Political Circumstances and Political Choices:
A Reading of the Fluctuations of Japanese “Modernity”
in North American History-Writing, 1940-2000

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The publication of Japan’s Emergence as a Modern State in 1940 by Canadian scholar-turned-diplomat E. Herbert Norman put into operation the category of “modernity” for North American history-writing about Japan. After 1940, uses of “modernity” existed in tension with relative disuses of the category, and the category itself changed definition. These fluctuations can be attributed primarily to political circumstances and the political choices made by historians.

In using the expression “political circumstances,” I have in mind primarily international politics, especially Japan-U.S. relations, but domestic politics and politics within the academy also belong to this category. By “political choices,” I mean where a scholar locates his or her arguments vis-a-vis these political circumstances. “Choice,” perhaps is the wrong word, for it suggests a degree of intentionality that is perhaps impossible, but because I am a graduate student at the turn of the century and not at mid-century, I do think that there is a “politics of interpretation” and that historians should engage in this politics as consciously as possible.

All history should, perhaps, be told in reverse, so that the successive lenses through which a historian’s view of the past is filtered can be openly revealed to the reader, except that these lenses are not arranged in a line that can be traced back in linear order. Still, the most powerful lens here is undoubtedly ground from discussions of history-writing in my own present. This, I would argue (again in keeping with my moment), is how it should be, and will not be a problem as long as readers do not expect otherwise.
The narrative that follows tracks the variable of "modernity" in relation to variables of political circumstances and political choices starting with the publication of Norman's book and continuing until the publication of Harry Harootunian's *Things Seen and Unseen* in 1988. It concludes with a discussion of the relationship between modernity and politics in scholarship of the more recent past, the decade of the 1990s.

**Incompletely Modern:**

**E. Herbert Norman and Japan in Marxian World History, 1925-1940**

In 1925, after World War I, which shifted the global balance of power in favor of the United States, 143 delegates and observers from what we would call today the Pacific Rim gathered in Honolulu to establish an international organization called the Institute of Pacific Relations. At its inception, the IPR consisted of a federation of national councils, each of which was represented by at least one member in a governing "Pacific Council." In following years, the number of national councils increased to include countries and colonies beyond the Pacific Rim: France, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, and Pakistan, among others. Conferences continued to be held every two years or so at locations in Asia, North America, and Europe until the Institute’s demise in 1960. Enthusiasts in the early 1930s used the term "conference diplomacy" to characterize what seemed to them to be a novel and noble effort to address contemporary international tensions through non-governmental means.¹

As originally proposed, the IPR was to be “a body of men and women deeply interested in the Pacific area, who meet and work, not as representatives of their Governments, or of any

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other organizations, but as individuals in order to promote the well-being of the peoples concerned.” From the beginning, however, an atmosphere of non-partisanship proved difficult to maintain. The opposition of the Japanese delegation to the presence of an informal delegation from Korea at the initial 1925 meeting compelled the organizing committee to agree that Korea would not be allowed independent representation at future conferences. At the 1929 conference in Kyoto, the first English-language version of the (spurious) “Tanaka Memorial” appeared, sparking conflict between the Chinese and Japanese delegations that, in the words of historian Paul F. Hooper, “effectively previewed the subsequent Manchurian crisis.” In 1934, the Institute moved its research headquarters to Tokyo partly in order to make its voice more effectively heard in Asia, but the Japanese government, disliking IPR publications critical of its Manchuria policy, worked indirectly through the Japanese Council to force the office’s return to New York. By 1937, when the IPR launched an “Inquiry Series” into the causes of the Sino-Japanese War, majority opinion within the organization sympathized with China. The Japanese Council protested the Series’ bias to no avail, and not long afterward withdrew from the IPR under government pressure. The higher the IPR’s profile among policy makers, the more difficult it was to preserve its nature as a forum for dispassionate discussion.

