

*Cultural Tradition, Historical Experience,  
and Social Change:  
The Limits of Convergence*

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THE TANNER LECTURES ON HUMAN VALUES

Delivered at  
The University of California, Berkeley

May 1–3, 1989

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## I. INTRODUCTION : THE PROBLEM

The major problem to which I want to address myself in these lectures is the nature of the relations between, on the one hand, the values, the basic premises, and the traditions of civilizations and, on the other hand, some central aspects of their social and cultural dynamics. This problem may seem to be purely academic, even if indeed of great interest. It does have nowadays, however, more actual dimensions. It is closely related to the challenge of understanding many aspects of the contemporary scene, and especially to whether we are witnessing the development of one worldwide civilization.

The view that what is happening —especially in the fully industrialized societies but gradually also in many others —is the emergence of one such worldwide civilization, with basically only local variants, has been of relatively long provenance in the contemporary social sciences. This view has been very prominent in many of the theories of modernization of the 1950s, which, instead of stressing, as did the classics of sociology, especially Marx and Max Weber, the specificity of European civilization, of European modernity, assumed that the development of modernity constituted the apogee of the evolutionary potential of mankind, the kernels of which were to be found in most human societies.<sup>1</sup> Hence they asked for the conditions which could facilitate —or impede — the development of such modernization in all human societies. At the same time, however, they took implicitly for granted that the European (and perhaps also the American) experience constituted,

The research on which these lectures are based has been partially supported by the World Society Foundation, Zurich.

<sup>1</sup> These theories are discussed in greater detail in S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* (New York: Wiley, 1973).

not only the first case, but also the major paradigm of such modern society and civilization.

One of the most important offshoots of these theories was the notion of the convergence of industrial societies —perhaps best illustrated in the work of Clark Kerr and his associates.<sup>2</sup> John Goldthorpe has captured, albeit in a critical vein, some of the assumptions of this approach :

The diversity within the industrializing process which he [Kerr] emphasizes turns out to be that evident in the relatively early stages —in Rostovian language, those of the break with “traditionalism,” “take-off,” and the “drive to maturity.” And when the question arises of the “road ahead” —for already advanced, as well as developing societies —Kerr’s view of the logic of industrialism is in fact such as to force him, willy-nilly, away from a multilinear and towards a unilinear perspective; or, to be rather more precise, to force him to see hitherto clearly different processes of industrialization as becoming progressively similar in their socio-cultural correlates. As industrialism advances and becomes increasingly a world-wide phenomenon, then —Kerr argues —the range of viable institutional structures and of a viable system of value and belief is necessarily reduced. All societies, whatever the path by which they entered the industrial world, will tend to approximate, even if asymptotically, the pure industrial form.<sup>3</sup>

Behind these theories there loomed a conviction of the inevitability of progress toward modernity —be it political, industrial, or cultural —and toward the development of a universal modern civilization, although such conviction was tempered, even in the beginning of the post–Second World War studies of modernization, by the recognition that some societies may not make it, as well as by the growing recognition by some scholars (Alex

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, C. Kerr, J. T. Dunlop, F. H. Harbison, and C. A. Myers, *Industrialism and Industrial Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>3</sup> J. Goldthorpe, “Theories of Industrial Society: Reflections on the Recrudescence of Historicism and the Future of Futurology,” *European Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 2 (1971): 263–88.

Inkeles and Gabriel Almond, for instance) of the distinct characteristics of the communist-totalitarian pattern of modernity.<sup>4</sup> Such a view implied that the very force of modern technology — industrial technology and later on the technology of communication and of acquisition of knowledge — and its expansion throughout the world, and the concomitant development of industrialization and, later, of so-called postindustrial society, would necessarily shape the central institutional features of contemporary societies. Or, in other words, this view implied that technology, its prerequisites, and its impacts, were the most formative factors shaping the institutions and dynamics of human societies. In this view the specific values, premises, and traditions of different and especially of modern civilizations played only a secondary role.

### *Criticisms of Theories of Convergence*

But, as is well known, and as has been abundantly analyzed in the scholarly literature, the ideological and institutional developments in the contemporary world have not upheld this vision — at least in its simplified version. The great institutional variability of different modern and modernizing societies — not only among the transitional, but also among the more developed, even highly industrialized societies — has become continuously more and more apparent.<sup>5</sup>

The growing recognition of the great symbolic and institutional variability and of different modes of ideological and institutional dynamics attendant on the spread of modern civilization — or civilizations — necessarily called for a search for new types of systematic explanation in response to the disintegration of the initial models of modernization. This search gave rise, in the late

<sup>4</sup> A. Inkeles, *Social Change in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); A. Inkeles, ed., *Soviet Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); G. Almond, *Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970); G. Almond and G. B. Powell, eds., *Comparative Politics Today* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*, p. 1.

1960s and 1970s, to two major approaches: first, that approach or conglomeration of approaches which stressed the importance of the traditions of different societies, and second, that which stressed the dynamics of international, especially capitalist, systems as the major factors explaining the variability and dynamics of different modern or modernizing societies.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than analyze in detail these various approaches, I would like simply to observe that, while these approaches indeed pointed out some very important factors which influence the dynamics of modern or modernizing societies, they also encountered many difficulties in their attempts to explain systematically the great variability of such dynamics. On the whole these approaches did not successfully explain how the *concrete* patterns of change which have been taking place in different non-western societies were related either to their respective traditions —or even what was meant by tradition —or to the new international situations created by the spread of modernity.

In the following discussion I shall address myself to some of these problems, and especially to the problem of how the basic premises of the cultural traditions —in themselves continuously reconstructed —and the historical experience of different civilizations take part in shaping their institutions.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS OF AXIAL CIVILIZATIONS : GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

### *The Axial Revolution in Human History*

I will first address the problems mentioned above by analyzing them from the point of view of some of the great historical civilizations, especially those so-called Axial civilizations, which constituted one of the major revolutionary breakthroughs in the history of mankind. The essence of these revolutions was in the development and institutionalization of a new type of cultural

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

orientation or premise. Since these civilizations spanned many societies, it is possible to analyze the relative importance of the institutionalization of such orientations in comparison with the more structural dimensions of these societies —an analysis which is, of course, of great importance to the examination of the convergence thesis. Such analysis will be facilitated by the examination of one non-Axial civilization which has exhibited many structural similarities to some Axial ones and which is of central importance from the point of view of our contemporary concerns —namely, Japan. The fact that many of these civilizations —including Japan —were in constant contact with one another will also facilitate the analysis.

Axial Age civilization (to use Karl Jasper's nomenclature) are those civilizations that crystallized during the thousand years from 500 B.C.E. to the first century of the Christian era, when conceptions of a basic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders emerged and were institutionalized in many parts of the world. These civilizations include those of ancient Israel, Second Commonwealth Judaism and Christianity, ancient Greece, Zoroastrian Iran, early Imperial China, Hinduism and Buddhism; and, beyond the Axial Age proper, Islam.<sup>7</sup> The crystallization of these civilizations can be seen —as a series of great revolutionary breakthroughs that changed the course of human history: the emergence and institutionalization of basic conceptions of a chasm between the transcendental and mundane orders. These conceptions, which first developed among small groups of autonomous “intellectuals” (a new social element at the time), particularly among the articulators of models of cultural and social order, were ultimately transformed into the basic premises of their respective civilizations, that is, they were institutionalized.

<sup>7</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, “The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics,” *European Journal of Sociology* 23, no. 2 (1952) : 294–314; S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1986).

The development and institutionalization of these conceptions gave rise in all these civilizations to attempts to reconstruct the mundane world-human personality and the sociopolitical and economic order according to the appropriate transcendental vision, to the principles of the higher metaphysical or ethical order. The given, mundane, order was perceived in these civilizations as incomplete, inferior.

Thus in these societies or civilizations personal identity was taken beyond the definition of man in terms of the primordial givens of human existence, and beyond the various technical needs of daily activities, and constructed around the central mode or modes of human action through which the tensions between the transcendental and the mundane orders are resolved. Such purely personal virtues as courage and such interpersonal ones as solidarity and mutual help were taken out of their primordial framework and combined, in different dialectical modes, with the attributes of resolution of the tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders, thus generating a new level of internal tensions in the structuring of the personality.

Similarly there developed far-reaching concrete institutional implications of these tensions. The most general and common has been the high degree of symbolic orientation and ideologization of the major aspects of the institutional structure. I shall mention here only two; namely, the tendency to construct distinct civilizational frameworks and the development of the concept of accountability of rulers.

Some collectivities and institutional spheres were singled out as the most appropriate carriers of the attributes of the required resolution. As a result new types of collectivities were created, or seemingly natural and "primordial" groups were endowed with special meaning couched in terms of the perception of this tension and its resolution. The most important innovation in this context was the development of "cultural" or "religious" collectivities distinct from ethnic or political ones. Some embryonic elements of



this development existed in some of those societies in which no conception of tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders was institutionalized. However, it was only with the development and institutionalization of this conception that those elements became transformed into new, potentially full-fledged collectivities with autonomous criteria of membership and loci of authority. The membership in these collectivities and frameworks tended to become imbued with a strong ideological dimension and to become a focus of ideological struggle.

An aspect of this ideological struggle was the insistence on the exclusiveness and closure of such collectivities and on the distinction between inner and outer social and cultural space defined by them. This aspect became connected with attempts to structure the different cultural, political, and ethnic collectivities in some hierarchical order, and the very construction of such an order usually became a focus of ideological and political conflict.

*The Restructuring of the Political Orders:  
The Accountability of Rulers*

Closely related to this mode of structuring of special frameworks was a far-reaching restructuring of the relation between the political and the higher, transcendental order.<sup>8</sup> The political order as the central locus of the mundane order was usually viewed as lower than the transcendental one and accordingly had to be restructured according to the precepts of the latter and, above all, according to the perception of the proper mode of overcoming the tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders, that is, the definition of "salvation."

The rulers were usually held responsible for organizing the political order, but at the same time the nature of the rulers became greatly transformed. The king-god, the embodiment of the cosmic and earthly order alike, disappeared, and a secular ruler,

<sup>5</sup> See S. N. Eisenstadt, "Cultural Traditions and Political Dynamism," *British Journal of Sociology* 32, no. 2 (1982): 155-81.

in principle accountable to some higher order, appeared. Thus there arose the idea of the accountability of the rulers and of the community to a higher authority —God, divine law, and the like. Accordingly, the possibility of calling a ruler to judgment emerged. This notion occurred first and most dramatically in ancient Israel, in the priestly and prophetic pronouncements. A different conception of such accountability, an accountability to the community and its laws, came into being in the northern shores of the eastern Mediterranean, in ancient Greece. In different forms the idea of accountability appeared in all these civilizations.

Concomitant to the emergence of conceptions of accountability of rulers there began to develop autonomous spheres of law and conceptions of rights. These tended to be somewhat distinct from ascriptively bound custom and from purely customary law. The scope of these spheres of law and rights varied greatly from society to society, but they were all established according to some distinct and autonomous criteria.

### *The Dynamics of Axial Civilizations*

All these models of reconstruction of the social and civilizational orders were not, however, static. Indeed they constituted foci of continuous struggle and change and cannot be understood except in connection with the tension between the transcendental and the mundane alluded to above, which was inherent in the very premises of these civilizations. The root of such tension lay in the institutionalization of its perception and in the quest to overcome it. This generates an awareness of a great range of possibilities or visions of the definition of such tension, of the proper mode of its resolution, and an awareness of the partiality or incompleteness of any given institutionalization of such visions.

Historically the institutionalization of these visions, of the perceptions of such tensions, was never a simple peaceful process. It was usually connected with a continuous struggle and competition between many groups and between their respective visions. Once

a basic tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders was fully recognized and institutionalized in a society, or at least within its center, any definition and resolution of this tension became in themselves very problematic. Such tension usually contained strong heterogeneous and even contradictory elements, and its elaboration in fully articulated terms generated the possibility of different emphases, and interpretations, all of which have been reinforced by the historical existence of multiple visions carried by different groups. Because of this multiplicity of visions, no single one could be taken as given or complete.

This multiplicity of visions gave rise in all these civilizations to an awareness of the uncertainty of different roads to salvation, of alternative conceptions of social and cultural order, and of the seeming arbitrariness of any single solution. Such awareness became a constituent element of the consciousness of these civilizations, especially among the carriers of their great traditions. This awareness was closely related to the development of a high degree of second-order thinking, which is a reflexivity turning on the basic premises of the social and cultural order.

