

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR

This book was written as a succinct introduction into the history of the modernization of Japan in the decades just before and just after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Its main emphasis is on providing a clear framework for a chaotic period. Yoda Yoshiie stays clear of post-modernist jargon. True to traditional Asian historiography his presentation of history implies a personal interpretation of his subject which is not formulated abstractly or summarized in terms of a new theory. Important is the way in which he links cultural, economic and social developments with the creation of new institutions in the modernizing of Japan, and particular interesting the manner in which he establishes causal links between new socio-economic developments and political ideas. Although these developments have some parallels in the history of European and American industrialization, the modernization of Japan is not seen as a clash between civilizations in which the debate focuses on whether or not to emulate "the West". Impelled by contact and confrontation, modernization in Japan proceeds as a variant of a truly universal pattern; there is no need to interpret modernizing Japan as a derivative of Western civilization with its own particular claim to universality. Although Yoda refers to an "Asian" pattern of development in which calls for revolution in peasant uprisings play a particular role, his use of the term does not suggest cultural determinism.

Many scholarly theories and discussions in the field of Humanities, be they sociology, economics, or other branches of cultural sciences, address themselves to a domestic audience, or to an imagined community of scholars and scientists whose common language is English. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with such an approach. Questions arise only when unsubstantiated claims of universality are made. Yoda does not refer to the current debate on "civil society", a debate closely related to European concepts developed by Hegel and Gramsci. An attentive reader will notice, no doubt, that Yoda's description of Chinese and Japanese pre-modern society must raise serious doubts about the applicability of such concepts. Yoda's survey provides an uncomplicated, yet stimulating survey which may very well serve as a starting point for further

discussions in university classrooms and elsewhere. The central topic is basic patterns of modernization in Japan and in China, undoubtedly one of the most important issues of the twentieth century. In keeping with this character, scholarly annotation is left to a minimum.

Yoda's book is divided into three parts. In the first one he focuses on the existence of "patterns in culture", such as the Japanese preference for juxtaposing the new and the ancient, contrasted with the Chinese preference for discarding past institutions in revolutionary processes.

In the second part Professor Yoda uses paradigms well-known from European history, such as "absolutism", to describe significant periods in the process of the modernization of China and Japan. He pays careful attention to the specific content of this term within the context of society and tradition in Japan and in China. He refers repeatedly to indigenous "patterns in culture" which have contributed to differences in the development of both countries. In the final part he follows the history of economic, political, and institutional developments on the basis of quotations from original Japanese (and Chinese) sources, which are arranged within the methodological framework of universal historical concepts, indigenous cultural patterns, and specific conditions in both countries.

This book is a translation of Professor Yoda Yoshiie's study entitled *The Modernization of Japan* (*Nihon no kindai* 日本の近代化), Yagi Publishers 八木出版, Tokyo 1989 (Fumanitas sensho, No. 10 フマニタス選書), of which a Chinese translation appeared in 1988.¹ The author is currently Professor at the Center for the Study of Social Sciences (社会科学研究所) at Waseda University in Tokyo. He also lectures regularly at Peking University, Nankai University (Tianjin), and Fudan University (Shanghai). He was born in Tokyo in 1931, and studied history and economics at Waseda University, where he obtained a doctorate in history (a list of his publications follows at the end of this preface). His previous research has focused on the history of the Japanese imperial institutions, changes in the system of land-holding, historiographical problems, and comparative history. Apart from these specializations, he is well-versed in the history of China; in particular, he has stressed the importance of developing new paradigms to describe historical shifts on the

¹ *Chuumichi kindai hikaku kenkyuu*. For full details refer to the bibliography.

basis of comparative historical studies. While emphasizing the need to acknowledge the universal applicability of concepts such as "absolutism" in the history of Europe and East Asia, he highlights the existence of culturally conditioned "preferences" in the historical traditions of Japan and China.

Since the main emphasis of this book is on presenting a clear methodology for the study of modernization in East Asia the author has dispensed with the wealth of detail usually found in books by Japanese and Chinese historians. This should make it more accessible to the foreign reader. Publications on Japan and China in English for the non-specialist must always face the difficult question to what extent background information on East Asian history has to be provided for the average reader of such a book in the English language, knowledge of which may usually be taken for granted in the case of Japanese and Chinese readers. The present translator felt that Professor Yoda's approach has the advantage that explanatory comments for the non-Asian reader could be kept to a minimum. At times, I have opted to paraphrase some passages rather than provide a literal translation. Some comments, such as birth and death years of some historical figures have been added into the text. It is assumed that the likely reader of this study wishing to obtain further information will be able to consult modern standard reference works such as the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Modern Japan*. Where considered helpful, Japanese technical terms and some proper names have been provided in transcription and/or Japanese/Chinese script. Usually I have followed the Japanese and Chinese custom of having given names follow the surname (such as is the case in Hungarian). For Chinese names, *Pinyin* transliteration has been used, with the exception of a few names such as Sun Yat-sen.

Until recently numerous Japanese scholars in the Humanities used to be extremely sparing in their use of footnotes, and the precise location of sources used. By far the most sources quoted by Yoda are sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, readily available in various Japanese editions, but only few in recent English translations. Those readers able to refer to the Japanese originals will not find it too difficult to locate them, since a list of Japanese titles has been appended to this translation. Since the likely reader of this volume may not often have immediate access to the editions originally used by

Yoda I have taken the liberty of not specifying the location of quotes in a particular edition myself.

This translator is currently Professor of Modern Japanese History at Leiden University. My publication (in Japanese) entitled "The Comparative Study of Japanese and Chinese Ethics" is an attempt to proceed from the suggestions implicit in Professor Yoda's approach.² It deals with the links between shifting concepts of property, changes in ethical behavior, formal law, and human reactions in Japan and China to the process of modernization.

I should like to express my deep personal gratitude to Professor Yoda for his assistance in producing this translation, and to Rosemary Robson-McKillop of the Royal Institute for Linguistics and Anthropology, Leiden, The Netherlands, for checking the English usage of my translation. I am grateful to Mrs Nobuko Tanaka-Karthaus for her assistance in compiling references for the footnotes. Needless to add, the responsibility for the translation and the comments rests with me. I should also like to thank the Tokugawa Institute For the History of Forestry, Tokyo and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS), Wassenaar, for providing me with an environment in which I was able to complete this translation in time to meet threatening deadlines.

² "Nitchuu ryookoku no hikaku rinri kenkyuu."