One of the contributors to the Inquiry Series was E. Herbert Norman, who at one point in the 1930s served as a research associate of the IPR’s International Secretariat. The son of Canadian missionaries, Norman lived in Japan from the time of his birth in 1909 until his graduation from Kōbe’s Canadian Academy in 1926. He spent the next decade-and-a-half abroad, studying in Canada, England, and the United States. At the time of Japan’s invasion southward into China in 1937, he was pursuing a Ph.D. in Japanese and Chinese history at Harvard. He received his degree in 1939, and when the IPR published his book *Japan’s Emergence as a

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Footnotes:


2. Hooper, “A Brief History.”
Modern State a year later, he was beginning a career as a Canadian diplomat with the Department of External Affairs, Ottawa.4

Most English-language histories written before Japan's Emergence had been surveys and most had stopped with the end of the Tokugawa period in 1868. This can be said of the two most celebrated works published before 1940: James Murdoch’s A History of Japan in three volumes5 and Sir George Sansom’s Japan, A Short Cultural History.6 Less renowned today, but known to Norman, was the British diplomat J. H. Gubbins’ The Making of Modern Japan, published in 1922.7 As captured by the subtitle, this book was “an account of the progress of Japan from pre-feudal days to constitutional government & the position of a great power, with chapters on religion, the complex family system, education, &c.” The book still retained characteristics of a survey, however, covering as it did nearly thirteen centuries in the span of 316 pages--from the Taika reforms of 646 through Japan’s participation in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Whereas Gubbins devoted his first chapter to “Early History--The Great Reform--Adoption of Chinese Culture,” Norman commenced immediately with “The Background of the Meiji Restoration.”

In place of a survey, Norman presented an analysis of a “central problem”: “the rapid creation of a centralized, absolute state after the Meiji Restoration (1868), and the growth of an industrial economy under conditions of state patronage and control.”8 This problem-based approach was in keeping with the premises of the IPR’s Inquiry Series, which called for studies of “the political and economic conditions [that] . . . contributed to the present course of Japanese

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8 E. Herbert Norman, Japan’s Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940; reprint, 1946), 3.
foreign policy and possible important future developments.” The rapid creation of a centralized state and the growth of an industrial economy under the direction of this state were, for Norman, “those peculiarities of the Meiji settlement which have, to a great extent, conditioned modern Japanese economy, political life and foreign policy.”

In choosing to focus on the Meiji period, Norman took his lead from Japanese scholarship. From the late 1920s into the 1930s, historians in Japan responded to the experience of unevenness by employing Marxist terms to debate the extent to which the economy remained feudal. Participants in what has come to be called the “debate on Japanese capitalism” (Nihon shihonshugi ronsō) looked back to the Meiji period to reevaluate the significance of the reforms undertaken during the late nineteenth century. Noro Eitarō, Hirano Yoshitarō, Yamada Moritarō, and others associated with the so-called “Lectures faction” (Kōza-ha) argued that feudal or semi-feudal relations survived the reforms, with the result that peasants suffered from high agricultural rents, which kept their standard of living low and made them a cheap source of labor for the industrial sector. Critics of this view, including Kushida Tamizō, Sakisaka Itsurō, and Tsuchiya Takao, who were identified with the “Labor-Agriculture faction” (Rônô-ha), claimed in rebuttal that changes after the Meiji Restoration eliminated the mechanisms of “non-economic coercion” (keizaigai kyōsei) associated with feudalism. They pointed out that the reforms freed peasants to leave the land, and they attributed high rents to competition.

Norman cited few sources from “the debate on Japanese capitalism,” and only by forcing

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9 Edward C. Carter, foreword to Japan's Emergence, x.
10 Norman, 3.
11 Here I am following Harry Harootunian’s recent argument about the 1920s and ‘30s as a “historical conjuncture” marked by “the recognition of a vast field of economic and cultural unevenness” brought about by “the war and the swift move to heavier forms of industrialization.” Harry Harootunian, Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), xviii-xxi. Historians writing within the framework of “modernization” discussed this period in terms of the emergence of a “dual economy.” That is, they argued that a “modern” industrial capitalist sector began to sustain itself for the first time alongside a still sizable “traditional” agricultural/handicraft sector. See, for example, Sydney Crawcour, “Industrialization and Technological Change” in The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 6: The Twentieth Century, ed. Peter Duus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
the argument can one pigeonhole his work as representative of either the Kōza-ha or the Rōnō-ha position. He argued, for example, that, as of the Meiji Restoration and the reforms of subsequent years, "Japan burst the fetters of feudal economy" (in line with the Rōnō-ha view) and yet, in a discussion of the countryside, he referred to "the perpetuation of small-scale agriculture, high rents and a landlordism which has not completely lost its feudal coloring" (a Kōza-ha perspective). The reason for linking him to this debate, therefore, lies not so much in his specific arguments as in his choice of period and the way in which he characterized economic and political change.