Out of the combination of possible alternative ways of salvation, alternative cultural and social orders, and the structuring of the time dimension, there emerged another element which is common to all these civilizations; namely that of the utopian vision or visions — the visions of an alternative cultural and social order beyond any given place or time. Such visions contain many of the millenarian and revivalist elements found in pagan religions, but they go beyond them by stressing the necessity to construct the mundane order according to the precepts of the higher one, with the search for an alternative “better” order beyond any given time and place.

### *The Place of Cultural Elites in the Dynamics of Axial Civilizations*

The full impact of these dynamics can be understood only in connection with the nature of the social actors who were the car-

riers of those visions and who were most active in the structuring of these civilizations —namely, the elites of the society. The development and institutionalization of the perception of basic tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders were closely connected with the emergence of a new social element, especially of autonomous intellectuals, who were a new type of elite and the carriers of models of cultural and social order, such as the ancient Israeli prophets and priests and later on the Jewish sages, the Greek philosophers and sophists, the Chinese literati, the Hindu Brahmins, the Buddhist Sangha, and the Islamic Ulema.

It was the initial small nuclei of such groups of intellectuals that developed these new “transcendental” conceptions. In all these Axial Age civilizations these conceptions ultimately became the predominant orientations of the ruling as well as of many secondary elites, fully embodied in their respective centers or subcenters.

Once such a conception of a tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders became institutionalized, it was also associated with the transformation of political elites and turned the new scholar class into relatively autonomous partners in the major ruling coalitions and protest movements. The new type of elites which resulted from the process of institutionalization were entirely different in nature from the elites who had been ritual, magical, and sacral specialists in the pre-Axial Age civilizations. The new elites —above all the intellectuals and clerics — were recruited and legitimized according to distinct, autonomous criteria and were organized in autonomous settings, distinct from those of the basic ascriptive units. They acquired a potential country-wide status consciousness of their own. They also tended to become potentially independent of other categories of elites and social groups. But at the same time they competed strongly with them, especially over the production and control of symbols and media of communication.

Such competition now became very intensive because, with the institutionalization of such transcendental conceptions, a par-

allel transformation had taken place in the structure of other elites. All the elites tended to develop claims for an autonomous place in the construction of the cultural and social order. They saw themselves not only as performing specific technical, functional activities, but also as potentially autonomous carriers of a distinct cultural and social order related to the transcendental vision prevalent in their respective societies. Both the nonpolitical cultural elites and the political elites saw themselves as the autonomous articulators of the new order, and each saw the other type as potentially inferior and accountable to it.

Moreover, neither of these groups of elites was, in these societies, homogeneous. There developed a multiplicity of secondary cultural, political, or educational elites, each very often carrying a different conception of the cultural and social order. It is these elites who were the most active in the restructuring of the world and the institutional creativity that developed in these societies. But —and this is crucial for our analysis —these different elites in general and the intellectuals in particular constituted also the most active proponents of such concepts of the various alternative conceptions of the social and cultural order.

Accordingly, these conceptions were not confined to the purely intellectual realm. They had also —as we saw earlier —far-reaching institutional implications rooted in two closely interconnected facts: first, these conceptions had usually very strong orientations to the construction of the mundane world; second, these conceptions became closely connected with the struggle between different elites, often because they were the very foci of such struggle.

*The External Dynamics of Axial Civilizations —  
The Construction of World Histories*

It was not only the internal dynamics of the Axial Age civilizations that were so intensive. Their external or international relations were also special, distinct from those of other civilizations.

All these civilizations crystallized by an intensification of different types of intersocietal contacts —migration, settlement, conquest, and trade —especially those contacts that involved the impingement upon any given society of a variety of internal and external forces and material and symbolic resources located in different social and ecological settings that affected differentially the various institutional spheres of a society or sectors thereof. These contacts were both intensified and transformed after the institutionalization of the civilizations. Their number and frequency increased, often because of the internal structure and ideological heterogeneity of these societies and their internal conflicts.

Moreover, a new type of intercivilizational encounter evolved: all these civilizations developed, in varying degrees, strong missionary and expansionist orientations and could also be the target of the similar orientations of other Axial Age civilizations. The intensity of these encounters was reinforced by their reciprocal nature.

Thus the attempts to institutionalize their visions led to a far-reaching restructuring of the contours of the societies —a process that changed the dynamics and history of the societies and made world history possible. All the Axial Age civilizations evolved some conceptions of world history, and, because of the zeal generated by the visions of salvation of each of these civilizations, made the entire (known) world at least potentially eligible for cultural and political reconstruction.

Although none of these civilizations became —as was the case with the modern civilizations —a worldwide one, each of them created a “world” or international system of its own, many of which were in close contact with one another, and each of these civilizations also comprised different societies. Thus the institutionalization of these civilizations in many ways provided the background for the development of the modern world —a world characterized by continuous encounters between different civilizations

and the crystallization of worldwide social and cultural systems.<sup>9</sup>

The external processes discussed above were often interwoven with internal processes. Together they generated the dynamics of the civilizations, which, from their initial crystallization onward, produced mutual influences among customs and beliefs, attempts to absorb change, and processes of social and cultural reconstruction. These attempts were often consciously undertaken by the civilizations' primary and secondary elites.

Conflicts between tribes and societies became missionary crusades for transformation of others' solutions, informed by each society's concept of salvation, and made the whole world at least potentially subject to cultural-political reconstruction. In all these new developments the different sectarian movements and movements of heterodoxy played a central role.

The continuous social and cultural reconstruction as a response to change took place on many levels. At the organizational and institutional level, changes in economic or political structure or the development of new types of religious organizations took place. A second level involved changes in the symbols of collective identity —generally effected in reaction to encounters with other civilizations and with internal sectarian and protest movements; these changes usually contained some dimensions of reflexivity. A third level constituted changes in or the reconstruction of the basic premises of the civilization.

While all the Axial Age civilizations changed in their basic premises, the form taken by the changes varied from one to another, and these variations were related to basic differences in the characteristics of these civilizations. The most important of these differences were those rooted in the nature of the very definition of the tension between the transcendental and mundane orders and in the modes of resolving such tension —or, to use Weber's termi-

<sup>9</sup> For greater detail see Eisenstadt, *Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*; M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

nology, whether the resolution was conceived of in this-worldly or in combined this-worldly and other-worldly terms, generating the different symbolic and institutional premises of these civilizations.

There were also differences in the structure of the major ruling and secondary elites and the mechanism of control they exercised and the worldview they promulgated. Finally, there were differences in the socioeconomic structures of these civilizations and in the place of the society in the international political, economic, and cultural systems to which they were related. It is these differences that shaped the different modes of institutional dynamics of change that developed in these civilizations.

It would, of course, be impossible to do justice here to all the great variety of such modes of change and reconstruction, but I would like to distinguish, even if very briefly, several such major types, starting with the one which has often served as the model or epitome of “real” change—namely, the Western one. The subsequent analysis of the modes of institutional dynamics of other civilizations will show that such a “Western-centric” assumption is a wrong one, and that we have to go beyond it.

### III. INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS OF SELECT AXIAL CIVILIZATIONS

#### *Patterns of Change in Western Europe*

The mode of change that developed in western Europe, from at least the late Middle Ages on, was characterized by a relatively high degree of symbolic and ideological articulation of political struggle in movements of protest, by a high degree of coalescence of changes in different institutional arenas, and by a very close relation between such changes and the restructuring of political centers and regimes.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On the general characteristics of the patterns of dynamics of European societies, see F. Heer, *The Intellectual History of Europe*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings of Western Thought to Luther* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor, 1968); J. K. O’Dea, T. F. O’Dea, and C. Adams, *Religion and Man: Judaism, Christianity,*



Thus in western Europe changes within various institutional arenas, such as the economical and cultural arenas, impinged on one another and especially on the political sphere. These changes gave rise to a continuous process of social and political restructuring. As compared with the pure imperial systems, such as the Chinese or Byzantine one, those in western Europe were characterized by much less stability of regimes and by continuous changes of boundaries of collectivities and restructuring of centers; but at the same time they also evinced a much greater capacity for institutional innovation, cutting across different political and "national" boundaries and centers.

These changes were activated by (a) secondary elites, relatively close to the center and highly predisposed to be the major carriers of religious heterodoxies and political innovations; (b) a relatively close relationship between these autonomous secondary elites and broader social strata; and (c) a concomitant predisposition on the part of these elites and broader social strata to develop activities oriented to center formation and to combine them with those of institution building in the economic, cultural, and educational spheres. Out of these tendencies there developed a continuous confrontation between the construction of centers and the processes of institution building. Institution building in most spheres was seen as very relevant to the construction of centers and judged according to its contribution to their basic premises. At the same time centers were judged according to their capacity to promote just and meaningful institutions, and as such, were subject to the continuous competition on the part of different groups and elites over the terms of access to these centers and their definition.

This pattern of change was closely related to some of the major structural characteristics of western European civilization as they

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*and Islam* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 1; the various articles on "Christentum" in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961), 1:1685-1721; E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: Macmillan, 1931); see also S. N. Eisenstadt, *European Civilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987), chap. 2.

have developed from the Middle Ages on. The most important among these characteristics were

1. a strong emphasis by major groups on autonomous access to those social and cultural attributes which serve as bases of the criteria of status, as well as to the centers of the society;
2. a high degree of status association and perception of common class interests among relatively diversified occupational groups;
3. a relatively high degree of country-wide strata or class consciousness which tends to minimize, from the point of view of strata formation, the importance of ethnic, religious, or regional groups, and which is characterized by
4. multiplicity of cultural and “functional” (economic or professional) elites with a relatively high degree of autonomy, a high degree of cross-cutting between them, and close relationships between them and broader, more ascriptive strata;
5. a high degree of political articulation and expression of their respective class interests and conflicts;
6. continuous attempts by different strata to acquire access to the center or centers, to participate in them and to change them, and above all to minimize the principles of hierarchy as against those of equality in access to them;
7. a relatively high degree of autonomy of the legal system with regard to other integrative systems, above all the political and religious ones; and
8. a high degree of autonomy of cities and autonomous centers of social and structural creativity and identity-formation.

To a very large degree, all these tendencies and orientations were based on the assumption, unique to European civilization — and one which has greatly influenced social-science analysis — that economic power could be converted directly, not only into prestige, but also into political power, without losing its autonomous standing and legitimation.

The full crystallization of these structural tendencies, combined with the specific cultural orientations prevalent in Europe, gave rise there to (a) a multiplicity of centers; (b) a high degree of permeation of the peripheries by the centers and of impingement of the peripheries on the centers; (c) a relatively small degree of overlapping of the boundaries of class, ethnic, religious, and political entities and their continuous restructuring.

The apogee of this mode of change was, of course, the great revolutions and the development of modern Western society and civilization under the combined impact of these and the industrial revolutions, as well as, of course, the great cultural and ideological changes, all of which in their turn have generated the specific patterns of modern protest orientations and their incorporation into the centers in the various states of western and central Europe.<sup>11</sup>

The focus of the modern European order has been the crystallization of the assumption, so often stressed in sociological literature, that the exploration of continuously expanding human and natural environments and their mastery can be attained by the conscious effort of man in society. The fullest expression of this attitude can be found in the breakthrough of science, that is, in the premises that the exploration of nature by man is an "open" enterprise which creates a new cultural order and that the continuous expansion of scientific and technological knowledge can transform both the cultural and social orders and create new external and internal environments to be endlessly explored by man but at the same time harnessed to both his intellectual vision and technical needs. Science and technological knowledge were only one aspect of European modernity. Other aspects entailed the formation of a "rational" culture, an efficient economy, a civil

<sup>11</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Revolutions and the Transformation of Societies* (New York: Free Press, 1978), chaps. 4, 5 (pt. 2), 6; C. Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); J. Szucs, *Les trois Europes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985); M. Beloff, *The Age of Absolutism* (London: Hutchinson, 1954); O. Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. F. Gilbert (New York, Oxford University Press, 1975).

(class) society, and nation-states where these tendencies of “rational” expansion could become fully articulated and which could create a social and political order based on freedom.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the new civilization of modernity that emerged from these ideas was based ideologically and politically on the assumption of equality and of growing participation of the citizens in the center. This was most clearly manifest in the tendency to establish universal citizenship and suffrage and some semblance of a “participant” political or social order, giving rise to various ideologies of participation, which became closely interrelated in the political process, with the emphasis on the accountability of rulers.

