

## *Criterion for Assessing the Big Civilization*

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### **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to establish an objective criterion for civilizations, in order to treat them impartially and give them a fair assessment. First, theories up to the present about civilizations including those of Spengler and Toynbee are introduced. Second, the criterion presented by Bagby to distinguish major civilizations and peripheral civilizations are examined and proved to be subjective. Then the author proposes as an objective criterion for big civilizations just the pattern of succeeding four stages with the span of 400~500 years each. Big civilizations meeting this requirement which total eight or nine are divided into two types according to the difference of their nature. Lastly is shown how four puzzles of world history that have hitherto caused a lot of disputes (feudalism, absolute power of royalty, capitalism and modernization) can be solved through the recognition of these big civilizations.

### **1**

A certain group of civilizations has since the middle of the nineteenth century drawn the attention of scholars of comparative civilization. Different names were given to that group: Kulturkreis (Heinrich Rückert<sup>1</sup>), kulturhistorischer Typus or Zivilisation (Nicolai Danilewsky<sup>2</sup>), Hochkultur (Oswald Spengler<sup>3</sup>), major civilization (Philip Bagby<sup>4</sup>) and independent civilization (Arnold Toynbee<sup>5</sup>). Their substance however seems to be almost the same, for the names of the civilizations listed are alike. Let this group be called here provisionally the big civilizations.

Vollgraff as well as Lasaulx roughly described the big civilization as an organic body (organism) which runs the definite course of birth, growth, breakdown and death. They dealt almost exclusively with two examples of Greece-Rome and Western Europe<sup>6</sup>. Heinrich Rückert added further to them the Orient, China, Mexico and Peru<sup>7</sup>. Since Nicolai Danilewsky the definition became more and more precise and the number of civilizations being described increased. Danilewsky describes three stages of development: the preparatory stage lasting several thousands of years, the middle stage of about one thousand years settling a state to begin actions, and the final stage lasting for several hundred years, when creative activities vividly take place in all fields of culture. His examples are Egypt, China, Babylonia, India, Iran, Judea, Greece, Rome, the New Semites and Europe<sup>8</sup>.

According to Kurt Breysig there are five sorts of ages indicating the progress of human societies: primitive societies, ancient states, the mediaeval age, the modern age and the latest modern age. The ancient state has the king with absolute power, whereas the mediaeval age has a number of nobles provided with real political power. The mediaeval age is also characterized as the era of religious faith. In the modern age cities arise, commerce and industries prosper, arts and sciences come to flourish, followed by the latest modern age when we see the urban economy being most prosperous, faith declining, and masses of people getting more and more power. Many races on earth achieve as far as the ancient state; only Greece-Rome, Western

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Europe, Japan and India went through the mediaeval age, of which merely Greece-Rome and Western Europe advanced to the modern age and further to the latest modern age<sup>9</sup>.

We know of Oswald Spengler exhibiting, in his *Decline of the West*, charts of three kinds of historical course (intellectual, cultural and political), in which we find particulars of the pattern of transition marking the big civilizations. It begins with the preparatory stage of an agricultural society, goes through the cultural epoch of feudal aristocracy and then through that of urban citizens, until it arrives in the long run at the stage of the inorganic megalopolis. His big civilizations are Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, Greece-Rome, Western Europe, Arabia and Mexico<sup>10</sup>.

Arnold Toynbee finds in his *Study of History* the pattern of 'full blown civilizations' merely in the age of political disunity (years not indicated), the age of wars (400 years), and the age of the universal state (400 years<sup>11</sup>), but in *Reconsiderations* we find him trying to classify these civilizations into two groups (independent civilizations and satellite civilizations) on the base of whether a civilization is independent of or dependent on another contemporary civilization. His independent (in our word, big) civilizations are 13 in all: Middle America, Andes, Sumer-Accad, Egypt, Aegean, Indus, China, Syria, Hellenic, India, Orthodox Christian, Western Europe and Islam<sup>12</sup>.

Toynbee was stimulated to this classification by Philip Bagby. It was Bagby who gave us for the first time clear outlines of the major (in our word, big) civilizations, through comparing them with other civilizations which he called peripheral or secondary. Because this distinction of his found assent among scholars and often brought up as the criterion of civilizations, we should like to introduce it to some detail and examine its validity in the following.

## 2

Bagby's view is summed up as follows:

(a) The big civilization develops for itself both on the political level (from disintegration to an integrated universal state) and on the cultural level (from the age of faith to the age of reason). This factor is not to be found in a secondary civilization, or if it is, it merely reflects the development of a big civilization.