According to Norman, a combination of internal and external threats to Japan’s survival—"the death agony of feudalism" and "the pressure exerted on Japan by the Western nations"—pushed "military bureaucrats" to initiate change at an accelerated rate that resulted in an edited version of history with a crucial stage left out: "Japan skipped from feudalism into capitalism omitting the laissez-faire stage and its political counterpart, Victorian liberalism." And so Japan became a modern state, but not a wholly satisfactory one. Rapid modernization came at the cost of democratic and liberal reform. For Norman, and for Japanese Marxist historians, history moved forward in stages, defined in terms of economic, political, and social transformations that transpired earlier in England or, less often, in France.

*Japan’s Emergence* suggests that Norman cared most to demonstrate to an English-reading audience that “Japanese development” did not transcend “all the laws of history and nature.” No “miracle,” “Japan’s spectacular rise” was “the result of highly complex and as yet only partly explored phenomena, still demanding to be analyzed and interpreted.” A Marxian framework suited his effort to place Japanese history in “world”—more accurately, western

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13 Norman, 11.
14 Norman, 80.
15 Norman, 47.
16 Norman, 47.
17 Norman, 207.
European--history. In his book, Japan is no longer quaint or exotic, but understandable and to be taken seriously. The argument reflects Japan’s standing in world power politics at the time: an almost-but-not-quite equal of Great Britain and the United States, symbolized by the 5:5:3 and 10:10:7 ratios forced upon Japan at the Washington and London naval conferences.

Norman accepted a top-down, “autocratic” process of transformation as an inevitability, considering that “the tremendous task of modernization” had to be accomplished quickly and successfully if Japan were to “escape once and for all from the threat of foreign encroachment.” At the same time, he agreed with Iwasaki Uichi that, while “in a period of transition someone must take the helm, and they [the bureaucrats] were expert pilots,” “the period of transition is now over.” The time had come for a more democratic society. For Norman, a left-leaning humanist progressive, the ideal democracy looked more socialist than liberal. Had he been more interested in revolution, he might have been a Marxist.

Norman’s work encouraged his English-reading audience to imagine a connection to people in Japan based upon a certain amount of shared modernity. Just one year after his book was published, however, war commenced between Japanese and American militaries, which cast the two country’s people into a relationship of enmity and fostered perceptions of radical otherness.

Not Modern But Japanese:

Ruth Benedict and “Patterns of Culture,” 1941-1945

On December 8, 1941, Congress passed a joint resolution declaring a state of war between “the Imperial Government of Japan” and “the Government and the people of the United States.” Although events of the day before at Pearl Harbor had certainly been a surprise for most

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13 Norman, 102-3.
Americans, U.S. involvement in World War II had not been unforeseen. Nonetheless, it was as of this date that the national need for personnel with knowledge of Japan and the Japanese became urgent, first for the war and then for the occupation that followed the enemy's anticipated defeat. During the war years, the Navy and the Army set up a number of training programs on university campuses around the country. The necessarily utilitarian goals of these programs resulted in pedagogical innovations that replaced a focus on reading foundational texts in classical languages with emphasis on rapid attainment of proficiency in contemporary speech and basic familiarity with the geography and culture of the area.

