**Using titles**

**Britain and Japan: Two roads to higher education**

Britain and Japan are the two great pioneers of industrialism and therefore ofthe modern world. Britain was the pioneer industrial nation of the Western, European-dominated world, Japan of the Eastern, non-European and, to many eyes, the hope of the Third World. The countries have always had much in common. Both groups of islands off an initially more civilized and powerful continent, they had to defend themselves from military and cultural conquest and to that end developed a powerful navy and an independence of mind which made them increasingly different from their continental neighbours. Behind their sea defences they were able to pursue their own ideals and ambitions which enabled them in the end to originate changes in industry and society which, because they brought wealth and power, others tried to imitate. The British at the height of their imperial power and economic domination recognized in the emerging Japanese a fellow pioneer and an ally. They called her 'the Britain of the East' and in the 1902 Treaty were the first to recognize Japan as a world power.

Yet the two countries took utterly different roads to industrialism, power and wealth. Britain, the first industrial nation, evolved slowly without knowing - because nobody then knew what an Industrial Revolution was - where she was going or what the end of modernization would be. Japan, coming late to economic growth in a world which saw and felt only too clearly what the gains and dangers of industrialism were, adopted it self-consciously and with explosive and revolutionary speed. And they still bear the marks of these differences of origin, timing and approach. Britain had the first Industrial Revolution because she had the right kind of society to generate it; but for that very reason she was riot forced to change her society as much as later developing countries, and she now has the wrong kind of society for sustaining a high and continuing rate of economic growth. That does not mean that she has the wrong kind of society to provide a highly civilized and comfortable life for her people. On the contrary, just as the British were pioneers of the industrial society dominated by a gospel of work so they may now be the pioneers of the post-industrial society dedicated to the gospels of leisure and welfare.

Japan on the other hand has astonished the world by the degree to which she was prepared to change her society in order to industrialize, and the speed at which, in less than a hundred years, she transformed herself from a feudal society of samurai, artisans and peasants into one of the most efficient industrial and egalitarian meritocracies in the world. However, it must be said that Tokugawa Japan was no ordinary feudal society, and had hidden advantages for industrial development which most feudal societies lack: one of the most urbanized populations in the world, with a highly educated ruling class of efficient bureaucrats, large numbers of skilled craftsmen and sophisticated merchants, and a more literate populace than most other countries, even in the West. But the fact remains that the leaders of the Meiji Restoration were prepared to abolish feudalism, establish equality before the law, and make everyone, rich or poor, samurai, worker or peasant, contribute to the survival and development of the country.

If the British and Japanese roads to industrialism were different, their two roads to higher education were even more different. The British educational road was far slower, more indirect and evolutionary even than their road to industrial development and, indeed, in the early stages had little connection with economic growth. The ancient universities, particularly in England as distinct from Scotland, had become little more than finishing schools for young gentlemen, chiefly landowners' sons and young clergymen. They did not conduct research and not one of the major inventions of the early Industrial Revolution originated in a university. Oxford and Cambridge were even less important to English society when the Industrial Revolution began than they were over a century earlier - many of the ruling elite came to find little to interest them in the repetition of classical Greek and Latin texts.

When Japan was beginning its great transformation under the Meiji, the main contribution of the British universities to economic growth was still in the future. It may seem surprising that, in relation to industrial development and modernization, British higher education in the late 19th century was no more advanced than the new Japanese system. By 1900 university students in both Britain and Japan were less than one per cent of the student age group. In both countries higher education was exclusively for the elite, but whereas in Britain the elite graduates went predominantly into the home civil service, colonial government and the traditional professions, in Japan they went not only into these but still more into industry and commerce and the newer technological professions.