(b) The whole process in the development of a big civilization, from the beginning to the formation of the universal state, takes between 1000 and 1500 years (or to narrow it, between 1100 and 1300 years). Secondary civilizations are much shorter in duration.

(c) Secondary civilizations borrow from other civilizations. They lack originality or at least those features of their culture which are original are rarely borrowed by other civilizations. None of the great art-styles and systems of thought which have had so much influence throughout the world can be ascribed to a secondary civilization.

Based on this standard he lists nine big civilizations: Egypt, Babylonia (= Mesopotamia), China, India, Greece-Rome, Peru, Middle America, Western Europe and Near East. Secondary civilizations are about thirty: Hittite, Aegean, Celt, Russia, Ceylon, Burma, Tibet, Japan, Korea and so on<sup>13</sup>.

Now to examine these three criteria, (a) and (b) which are themselves of an objective nature do not come into question. (c) however is a problem, because 'borrowing', 'originality' and 'influence' are of subjective character.

Borrowing, to begin with, can be pointed out in so many civilizations that it must be accounted as the normal state of civilization in general. European civilization for example is full of borrowed elements from Greece-Rome, Arabia, Judea etc. Second, judgement or comparative valuation of originality depends largely on who judges or values it. The art-style of his own civilization can be easily taken for 'great'. As to systems of thought, they should be regarded as phenomena of the civilizational style that inclines towards rational thinking.

Third, the power of influence can fluctuate according to the spacial distance between civilizations, the difference of their constitutions, the difficulty of diffusion of cultural elements and the difference of

civilizational generations or of stages of development. A.L.Kroeber says that an isolated culture such as Japan is unlikely to produce much that will be passed on to others, and he regarded Egypt as a similar case<sup>14</sup>. That China exerted a great influence on surrounding areas can be understood, when we consider that China belongs to the civilization antecedent to Japan and that it was surrounded on all sides by primitive societies.

The arguments above suggest the conclusion that the propriety of taking (c) as a criterion is doubtful. Bagby however makes much account of and use of it. About Near Eastern civilization for instance he admits that it does not satisfy (a) and (b), but he considers the elements of a religion with a single God, the endogamous and residentially-separate religious community, sacred rulers, art-forms emphasizing the immanence of the divine in man and nature, the dome in architecture, the steam-bath, styles of dressing and preparing food enough to meet the requirements of (c) and came to the conclusion that it is a big civilization<sup>15</sup>. Under such a supposition, I dare say, there seems to exist many other big civilizations.

He says next on Japan: "Japan is clearly peripheral since it has borrowed from China its style of writing, many of its art-styles and the Chinese form of the Buddhist religion. In the last century there has also been extensive borrowing from Western Europe. Nevertheless, in some respects Japanese civilization appears to resemble the major rather than the secondary civilizations. Its social institutions, for instance, seem to have undergone independently a development involving first feudalism and then the rise of a merchant class, a development which is also found in some of the major civilizations, but in China only at a much earlier time. It is possible therefore that we should class Japanese civilization as a major civilization in spite of its borrowings from China. This question cannot, however, be settled until we know a good deal more about the processes of development of the major civilizations."<sup>16</sup>

Japan satisfies (a) and (b), but is in short of (c), thus it is just the inverse case to the Near East. Bagby's conclusion is that it is a secondary civilization. However, when a civilization is secondary because of much borrowing, Western Europe must be first of all secondary, for it has borrowed writing and religion from Syria, vocabulary, philosophy, laws and art-styles from Greece-Rome, science, technology, literature from Arabia and so forth, namely various elements in various periods.

After saying so on Japan, he mentions Russia: "Similar considerations may also apply to Russian civilization which appears to have been peripheral first to Near Eastern and then to Western-European, but also in the last century or two to exhibit some of the earmarks of a major civilization in its early stages."<sup>17</sup>

We can hardly understand this proposal, either. When he wants to claim as a big civilization, a civilization that does not fulfill any criteria of (a), (b) and (c) at all, but merely exhibits earmarks of early stages, we must say virtually no criterion has been found. When a criterion, even if false, is applied impartially, we are convinced of it, but Bagby's method of application is also careless, and arbitrary as well.

To give a supplementary explanation, Bagby's criterion (c) seems to expose unintentionally what other researchers of civilizations have so far tacitly used for judging civilizations. Danilewsky, Spengler and Toynbee all explicitly used objective standards corresponding to (a) and (b). On the other hand they no doubt attached most importance to a concealed standard corresponding to (c), without mentioning it at any time and without seeing the need for mentioning it.