A year before the war started, in December, 1940, the Navy surveyed its personnel registers for men proficient in spoken and written Japanese, and out of 200,000 found only twelve that qualified. Similarly disappointing were the results of an inquiry into levels of civilian proficiency. Of the 600 people who the Navy expected to know Japanese, only fifty-six knew it well enough to justify further training. These fifty-six became the Navy's hope for translators and interpreters. Sent first to either Harvard or Berkeley, they were all at the University of Colorado at Boulder by the end of 1942.19

The rigorous language program at Boulder had students working, according to one account, "fourteen hours a day, six days a week, fifty weeks per year." Following the arguments of anthropologists working in the 1920s and '30s--Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Leonard Bloomfield--emphasis was placed on language acquisition through imitation of native speakers. Outside the classroom, too, students were expected to speak in Japanese at all times. As future translators, they also had to learn reading and writing, which they did in ways that once again contrasted with the older philological techniques. Writing skills, for example, were most often learned in the context of dictation. Donald Keene and Edward Seidensticker, who after the war

went on to become famous scholars and translators of Japanese literature, were among those who passed through this program. In January, 1943, the Army began operation of a similarly elite and intensive program at the University of Michigan.\textsuperscript{20}

Less intensive and elite were the branch programs of the Army’s Foreign Area and Language Program. Created in anticipation of the need for, and desirability of, an American presence in many regions of the world after the war, these branch programs balanced language instruction with classes designed to convey basic knowledge of an “area.” Of the total of fifty-five programs devoted to various areas of the world, eleven focused on Japan. At these centers, future assistants to Civil Affairs officers spent approximately fifteen hours per week studying spoken Japanese and another ten hours learning about Japanese history, geography, politics, and society. With few qualified instructors available and a scarcity of teaching materials, much improvisation had to go into the teaching of these area classes.\textsuperscript{21}

If many Americans were willing to be trained in order to contribute to the war effort, others were eager to lend expertise already achieved as the result of previous training. One such individual was Ruth Benedict, a cultural anthropologist at Columbia University who already in 1939 joined with her close friend and fellow anthropologist Margaret Mead to organize a Committee for National Morale. In June, 1943, she agreed to replace her friend Geoffrey Gorer as head analyst at the Overseas Intelligence division of the Office of War Information (OWI). For the first year, she prepared brief reports on the cultures of Thailand, Romania, and the Netherlands, which included suggestions for culture-specific methods of “psychological warfare.” In June, 1944, a friend in charge of the OWI’s Foreign Morale Division asked her to produce a study of Japan.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Jansen, 33-6.
\textsuperscript{21} Jansen, 37.
revised and expanded version of her OWI report as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture.* The “patterns” approach was one that she had worked out in the late 1920s and early 1930s for her pathbreaking book *Patterns of Culture.* Published in 1934, the book urged readers to “imagine a great arc on which are ranged the possible interests provided either by the human age-cycle or by the environment or by man’s various activities.” The enormous dimensions of this arc meant that no individual or group could incorporate them all at any given time; selection was necessary. Different configurations of selections made for different patterns of culture. Benedict preferred to study “primitive societies” in order to illustrate her point, because “[i]t is possible to estimate the interrelation of traits in [these] simple environment[s] in a way which is impossible in the cross-currents of our complex civilization.” But her preference did not mean that she exempted “Western civilization” from her argument about the particularity of different patterns of culture. According to her diagnosis,

[The] world-wide cultural diffusion [of white culture] has protected us as man had never been protected before from having to take seriously the civilizations of other peoples; it has given to our culture a massive universality that we have long ceased to account for historically, and which we read off rather as necessary and inevitable.

She called for “genuinely culture-conscious” individuals, “who can see objectively the socially conditioned behaviour of other peoples without fear and recrimination.”

When Benedict turned to the study of Japanese culture during wartime, her basic stance did not change. She still advocated respect for difference. But what is striking about *The*
Chrysanthemum and the Sword is the degree of difference posited between American and Japanese cultures. The book opens with the stark assertion that “[t]he Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle,” possessed, as they were, by “exceedingly different habits of acting and thinking.”28 Denied “a field trip” by circumstances of war, Benedict had to grasp the pattern of these habits through conversations with Japanese-Americans and through texts available in English, such as Sumie Mishima’s My Narrow Isle and Lafcadio Hearn’s Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation.29 The pattern that she discerned set “their reliance upon order and hierarchy” in contrast to “our faith in freedom and equality”;30 their “situational realism” in contrast to our preference “for convictions on ideological matters”;31 their “particularistic codes” of behavior in contrast to our referrals to a “generalized virtue,”32 and so on.

