with the little box on the right simplified to a single line. In *katakana* it is written with only the left half of the original character preserved. All three were pronounced *ka* then, and the Japanese *kana* still are now.

加	か	カ
man'yogana	hiragana	katakana

A set of four dozen odd symbols created in this fashion constitute a syllabary (i.e. one symbol for each syllable). Given the paucity of unique syllables in spoken Japanese compared to most other languages, a syllabary is just about as convenient as our 26 letter alphabet would be for transcribing the sounds of the language, even using a computer keyboard.

The Japanese could (and did) continue to also use as many other Chinese characters, called *kanji* (Chinese *Han zi* 漢字, meaning Han character) as they pleased. These no longer transcribed Japanese sounds. Their meanings now counted. *Kanji* normally constitute the roots of words. The Chinese character meaning “to move on foot” would be used to represent the root of the word “to run.” The Japanese would hang the affixes for conjugating the verb onto this root by using *hiragana* script. The Chinese character might be pronounced roughly as it was during Tang times in China, or the sound of the quite different Japanese word with roughly the same meaning might be employed instead. (There are, alas, no rules for deciding when to use which rule to determine pronunciation.)

That is how the Japanese have indigenized written Chinese to create a written language of their own. It may appear cumbersome, and in fact it is, but it

works. It is also a very striking example of what I mean by “indigenization.”

## G. Signs of Crisis At the Spiritual and Social Levels During Late Heian

By late Heian times, i.e. between the end of the 10th and the late 12th century, signs increased that the above indigenizing trends had reached a critical point, a point where the imported framework—the Tang Chinese Buddhist vision of Heaven—could no longer be reconciled with the much changed because much indigenized political and social order.

The old imported Heaven could no longer contain or provide rules for the increased number of social classes, or for the larger territory that the imported civilization had helped the Japanese to conquer. In response, new visions of Heaven began to percolate into Japan.

### 1. New forms of Buddhism

Buddhism seems always to have been more independently instituted in Japan than in China. The Chinese word *zong* 宗 (Sino-Japanese pronunciation *shu*) means, among other things, “school of thought” in Chinese, but “sect” in Japanese.

Perhaps because Late Heian Japanese sensed their civilization was heading into crisis, they imported from China new forms of Buddhism embodied in intensely didactic sects.

Worship of Amida Bodhisattva spread from China, and became even more popular in Japan. Amida Bodhisattva is one of the numerous Buddhas-to-come who remains within convenient commuting distance of this lower sensate realm until he can save everyone down here.

In China, Amida was believed to rule over a Pure Land in the West. This Pure Land was a melding of Indian and Chinese pre-Buddhist myths. It was in the “west” only in the sense that Chinese myths normally shifted wondrous places in that direction.

The Pure Land actually operates as an intermediate zone between our sensate world and the higher realm where no-thing existed. A believer can be reborn into it solely by expressing faith in Amida Bodhisattva, perhaps merely by emitting

Amida's name with sufficient sincerity, even as late as just before the moment of the believer's death. To be sure, the believer reborn into the Pure Land has not yet escaped the cycle of rebirths. But once there, he finds it much easier to muster the discipline to achieve his own final enlightenment.

Along with Amidist Buddhism other Buddhist ideas received new emphasis. The idea of the *mappo* 末法—the third and final stage of the law, the current manifestation of sensate reality—was one of these.

There are, according to one form of Mahayana Buddhism, three stages of human history: An initial stage of primordial chaos, a second stage that began with the birth of the historical Buddha, during which the law of salvation is spread, and then the third and final stage of the current cosmic era, the period when human history begins to wind down and then ends with the extinguishing of sensate reality.

This third stage was widely believed by Japanese to be just getting under way during late Heian times. The same people who believed that Lord Amida Bodhisattva could save them, also believed that such salvation could not, especially in the ever more decadent *mappo* times, be achieved by a person's accomplishments at the sensate level. Amida's freely given compassion was all the more indispensable under such circumstances.

The concept of the end of human history after the third stage looks very much like the Buddhist equivalent of the Christian belief in the coming of the millennium.<sup>6</sup>

The Japanese added their own unique touches to this East Asia-wide evolutionary development within Buddhism.