Toynbee's *Reconsiderations* criticizes Bagby's attempt as follows: "A comparative student's attitude and feeling towards the civilization into which he has been born, and also towards one in whose classical literature he has been educated, can never be the same as his attitude and feeling towards other civilizations with which his relation is less intimate. Any attempt to classify civilizations according to their relative value will open the door wide for the intrusion of subjective judgements. We cannot venture into this field profitably, or even safely, unless we can find some objective criterion. This is not provided by Bagby's proposed distinction between civilizations that are 'secondary and peripheral' and those that are 'major'."<sup>18</sup>

This criticism exposes a central weakness in Bagby's method. But Toynbee, in saying so, repeats the error. After the statement above he says: "But it should be possible to distinguish objectively between

civilizations that are 'satellites' of others and civilizations that are independent of any other contemporary civilizations, though they may be affiliated to one or more antecedent civilizations." Instead of the list of civilizations in *A Study of History*, he thus proposed a new classification of civilizations, dividing them into independent and satellite. Examples of independent civilizations are shown above, those of satellite civilizations are Mississippi, South West, North Andes, South Andes, Elamite, Hittite, Urart, Iran, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, South East Asia, Tibet, Russia, etc<sup>19</sup>.

His criterion of division lies solely in whether a civilization is independent from any other contemporary civilization, is ambiguous. When the dependence of China on India, of India on Hellenic (Greece-Rome) and of Orthodox Christian on Western Europe do not preclude their 'independence', then he has to describe in what points the dependences of Japan and of Korea on China preclude them from 'independence'. Is it not possible that his subjectivity entered into this adjudication? We may wonder also why he took up only the dependence on a contemporary civilization, but not that on a preceding civilization. Did he not take account of, or did he not care for the relation between the civilization to which he himself belongs and the civilization antecedent to it (Hellenic)? In addition, we may suppose that according to his way of counting primitive societies, Mississippi, South West (of North America) and others, as civilizations, the isolated society of the Eskimos living in the periphery of the North Pole should be an independent civilization. Since he did not make this classification, we may presume he used another implicit criterion.

We may assume that Toynbee embarked on his opposition to Bagby more or less light-heartedly to establish a two-part classification. We should rather read this Toynbee as a warning example of how difficult it is to exclude subjective judgements. The question is after all the subjective judgements that are inevitable when once we begin to make any comparative valuation of civilizations. Until we find an objective criterion which excludes subjectivity and applies indiscriminately and uniformly to all, we will never be able to settle the classification of civilizations.

### 3

Is it possible, then, to create a purely objective criterion?

The purely objective criterion lies in the time span and in the pattern of historical changes evident to everyone's eyes. It comes to be acknowledged by itself, when we check the history of each civilization and, taking account of its details, get a bird's eye view of it.

Might not a subjective arbitrariness always enter into the search for rules in history? Some say that elements are freely chosen from innumerable possibilities of historical facts in order to make rules. Karl Popper for instance says: 'Once we believe in a law of repetitive life-cycles, we are sure to discover historical confirmation of it nearly everywhere. But this is merely one of many instances of metaphysical theories seemingly confirmed by facts — facts which, if examined more closely, turn out to be selected in the light of the very theories they are supposed to test.'<sup>20</sup>

But I dare say such criticism is made by those who have never attempted this work. Most histories of countries or of regions are compiled without any concern for historical rules, but when we compare them, we become aware at once of their similar aspects. By similar aspects I mean coincidences in the change of political systems, coincidences in the change of social situations, coincidences in the duration of periods; in short, the existence of a common pattern coming so clearly before our eyes before our subjectivity gets to work. It is what we just call rule or law.

I made a comparative survey on histories of civilized societies and confirmed that eight or nine societies have the pattern of four stages in common, with each stage lasting 400~500 years. There seem to be the following two types.

Type A: allied tribal powers → a unified state → wars → world empire.

This type includes Egypt, China (until the Han Dynasty), Japan, Peru, Western Europe and probably Tibet.

Type B: coexistence of tribal powers → coexistence of city states → wars → world empire.

This type includes Sumer, India (until the Gupta Dynasty) and Greece-Rome.

Type A and Type B differ only in the first and second stages; that is, Type A has one emperor dominating the civilization, while Type B none. This emperor appears with the birth of Type A civilization, takes the helm of state in the first and second stages and falls down in general to a mere spiritual authority during the third stage.