In the context of the mid-1940s, Benedict’s emphasis on the polar differences between American and Japanese culture allowed her to do two things at once. On the one hand, the emphasis could accommodate wartime feelings about the enemy of the “we are nothing like them” variety. On the other hand, the differences that she described encouraged a “good faith” occupation policy.34 The “situational realism” of the Japanese could be counted on to enable a transfer of their energies from war to peace: “The Japanese ethic contains much which Americans repudiate, but American experiences during the occupation of Japan have been an excellent demonstration of how many favorable aspects a strange ethic can have.”35 A “tough-minded” progressive, Benedict worked for “a world made safe for differences,” in contrast to the

29 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, front matter and 5-7.
30 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 43.
31 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 175.
32 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 171.
33 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 212.
34 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 299.
35 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 172-3.
36 Benedict, Chrysanthemum, 306.
“tender-minded,” who “staked their hopes on convincing people of every corner of the earth that all the differences between East and West, black and white, Christian and Mohammedan, are superficial and that all mankind is really like-minded.”

_The Chrysanthemum and the Sword_ posits a relationship between culture and history that allows for change without destruction of a national essence:

Encouraging cultural differences would not mean a static world. England did not lose her Englishness because an Age of Elizabeth was followed by an Age of Queen Anne and a Victorian Era. It was just because the English were so much themselves that different standards and different national moods could assert themselves in different generations.

In line with this view, the “Meiji reform” appears in Benedict’s work as an example of an enduring Japanese pattern of culture— in this case, “the habit of hierarchy”— and not as a moment of historical transformation, in Norman’s Marxian terms, from the stage of feudalism to the stage of capitalism. Japanese culture, as Benedict saw it, had closer ties to other cultures of Asia and the Pacific, even to those of “primitive tribes,” than it did to the those of Europe, or, certainly, than it did to the that of the United States. The geographical area of the world that Japan was in mattered more to her than economic, social, and political changes that engendered commonalities between life as it was experienced in Japan and life as it was experienced in other industrializing countries. Primarily interested in the diversity of the ways in which life was lived around the world, she ignored or overlooked the effects of trade and technology that fostered similarities across “cultural patterns.”

Historians beginning their careers after the war thus had two powerful arguments to which they could respond: Japan’s emergence as a modern state and the existence of a Japanese

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37 Benedict, _Chrysanthemum_, 14-5.
38 Benedict, _Chrysanthemum_, 15.
40 Benedict, _Chrysanthemum_, 8-9.
pattern of culture. More often than not, they accepted Norman’s thesis that Japan emerged as a modern state during the Meiji period, even as they objected to his Marxian analysis. Like Benedict, they allowed for differences in motivations and attitudes, but they looked for those that would incline Japanese to act similarly to, not differently from, Americans. Japan appeared in their histories as a special case of successful modernization outside of Europe and the United States.

A Model of Non-Western Modernity for the Developing World:
John Whitney Hall and "Modernization," 1945-1968

The latter half of the 1940s and the early 1950s were a time of overlap between the aftermath of World War II and the initiation of the Cold War. To take a symbolic example, in 1951, Japanese and American representatives met in San Francisco to sign a peace treaty that officially marked the end of their WWII hostilities at the same time that Americans were fighting in Korea, ostensibly to stop the spread of Communism. In this geo-political context, the area-studies approach developed during WWII was institutionalized and mobilized in the interest of winning the Cold War. While it was recognized that Americans needed to know about all areas of the world in order to protect their interests and to carry out President Truman’s imperative to support “free peoples” resisting “attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures,” some areas were strategically more important than others. In the words of historian Carol Gluck, “U.S. foreign relations made China and Japan loom larger than India, the Middle East more salient than Africa, and the Soviet Union more riveting than the for-decades-

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disappeared past of Eastern Europe." Especially following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Japan, it was hoped, would become a “mighty bulwark against Moscow’s domination of Asia.”