The great institutional achievement of Western modern civilization was the institutionalization of these two notions —accountability of rulers and political participation in the routine political process. The achievement also created the possibility —but not the certainty —of continuous incorporation of movements of protest into the central political arena, a possibility which probably constitutes the great challenge and promise of democratic regimes.

It was out of these orientations that some of the specific assumptions about patterns of participation and characteristics of protest in the modern European societies and nation-states developed, leading ultimately, but only ultimately, to the potentialities of *Entzauberung*, of the “disenchantment of the world.” The most important of these assumptions were, first, that the major social and political forces (the political elites as well as the state) on the one hand, and “society” on the other, continuously strug-

<sup>12</sup> On the premises of modernity see G. Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900; reprint ed., Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1958); G. Simmel, *Der Konflikt des Modernen Kultur* (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1926); G. Simmel, *The Sociology of George Simmel*, ed. and trans. K. Wolff (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950); H. Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987); R. Aron, *Progress und Disillusion* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969); Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*; J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). Among the classical accounts of the transformation of concepts of authority and legitimation in modernity, see A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Knopf, 1946).

gled about their relative importance in the formation and crystallization of the cultural and political centers of the nation-state and the regulation of access to it, and about the access to the transcendental attributes which these centers represented, and second, that the processes of structural change and dislocation, which developed as a result of the process of modernization, gave rise not only to various concrete problems and demands, but also to the growing quest for participation in the broader social and political orders. This quest for participation of the periphery in such social, political, and cultural orders was mostly manifest in the search for access to these centers.

It was this pattern of change, with its apogee in the great revolutions and in the numerous social movements which developed after the revolutions, that has often been conceived as the very epitome of "real" change — against which all other patterns of change had to be judged. This model has also greatly influenced many of the assumptions of modern social science and historical analysis. But the experience of expansion of modern civilization beyond the West has indeed shown that in many civilizations other processes of change have taken place and has therefore necessitated the revision of many of the assumptions of these scholarly analyses.

#### *Patterns of Change in Hindu and Buddhist Civilizations*

India and Europe, from a broad comparative perspective, have shared some very important characteristics which cannot be found in relatively pristine form in any other of the great civilizations in the history of mankind. The most important of these characteristics was the existence of relatively common civilizational frameworks, rooted in cultural-religious orientations which became transposed into the basic premises of different civilizations, as against a multiplicity of continuously changing political centers and subcenters and types of economic structures.

Indeed, the political and economic spheres, especially the former, in these two civilizations may seemingly evince some very strong similarities or parallels in their forms of, for instance, political domination, such as kingship, patrimonial arrangements, and semifeudal arrangements.<sup>13</sup>

Yet the overall political dynamics, the structure and construction of the centers and of their activities, the nature of the movements of protest, their articulation into political conflicts and the modes of their incorporation into the center —the entire pattern of change and of institutional dynamics —were different in these civilizations.

Common to them (aside from the great differences, which are beyond the scope of this lecture) were the continuous restructuring of ascriptive-primordial categories and collectivities and the continuous subsumption (usually piecemeal) of most institutional changes within the framework of such restructuring, which was not, however —unlike in the case of Europe —mainly oriented to the political center.<sup>14</sup> The restructuring of the new collectivities facilitated the expansion of different social organizations. All these developments often engendered new organizational settings, a continuous redefinition of political and economic units and changes in policies, as well as changes in the religious sphere, manifested above all in the development of new movements and sects.

These developments were often accompanied by the redefinition of the boundaries of the collectivities and of access to them,

<sup>13</sup> On the basic premises of Hinduism and the direction of development of Indian civilization, see M. Biarreau, *Clefs pour la pensee hindoue* (Paris: Seghers, 1972); J. B. Carman, and F. A. Margolin, eds., *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985); M. Weber, *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, trans. H. H. Gerth and D. Martindale (New York: Free Press, 1958); W. T. de Bary, W. T. Chan, and B. Watson, comps., *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

<sup>14</sup> See L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); L. Dumont, *Religion, Politics, and History in India* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); T. N. Madan, ed., *Way of Life: King, Householder, and Renouncer* (New Delhi: V. Kas, 1982).

together with periodic attempts at imbuing them with a strong emphasis on equality. But, unlike in the West, they were not oriented to the reconstruction and transformation of the political center and its relations to the civilizational and religious center.

Unlike in the West and in China these dynamics were not ideologically focused on the possibility of *principled* reconstruction of the political center or, for that matter, of other institutional “mundane” arenas —such as the economic one or the family and kinship structure. Any reorganization of mundane institutional spheres that occurred in these spheres took place mostly on the organizational level, with only weak restructuring of their levels of symbolic articulation and without imbuing them with new autonomous meanings. Thus, for instance, in the political sphere these processes generated a high level of symbolization, much beyond what can be found in pre-Axial Age civilizations; yet they did not give rise, as in China and in monotheistic civilizations, to autonomous political centers, distinct from the periphery, with strong imperial orientations.<sup>15</sup>

The political centers that developed —for instance, in the Gupta and Mauryan empires — were stronger, and the territorial scope of the polities could be wider than the polities that existed before them. Similarly, the central and provincial administrations had strong centralizing tendencies. Yet these centralizing tendencies retained strong patrimonial characteristics —and did not lead to the restructuring of the relations between the center and the

<sup>15</sup> On the conception of polity see Dumont, *Religion, Politics, and History in India*; J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rajasuya Described According to the Yajus Texts* (Paris: Mouton, 1957); D. H. H. Ingalls, “Authority and Law in Ancient India,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 74 (1954): 34–45; H. N. Sinha, *Sovereignty in Ancient Indian Polity* (London: Luzac, 1938). See also B. L. Smith, ed., *Religion and Legitimation of Power in South Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978); A. Nandy, “The Making and Unmaking of Political Cultures in India,” in *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 47–69; and the following discussions of Homo Hierarchicus in *Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 4 (1976): J. P. Richards and R. W. Nichols, “Introduction,” pp. 579–80; P. Kolenda, “Seven Kinds of Hierarchy in Homo Hierarchicus,” pp. 581–96; M. Derett and J. Duncan, “Rajadharma,” pp. 597–610.

periphery, to the creation of new links between them, or to breaking through the ascriptive premises of the periphery. The rulers of these political entities, even on the rare occasions when (like Asoka, the most important illustration) they attempted to do so, were not able to imbue the political sphere with new and broader meaning which could go beyond the existing premises.

A rather similar picture emerges in the economic sphere. Within the framework of Indian civilization, relatively far-reaching economic developments occurred: the broadening of internal markets; the extension of the scope of mercantile and, in some periods, of agricultural activities and production; and technological innovation, which gave rise to new institutional complexes. Yet the restructuring of economic activities did not lead to the development of more autonomous economic roles and autonomous economic regulatory complexes, to the definition of the arena as a distinct, autonomous one, or to the principles of control over the access to markets and of conversion of resources. Many new economic units tended to be incorporated mostly as external enclaves with but little impact on the structure of the internal economic markets.

In Buddhist societies, given their relatively stronger orientation to the political arena than in Hinduist ones, impingement of the religious groups on the political arena —in addition to their serving, in periods of crisis, as the moral conscience of the community —was primarily in the reinforcement of the “galactic” tendencies of these rulers and of the construction of national Buddhist communities.<sup>16</sup> These patterns of change and of innovation

<sup>16</sup> See M. Nash, G. Obeyesekere, H. M. Ames, J. Ingersoll, D. E. Pianner, J. C. Nash, M. Moerman, M. Ebihara, and N. Yalman, *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, Southeast Asia Studies Cultural Report Series 13 (New Haven: Yale University, 1966); E. B. Harper, ed., *Religion in South Asia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964); B. L. Smith, *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka* (Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1978); B. L. Smith, *Religion and Political Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma* (Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1979); S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). On Buddhism see P. A. Pardue, *Buddhism: An Historic Introduction* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); R. E. Reynolds and C. Hellesey, “Buddhism: An Overview,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New



can also be discerned in the cognitive-symbolical realm and in the concomitant processes of the reconstruction of tradition that developed in the Indian and Buddhist civilizations. The most important characteristics of these patterns were the low ideologization of the attitude to change; a nontotalistic approach to the various aspects of change; weak attempts to organize the various aspects of reality in a close hierarchical way; and the continuous addition and incorporation of different new contents and patterns of behavior to existing tradition, without any great effort to combine them in a systematic way.

Of special importance for our analysis is the so-called tolerance and eclecticism of these “traditions” or religions, with respect both to philosophical speculation and mathematical or “semi-scientific” innovations (such as astrology) and to various local traditions and cults.

D. Shulman captures the essence of this strength of the Brahmanic tradition in the following way:

A certain mystery attaches to the fundamental problem of Brahminism’s historical resilience in Indian civilization to its capacity to expand its intellectual *and* social penetration to ever greater depths, to disarm and absorb its rivals, above all to outlast them, to have the final word. Thus Buddhism, the most serious of all challengers in the classical period, born from the same ferment and crisis of the mid-first millennium B.C. that ultimately produced Brahminical orthodoxy itself, finally disappeared from the land of its birth for reasons still poorly understood. Of course, the Buddhists also had powerful successors in their anti-Vedic role. Like the other “Axial” civiliza-

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York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1987), 2:351-85; W. T. de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China, and Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); H. Bechert, *Buddhismus: Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravada-Buddhismus*, 4 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966-68); S. J. Tambiah, “The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293 (July 15, 1977): 69-97. On Asoka see R. Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). See also Smith, *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, and *Religion and Political Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma*.

tions, India, through the very process of articulating its vision of the world in the newly absolutized and transcendent terms of the Upanishadic period of breakthrough and restructuring, created the conditions of enduring conflict over the realization of this vision; from this point onward, competing elites would argue over who among them was the “true Brahmin.” And yet, however tenuous their claims to monopolize the life-lines leading back to the *rsis*, it was always the protagonists of the vedic *dharma* arguing for the final authority of a largely inscrutable *sruti*-text as well as for that of their own practice, *sistacara* — whether supported by existing texts or not — who remained in place in the countryside, while their opponents tended to find themselves uncomfortably encapsulated and, in many cases, paradoxically assimilated to the Brahminical system. Moreover, this historical pattern of success unfolded in the context of powerful internal challenges to the orthodox conceptual structures (for example, by antinomian Sakta and Tantrika movements) that generally elaborated the idiom of revolt from terms available in the same authoritative corpus. On the face of it, Brahminism should have been vulnerable to both types of attack, from outside and from within, especially given the unsettling potential of its own genuinely skeptical attitude toward the world; the enormous investment in authoritarian claims to regulate nearly all domains of human experience had to operate in the face of a deeply internalized suspicion and devaluation of all nontranscendent (*laukika*) realms. Hence, no doubt, the need to establish transcendent, Vedic legitimacy for domains which were originally transparently mundane (e.g., erotic science, music, poetics, to name but a few). This is the paradigm: It is Sankara, predisposed by his radical premises to a certain hostility even toward the world of Vedic sacrifice, who serves as defender and renewer of Brahminical orthodoxy in its structure of authority and its institutions. And he is not alone. Something in the code of Vedic and Sanskritic culture, operative within the ongoing Brahmin tradition from the critical moment of its crystallization in the middle of the first millennium B.C., allowed it to sustain and

to perpetuate a social and institutional dynamic of amazing adaptive power in the face of very real threats and attacks.<sup>17</sup>

*Patterns of Change in the Chinese Empire*

Yet another pattern of change has crystallized in the most enduring political and civilizational entity that developed in human history —namely, the Chinese Empire —as shaped by the combination of the imperial regime and Confucianism, with an admixture of legalist, Taoist, and Buddhist orientations, and which the Confucian literati, which constituted the main recruiting group for the imperial bureaucracy and the emperors, constituted the most important and constant components of the ruling coalition.<sup>18</sup>

China experienced far-reaching changes in all the institutional areas, far beyond what can be found in non-Axial civilizations. China underwent not only dynastic changes and divisions of the empire, but also growing differentiation in the structure of its economy, both in the agrarian and in the urban sectors; changes in the importance of its cities; shifts in the relative power and social standing of different cultural and social groups (such as the

<sup>17</sup> D. Schulman, "The Dynamics of Sect Formation in Medieval South India," in S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., in *The Dynamics of Axial Age Civilizations* (tentative title; forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> On the Chinese civilization see E. D. Reischauer and J. K. Fairbank, *A History of East Asian Civilization*, vol. 1, *East Asia: the Great Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960); M. Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. H. Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1964); C. K. Yang, "The Functional Relationship between Confucian Thought and Chinese Religion," in J. K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 269–91; A. F. Wright, *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960); D. S. Nivison and A. F. Wright, eds., *Confucianism in Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); and A. F. Wright, ed., *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). See also J. Gernet, "Introduction"; D. McMullen, "View of the State in Du You and Liu Zongyuan"; B. L. Schwartz, "The Primacy of the Political Order in East Asian Societies: Some Preliminary Generalizations"; A. Hulsewe, "Law as One of the Foundations of State Power in Early Imperial China"; M. Loewe, "Imperial Sovereignty: Dong Zhongshu's Contribution and His Predecessors"; and H. Franke, "The Role of the State as a Structural Element in Polyethnic Societies," all in S. R. Schram, ed., *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China* (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987), pp. xv–xxvii, 59–86, 1–10, 11–32, 33–58, and 87–112.

aristocracy) ; and shifts in the predominance of the emperors (i.e., the Ming) as against the bureaucracy.<sup>19</sup>

Major movements of protest and change, rebellions, warlord uprisings and especially different sectarian movements and secret societies also developed in the Chinese Empire.<sup>20</sup> These movements, the various popular rebellions and warlord uprisings, as well as the various processes of change mentioned above, could have a strong impact on the center and often had strong incipient transformative potentialities — a fact of which the center was not unaware. The symbols and aims of these movements often included strong political, historical, and semimythical or utopian components — seemingly rather similar to such movements in the monotheistic civilizations, particularly in the West.