We can observe further that the sequence of the four stages is accompanied with such phenomena as the development of technology, the rise of cities, the development of commerce and industry, the overpowering the upper by the lower class, the upward trend of the masses, the increase of intelligence, etc.

This group of civilizations corresponds to what has been hitherto mainly studied under various names, here termed big civilization. Their four stages are shown in the table<sup>21</sup>.

Histories of other societies, for instance Cambodia, Indonesia, Ceylon and so forth, let us know, how they differ from the category of the big civilization. To be brief, they have neither four stages, each with the term 400~500 years, nor the historical dynamism of gradual development of technology, growth of cities, rise of the people, increase of intelligence, etc. Noticeable above all is the fact that in case of the group of big civilizations various classes including nobles appear between the emperor and the people, moving upward and increasingly quarreling each other. In these other cases the distance between the two is maintained and is never closed.

This historical dynamism is a pretty objective factor, but should we make it the criterion for identifying a big civilization? And should we further add to this factor such subjective factors as borrowing, originality and influence? The four stages with each 400~500 years, i.e. (1) allied tribal powers or coexistence of tribal powers, (2) one unified state or coexistence of city states, (3) wars, (4) world empire: this restriction is strict and sufficient enough to distinguish big civilizations as a group from others. So I suppose that this regulation or criterion or definition will be sufficient on its own.

Can the size of the geographical area be a requisite of the big civilization? Egypt was a civilization on a plain 1700 km long and but 3~30 km wide; the surroundings are deserts. The area of Greece in the age of poleis is estimated to have been no more than that of Kyushu, an island of Japan. Chinese civilization developed until the third stage mainly along the Yellow River, an area which does not seem to be larger than that of Japan. The big civilization, as it enters into the fourth stage, begins to expand, and so does Japan to overseas territories as far as China, Cambodia, Siam and Java. Toynbee who treated Japan of the Tokugawa period as a 'universal state' in his *Study of History*, assumes later in *Reconsiderations* a conciliatory attitude to the criticism on the plea of the area. The criticism was that 'to characterise the Tokugawa Shogunate as the "universal state" is to push an abstraction to the point of fantasy.' Toynbee refuted it saying that 'the equation of the Japanese Isles with the World might indeed appear to be a geographical absurdity. Yet every soi-disant universal state that has come and gone so far has fallen very far short of being literally world-wide. The universality of a universal state has, so far, been something subjective.' But he took account of the situation of the Tokugawa period, that Japan continued to live on cultural capital previously imported from China or via China — this situation however does not seem to us to have any concern with the geographical area — and he finally concluded that the Tokugawa regime may have been an attempt at a universal state that failed<sup>22</sup>.

I would like to propose that we abandon such elements as geographical area which are not easy to deal with and on which it is not easy to attain objectivity.

On the basis of our new criterion, civilizations of western Asia (Arabia, Near East, Byzantine, Orthodox

**Type B Big Civilizations**  
**Four Stages**

	Sumer	Greece-Rome	India
1. tribal powers	BC3900 Ubaid Age Formation of towns Emergence of temples Invention of writing	BC1600 Mycenaean Age Age of kings Palaces, citadels, round vaulted tombs, linear writing B  BC1200 Dark Age Destruction of culture by the Dorians	BC1500 Birth of civilization Invasion of the Aryans into India
2. city states	BC3500 Uruk Age Civilized town culture Golden age of temple architecture  Writing materials increased BC3100 Jamdat Nasr Age Diffusion of civilized life	BC800 Small states of polis From aristocracy to democracy Establishment of colonies Monetary economy Increase of merchandise production Accumulation of wealth Arts and sciences simultaneously in bloom	BC1100 Growth of civilization Transfer to the upper Ganges Formation of small states Formation of the caste system Rig-Veda  Transfer to the middle Ganges
3. wars	BC2900 Early Dynastic Age Religion and politics separated  Secularization Constant warfare between city states	BC431 Age of Wars Persian Wars Peloponnesian War Alexander's campaign Rise and leadership of Rome	BC700 Age of Wars Increase of agricul. production Development of cities Commerce and industries Secularization Wars among city states Formation of philos. relig. thoughts
4. world empire	BC2400 Akkadian Empire Centralized state of bureaucracy Monetary economy Commerce flourishing Standardization of the language Calendar system established BC2100 Third Dynasty of Ur Development of urban economy Codes compiled Weights and measures unified BC2000 End of Civilization	BC27 Roman Empire Centralized military police state Imperialistic expansion Commerce and industries Widespread road network Luxury of megalopolis  476 Fall of West Roman Empire	BC317 Mauryan Empire Centralized police state Imperialistic Expansion Progress of economy Urban Culture 50 Kushan Empire Foreign trade Gandharan art  320 Gupta Empire Arts and sciences in bloom 500 Fall of the Empire