Between 1945 and 1949 six area studies programs related to Japan were established at six of the country’s top universities, including The East Asia Regional Studies Program at Harvard University and the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan, in 1947, and the East Asian Institute at Columbia University, in 1948. The key program for students beginning graduate study in Japanese history immediately after the war was the one at Harvard, where Edwin O. Reischauer taught with John K. Fairbank. John Whitney Hall and Marius Jansen, who soon became important figures themselves in the growing field, were among Reischauer’s first students.

Most American historians writing during this postwar/Cold War period—not just those interested in Japan—shared an attraction to the social sciences. Robert Bellah, a Harvard-trained sociologist who published his dissertation-based book *Tokugawa Religion* in 1957, observed in 1985:

> It is hard for us to realize today how optimistic, how euphoric, was the atmosphere in American social science in that first decade after the end of World War II. The belief that social science was rapidly becoming scientific and the belief that its results would be socially ameliorative still held together to an extent hard to imagine today . . .

We can see this optimism in David Sills’s introduction to the *International Encyclopedia of the*...
Social Sciences, published in 1968: “Regardless of what we may think about the quality of life in the pre-scientific era, . . . the satisfactions and material advantages that derive from understanding and from some measure of control seem in the 1960s to be mankind’s best hope for a measure of contentment.” Cooperation between social scientists and institutions of all types—“government agencies; business and industry; schools, colleges, and universities; philanthropic foundations; religious bodies; and voluntary associations”—flourished in the hope of rationally planning and managing change for the purpose of bringing about economically prosperous liberal democratic societies.

The general American hostility to Marxism during this period of anti-Communism notwithstanding, Daniel Lerner, a contributor to the International Encyclopedia, quoted approvingly from Das Kapital: “The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.” American scholars of the 1950s and ‘60s generally believed this version of progressive history, which located countries along a timeline of development. This belief in and of itself was not new—Lerner was, after all, citing Marx, a historian of the mid-nineteenth century—but what seems to have been distinctive about this post-WWII and Cold War period is that many American scholars endeavored consciously to transcend the particularities of their viewpoint as culturally-defined “Westerners.” In Hall’s opinion, published in 1960, “[t]he postwar world of Western scholarship has sought conscientiously to find some objective ground from which to approach the problem of comparison.” According to Lerner, “[a]n important step was taken when development economists reached the consensus that their subject matter was, in the words of W. Arthur Lewis, ‘the growth of output per head

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46 Sills, xix.
The concept of per capita income gave economists a measure for comparing levels of development that was not pegged to the level of development of a specific country. On the scale of per capita income, any country could set the benchmark. De facto, of course, more often than not this benchmark and others were set by the United States, but a number of factors--including the widely held belief that the American way of life was a better model for the world than the Soviet one--prevented, or at least discouraged, American scholars from exploring the irony of a situation in which aspirations to objectivity produced a system of rankings that privileged one's own country.

Social scientists studying social change and trying to figure out how to direct and manage it noted that economic development did not occur unless a number of other factors were present. "Modernization" became the term that they used to describe the broader process of change that "produces the societal environment in which rising output per head is effectively incorporated." Max Weber’s early twentieth-century essay Die protestantischen Sekten und der Geist des Kapitalismus, translated by Talcott Parsons as The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, assumed theoretical importance in this context. Parson’s Weber argued that "[o]ne of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born . . . from the spirit of Christian asceticism." Weber’s argument could be and was used to buttress post-WWII arguments that attitudes and motivations needed to be assessed in order to understand a society’s

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50 Lerner, 387.
51 "When Talcott Parsons first translated The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism in 1930, Weber was moderately well known among scholarly specialists in Germany; but sociology in that country was a tiny, struggling field, soon to be snuffed out by the Nazis coming to power in 1933. In England and France, Weber was scarcely regarded at all. Parsons proceeded to make Weber into a truly major figure, taking The Protestant Ethic as the exemplar of how sociology should be done: showing the role of ideas and values rather than materialist reduction of the Marxian or even the Durkheimian sort; and showing the importance of verstehen, the methodology of understanding subjective orientations to social action." Randall Collins, new introduction to Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons, 2d ed. (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company), xxix.
potential for economic development. Like many of his colleagues, Robert Bellah observed that “Japan alone of the non-Western nations was able to take over very rapidly what it needed of Western culture in order to transform itself into a modern industrial nation.” As a student of Parsons at Harvard, he asked: “[W]as there a functional analogue to the Protestant ethic in Japanese religion?” He found several examples in the religions of the Tokugawa period, including Shingaku, a religious movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which he singled out for close analysis.