But ultimately these rebellions usually provided only secondary interpretations of the dominant value structure; most of them emphasized the ideology and symbolism of the Mandate of Heaven and did not spawn radically new orientations or new institutional patterns, especially with respect to the accountability of rulers. The military governors and warlords were also usually oriented toward the existing value system and political framework. Although they strove for greater independence from, or the seizure of, the central government, only rarely did they aim at the establishment of a

<sup>19</sup> See Fairbank, *Chinese Thought and Institutions*; F. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York: Knopf, 1971); D. S. Nivison and Wright, *Confucianism in Action*; B. Schwartz, "Transcendence in Ancient China," *Daedalus*, Spring 1975, pp. 57–63; B. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); Wright, *The Confucian Persuasion*. See also D. Bodde, *Essays in Chinese Civilization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), esp. chaps. 6–17.

<sup>20</sup> The patterns of rebellion, warlordship, and state reconstruction in China are discussed in S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* (New York: Free Press, 1963), chaps. 10, 11; F. Wakeman, "Rebellion and Revolution: The Study of Popular Movements in Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, no. 4 (1977): 201–38; J. B. Parsons, "The Culmination of a Chinese Peasant Rebellion," *Journal of Asian Studies* 16, no. 3 (1957): 387–401; E. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), chaps. 3, 5; A. Feuerwerker, *Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies, 1975).

new type of political system. It was only with the downfall of the empire that “real” warlordism developed.

Above all, these movements of protest —as well as religious movements that arose in the peripheries and secondary institutional spheres of these societies —showed little capacity (despite some broader orientations and incipient tendencies in this direction) to become linked with the central political struggle and to develop new common ideologies and frameworks of action, particularly those relating to the definition and structuring of the criteria of major institutional complexes.

Similarly, few enduring organizational, structural, and ideological connections developed between the central heterodoxies, the different ideologies and policies in the center, and the more popular movements. True, many (usually unemployed) literati and members of the gentry participated in the secret societies and rebellions, but they tended either to articulate the ideology of the Mandate of Heaven or to provide different secondary interpretations of the predominant ideologies.

Parallel to this, the rather loose connections between the secondary religions or heterodoxies like Buddhism and Taoism and the struggles of the political center did not exert (except in the T’ang period, when the Buddhists were pushed out of the center) far-reaching transformative influences on the Chinese social and political order, although they caused many changes in the different institutional spheres.<sup>21</sup> In general the pattern of change that developed in China was characterized by a relatively low level of coalescence between the restructuring of the political regimes on

<sup>21</sup> On the impact of Buddhism and Taoism on Chinese society, see Reischauer and Fairbank, *A History of East Asian Civilization*; M. Kaltenmark, *Lao Tzu and Taoism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); C. Y. Chiu, “The Church-State Conflict in the T’ang Dynasty,” in E. T. Zen and J. de Francis, eds., *Chinese Social History* (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1956), pp. 197–207; and for a more general discussion, see A. F. Wolf, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974); H. Welch and A. Seidel, eds., *Facets of Taoism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

the one hand and of the economic institutions or different strata on the other.

The closest relation of changes in political regimes to those of strata formation that developed in the Chinese Empire was that common to all imperial societies —namely, the strength and standing of free peasants as opposed to that of would-be aristocratic elements or strong gentry. But even this connection was manifest in China (as distinct from, for instance, the Byzantine Empire) more in the development of the rulers' policies than in the political articulation of the demands of these strata. Similarly, even the great urban and commercial development under the Sung, or the growing differentiation of the economy under the late Ming and the Ch'ing, while connected with changes in government policy, were not as evident in the mode of impingement of the respective economic groups on the center.

Changes in political boundaries and dynasties were connected only to a relatively small degree with changes in the economic — either agrarian or commercial — systems compared with some other imperial systems, though obviously the maintenance of proper economic conditions and ability to develop adequate policies constituted continuous challenges and tests for the rulers. Changes in the cultural sphere —above all in the schools and ideologies of Confucianism — were closely related to those in the political sphere and led to many political struggles and changes in the composition of elites and in policies with a high ideological tone. But these changes were confined to the center, to the literati, the bureaucracy, and the emperor. Unlike, for instance, in the Roman and Byzantine empires, there was little participation by broader strata or secondary elites, and these changes were, officially at least, denied in political ideological standing. The persistence of this type of change and the mode of the incorporation of change epitomizes the great riddle of the continuity of Chinese civilization, which in

a way constitutes the epitome of its specific mode of historical experience.<sup>22</sup>

This continuity had two aspects. One was the ability to contain most of the far-reaching internal, structural, and ideological changes (which were more far-reaching than was granted by the official Confucian ideology and, later on, by large parts of the Western historiography, which was greatly influenced by it) within the basic premises outlined above, even if the premises were themselves to some extent continuously reformulated.

The other aspect of this continuity was that, unlike the Roman or Hellenistic empires, where a certain type of this-worldly orientation also prevailed, the Chinese Empire persisted in its ideal model and symbolism, which constituted a continuous reference point for its reconstruction throughout periods of dismemberment and of dynastic change.

#### IV. THE PLACE OF HETERODOXIES IN THE INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS OF AXIAL CIVILIZATIONS

##### *Introduction*

Rather different patterns of change have, of course, developed in the Eastern Christian, Islamic, and many other civilizations, but

<sup>22</sup> On the political structure and dynamism of the Chinese Empire, see Reischauer and Fairbank, *A History of East Asian Civilization*; C. O. Hucker, ed., *Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); J. T. C. Liu, "An Administration Cycle in Chinese History," in J. A. Harrison, ed., *China: Enduring Scholarship* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), 1:75-90; Eisenstadt, *Political Systems of Empires*, esp. chaps. 10, 11; S. N. Eisenstadt, "Innerweltliche Transtenden und die Strukturierung der Welt: Max Weber Studie ueber China und die Gestalt der chinesischen Zivilisation," in W. Schluchter, ed., *Max Webers Studie ueber Konfuzianismus und Taoismus: Interpretation und Kritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983); A. E. Wright and D. Twitchett, eds., *Perspectives on the Tang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); J. A. Langlois, Jr., ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); J. D. Spence and J. E. Wills, eds., *From Ming to Ching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); F. Wakeman, Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of the Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); S. R. Schram, ed., *The Scope of State Power in China* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1985).

it would be beyond the scope of this discussion to go into them here. Instead I would like to spend some time analyzing one aspect of the “causes” of these different types of change.

In the literature dealing with these problems many such causes —above all demographic, economic, and political —have been emphasized. No one would, of course, deny the importance of these factors. Yet by themselves they cannot fully explain the differences between the rather marked patterns of change in societies or civilizations with relatively similar structural characteristics —such as the decentralized civilizations of Europe and India or different imperial systems, as, for instance, the Chinese, Roman, and Byzantine ones.

Here it seems that yet another factor has to be taken into account, which has been relatively neglected in the literature: namely, the role played by heterodoxies and sects —not standing alone but in their interrelation with the demographic, economic, and political processes and movements —in shaping the different specific contours of these processes of change. This factor is of course also of great importance from the point of view of our initial concern about the relations of values and premises of different civilizations in shaping their institutional dynamics.

Heterodoxies and sectarian groups were indeed common to all Axial Age civilizations; they constituted, as we have seen, one of the distinct characteristics of such civilizations. From the conceptions of possible alternative ways of salvation, alternative cultural and social orders, and the structuring of the time dimensions, there emerged in all these civilizations another element —namely, the utopian vision, the vision of an alternative cultural and social order beyond any given place or time. Such visions contain many of the millenarian and revivalist elements which can be found also in pagan religions, but they go beyond them by combining these elements with a component stressing the necessity to construct the mundane order according to the precepts of the higher one, with the search for an alternative, “better,” order.



As we have seen above, these conceptions were not confined to the purely intellectual realm. They also had far-reaching institutional implications in that they usually had very strong orientations to the construction of the mundane world and in that they became closely connected with the struggle between different elites and indeed often became the very foci of such struggle.

Because of this there emerged in these civilizations the possibility of structural and ideological linkages between different movements of protest and foci of political conflict, and above all between rebellions, central political struggles, and religious or intellectual heterodoxies. These linkages were effected by different coalitions of various secondary elites —above all by coalitions between rebellions) central political struggles, and religious or intellectual sects and heterodoxies. Accordingly there also developed the possibility of the greater impingement by all such movements on the center or centers of the society. The transformation of alternative conceptions into heterodoxies or heresies was effected, of course, by their confrontation with some institutionalized orthodoxy. It was indeed in the Axial Age civilizations —and only in them —that the continuous confrontation between orthodoxy on the one hand, and sectarianism, heresy, and heterodoxy —with their potential impingement on the restructuring of the basic premises of civilization —on the other, became a crucial component in the history of mankind.<sup>23</sup>

One of the basic characteristics of the Axial Age civilizations was the development of the symbolically and institutionally organized orthodoxies, in which belief systems were structured according to relatively explicit rules in relatively well-demarcated symbolic frameworks. But for just this reason the institutionalization of such orthodoxies generated the possibility of sectarianism, heresies, and heterodoxies and of a continuous confrontation be-

<sup>23</sup> See Eisenstadt, *The Axial Age*, and S. N. Eisenstadt, "Heterodoxies and Dynamics of Civilizations," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128, no. 2 (1984): 104–13.

tween them and the orthodoxies in which political and religious or ideological dimensions were only two aspects of the same dynamics. This construction stemmed from the fact that one of the central aspects of the Axial Age civilizations was the development of the potential questioning of their own basic premises —that is, of a high degree of second-order thinking, or reflexivity, which focused on the basic premises of the social and cultural order, and not only, as in most pre-Axial Age civilizations, on individual adherence to the given social and moral order. For all these reasons the confrontation between hegemonic orthodoxies and different types of heterodoxies constituted a central element in the processes of change that developed in these civilizations.

The different modes of change and reconstruction in these civilizations were closely related to some of the specific characteristics of these heterodoxies as they developed in distinct ways. They were, above all, related to the basic visions articulated in these heterodoxies, their patterns of organization and the nature of their coalitions with other groups and movements, as well as to the nature of their international contacts.