Type A Big Civilizations  
Four Stages

	Egypt	China	Japan	Peru	Western Europe
1. allied tribal powers	BC3200 Early Dynasty Menes unified Egypt Royal power extending Establ. of Egyptian style	BC1600 Shang Dynasty ~1500 Birth of the 1st large state Walls, underground tombs, big bronze castings	250 Tumulus Period Birth of the 1st large state by Himiko or Amaterasu Theocracy Huge burial mounds Expansion of the domain	200 Florescent Period Birth of Tiahuanaco state Theocracy Pyramid temples Expansion of the domain	480 Frankish Kingdom Clovis united Frankish tribes Expansion of the domain
2. unified state	BC2700 Old Kingdom Centralization of administrative powers Great Pyramids  Decline of the Kingdom Growth of the nobles	BC1100 Chou Dynasty (West) Strong royal power Expansion of the domain  Growth of the nobles Hundreds of small states	700 Nara Period Royal power strengthened Centralization of governing Systems and institutions introduced  800 Heian Period Rise of the nobles Dispersion of political power Private landownership begins Fall of the unified state Japanese art style established	600 Expansionist Period Reign of Wari Empire all over Peru  Diffusion of ceramics with Tiahuanaco style	800 Unified state Crowning of Charlemagne Systems and institutions introduced Division of the state 962 Holy Roman Empire Feudalism Monarchy strengthening Formation of national states
3. wars	BC2200 1st Intermediate Period Wars among rival lords BC2050 Middle Kingdom Restoration of kingship Business and handicrafts Rise of the people BC1800 2nd Intermediate Period Anarchy Reign of the Hyksos	BC770 Chou Dynasty (East) Outbreak of civil wars Farming methods improved Era of Warring States BC400 Monetary economy spreading Trade and technology developing Growth of cities Rise of the lower class Increase of intelligence	1150 Beginning of wars Kamakura Period Feudalism Wars among small states Increase of agricultural Production  1400 Muromachi Period Monetary economy spreading Trade and manual industries Rise of cities Rise of the lower class Increase of intelligence	1000 Urbanist Period Wars among small states  Rise of cities Trade and craftsmanship	1338? Age of troubles 1550? Wars among states Growth of towns Commerce and manual industries Secularism growing Increase of intelligence
4. world empire	BC1580 New Kingdom Centralized state of bureaucracy Imperialistic expansion Peace and prosperity Cosmopolitanism  BC1100 Fall of the Kingdom	BC200 Han Dynasty Centralized state of bureaucracy Imperialistic Expansion Megalopolis Merchandise Production Sciences flourishing 220 Fall of the Dynasty	1600 Tokugawa Period Centralized police state Traffic network developed Megalopolis Mass merchandise production Large sphere distribution Urban culture prospers Sciences flourishing 1867 Meiji Restoration	1440 Imperialistic Period (Inca Empire) Centralized military police state Traffic network developed Prosperous urban culture 1532 Destruction of the Empire	1800? Attempt of world empire by Napoleon 2000? European Community

Christian, Islam), which have been hitherto much talked about, are left out, and so too, Mexico and Russia disappear, and instead of them Japan and probably Tibet become new members.

We know little of Tibetan history because of the insufficiency of materials. After the age of myth that seems to have lasted 300~400 years the unification of tribal states by the Lhasa Kingdom took place, which introduced cultural elements and political systems from China and India at the beginning of the 7th century. It experienced the decline of royal power in the 9th and 10th centuries, unceasing civil wars from the 11th to 16th century and at last the establishment of the centralized administrative power by the 5th Dalai Lama at the beginning of the 17th century.

This history of Tibet seems to be a synchronous parallel to the process of Japanese history. Japanese civilization has an abundance of distinctive historical facts and exhibits the four stages of 450 years, 450 years, 450 years and 270 years (interruption by external pressure). Japan with sharp-cut outlines of the four stages with such proportional distribution of terms may even be called a model defining the pattern of a big civilization<sup>23</sup>.