They added the notion of *aware*—an onomatopoeic word referring to the profound sigh (“ah,” the first syllable of *aware*)—one utters to express the sweet sadness filling one's soul as one realizes the ephemerality of even the beauties of the Earth. One who believes Earth is en-

<sup>6</sup> Originally, this was to be the return to earth of Christ a thousand years after His crucifixion. Later versions would have Christ return at some other time, after which He would rule over earth for another thousand years. During this time those predestined for salvation will undergo the final training for salvation. Another variant, sometimes called pre-millennialism has an elect group of saints rule for a thousand years, after which Christ reappears. All the variant millenniums end the same way, with Creation coming to a decisive and final end.

tering the *mappo* stage has many occasions for such sweet sighs. The only reason such a person does not scream aloud at this prospect is the hope of salvation through the divine intervention of Amida.

The necessity even for an aristocrat to give up the glories of life on Earth evokes still more sighs. Naturally, the aristocracy felt that only they were capable of true *aware*, since only they appreciated life on Earth at its best.

## 2. The social level

Once belief in Amidism and in the *mappo* had become common, people in general tended to become much more fully involved in Buddhism. The masses as well as aristocrats became ready to believe there was indeed a crisis of civilization. They may even have accelerated the crisis's development by this belief.

In fact, however, the aristocracy as such really was entering into a crisis in the management of their state, and one which undermined their own status. The more prescient among them realized they had much to worry about even before Amidist Buddhism got them used to looking for trouble.

The pure aristocracy of the Heian period was so determined to exclude any meritization, on the basis of any conceivable template of merit, that it invented all sorts of dotty versions of pseudo-meritization that only a member of the old *uji* based aristocracy could possibly conform himself to.

There are only, the aristocrats said, two kinds of people: These barely humanoid homuncules of commoners, and then the *yoko hito*—the “good persons.” The only “good person” was one who was well-born, who could, in effect, trace his ancestors back to Amaterasu on his daddy's side. He or she demonstrated this not only through records of lineage, but by having the purest of manners defined in a highly arbitrary way.

Such a person was *uruwashiki*—metaphorically clean. This image preserved one of the aboriginal aspects of the native Japanese religion, under the terms of which one must be or become clean in some sacred definition of the term to have earned ultimate justification.

In Heian times, a female demonstrated the mannered aspects of her cleanliness by having her natural eyebrows completely plucked out, and then blacking in artifi-

cial eyebrows two inches higher. Such a lady would also blacken her teeth. It was vulgar to have white teeth. To a cultured observer of Heian times the dazzling white smile of a Hollywood bimbo would be like seeing a skinned caterpillar in a lady's mouth.

To have the right number and color sequence of layered undergarments (which you would need anyway to avoid chilblains during the atrocious Japanese winter with only a *hibachi* inside the house to warm you) was another sign of virtue.<sup>7</sup>

Even love affairs had to be conducted by both sexes in just the right way, with the right people, with whom love poems of the right type were exchanged, after composing them with the right degree of subtlety on the right shape of paper scented with the right perfume.

If you could do all these things, you were a *yoko hito*, and the odds were overwhelming that you were born to it. No one could learn to fit himself to these requirements as to a template of merit.

The aristocratic love affairs celebrated in the great novels and fictionalized court diaries of late Heian times were not so much decadent or even precocious signs of sexual “liberation” as they were survivals of uxori-local marriage patterns from the days before the aristocracy started to adopt Chinese style patrilocal marriage. Patrilocal marriage moved the girl in with the boy's family. The more ancient uxori-local pattern had the boy moving in with the girl's family.

Originally, everyone in Japan practiced uxori-local marriage. Aristocrats nominally (but not really) gave it up first, during Heian times, because they were the first group to be heavily influenced by Chinese practices. Other classes shifted over much later.

Uxori-local marriage was still being commonly practiced by ordinary people in some remote areas of Japan as late as the 19th century and perhaps later. This late form of uxori-local marriage was sometimes referred to by the euphemism *yobai*—“continuous visiting.” The boy would regularly slip into the girl's house (or into a communal dormitory for teenage girls maintained by the village) at night and sleep with her. When she got pregnant, their marriage was proclaimed.

<sup>7</sup> It was not just the ancient equivalent of the recent fashion trend of “the layered look” (but which, I understand, originated in Tokyo).

The dirty-minded should not snicker at this, since it was not really what my generation called “fooling around,” but rather was a perfectly well-regulated form of uxori-local marriage.<sup>8</sup>

The aristocratic love affairs you read about in the delightful late Heian novels and diaries written in *hiragana* script were probably echoes of some of the habits originally derived from such uxori-local courtship and marriage patterns. The love affairs of fiction, however, were so very refined that only true aristocrats could do them right. The preservation of this old custom was one of the many forms taken by indigenization.