This was because Japanese higher education, like the whole modern education system, was created by the Meiji reformers for the express purpose of modernizing Japan. Japan, contrary to popular belief in the West, did not start from scratch. Under the Tokugawa there were higher schools and colleges based on Confucian learning, no more out of touch with the needs of a traditional ruling elite than were Oxford and Cambridge. But the difference was that the Meiji elite *knew* that higher education had to be changed, and changed radically if Japan was to be transformed into a modern nation able to expel the barbarians and become a strong and wealthy country. Under the Fundamental Code of Education of 1872 they set out to establish a modern system of education with an elementary school within reach of every child, a secondary school in every school district, and a university in each of eight academic regions. In the next forty years, Japanese higher education expanded explosively. By 1922 there were 6 imperial and 20 non-imperial universities and 235 other higher institutions. Moreover, the whole system was geared to industrialization and economic growth, to the production of bureaucrats, managers, technologists and technicians. Whereas in Britain the sons of the elite at this stage avoided industry, which was left to the largely self-educated, trained in industry itself, in Japan the sons of the Shizoku, the ex-samurai who formed the majority of students in the universities, went indiscriminately into the service of the state and of private industry.

Britain too began a remarkable expansion of higher education in the late 19th century. New universities, more responsive to the scientific and industrial needs of their regions, came into existence in nearly all the great cities which did not already have them: Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, and so on. These new civic universities were much more dedicated to scientific and technological research and had a provocative and stimulating effect on the older universities too, and Oxford and Cambridge came to develop science and engineering and other modern subjects. Thus at the time Japan was using higher education as an instrument of industrialization, Britain began to do the same.

The road remained substantially different, however. Unlike the Japanese, the great majority of British managers never went to university. Some went to a variety of technical colleges which grew up to meet the demand which the universities had so long neglected, but the great majority were trained on the job with the help of evening schools where they learned to pass the examinations of the new professional bodies like the Institution of Mechanical Engineers or the Institute of Chemistry.

Thus the British road to industrial higher education was largely a part-time road, Most modern universities began as technical or other colleges, mostly for part-time students. This helps to explain why Britain, with one of the smallest university systems amongst the advanced countries, could sustain a competitive industrial economy, and even remain the world's largest exporter of manufactured goods down to the First World War.

During the 1960s the number of British universities nearly doubled, from 25 to 45 and in addition 30 polytechnics were formed from existing technical colleges. But British industry still depends to a larger extent than any other advanced country on part-time education and training on the job.

Japan by contrast believes in full-time higher education, and has far larger numbers in universities and colleges. Since the Second World War, initially under the stimulus of the American Occupation, the system has grown from 64 universities and 352 other colleges with about 250,000 students in l948 to 43l universities and 580 other colleges with nearly 2 million students in 1977, equal to 38 per cent of the age group. In terms of full-time students Britain is still only on the threshold of mass higher education; Japan is already moving towards universal higher education.

Most educationists still believe that if only the British would spend as much on education as the Japanese they could achieve the same rate of economic growth. But perhaps too much influence is claimed for it by educationists. Could it not be said that education is an effect rather than a cause - or rather, that it is an effect before it can become a cause. It is an effect of the social values and social structure of the society which creates and provides it.

In other words, the British and the Japanese took two different roads to higher education and to modern industrialism because they were two different kinds of society; with different aims and ambitions, different moral and social values, different principles of social connexion and of social structure.

In one sense the aims and objectives of the two societies were very similar. They both harnessed personal ambition to the drive to wealth and power. The key to the British Industrial Revolution was social ambition, 'keeping up with the 'Joneses,' the desire to rise in society by making money and to confirm that rise by spending money on conspicuous consumer goods. In a similar way, the Japanese of the Meiji Restoration strove to become rich and powerful in order to expel the barbarians and restore the country's independence. The two kinds of ambition were fundamentally different. The British landlords, farmers, industrialists and workers were self-seeking and individualistic in their ambition, and national economic growth was a by-product of their individual success. The Japanese samurai, merchants, artisans, and peasants strove to succeed, but success was not measured as much by personal wealth, status and power, as by the admiration and applause of one's family, one's colleagues and one's fellow citizens. Individual prosperity was a by-product of the group's. The British (and Western) kind of ambition may be called 'acquisitive individualism' and the Japanese kind 'participative self-fulfilment'.