#### 4

By means of the list of big civilizations made on the basis of the new criterion of the four stages of 400~500 years each, puzzles arising from several conspicuous phenomena in world history, hitherto the cause of world-wide disputes, can be solved. The following are my brief comments on these phenomena: feudalism, absolute power of royalty, capitalism and modernization.

#### **Feudalism.**

In order to dissolve the problem of conceptual polysemy of feudalism leading to the difficulty of discussing it, I have in my work *Feudalism — A Comparative Study* offered a comparative analysis of the societies so far treated as feudal. I suggested as my conclusion five factors be regarded as the definition of feudalism. They are: (1) method of governing a state; (2) dispersion of public powers among provincial lords; (3) a system of classes and ranks; (4) primitive relation between a lord and his vassals; (5) the grant of estates. These five factors relate to each other not in a parallel but in a subordinate order; i.e. this is a ranking order and none of the five factors is to be missing.

¿From this definition, only Europe, Japan, China and Egypt are societies that have experienced pure feudalism. The Pronoia system of the Byzantine empire, the Iqta and Timar systems of Islam and the Pomestie system of Russia have hitherto been regarded as feudal, but they are substantially no more than centralization of the magistrative power, that is, the opposite of feudalism<sup>24</sup>.

This survey of feudalism has been done without reference to any civilizational argument. However, quite unexpectedly, the four purely feudal societies of Europe, Japan, China and Egypt come to cover just the big civilizations of Type A, so that there seems to be the possibility of interpretation through combining these two viewpoints: the viewpoint of feudalism and the viewpoint of comparative civilization.

The royal power that gradually strengthened and consolidated itself from the first to the second stage begins to fall down rapidly in the middle of the second stage, dispersing its real power to provincial nobles, so that disintegration of the society is brought about. This situation of the society lasts until the end of the third stage. This is the situation which we have just defined as feudalism.

The civilization expanding its territory in the first stage comes into contact with neighboring races and realizes itself as a race, until it at last forms a unified state (second stage) covering the full extent of the race. But in an immature social condition where both traffic and even barter economy do not function, it is natural that the unified state soon falls into a loose condition and alternates with the regionalism with tribal antagonism which was the original ground of the society.

Otto Hintze once said feudalism is a means to deal with social difficulties brought about in a certain



society which under the influence of a foreign imperialism had adopted it for itself<sup>25</sup>. However, Hintze's view leaves unexplained the feudalism of Egypt and China, which had no effects from external imperialism. I am of the opinion that feudalism is not an effect from outside, but a natural phenomenon woven in the development of Type A big civilization. Taken as a phenomenon based on the law of development of Type A civilization, the problems of Egypt and China are solved, and other difficulties in the argument of Hintze also soon ravel out themselves.

General histories of Peru and Tibet often explain political and social conditions or systems of their mediaeval ages with the term of feudalism<sup>26</sup>. This interpretation may be consistent with our interpretation above.

As for Type B big civilization, we find Max Weber viewing the polis state of Old Greece as a kind of feudalism<sup>27</sup>. Then it becomes possible to presume that Type B equally experiences and passes through a feudal situation, if not a full-blown feudalism.

### **Absolute power of royalty.**

The kings succeeding the thrones in both Kingdoms of East and West Franks continued to be the absolute authority throughout the feudal era, although they possessed indeed less or at most equal real power as the peerage. The emperor (= Tenno) of Japan was in the same position. He was divested of political power from the 11th to the 19th century, but he held always the status to grant official ranks and positions including that of the Supreme Commander (Seii-taishougun).

Historians of traditional thinking represented by HORIGOME Yohzoh derive this phenomenon from the undeniable traditional authority of royalty coming from the preceding unified state<sup>28</sup>, while historians mainly of Marxian viewpoint including ISHIMODA Tadashi and SERA Terushiroh are of the opinion that rulers of each period reproduced this ancient authority of royalty each time and utilized it to the fullest in order to get justification of their own governing<sup>29</sup>.

This problem has been discussed so far in relation to Western Europe and Japan, but as China is a similar case, we should take it into account as well. The emperors of the Chou Dynasty (BC1100~BC200), as is well known, retained their holy authority even in the age of civil wars from the middle of the second stage (unified state) to the end of the third stage (civil wars) when they had but little real political power. The throne of the emperors remained thus the pivot of Chinese civilization all the time until the end of the Chou Dynasty.