At around the time that Bellah published his book, Robert E. Ward and John W. Hall at the University of Michigan drafted a proposal for a series of conferences on “the problems of modernization in Japan.” Together they secured funding from the Ford Foundation for a six-part series titled Conference on Modern Japan, which met almost annually from 1962 to 1968. A preliminary gathering took place in Hakone, Japan, during the late summer of 1960. For five days, scholars invited from Japanese, American, British, Australian, and Canadian institutions “began an effort at revaluation of the concept of modernization around the Japanese example.”

At the Hakone Conference, key components of a definition of modernization prepared in the United States—a list of descriptive characteristics culled primarily from Almond and Coleman’s *The Politics of Developing Areas*—which appeared “objective” as long as American scholars were talking to one another, were soon shown to be laden with parochial assumptions. Ōuchi Tsutomu of Tokyo University objected to what seemed to him to be the excessively “capitalistic” connotations of the features on the list. Discussion prompted the scholars to reject

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53 Bellah, 2-3.
54 For the Shingaku case study, see Bellah, chapter VI, 133-177.
such terms as “urbanization,” “commercialization,” and, perhaps most significantly, “high per capita income” on the premise that they “were too specific in their reference to the advanced industrial societies of the West.”57 Following a suggestion made by Benjamin Schwartz, a professor of Chinese history at Harvard, participants centered their discussion of modernization on Weber’s concept of Zwecksrationalität, or “the rationality of means and ends.”58 A focus on rationalization seemed to be more accommodating of a variety of economic and political systems—especially those of the Soviet Union, which mattered to the Japanese historians—at the same time that it captured the nature of “the great transformation” taking place around the world.59

In contrast to their American colleagues, most Japanese historians of the postwar generation were Marxist. Norman’s 1940 study of the Meiji Restoration had been translated by Ōkubo Genji and published first by Tokiji Tsūshinsha in 1947 and then by Iwanami Shoten in 1953.60 The enthusiastic reception the book received contrasted with the response of American historians of the same time period, who viewed the book as a classic but thought it to be too driven by Marxist theory.

Toyama Shigeki challenged the purpose of the Hakone meeting from the outset: “Most Japanese scholars, especially historians use ‘modernization’ in the sense of the process of transition to a capitalistic society. . . . I would like to have it made clear why a totally new conception, completely divorced from [the usual modes of thought], is considered necessary.”61 He explained that “[t]he greatest concern of our scholars until quite recently has been with the problem of how to democratize the politics and thought of our country.”62 With memories of the fascism and militarism of the war years still fresh, and with the even more recent experience of failed protest against the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo) even fresher,

60 The Japanese title of Japan’s Emergence as a Modern State was Nihon ni okeru kindai kokka no seiritsu.
Japanese historians could not easily accept the "open approach" to the question of the relationship between democracy and modernity advocated by American participants in the Conference.

While American historians at the start of the 1960s were confident that their way of life was best, they were also anxious, in the context of the Cold War, about the extent to which the rest of the world agreed with them. If their confidence helps to explain why they did not feel the need openly to declare and defend their commitment to liberal democracy, then their anxiety contributed to their eagerness for their Japanese colleagues to see things their way. In Marius Jansen's opinion,

The free and full discussion of those five days served two functions. It helped to sharpen awareness of conceptual problems common to all future seminars, and it served to focus the attention of social scientists in Japan upon the idea of approaching their country's modern transformation in this manner.\(^63\)