### *Heterodoxies in European Civilization*

The major characteristics of the various heterodoxies and sects in the West was a very strong this-worldly component in their alternative vision, a very strong orientation to the restructuring and control of the political and cognitive arenas and a strong predilection to enter into coalitions with movements of social and political protest.<sup>24</sup> These characteristics were, of course, also very closely

<sup>24</sup> On heterodoxies in Christian civilizations and on the most important heterodoxy to develop in Catholic Europe —Protestantism —see J. LeGoff, *Heresies et sociétés dans l'Europe préindustrielle 11-18<sup>e</sup> siècles* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968); G. Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); M. Walzer, "Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology," in B. Laughlin, ed., *Studies in Social Movements* (New York: Free Press, 1959); D. C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); T. Nipperday, *Reformation, Revolution, Utopie*, Studies of the Sixteenth Century (Göttingen: Vandenoebck and Ruprecht, 1975).

related to the characteristics of orthodoxies in the West — namely, to the existence of some type of organized church which attempts to monopolize at least the religious sphere and usually also the relations of this sphere to the political powers. But of no less importance has been the doctrinal aspect, the organization of doctrine, that is, the stress on the structuring of clear, cognitive, and symbolic boundaries of doctrine.

It was within Christianity that these organizational and doctrinal aspects of orthodoxy developed in the fullest way. It was within Christianity that there developed full-fledged churches which constituted active and autonomous partners of the ruling coalitions. The other monotheistic civilizations, Judaism and Islam, developed rather powerful organizations of clerics, but they were not always as fully organized and autonomous.

The tendency to structure relatively clear cognitive doctrinal boundaries was rooted, first, in the prevalence, within the monotheistic civilizations in general, and within Christianity with its stronger connections to the Greek philosophical heritage in particular, of strong orientations to the cognitive elaboration of the relations between God, man, and the world. Second, this tendency was rooted in the fact that, in all these monotheistic religions, with their strong other-worldly orientations, the activities in the mundane world, the reconstruction of the mundane world, were yet seen — even if in different degrees — as at least one focus of other-worldly salvation. Hence the proper designation of such activities became a focus of central concern and of contention between the ruling orthodoxies and the numerous heterodoxies that developed within them. These characteristics of the confrontation between orthodoxy and heterodoxies, with their strong political orientations and implications, greatly contributed to shape the specific processes of change and reconstruction that developed in the West and that were analyzed earlier.

*Heterodoxies and Sectarianism in Hinduism and Buddhism*

In the Hinduist and Buddhist realms a rather different pattern of sectarianism developed. The most important of these sects — Bhakti, Jainism, and originally Buddhism itself — all closely connected with the traditions and orientations of the renouncer, emphasized the pristine other-worldly orientations. But they developed not only as intellectual or ascetic exercises in elaborations of esoteric doctrines, but as full-fledged sects, each of which offered its own interpretation of the proper way to salvation and gave rise to far-reaching innovation in different social arenas.

The most dramatic among these innovations could be found, as indicated above, in the Jainism and Bhakti cults, and above all in the rise of Buddhism itself. These Hindu sects and Buddhism, originally a sectarian movement within Hinduism, had a wide impact not only on the religious sphere but on the entire institutional framework of Indian civilization.<sup>25</sup> These sects often focused on attempts at more universal definitions of the religious communities, and on greater equality within them, rooted in a pure, unmediated devotion to the Absolute, taking them beyond any ascriptive communal and, above all, caste setting. Buddhism created a new world civilization; later the different Buddhist sects had a

<sup>25</sup> On Jainism, see C. Gaillat, "Jainism," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 7:507–14; A.L. Basham, "Jainism and Buddhism," in W. T. de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 37–93; S. Jaini, "The Pure and the Auspicious in the Jaina Tradition," in Carman and Margolin, *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society*; H. von Glasnapf, *Der Jainismus* (Hildesheim, 1964); S. Padmanabh, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); W. Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jainas*, trans. W. Beurlen (Delhi, 1962); on Bhakti see J. B. Carman, "Bhakti," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2:130–34; J. Lele, ed., *Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti: Movements* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981); F. Hardy, *Viraba Bhakti: The Early Development of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); K. Schormer and W. H. McLeod, eds., *The Saints: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); E. Zelliott, "The Medieval Bhakti Movement in History: An Essay on the Literature in English," in B. L. Smith, ed., *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), pp. 143–68. On some of the earlier but persistent heterogenous trends in Indian religion, see J. Gonda, *Vishnuism and Sivaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1970).

far-reaching impact on the institutional spheres of their respective civilizations.

The dynamics generated by these sects in coalition with other social groups differed greatly from those of other Axial Age civilizations, whether from China, in which this-worldly orientations were predominant, or from the monotheistic ones, where this-worldly orientations were closely interwoven with other-worldly ones. These dynamics were to some degree unique in human history. They led to the restructuring and continuous expansion of the civilizational, political, and religious frameworks and collectivities, as well as of the organizational settings —to the redefinition of the scope of political and economic units and to changes in policy but not, as we have seen above, to the reconstruction of political centers or of the basic premises of the political regimes.

The distinct nature of the impacts of these sects on the institutional formations of their respective civilizations were closely related to the alternative social and cultural models that developed within them, as well as to the nature of their linkages with different types of political struggle and rebellion —that is, the nature of the coalitions into which they entered and their place in and impact on the central ruling coalitions.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See, on this problem, J. Bunnag, *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Layman: A Study of Urban Monastic Organization in Central Thailand*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Nash et al., *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*; E. B. Harper, ed., *Religion in South Asia* (Seattle, 1964); P. Mus, "Traditions anciennes et bouddhisme moderne," in *Eranos Jahrbuch*, vol. 32 (Zurich: Rhein Verlag, 1968), pp. 161–275; P. Mus, "La sociologie de Georges Gurvitch et l'Asie," in *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 43 (Dec. 1967): 1–21; R. Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978); S. C. Malik, ed., *Dissent, Protest, and Reform in Indian Civilization* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1973). See also M. S. A. Rao, ed., *Social Movements in India* (New Delhi: Mahonar, 1982); S. N. Eisenstadt, R. Kahane, and D. Shulman, eds., *Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Dissent in India*. On the participation of the Sangha in political life, rebellions, and change in Buddhist societies, see Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*; Bechert, *Buddhismus*; G. Obeyeskere, F. Reynolds, and B. L. Smith, eds., *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon*, Studies in Religion 3 (Chambersburg, Pa.: American Academy of Religion, 1972), esp. chaps. 1–3; F. E. Reynolds, "Civic Religion and National Community in Thailand," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, no. 4 (1977): 267–82;

The basic definition of ontological reality and the strong other-worldly conceptions of salvation that developed in these civilizations did not generate strong alternative conceptions of the social and, especially, political orders. True, many of these visions and movements tended to develop a strong emphasis on equality, primarily in the religious and cultural fields and to some extent in the definition of membership in the various collectivities. Similarly, some of the heterodoxies or sectarian movements that developed in these civilizations, and which sometimes became connected with rebellions and political struggle, articulated millenarian orientations. But these were not characterized by strongly articulated political goals, nor were they linked with attempts to restructure the political regimes. Only in some popular uprisings against alien or “bad” rulers were such goals crystallized briefly.

The direction of the impact of these sects on the dynamics of Hindu civilization was closely related to the fact that, while the various sectarian “religious” groups, organizations, or conglomerations continued to be autonomous in the cultural-religious arena, in the more “mundane” sphere they were mostly embedded in various ascriptive and political groups. Hence, while the leaders of these sects were able to form many new coalitions, with different social groups and movements, these coalitions were of the same nature that existed in the major arenas of their respective societies and were mostly confined to the prevalent organizational networks, and they did not generate markedly different principles of social organization and above all of the political arena.

Thus these civilizations, unlike the monotheistic ones, have but rarely witnessed attempts, articulated by various elites and movements, to reconstruct the political centers, their symbols, and the criteria of access to them. The sociopolitical demands voiced in these movements were focused on attempts to change the concrete application of existing rules and to persuade the rulers to imple-

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T. Stern, “Ariya and the Golden Book: A Millenarian Buddhist Sect among the Karen,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 27, no. 2 (1968): 297–327.

ment more benevolent policies. Such demands were not usually seen as new principles of political action or of accountability of rulers to different sectors of the population but rather as an articulation of the latent moral premises of legitimation inherent in the existing regimes.

### *The Renouncer in the Indian and Buddhist Civilizations*

The best way to understand these characteristics of the construction of other-worldly civilizations is to analyze the nature of the most extreme pristine manifestations of the other-worldly ideal —the so-called Indian renouncer (Sanyassin), and the Buddhist monk, especially the forest monk (the *bhikku*)—which epitomize the most extreme renunciation of the world.<sup>27</sup>

These renouncers may appear similar to —even more extreme than —the Christian holy men of ancient antiquity and the medieval monks, the Muslim sufis, some of the Jewish sectarians in the period of the Second Commonwealth, and the Jewish Hasidim of the early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the Indian Sanyassin and Buddhist bhikku differ greatly from their apparent counterparts in the monotheistic civilizations, not to mention their rather more obvious differences from the Confucian scholar who denounced officialdom and became a sort of *Privatgelehrter*.

The specific characteristics of the Hindu Sanyassin and Buddhist bhikku can best be understood by analyzing the relationship between their ideal of renunciation and the mundane, lay world. Here we encounter a rather paradoxical situation: this extreme ideal of renunciation also contains a strong de facto interweaving with

<sup>27</sup> J. S. Tambiah, "Renouncer, His Individuality and His Community," in Madan, *Way of Life*, pp. 299–320; I. F. Silber, "Dissent through Holiness: The Case of the Radical Renouncer in Theravada Buddhist Communities," *Numen* 23, no. 2 (1981): 164–93; I. F. Silber, "Opting Out in Theravada Buddhism and in Medieval Christianity: A Comparative Study of Monasticism as Alternative Structure," *Religion* 15, no. 3 (1985): 251–77. See also R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979); R. Thapar, "Householders and Renouncers in the Brahmanical and Buddhist Traditions," in Madan, *Way of Life*, pp. 273–98.

the mundane world and lay life, as can be seen in two crucial aspects of their respective roles.

The Indian renouncer (and the Buddhist, especially Theravada, bhikku) was defined not only as a distinctive role, differentiated from other roles of mundane, lay life, but also as a distinct stage — the last one, after that of the householder, in each man's life cycle. The stage was not entirely discontinuous with lay life; it was usually the culmination of this life. At the same time there existed also the possibility — more evident in the Buddhist monasteries, but existing also in the Hindu complex — of continuous entry, exit, and reentry into the organizations that emerged around the renouncers.

It is the lack of such a sharp break and differentiation between the role of the bhikku and lay life — which is, paradoxically, closely related to the total devaluation of the mundane world, but a devaluation which is not based on a conception of radical, ontological evil within it (even if it contains a conception of life as suffering) — that prevented these renouncers or the bhikkus to find an Archimedean point outside this world from which they could try to change it, as has been the case in the monotheistic civilizations in general and in Western Christianity in particular.

This definition of the role of the renouncer and the consequent ways in which the different sects and movements were interwoven in the institutional dynamics of Hindu (and Buddhist) civilization have been also closely related to the fact that the strong otherworldly emphases prevalent in these civilizations and their conception of ontological reality generated a tendency to a relatively weak relationship between the rules defining the ontological reality and the sharp cognitive and ideologized structuring of doctrines, and above all their application to the regulation of mundane arenas.

### *Heterodoxies in Chinese Civilization*

The pattern of relations between orthodoxy and heterodoxy that evolved in China revealed some very distinct — and com-



plex —characteristics, some of which we have alluded to above. The nature of this complexity, which has been a focus of scholarly controversy, lies in the fact that “heterodox” tendencies developed not only from within the Buddhist (or Taoist) groups but also from within the Confucian ones. Their orientations were seemingly similar to those of the monotheistic civilizations and of the West in that they were in principle oriented to the mundane, above all to the political arena, but their overall institutional impact differed greatly from these movements.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, we have seen, while many important attempts at reform grounded in Confucian and Neo-Confucian visions abounded in China, especially from the Sung period onward, in none of these attempts do we find those tendencies to reconstruct the premises and centers of the regimes that can be found in the monotheistic civilizations.

Here the interpretation of Neo-Confucianism is of great importance. There can be no doubt that Neo-Confucian groups were closely concerned with the reconstruction of the imperial order, in accordance with the metaphysical and moral visions which they articulated, and that they had great impact on some aspects of policy, such as land allotment and taxation and to some extent also some of the details of the examination system itself. On the other hand, they never challenged the basic premises of the regimes, the very foundations of the imperial order, and, above all, the view that the political arena or political-cultural arenas, as represented in this order, were the main, possibly only, *institutional* (as distinct

<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, W. T. de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind and Heart* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); T. A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy*; Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*; P. Nasco, ed., “Introduction: Neo-Confucianism and Tokugawa Discourse,” in *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Y. Lao, “Southern Chinese Scholars and Educational Institutions in Early Yuan: Some Preliminary Remarks,” in Langlois, *China under Mongol Rule*, pp. 107–33.

from the more private and contemplative) arenas for implementing the Confucian transcendental vision.