Now since these three civilizations belong to Type A, another new interpretation seems to be possible. As the civilization begins, the world is shifted to a higher dimension than the primitive world. Civilization is a sort of radiance. The emperor is the source of it and reigns over the world as the king of beings, as dominus mundi. The world is tinged with gold, so there cannot be any utter disorder, any thoroughly anarchic condition of the society, however many wars may break out, whatever struggles of classes may happen. We may take the emperor thus as a higher being than merely a political power, that is to say as Lord of Civilization who dominates all fields of human activity, namely religion, politics, economy, literature and art, habits and customs. In such a system it will be quite natural that he still retains his authority after he has lost political power.

### **Capitalism.**

It is generally assumed that the industrial capitalism has occurred only once throughout world history, i.e. in Western Europe. But if its final substance lies in merchandise production by means of purchased labor, we ought to presume the economy of ancient Rome, of the Han Dynasty and of the Tokugawa period to be the same kind.

There is little room here to enter in the details of this problem, so suffice it to say that those social aspects similar to the modern age of Western Europe, such as prosperity of big cities, development of commerce and industry, trade of labor, mass production of merchandise, distribution in a great sphere, absorption of

land, emergence of the mass of pauperdom and its inflow into cities, are also recognized in each of them. We know of the dispute over the Greek-Roman capitalism, and there is much controversy on the manufacture in the Tokugawa period of Japan, too. Scholars including UTSUNOMIYA Kiyoyoshi have indicated the nature of the industrial capitalism in the economy of the Han Dynasty of China as well<sup>30</sup>.

Above all the resemblance between the aspects of the late Tokugawa economy and those of the modern economy of Western Europe is striking. The dispute on Japanese manufacture which has continued over the past fifty years relates to Japan in the late Tokugawa period (1800~1867)<sup>31</sup>. The assumption is that the late Tokugawa society had already spontaneously arrived at an early stage of modern (= industrial) capitalism. Various kinds of manufactures (manual factory industries) can be found in many parts of the country in the late Tokugawa period: textiles, salt, paper, mining, iron works, brewing and so forth. The textile manufactures were flanked by wholesale home industries. This was the situation brought about as the result of gradual development for many centuries, with a similar aspect to that of the 18th century England which Karl Marx once named 'the manufacturing period properly so called'<sup>32</sup>.

In addition we can also observe the following social phenomena in this period of Japan: development of roads and sea routs, increase of transportation, development of courier systems, cultivation of merchandise vegetables in suburbs of big cities, mass production of merchandise, formation of the unified market throughout the country, development of deposit, loan, bill, money order and other banking procedures, formation of speculative markets and so on.

Japan did not have the Industrial Revolution of its own. It did not create the advanced capitalism after the Industrial Revolution, either. But when we presume the core of modern (=industrial) capitalism consist in merchandise production by means of purchased labor, the early stage of modern capitalism and the advanced capitalism after the Industrial Revolution will come into continuity and Japan of the Tokugawa period must be taken as having arrived of itself at the stage of modern capitalism.

Since Western Europe, Japan, Greece-Rome and China are all big civilizations, here too, a new interpretation from the viewpoint of comparative civilization becomes possible. I mean namely the industrial capitalism is the economical system that fundamentally emerges as a natural phenomenon in the fourth stage of the big civilization and that individual differences may depend on their inclinations.

### **Modernization.**

It excited wonder in the world that Japan whose nation and culture are not European was quick to make success of modernization in the second half of the 19th century and to rank among world political and military powers. There is not so far any other example of such a success. Most of people of the world are still of the opinion that it is due to diligence or skillfulness of the Japanese, solidarity of one race, one language and one country, pile of fortunes, cheap labor, and so on. Max Weber and contemporary American Japanologists at the very most mention that feudal systems of the preceding Tokugawa period became of great use for the formation of modern society, so far as bringing up ideas of contract, duty and judicature are concerned<sup>33</sup>.

It will however not suffice, merely to give attention to the preceding period. The problem extends across the whole range of the history. Histories of Western Europe and of Japan followed parallel lines and development from the beginning, so that the modern ages of the two came to overlap: this is in my interpretation the fundamental cause of Japanese modernization and advance in the present period.

In this paper I have presented an outline or a draft of a criterion for judging and clarifying civilizations objectively. I have also made a rough sketch showing how several conspicuous puzzles of world history can be solved through the interpretation of history on the basis of this criterion.