The female court aristocrats who wrote these novels and diaries wrote them out of both fear and nostalgia. As females and aristocrats they were members of two once influential but now threatened groups.

The power and status of aristocratic women had been declining ever since the adoption of male-centered Chinese forms of organization had gotten seriously under way in Nara times. Women were not permitted to hold the throne after the late 8th century, and were never permitted to hold substantive Chinese-style offices. Nor were they taught to read or write Chinese, the language of government. That was man's work. Though some women learned Chinese on the sly anyway, they could only admit to having learned the new *kana* scripts.

*Kana*, however, allowed women writers to use their native language rather than the stilted Chinese favored by men. They could console themselves for their decline in status by writing the world's first psychological novels, some of them disguised as diaries.

These novels externalized both the sexual and civilizational aspects of the dilemma faced by these brilliant women. Their heroines were insecure sojourners in a world dominated by men bearing an alien Chinese culture. Their heroes tend to be soft, Japanese-style men upon whom a woman could count, rather than blustery Chinese *manqué*.

Nevertheless, even life in the novel ultimately defeats both heroes and heroines. The resulting displays of literary

<sup>8</sup> Not as much can be said for the closest analog to this practice among the white-skinned natives of late 20th century North America, since, unlike *yobai*, “shacking up” or “living together” much less “hooking” do not necessarily result in stable bonding of the sexes in marriage.

aware provide us with the most vivid examples of late Heian Japan's descent into crisis of civilization.

The strain of living up to their status was also putting the men of the late Heian period court aristocracy under stress in other ways. A lower, somewhat meritized military almost-aristocracy was arising outside of court and getting ready to challenge the men of the Heian court.

### 3. The unassimilable lesser near aristocrats

If the middle class could still be treated as mere homunculi by ultra-refined pure court aristocrats, these aristocrats gradually were obliged to take their own provincial near aristocracy much more seriously, and to try to build them into the old system. It turned out, however, that these lesser aristocrats could not stably be assimilated into the ruling class without making drastic changes to the late Heian political order, changes which would ultimately lead to a new stage of civilization.

Some of these provincial aristocratic clans, like the Taira (Heike in Sino-Japanese pronunciation) or the Minamoto (Genji) were actually branches of the imperial clan. The main branch of the imperial house gave their descendants new surnames after five generations of younger sons, and sent them off to the far east or far west of the country to keep them from making mischief at court. Out in the countryside, however, their prestige as scions of the imperial *uji* made them the natural leaders of other lesser aristocrats in the provinces.

Many of these other local aristocrats of less exalted ancestry had already turned into a new kind of professional military man. Originally conquerors and then settlers of new land on the frontiers, they eventually evolved into holders of the lowest level of ownership of manorial as well as Equal Fields land.

The court aristocrats recruited the most vigorous of them as enforcers of their commendation rights. The courtiers condescendingly referred to them as their "teeth and claws" in the provinces.

Their ability to deliver *shiki* revenues to their superiors became the basis for the first template of merit to be seriously accepted by the court aristocracy. These provincials eventually secured recognition as a slightly meritized provincial military

aristocracy. Internecine fights at court tempted particular factions of court aristocrats to settle these fights on their own terms by bringing their now more respectable "teeth and claws" in from the provinces to court. Their intervention produced unexpected results.

## H. Political and Economic Signs of Crisis

### 1. At court

By late Heian times instability in the political arrangements at court was becoming chronic. During the late 10th century, the main branch of the Fujiwara family had wrested direct control over the central government from the emperors.

To some extent, this was the result of a series of historical accidents. After the 8th century, the emperors became less vigorous, while the Fujiwara produced several successive brilliant clan heads who gradually managed to institutionalize these accidents. The greatest of these was Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027).