Confucian thinkers of different generations, and especially Neo-Confucians from the Sung period on, were concerned about the imperfectibility of the political system, especially of the emperor but also of the examination system and of the bureaucracy, and attempted to find some fulfillment beyond it. But given their adherence to the basic Confucian tenets, especially to the identification of the center and the political arena, in the broad sense, as the major sites of implementation of the Confucian vision, they did not, beyond the suggestion of reforms, attempt to reconstruct the premises of the center itself. The major thrust of their transformative orientations was in the direction of cultural and to some extent educational activities, and they could not link changes in the central political arena with protest movements and rebellion in the periphery.<sup>29</sup>

Accordingly, the transformative potentials of these “heterodox” tendencies in the institutional arena — as well as the utopian

<sup>29</sup> On Neo-Confucianism see W. T. de Bary and the Conference on Ming Thought, *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); W. T. de Bary and Irene Bloom, *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 1–36; W. T. de Bary and the Conference on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Thought, *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*. On some controversies about the transformative potentials of Neo-Confucianism, see S. N. Eisenstadt, “Some Observations on Th. Metzger’s Analysis of the Relations between Modernization and Tradition in China”; Th. Metzger, “A Response to Professor Eisenstadt”; S. N. Eisenstadt, “Some Concluding Observations in Response to Prof. Metzger,” all in *American-Asian Review* 3 (Feb. 2, 1985): 1–14, 15–27, 28–31. On the literati see E. Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy: Variations on a Theme* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); B. D. van der Sprenkel, *The Chinese Civil Service: The Nineteenth Century* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1958); M. Weber, “The Chinese Literati,” in H. H. Berth and C. W. Mills, eds., *Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 416–44; C. K. Yang, “Some Characteristics of Chinese Bureaucratic Behavior,” in Nivison and Wright, *Confucianism in Action*, pp. 134–65; E. A. Kracke, *Civil Service in Early Sung China, 960–1067* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953); and E. A. Kracke, “Sung Society: Change within Tradition,” *Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1955): 479–89; J. W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

visions generated by them —gave rise to institutional dynamics different from those of other Axial civilizations. The major aspect of distinct patterns of change was, as we have seen, the relatively weak linkage between changes in different institutional arenas and, above all, the relative segregation of changes in the cultural and economic arenas and the restructuring of the political center.

The uniqueness of the Chinese case lay in the ability of the ruling elites to regulate the numerous actual and potential internal and external impingements on its symbolic premises and institutional frameworks, without these impingements being able to change or restructure the basic premises of these frameworks, although, generally speaking, the different Neo-Confucian schools did generate far-reaching reinterpretations of such premises.<sup>30</sup> This relatively weak ideological and structural linkage between the different movements and processes of change, and the central political struggle, in particular, was affected by the lack of predilection, especially among the literati, to generate enduring organizations and ideological linkages between their own activities and the different secondary institutional elites, which thus minimized the development of a full-fledged confrontation between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in China. This tendency to such weak linkages and the consequent ability of the ruling groups to regulate the movements of change without their direct impingement on the center were related to the basic characteristics of the literati, especially to their constituting both an autonomous intellectual stratum and a “church” and a “state” bureaucracy, and to their basic orientations.

The literati constituted a combined intellectual, political, and administrative elite, and defined their intellectual activities as participation in the political order. They based their major cultural operations on the assumption that the political and cultural realm was the major arena of resolution of the tension between the tran-

<sup>30</sup> See Eisenstadt, *Political Systems of Empires*, chaps. 11, 12; Eisenstadt, *Revolutions and Transformation of Societies*, chaps. 4, 5, 6.

scendental and mundane orders. Accordingly, they were not able to develop strong political action and organization beyond these orders, nor any independent resources or power bases and contacts with broader groups, sects, or movements.

The strong emphasis on individual responsibility and the moral cultivation of the individual was oriented either toward perfecting the philosophical premises of their respective systems or toward the development of private intellectual or even mystic religious tendencies and reflexivity. These could become connected with other-worldly tendencies, but mostly on the private level.

True, the various Neo-Confucian schools incorporated some Buddhist Taoist concerns into their intellectual system and attempted to provide more explicit rules for defining ontology. The very development of these Neo-Confucian schools can be seen as a reaction to the strong attraction of Buddhism and Taoism for many strata—including the literati—in times of trouble and division. But the incorporation of some Buddhist or Taoist themes into Neo-Confucianism was effected within the basic framework of its this-worldly orientations; the cultivation of other-worldly orientations was left to the various sects in their relatively segregated arenas, or to the private life of the literati.<sup>31</sup> When any sect or school (e.g., the Buddhists under the T'ang) attempted to impinge on these premises of the Confucian order in order to reconstruct the world according to its own premises, however, the Confucian literati and bureaucracy behaved like any other monotheistic orthodoxy and initiated a very fierce political struggle and persecution.<sup>32</sup>

These tendencies of the literati were reinforced by the nature of the predominant symbolic and structural relations between the center and the periphery, and the modes of recruitment of the literati to the bureaucracy. Of special importance in this context

<sup>31</sup> See the literature cited in note 29.

<sup>32</sup> E. B. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-Shan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955); E. Zuercher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959).

was the combination of three elements. First was the basic affinity of the official ideology as enunciated by the ideology of the center and the societal order represented by the center and the various types of peripheral collectivities. The second element was the fact that access by the broader strata to the major attributes of the Confucian order was vested in the hands of the literati and mediated by them. The literati's control of access to the center was not based on coercion alone but also on solidarity ties with the periphery regulated by them. Third, this relatively strong solidarity between the literati and the broader strata was influenced by the fact that all strata (with the partial exception of merchants and some marginal groups) could be recruited to the literati. At the same time, however, attainment of literati status entailed a cultural transformation and elitist distancing —though not principled dissociation or alienation —from the broader strata.

The preceding analysis of the patterns of change in some Axial civilizations indicates that the general tendency to reconstruct the world, with all its symbolic-ideological and institutional repercussions, was common to all the Axial Age civilizations. But their concrete implementation, of course, varied greatly. No single homogeneous world history emerged, nor were the different civilizations similar or convergent, despite many structural similarities between them and despite the numerous contacts among them.

What developed was rather a multiplicity of different, divergent, yet mutually impinging world civilizations, each attempting to reconstruct the world in its own mode and according to its basic premises, and attempting either to absorb the others or consciously to segregate itself from them.

The general considerations about the dynamics of Axial civilizations have some implications for the understanding of modernity. They bear on the very problem with which we started our discussion; they go against the earlier, Western-centered concep-

tion thereof and entail a far-reaching reappraisal of the classical studies of modernization.

#### V. JAPANESE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AND MODERNITY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Before proceeding to discuss the reappraisal of studies of modernization I would like to analyze briefly one non-Axial civilization which has revealed striking similarity to some Axial ones. This society is Japan. Such analysis may indeed serve as a very good transition to the discussion of the similarities and variabilities of modern societies.

The historical experience and dynamics of Japan evince some rather special characteristics. Perhaps the most important is the unusual combination of many structural-institutional characteristics that can usually be found in Axial Age civilizations —especially in Western Europe —and basic non-Axial Age premises of the cultural and social order. This combination makes the analysis of special interest and importance from the point of view of the problem of convergence between societies which evince structural similarity.

The major cultural orientations and premises and the definition of ontological reality predominant in Japan were definitely those of a non-Axial Age civilization. They included the perception of a relatively low level of tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders, and concomitantly the mutual embedment of culture and nature in the natural and social order. Rather rare for a non-Axial Age civilization, these premises also included very strong commitments to the social (and cosmic) orders, extending from the family through various wider circles to, in principle, the center of the collectivity as a whole; an emphasis on group identity and loyalty; and a concomitant emphasis on the importance of the concrete social frameworks (or contexts) for personal

definitions of attributes of activity and identity and of patterns of social interaction.<sup>33</sup>

Accordingly, in Japan, there developed almost no distinction between the social and cultural orders represented by the center and the order represented by the various types of collectivities on the periphery. A relatively close relationship evolved between the symbols of the center and those of the peripheral groups, with theorization of the center constituting a basic component of the identity of most of these groups, and with the symbolism of the periphery constituting a basic component of that of the center.

This symbolism was embodied in the figure of the emperor as the representative of the cosmic order and as the major mediator between it and the social order. This mediation was effected through the various vertical networks and the orientations of the different groups and sectors of the population.

It was the emperor who embodied and represented the basic qualities or attributes of Japanese collectivity, of Japanese collective identity, which were defined in sacral-liturgical terms stressing that Japan was a sacred nation —under the special protection of the gods —but not carrying, as those nations in Axial civilizations, any universalistic message or mission, and not being responsible to the gods for carrying out such message or mission.<sup>34</sup>

These orientations had far-reaching implications on some central aspects of the major institutional arenas in Japanese societies—those very arenas which have evinced great structural similarity to the western European one. One such aspect is the nature of the

<sup>33</sup> For greater detail see E. D. Reischauer and A. M. Craig, *Japan: Tradition and Transformation* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1978); P. Duus, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976); S. N. Eisenstadt and A. Shachar, *Society, Culture, and Urbanization* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1987), chap. 10; and R. Smith, *Japanese Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> See C. Blacker, "Two Shinto Myths: The Golden Age and the Chosen People," in S. Henny and J. P. Lehman, *Themes and Theories in Japanese History: Essays in Memory of Richard Storry* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), pp. 64–78; J. M. Kitagawa, *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

cultural definition of the major institutional arenas of the relations between the major actors within them, and of the semantic connotations of these arenas. The second such aspect is the specific features of some of the major integrative institutional or organizational frameworks which organized the activities in these arenas.

Thus, to give but a few illustrations, Japanese feudalism was characterized, in contrast to European feudalism, by the absence of the concepts of legal contractual rights of the vassals and of autonomous access to the center and by a stress instead on their sort of semifamilial mutual obligations. As Marc Bloch pointed out long ago, Japanese feudalism never developed full-fledged contractual relations between vassal and lord; Japanese vassals could have only one lord. Fully autonomous assemblies of estates were weak —if they existed at all —and Japanese feudalism was much more centralized than the European version; there were two foci to this centralization — emperor and shogun, or *bakufu* — and by a closely related, much more general tendency to dissociation between power and authority in many areas of social life, starting indeed with the emperor who had authority and the shogun who had power.<sup>35</sup>

Some of those institutional arrangements in Europe concerned with conceptions of rights did not develop in Japan, such as the right of vassals to have feudal relations with several lords or to appeal against the lord. In Japan, relations between lord and vassal were based on personal relations and not on vassals' rights in land. Similarly, as Elizabeth M. Berry has shown, the Tokugawa

<sup>35</sup> M. Bloch, *Feudal Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 2:446-97; P. Duus, *Feudalism in Japan* (New York: Knopf, 1976); J. W. Hall and M. B. Jansen, eds., *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); J. W. Hall and P. J. Mass, eds., *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); J. W. Hall, "Feudalism in Japan: A Reassessment," in Hall and Mass, *Medieval Japan*, pp. 15-5 1; S. Breuer, "Feudalismus und Rechtsstaat in Westeuropa und Japan," in S. Breuer and H. Treiber, eds., *Zur Rechtssoziologie Max Webers Interpretation, Kritik, Weiterentwicklung* (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1984), pp. 112-52.



state, the most centralized of pre-Meiji Japanese regimes, did not develop a conception of state as distinct from the bakufu domain, of a public domain entirely distinct from the private one.<sup>36</sup> The institutions of the Tokugawa state were based to a much smaller degree on centralized bureaucratic arrangements than those of the European absolutist regimes. Separate bureaucratic organizations developed within the Tokugawa bakufu and within the different feudal domains, but the relations between the bakufu and the daimyos were not regulated through bureaucratic channels. The administrative power of the daimyos was not abolished but was very closely supervised and controlled by the bakufu. The relations between the Tokugawa rulers and the daimyos were defined and structured according to the familial presentations or exchanges of gifts and not in terms of formal bureaucratic taxation.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, Japanese cities of late medieval times did not, on the whole, develop either distinct autonomous corporate units or city-wide autonomous institutions and self-government and thus were not able to generate, despite many possibilities of protest that developed within them, an autonomous bourgeoisie, capable of revolutionary orientations.<sup>38</sup>

The common denominator of all these arenas that were structurally similar to those of western Europe was that they were not defined in terms that symbolically differentiated them from those of other arenas. Instead, they were defined in some primordial, sacred, or "natural" terms and were regulated primarily not by distinct and autonomous legal, bureaucratic, or "voluntary" associations but through various less formal arrangements and net-

<sup>36</sup> E. M. Berry, "Public Peace and Private Attachment: The Goals and Conduct of Power in Early Modern Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12, no. 1 (1986).