## Notes

1. Heinrich Rückert: *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte in organischer Darstellung*, Leipzig 1857.
2. Nicolai Danilewsky: *Rußland und Europa*, übersetzt v. K. Nötzel, Osnabruck 1965.
3. Oswald Spengler: *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, München 1969 (Nachdruck).
4. Philip Bagby: *Culture and History*, Berkeley 1959.
5. Arnold Toynbee: *A Study of History* Vol.12 (*Reconsiderations*), London 1961.
6. Ernst von Lasaulx: *Neuer Versuch einer alten, auf die Wahrheit der Tatsachen gegründeten Philosophie der Geschichte*, München 1952.  
Hans Schoeps: *Vorläufer Spenglers*, Leiden-Köln 1953.
7. Rückert op.cit. pp.92ff.
8. Danilewsky op.cit. pp.57ff., pp.61ff.
9. Kurt Breysig: *Der Stufenbau und die Gesetze der Weltgeschichte*, Berlin 1905.
10. Spengler op.cit. pp.57ff.
11. Toynbee makes this threefold division in 'full-blown civilizations', but he seldom argues on 'political disunity'. According to his stronger interest in the ages of breakdown and of disintegration than in the age of growth of civilization, he treats of 'time of troubles' and 'universal state' at full length.
12. Toynbee op.cit. pp.558ff.
13. Bagby op.cit. pp.172ff., p.212, p.221.
14. A.L.Kroeber: *Configurations of Culture Growth*, Berkeley 1969, p.676.
15. Bagby op.cit. p.167.
16. Bagby pp.173-174.
17. Bagby p.174.
18. Toynbee op.cit. p.552.
19. Toynbee p.552, pp.558ff.
20. Karl Popper: *The Poverty of Historicism*, London 1957, p.111.
21. The 3rd stage of Egyptian civilization, the 1st stage of Greek-Roman civilization and the 4th stage of Indian civilization are judged to be suspended by the invasion of foreign forces. The 4th stage i.e. world empire of Indian civilization seems to consist of Mauryan Dynasty 140 years, Kushan Dyanasty 180 years and Gupta Dynasty 180 years which total 500 years. See TONOMURA Naohiko: *Tagen Bunmei Shikan (Comparative Civilization)*, Tokyo 1991 (Japanese), p.67, p.73.
22. Toynbee op.cit. pp.207-208.
23. TONOMURA op.cit. pp.34ff.
24. TONOMURA Naohiko: *Hikaku Hohkensei Ron (Feudalism — A Comparative Study)*, Tokyo 1991 (Japanese), pp.46ff.
25. Otto Hintze: *Wesen und Verbreitung des Feudalismus* (in: *Staat und Verfassung*, Göttingen 1962), pp.84-119.
26. Alden Mason: *The Ancient Civilisation of Peru*, Penguin Books 1968.  
Luis Lumbreras: *The Peoples and Cultures of Ancient Peru*, Washington D.C. 1974.  
R.A.Stein: *Tibetan Civilization*, Stanford 1972.  
T.L.Shen/S.C.Liu: *Tibet and the Tibetans*, New York 1973.  
T.B.Norbu/C.Turnbull: *Tibet*, Penguin Books 1976.
27. Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft II*, 5th rev. ed., Tübingen 1972, pp.625ff.
28. HORIGOME Yohzoh: *Structure of European Mediaeval World*, Tokyo 1975 (Japanese).

29. ISHIMODA Tadashi: *The Mediaeval State* (in: Hohgaku Shirin, Vol.48 No.2, Tokyo 1950) (Japanese).  
SERA Terushiroh: *Legal Structure of the Feudal Society*, Tokyo 1977 (Japanese).
30. UTSUNOMIYA Kiyoyoshi: *Social and Economical History of the Han Dynasty*, Tokyo 1965 (Japanese), pp.107ff.
31. The dispute on Japanese manufacture of the Tokugawa period began in the middle of this century with the controversy between HATTORI Sisoh and TSUCHIYA Takao and there have been many subsequent studies. HATTORI: *Works I*, Tokyo 1954 (Japanese). TSUCHIYA: *History of Japanese Capitalism*, Tokyo, 1947 (Japanese).
32. Karl Marx: *Das Kapital (Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe II-8)*, Berlin 1981, p.333, p.362, p.699.
33. Max Weber: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie II*, UTB Taschenbücher 1988, p.300.  
Edwin Reischauer: *Japanese Feudalism* (in: *Feudalism in History*, ed. by Courborn, Hamden 1965), pp.46ff.  
Joseph Strayer: *The Tokugawa Period and Japanese Feudalism* (in: *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan*, Princeton 1968), pp.10ff.