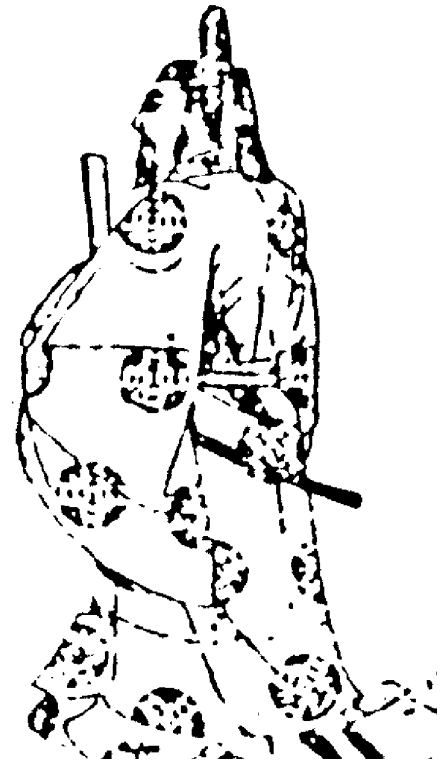
Michinaga married his daughters to emperors. He and then his son after him became regents when these weak rulers abdicated while Michinaga's grandchildren were still minors. Eventually, the Fujiwara institutionalized this practice. In each generation, the current head of the Fujiwaras would marry his daughter to the reigning emperor. When she gave birth to an heir to the throne, his father-in-law would pressure the emperor to retire to a "cloister"—i.e. to monastic life.

Actually, the cloister housing any retired emperor (*insei*) was a highly secularized one, where he and his friends could play many amorous games and live a life of luxury. The cloistered branch of the court only had to eschew overt political games.

The current head of the Fujiwara clan would rule as regent for his infant grandson who had succeeded to the throne upon his father's abdication. The Fujiwaras had finally succeeded in carrying out the kind of usurpation that the Sogas had in the 7th century been wiped out for attempting.

Ultimately this usurpation evoked a reaction. The cloistered emperors began to try to manipulate the court themselves from their places of nominal retirement.

By the late 11th and 12th centuries, confusing multi-party struggles amongst several cloistered and reigning emperors and the regent became chronic.



Fujiwara Michinaga. (Papinot, p. 96.)

At this point factions at court began to call in their "teeth and claws" from the provinces to secure their power and their very lives at court.

### 2. Spread of markets and money

Meanwhile, internal markets finally began to outgrow the Heian marketplace. Use of money spread as the effects of foreign trade, even under foreign control, were internalized. Though the Heian government soon gave up the Nara innovation of minting its own coins, this did not matter. By late Heian times merchants imported Chinese coins along with other Chinese goods, and these foreign coins began to be widely used within Japan.

Aristocrats and monasteries used Chinese coins to purchase foreign goods, not just in Heian but even in the surviving provincial and district towns established earlier. Some of these places were finally becoming more than military outposts.

Particularly vigorous towns were growing up around the postal stations, which (unlike the provincial and district

cities) had to be sited at economically suitable places (crossroads, river crossings, etc.) in the first place. The government had earlier established hostels and barns for horses used by official postal messengers at these locations. Now enterprising local people began to build private inns next to the decaying official establishments so as to serve non-official mercantile travelers.

Buddhist monasteries, which were as much prototypical joint stock companies in Japan as they had been in China, also carried on much trade. Some of the monasteries and temples were also recruiting "teeth and claws" of their own so as to participate in and profit from the wars of the 12th century and thereafter.

Potentially, at least, these market relationships represented a threat to the monopoly on political power enjoyed by the court aristocracy. Long before that poten-

tial could be realized, however, the court aristocracy faced a more immediate set of dangers.

### 3. *The Gempei wars*

By the middle of the 12th century, the teeth and claws provincial aristocrats led by the Genji and Heikei clans not only regularly came to court to settle the factional quarrels among their betters, they had come to realize that they were inherently more powerful than their betters. They pushed the men of the court aside, and began to fight it out among themselves for control of the court and the country.

At this point the crisis became overt at the political level: All realized that the state had expanded beyond the ability of its original form of organization to continue to control things.

Late Heian period Japan outside the political realm was also in what even contemporaries categorized as a crisis of some kind. In addition to calling it a crisis of civilization, we can also label what was happening as a prefeudal breakdown. A feudal process was to become the form taken by the Japanese crisis of the first stage of high civilization.

In the next chapter we will see the Western Zhou Chinese pattern of a feudal process repeated in Japan, but in a way more congruent with that which occurred in our own civilization's feudal process. These Japanese and European feudal processes occurred at roughly the same time, not during a late Bronze Age, as in ancient China, but during the middle part of an Iron Age; not during early civilization, but during the transition from the first to the second stage of high civilization. EHK