<sup>37</sup> T. Umesao, *La formation de la civilisation moderne au Japon et son évolution*, Lectures presented at the College de France, 1984 (forthcoming), "Troisième leçon — l'empire d'Edo: Une monarchie absolue — Pax Tokugawana."

<sup>38</sup> Eisenstadt and Shachar, *Society, Culture and Urbanization*; G. Garon, *The State and Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

works, mostly embedded in various ascriptively defined social frameworks.

Personality and selfhood were not, as has been very often emphasized in the numerous researches on Japanese personality, defined as distinct ontological entities or units but in interpersonal or contextual terms. Thus, in comparative perspective, most striking is the absence or weakness of conceptions or definitions of autonomous social actors — individuals or groups — in their relation to other such “abstract” individuals or equivalent groups in general and to the centers of society which are found in other, structurally similar societies.

Given these basic orientations and characteristics, it is seemingly natural that in structural-organizational terms the Japanese political systems in premodern times evinced some of the characteristics of the various patrimonial systems, in which relatively little distinction existed between center and periphery, and in which there was little permeation of the center into the periphery or impingement by the periphery on the center. Yet, in fact, the picture was much more complicated. In Japan the centers continuously attempted to permeate the periphery. This permeation was, however, less concerned with the ideological restructuring and structure of the periphery than in different imperial or feudal-imperial systems; rather, it focused on mobilizing the economic, political, and military resources, as well as the loyalty and strong commitments of the different groups of the periphery to the center, and it was based on the assumption of the basic symbolic identity between center and periphery, an identity couched in primary, sacral-liturgical terms.<sup>39</sup>

This mode of structuring center-periphery relations, as well as of the major institutional arenas, was related to the structure of the major elites that developed and became predominant in Japanese history and to the modes of control exercised by them — in

<sup>39</sup> For greater detail see Eisenstadt and Shahar, *Society, Culture, and Urbanization*, chap. 10; and Kitagawa, *On Understanding Japanese Religion*.

turn very closely related to the basic orientations analyzed above. While the structure and composition of these elites has, of course, changed throughout Japanese history, some characteristics have remained constant.

The most important among these are a multiplicity of “functional” elites—political, military, economic, and cultural-religious—as well as of representatives of families, villages, or regional sectors. Various such elites emerged in different periods of Japanese society and attempted to mobilize the resources of the periphery, basing themselves on the strong emphasis laid on group commitment and on the cultural premises and orientation of the center and periphery.

In addition, there was, in Japan, an almost total absence (except in such limited spheres of activity as the artistic or intellectual fields) of autonomous criteria of recruitment and organization—beyond those of the various primordial ascriptive groups, in themselves continuously reconstructed—of the cultural elites, even if these were themselves continuously reconstructed.

Most of the cultural and intellectual elites, while often engaged in very sophisticated cultural activities, had little autonomy in the political and social realm, differing in this respect from those of the major Axial civilizations. The lack of autonomy of, above all, the cultural elites was closely related to the absence of universalistic criteria based on a transcendental vision stressing a chasm between the transcendental and mundane orders.

It was these elites and their coalitions that upheld the specific patterns of social control that crystallized in Japanese society and that defined and structured the institutional arenas. It was also these elites and elite coalitions, articulating the basic cultural orientations analyzed above, that shaped some of the basic characteristics of social change as they developed in Japan throughout its history.

Here again, in structural terms, the general direction of these changes—the transition from semitribal monarchies through some

type of feudalism to more centralized, seemingly absolutist states; the continuous economic development, the growth of cities and commerce, to the processes of modernization —as well as a generally very high predisposition to change, to continuous institutional restructuring, seem to be, as Durkheim has remarked, strikingly similar to those in western Europe.<sup>40</sup>

And yet these dynamics differed, in some critical ways, from those that developed in western Europe. The major difference, with respect to the symbolic dimension of these dynamics, was the relative weakness, in comparative terms, of the ideological universalistic component —that very component which was crucial in the structuring of heterodoxies in Axial civilizations. Thus, for instance, utopian universalistic missionary ideology —or any components of class ideology —was missing from most of the peasant rebellions and movements of protest that abounded in Japan, even if they did sometimes contain very strong millenarian (although not overly utopian) components.<sup>41</sup>

The modes in which these movements of protest were defined and coped with were indeed very similar to the more general processes of resolution of conflict in Japanese society, which tended to reestablish some of the vertical hierarchical principles, even if in different organizational or institutional configurations and sometimes with different ideological underpinnings. Horizontal, or egalitarian, solidarity-communitarian orientations —often imbued with millenarian but not utopian themes —were more evident in peasant rebellions. They constituted part of the reservoirs of cultural themes in Japanese society and served as important components of collective action; but they were not effective in chang-

<sup>40</sup> E. Durkheim, review of *Der Gesellschaft und Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung in Japan*, by T. Fukada, *L'Annee Sociologique* 5 (1900–1902): 342–47.

<sup>41</sup> I. Scheiner, “Benevolent Lords and Honorable Peasants: Rebellion and Peasant Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan,” in T. Najita and I. Scheiner, eds., *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); A. Walthall, *Social Protest and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986); T. Ishida, “The Orthodoxy of the Japanese Empire,” in Eisenstadt, *The Dynamics of Axial Age Civilizations*.

ing the basic premises of the center. The more horizontal communal orientations tended to develop in the direction of some sort of populist, communitarian, ideological participation, and less toward a horizontal class or sector identity based on autonomous access to the major attributes of status and to the center.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the fact that such conflicts and movements were often organized by seemingly independent individuals, these individuals could rarely establish their positions effectively without acting in accordance with the above-mentioned hierarchical principles. True enough, in many periods of Japanese history, especially in periods of rapid historical change and intensive encounter with other civilizations, new ideological and structural options were opened up.

But these new options were incorporated, both within the high culture of the center and within popular culture, into frameworks based on some kind of sacral-liturgical-primordial or ascriptive definitions of social action, together with a strong emphasis on mutual obligations to the reconstruction of the social nexus, to the contribution to these nexuses, and to the basically mythical conception of collective time, however greatly these terms themselves and their concrete specifications had changed. Many such changing definitions incorporated some of the new themes, as, for instance, when some components of historical orientations were incorporated into the prevalent mythical thought in the later Tokugawa and early Meiji periods.

The frameworks of group or interpersonal loyalty and moral virtue, as well as other arenas of action, were continuously emphasized and redefined but not in terms of some universalistic principles conceived as being outside of the social or given nexus or outside of nature. This mythical primordial-sacral-liturgical "social" nexus became ultimately the most central focus of the new, sophisticated formulations that emerged in the philosophical discourse that developed in Japan in many of these situations of

<sup>42</sup> T. C. Smith, "The Right to Benevolence: Dignity and Japanese Workers, 1890-1920," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (Oct. 1984): 587-613.

change. This nexus provided the basic codes, parameters, or templates which channeled the direction and articulation of these formulations, even if defined in very sophisticated ways, giving rise continuously to the “immanentization” of any potentially transcendental orientations and to the particularization of any universalistic ones.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most important illustrations of the effects of the modes of control by Japanese elites is the transformation, or “Japanization,” of Confucianism and Buddhism. Confucianism and Buddhism, of course, were two of the major Axial religions and civilizations. They expanded into Japan relatively early and were of crucial importance there. They were, however, transformed in ways that changed some of their most important Axial orientations. On the institutional level this transformation was evident in the absence, in Japan, of the *literati* and of the imperial bureaucracy recruited from the *literati* through the examination system (so important in China, Korea, and Vietnam), as well as, in the case of Buddhism, in the strong familistic direction of sectarianism.

In addition, some of the major premises or concepts of Confucianism and Buddhism were transformed in Japan. Here, following, for instance, Takeshi Umehara and Hajime Nakamura, we can note the change to a more immanentist direction of transcendental orientations that stressed the chasm between the transcendental and mundane orders, as evident in the transformation of the conception of a chasm between culture and nature into a much stronger emphasis on the mutual embedment of the cultural and natural orders.<sup>44</sup> Such transformation had far-reaching impact on some of the basic premises and concepts of the social order, such

<sup>43</sup> H. Nakamura, *The Ways of Thinking of Eastern People: India, China, Tibet, Japdn* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964), pp. 345–588.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; T. Umehara, “Shinto and Buddhism in Japanese Culture,” *Japan Foundation Newsletter*, 15, no. 1 (1987): 1–7.

as the Mandate of Heaven, with its implication of authority and the accountability of rulers, as well on conceptions and definitions of the religious in relation to the national community. Unlike China, where in principle the emperor was “under” the Mandate of Heaven, in Japan he was seen as its embodiment and could not be held accountable to anybody. Only the shoguns —in ways not clearly specified and only in periods of crises, as, for instance, at the end of the Tokugawa regime —could be held accountable.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time the conception of relations between the nation and the potentially broader religious or cultural (such as Buddhist or Confucian) communities shifted from the strong universalistic orientations inherent in Buddhism, and more latent in Confucianism, into a much more “nativized” conception in Japan.<sup>46</sup> The transformations of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan represent the de-Axialization of Axial religions, not in the local or peripheral arenas or “small traditions” of Axial societies, but in a “total” society —probably a unique event in human history. This transformation illustrates one of the major characteristics of Japanese history —the openness to outside influences and their subsequent “domestication,” or “Japanization.”

Throughout its history Japanese society has been characterized by its openness to outside influences, continuous internal change and innovation. This openness has often, and mistakenly, been designated as borrowing or mere imitation. Yet, as the transformation of Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan attests, this openness and incorporation of foreign influences were usually accompanied by their Japanization. Such Japanization entailed not just the addition of local color but their transformation according to the basic premises of Japanese civilization. Of special interest from the point of view of our discussion is the fact that the Confucist and Buddhist sects did not develop in Japan into full-fledged sectarian

<sup>45</sup> See Kitagawa, *On Understanding Japanese Religion*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

heterodoxies with direct impact on the reconstruction of the political center or the boundaries of the community. This lack of development was closely related to the fact that in Japan these groups became greatly dissociated from the broader civilizational frameworks of Buddhism or of Confucianism and did not constitute a part of the political-religious networks of the Confucian and Buddhist civilizations.

Japanese civilization, unlike that of western and central Europe, with which it shared many structural similarities, was not part of a broad civilization, sharing basic civilizational premises with other countries. Throughout its history, it was a self-enclosed entity, not sharing its basic identity or premises with any other civilization. True, this identity and its basic premises were forged and crystallized through continuous encounters with other civilizations —China, represented by Confucianism and Buddhism (although the latter also came to Japan to some extent from India), and, in modern times, the West.<sup>47</sup> But the encounter with China did not entail the incorporation of Japan —as happened to Korea and Vietnam —into the framework of the Chinese civilization. Needless to say, there were many Confucian discourse, or “textual,” communities common to China and Japan, but their development did not go beyond the intellectual and artistic spheres. The basic premises of Confucianism and Buddhism —and later of many modern Western ideologies —were entirely transformed in Japan. Japan lived *with* these other civilizations but was never *of* them, instead always maintaining its distinctive and conscious uniqueness. But it was probably this continuous encounter with China, with Confucianism and Buddhism —and later with the West —that led to the development of the intense, complex, and sophisticated mode of ideological discourse that, along with most

<sup>47</sup> D. Pollak, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).



of its structural institutional features, distinguished it from most other non-Axial civilizations.