Acquisitive individualism in Britain has deep roots in English society. Even now the British are more concerned with their individual share of the national cake than with increasing its size.

The Japanese by contrast have never been individualists in this sense. They have always put the group - the family, the village, the feudal *han*, the nation - before the individual and his material gain. The individual has found his reward in and through the group and in loyalty to its leader, who represents the group to the outside world.

This ideal of participative self-fulfilment has deep roots in Japanese society and goes back to the nature of the Japanese family, the *ie*. In Western terms, *ie* is best translated as 'household' rather than 'family', since it was more open to newcomers such as sons-in-law than the Western family, and outgoing members who married into another *ie* ceased to belong. Its major feature was that every member, however new, strove for respect in the eyes or the household and received protection and loyalty in return. This was the origin of that participative self-fulfilment, that striving for success in and through whichever group one came to belong to, which is the secret of Japanese unselfish ambition and co-operative loyalty.

Yet there are limits to the group responsibility produced by the ie tradition. Because it was rooted in a system of group rivalries which drew a sharp distinction between one's own group and all the others - which is why it is difficult, for example, to unite workers from different companies in the same trade union - there is less sense of responsibility in Japan for the welfare of those who do not belong to the same group. That is why welfare, social security, pensions, medical services and leisure facilities are mainly organized by the large corporations for their own workers, and the state welfare system is still undeveloped compared with Britain and Europe.

Britain, despite its acquisitive individualism, always had another tradition, an aristocratic tradition of paternalism or 'noblesse oblige' which, oddly enough, remained enshrined in the older, aristocratic universities of Oxford and Cambridge while acquisitive individualism was creating or capturing the newer universities of the industrial society. This tradition found its way into the university settlement movement in the slums of London and other great cities, into housing improvement and factory reform, into adult education for the working class, into social work, even into British non- Marxist socialism, and into the welfare state. It was a tradition which went beyond all groups, whether of family, trade, profession or class. It asked in effect, 'who is my neighbour?' and it answered zany member of society who needs my help'. This is the hidden principle which has saved Britain from the excesses of acquisitive individualism.

Although British trade unions, employers and professional bodies today fight each other for a bigger share of the cake regardless of what happens to the cake as a whole, there is a gentleman's agreement, stemming from that other, more gentlemanly tradition, that the welfare of the poor, the disabled, the elderly, the sick and the unemployed comes first. For the same reason, economic growth comes second. Welfare, leisure, a clean environment and a civilized social life are now more important acquisitions to the British than a larger post-tax income. Acquisitive individualism has shifted its ground, from material possessions to the non-material goods of health, education for pleasure, an enjoyable environment and a more leisurely and pleasurable life.

Britain and Japan took two different roads to higher education and to industrialism because they were two very different societies with different social structures and ideals. If the British could borrow some of their unselfish self-fulfilment and co-operative efficiency from the Japanese and the Japanese some of their concern for social welfare and public amenity from the British, perhaps East and West could at last meet in mutual under- standing and each have the best of both worlds.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Enrolments in universities and colleges in Britain and Japan as percentage of the student age group | | |
|  | Britain | Japan |
| 1885 | (1.0) | 0.5 |
| 1900 | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| 1920 |  | 1.8 |
| 1924 | 2.7 |  |
| 1930 |  | 3.1 |
| 1938 | 2.7 |  |
| 1940 |  | 4.0 |
| 1955 | 6.1 | 8.7 |
| 1960 | 8.3 | 10.2 |
| 1965 | 8.9 | 15.9 |
| 1970 | 13.8 | 18.7 |
| 1974 | 14.0 | 27.9 |
| 1977 |  | 33.9 |
| 1979 | 13.9 |  |
| Note:  The British figures include full-time advanced students in universities, teacher training colleges and further education; the Japanese figures those in universities, two-year colleges and higher technical colleges (and excluding higher vocational schools). | | |