Indeed, contrary to many non-Axial civilizations (e.g., ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Mesoamerica), which, unlike Japan, were also pre-Axial civilizations, Japan evolved sophisticated intellectual, philosophical, ideological, and religious discourses. Such discourses developed in medieval times in Japanese Buddhism and above all in the various Neo-Confucian schools of the later Tokugawa period.<sup>48</sup> These discourses constituted a conscious, ideological, and highly reflexive denial of the type of ideology grounded in the premises of Axial civilizations; but at the same time they were often couched in terms derived from these ideologies, and the confrontation between these different ideologies constituted a continuous focus of this reflexivity.

This combination of characteristics of Axial Age civilizations and of non-Axial civilizations, together with modes of ideological discourse unlike those in most other non-Axial Age civilizations, provide clues to the historical experience of Japan, to its attempts to construct a distinct world history and to its characteristics as a modern civilization.

The entire process of modernization, of the formation of a modern society, developed in Japan in a rather distinct way. In the Meiji restoration, in the peasant rebellions, the universalistic, missionary elements were entirely missing. Structurally the Meiji restoration was characterized, as were also the earlier peasant rebellions —in contrast to the European revolutions —by the relative self-containment of the respective actors, whether the various peasant groups or those groups of samurai which were the harbingers of the Meiji restoration.<sup>49</sup> Of special interest are their relatively weak connections with each other and with different religious or cultural sectarian groups (such as, for instance, the

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, Nasco, *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture*.

<sup>49</sup> See Eisenstadt, *Revolutions and the Transformation of Societies*.

Puritans had in the English and American revolutions) or with independent ideologies (as was the case in French Revolution). The various sectarian groups which have existed in Japan have but rarely, as we have seen, become transformed into heterodoxies.

In more modern times, the Japanese authoritarian state of the 1930s did not proclaim, like the European totalitarian fascist movements, an ideology of total social transformation, nor did it develop many of the organizational features of these movements, like mass political parties or a high degree of overall social mobilization.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, many of the policies undertaken after the First World War and especially after the Second World War by the “Japanese state” —that state which has been seen as a major agent in directing the Japanese economic success —were characterized much more by “guidance” and continuous consultations with different groups than by direct political command and bureaucratic control. This state of affairs has led Daniel Okimoto to claim that the Japanese state is basically a “weak” one —a claim seemingly supported by, or at least related to, the fact that there seems not to have developed a clear concept of the state as distinct from that of the national community.<sup>51</sup>

The Japanese socialist and labor movements were characterized during most periods of their development, very much in line with the movements of protest of earlier periods, by an oscillation between strong sectarian predilections and splits with relatively little appeal to broader sectors of the population, including many sectors of the workers, and a very pronounced nonideological stance combined with highly accommodative policies.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See B. Shillony, “Traditional Constraints on Totalitarianism in Japan,” in *International Colloquium in Memory of J. L. Talmon* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1984), pp. 156-67.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel I. Okimoto, “Political Power in Japan,” Preliminary draft for JPERC III Conference, Tokyo, Japan, Jan. 4-9, 1988.

<sup>52</sup> On the development of labor and socialist movements in Japan, see R. Scalapino, *The Early Japanese Labor Movement: Labor and Politics in a Developing Society* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies/Center for Japanese Studies, University of California, 1984); G. O. Totten, *The Social Democratic Movement in Postwar Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

Similarly, some characteristics of the modes of conflict resolution that developed in modern Japan, such as, for instance, the relatively low level of formal litigation in courts, distinguished such modes of resolution from those in other modern societies while at the same time revealing some very striking similarities to those that were prevalent in Japan in earlier times.<sup>53</sup>

Thus Japan shows, perhaps in the clearest possible way, the ways in which the distinct historical experience of a civilization is shaped by the interweaving of cultural premises and traditions with structural forces—even if its structural characteristics are similar to those of other civilizations. It also shows how such experience has influenced the development of a specific ideological and institutional pattern of modernity.

All the examples given above are illustrations of the rather unique pattern of Japanese modernity. Such illustrations could—and should—be given for some of the civilizations discussed above, such as the Indian or the Chinese. All these civilizations, even if they have not achieved the level of economic development attained by Japan, have yet developed as specific patterns of modernity,

Parallel—although, of course, concretely different in their specification—illustrations of distinct institutional and ideological patterns of modernity could be given for other modern societies, attesting to the great variability in central aspects of their institutional formations. Such different patterns could be identified when comparing Europe and the United States, or, as S. M. Lipset has lately shown in a series of incisive analyses, even between the

<sup>53</sup> See T. Najita and J. V. Koschmann, eds., *Conflict in Modern Japanese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); E. S. Krauss, T. P. Rohlen, and P. G. Steinhoff, eds., *Conflict in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984); F. K. Upham, *Law and Social Change in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); T. Ishida, “Non-confrontational Strategies for Management of Interpersonal Conflicts: Omote-Ura and Uchi-Soto Relations,” in Krauss, Rohlen, and Steinhoff, *Conflict in Japan*, pp. 16–39.

United States and Canada.<sup>54</sup> They all attest to the fact that the United States is to be seen not just as the most modern, or as one of the most modern, societies, but also as a distinct modern civilization with its own premises and contours — a fact fully recognized, of course, in the nineteenth century by Alexis de Tocqueville and Lord James Bryce.

## VI. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

We may now bring together some of the major indications of this analysis. On the more general analytical level these indications point out that the formation of any institutional setting is effected by its combination of several major components: the level and distribution of resources among different groups in society, that is, the type of division of labor predominant in a given society; the institutional entrepreneurs or elites available — or competing — for mobilizing and structuring such resources and for organizing and articulating the interests of major groups generated by the social division of labor; and the nature of the “visions” which inform the activities of these elites and which are derived, above all, from the major cultural orientations or premises prevalent in a society, and as articulated and institutionalized by the activities of the major elites and counterelites.

The most important among such elites are: the political elites, who deal most directly with regulating power in society; the articulators of the models of the cultural order, whose activities are oriented to the construction of meaning; and the articulators of the solidarity of the major groups, who address themselves to building trust in a society. The structure of these elites is closely related to the basic cultural orientations and premises prevalent

<sup>54</sup> S. M. Lipset, “Historical Traditions and National Characteristics: A Comparative Analysis of Canada and the U.S.,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 11 (Summer 1986): 113–55; and S. M. Lipset, *Distinctive Neighbors: Values and Culture in Canada and the United States* (forthcoming).

in a society; in other words, different types of elites are the carriers of different types of orientations. Especially important among these are those relating to the structure of authority and its accountability; the conceptions of justice; the structure of power and political struggles; the principles of social hierarchization; the definition of the scope of membership of different communities.

In connection with types of cultural orientations, such elites tend to exercise different modes of control over the production and allocation of basic resources in their societies. It is through these modes of control that the elites combine the structuring of trust, provision of meaning, and regulation of power with the division of labor, thereby institutionalizing the charismatic dimension of the social orders. This control is effected by a combination of organizational and coercive measures, together with structuring the cognitive maps of the social order and the major reference orientations of social groups. The different coalitions of elites and their modes of control shape the major characteristics and boundaries of the respective social systems, into which they construct the political, economic, social stratification, class formation, and overall macrosocietal systems. Different modes of control shape the control aspects of institutional structure in different societies, and they give rise to processes of change and protest and patterns of institutional dynamics specific to each society.

But different types of civilizational settings and social organizations are not caused naturally by the basic orientations and premises of any civilization. Latent within the cultural visions from which such premises are derived are some of the potential developments of the societies or civilizations in which they become institutionalized. Still, the types of social organization that develop in different civilizations are not determined purely by their respective basic premises, nor are they merely the direct result of the basic inherent tendencies of any culture. They emerge from a variety of contingent constellations, economic and political trends, and ecological conditions —albeit as they relate to religious tenets or

beliefs, basic civilizational premises, and their institutional implications and carriers.

Many historical changes and new institutional formations probably resulted from the factors listed by James G. March and Johann Olsen in their analysis of changes in organization, namely, the combination of basic institutional and normative factors: that is, of processes of learning and the different types of decision making by individuals necessarily responding to a great variety of historical events.<sup>55</sup> The rise of new forms of social organization and activities entailed new interpretations of many basic tenets of the religious beliefs and institutional premises. But relatively similar types of contingent forces could have different impacts in different civilizations, even if these shared many concrete institutional or political-ecological settings, because of the differences in their premises.

We now return to the reappraisal, on the basis of the general considerations about Axial civilizations and of Japan, of the vision of modern society and of modernization. Such a reappraisal is based first of all on the recognition that the spread of modernity has to be viewed as the crystallization of a new type of civilization, not unlike the spread of great religions, or great imperial expansions in past times; but because the expansion of this modern civilization almost always combined economic, political, and ideological aspects and forces, its impact on the societies to which it spread was much more intense than in most historical cases. It is also based on the recognition that the expansion of all civilizations, in particular the modern ones, undermined the symbolic and institutional premises of the societies incorporated into them, calling for them to respond and open up new options and possibilities.

<sup>55</sup> J. G. March and J. P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (1984): 734-49.

But while modernity has spread to most of the world, it has not given rise to a single civilization and one pattern of ideological and institutional response but to several, or at least to many basic variants, which are constantly developing their own closely related but not identical dynamics. A great variety of modern or modernizing societies, sharing many common characteristics but also evincing great differences among themselves, developed out of these responses.

Each modern or modernizing and developing society, crystallized out of a selective incorporation and hence also transformation of the major symbolic premises and institutional formations of the original modern civilization in the West, opened up new options for various groups within it. This generated far-reaching processes of change, of which a crucial part was the selection of various symbolic and institutional aspects of the original civilization of modernity and the concomitant restructuring of its own symbolic and institutional formations.

This approach entails a far-reaching reformation of the vision of modernization, of modern civilization. Instead of looking at modernization or modernity as the ultimate end point in the evolution of all known societies, which brings out the evolutionary potential to all of them and of which the European experience was the most important and succinct manifestation and paradigm, we must view modernity as one specific type of civilization, which originated in Europe and which has spread all its economic, political, and ideological aspects throughout the world, encompassing almost all of it after the Second World War.

These considerations do not negate the obvious fact that in many central aspects of their institutional structures —be it occupational and industrial structure, the structure of education, or the structure of cities —very strong convergences have developed in different modern societies and these convergences have indeed generated common problems, such as those of urban and industrial

development, educational development, political organization, and urbanization. But the modes of coping with these problems have differed greatly between these different modern civilizations, and these differences are to no small degree attributable to the different traditions —especially basic premises —which became crystallized and continuously reconstructed in these civilizations and to the distinct historical experiences of these civilizations.

Thus these different symbolic and institutional modes of coping with the common problems of modern societies, the different symbolic and institutional formations, were shaped, first, by the basic premises of these civilizations and societies, the basic perception of the relation between the cosmic and social orders, and the social and political order of hierarchy and equality that were prevalent in them; second, by the structure of their predominant elites, who were the carriers and articulators of these perceptions and visions; and third, by the modes of control exercised by these elites, and by the modes of protest as articulated by different counterelites.

As in all cases of historical changes, a crucial element in the crystallization of the new symbolic and institutional formations was the various elites, both old and new. These groups were of vast importance in shaping the modern institutional and symbolic formations as they evolved in different modern societies.

As with the different heterodoxies analyzed above, these groups were not uniform. The new elites were more influenced by the historical traditions of response to change, heterodoxy, and innovation than has been often assumed, and the old ones were greatly transformed by the new situation. These responses to change were not shaped by what has been sometimes designated as the natural evolutionary potentialities of these societies, nor by the natural unfolding of their tradition, nor by their placement in the new international setting —if indeed it makes sense to talk of such potentials without reference to specific historical and international



settings —but rather by the encounter and continuous feedback between the various aspects of the societies analyzed above and the different modern international systems. This encounter entailed a strong element of choice with respect to the crystallization of symbols and institutions.

Whereas in any historical situation the range of such choices is limited, the course adopted in any specific situation of change in general, and of modernization in particular, is not entirely predetermined either by the international system in which they are structured or by the tradition of the respective societies. In situations that seem to be structurally similar, there is always some range of possible alternatives out of which choices are continuously being made.

Such decisions are also influenced, as indicated above, by processes of learning and by the concomitant activities of the various new and old groups of elites and counterelites which interact in any situation of change and create new linkages and coalitions. Such coalitions take up the various options opened in the new situation, among which are the possibilities of different modes of transformation —including revolutionary transformations —of the premises and institutional formations of different civilizations, and such coalitions shape the continuously changing contours of different modern civilizations as they did those of different historical civilizations.