In his introductory chapter based on the Hakone meeting, Hall did not mention Norman. According to his presentation, the only historians ever to be interested in Marxist analysis were Japanese: "Despite the popularity of the Western liberal ideal, for the Japanese intellectual, Marxism has seemed the most useful key to the discovery of the essentials of Western civilization and of the long range changes affecting the modern world."\(^64\) But even for "the Japanese intellectual," he claimed, the appeal of orthodox Marxist interpretation was breaking down. He mentioned Inoue Kiyoshi and Eguchi Bokurô as two young historians whose recent publications suggested an interest in moving away from a traditional Marxist scheme. He admitted that their "skepticism stems less from a recognition of the limitations of deterministic theory than from a pan-Asian sense of revolt against subservience to the West," but he

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\(^{64}\) Hall, "Changing Conceptions," 13.
nevertheless tried to make a connection between their search for a new historical framework and the attempt being made simultaneously by “scholars in the West [who] have sought to work out a universal concept of modernization detached from familiar assumptions about Westernization or democratization.” His roundabout, but unmistakable, suggestion was that a “universal” concept of modernization might fill the space being opened by the breakdown of Marxist orthodoxy in Japan. As a fellow graduate student once joked trenchantly in a Columbia seminar, Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization, the title of the volume in which Hall’s chapter was published, was a challenge felt by American scholars as much as it was their description of historical developments.

One must be careful, nonetheless, not to overemphasize the significance of the concept of modernization to history-writing during this period. Dorothy Ross, in a historiographical essay published in the late 1990s, noted that “[f]ew historical studies have in fact openly claimed modernization as the theoretical basis of their work.” Hall, reflecting on the theoretical basis of the book considered his major contribution to the field, Government and Local Power in Japan, 500 to 1700, in fact mentioned Benedict’s “cultural anthropological approach.” He certainly sounded like Benedict in his introduction, where he wrote that “[t]he patterns of cultural behavior in Japan have been quite varied. But this variety has been contained within well-defined limits, and the predominant motifs have frequently repeated.” His methodology, too, was not unlike that of an anthropologist. Shortly after the end of World War II, Hall had been instrumental in setting up a “field station” in Okayama, where professors and graduate students affiliated with the University of Michigan’s Center for Japanese Studies organized and carried

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66 Ananda Martin, spring 2000.
out research projects from April, 1950, to June, 1955.69 Government and Local Power focused on Bizen, the historical province in which Okayama was located. Hall described his methodology as “the technique of concentrating field observation and documentary analysis upon a single geographical region and thus to define a historical case study which, though limited in scope, nonetheless contains all the institutional ingredients of the larger national community.”70

Without familiarity with the framework of the discussion about modernization, however, one would have difficulty understanding what fascinated Hall about institutional development. His treatment of the topic seems excruciatingly detailed and antiquarian until one recognizes the link made at the time between transformation of institutions and comparative modern development. Institutional history was a place to look for rationalization, and Hall found it in “[t]he tendency of familially based power groupings to become ‘rationalized’ and to develop what Max Weber would call patrimonial officialdom for purposes of administration.”71 Moreover, his plan to write a more detailed book on the chronologically later Tokugawa period72 needs to be read in the context of the rhetorical question he posed in his analysis of the Hakone meeting: “Can we not say, then, that the process of rationalization has tended to pick up momentum as human society has gained the means to purposefully achieve rational control of its physical and social environment?”73 Judging by the title of a volume that Hall co-edited with Marius Jansen in the late 1960s, he felt that the process of rationalization picked up quite a bit of momentum in the years after 1700. Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan rendered the Tokugawa period a time of transition to modernity,74 in contrast to Norman’s

70 Hall, Government and Local Power, vii.
71 Hall, Government and Local Power, 7.
72 Hall did not intend his study to end in 1700; he considered it an “introduction to a considerably more detailed analysis of the political institutions of Okayama during the Tokugawa period” (Hall, Government and Local Power, vii).
characterization of the period as one marked by "one of the most conscious attempts in history to freeze society in a rigid hierarchical mold."²³

The combination of confidence and anxiety that fostered a commitment to the modernization approach among the WWII generation of historians did not continue beyond its historical moment of the mid-1940s to mid-1960s. Nor did the relative consensus on matters of approach and epistemology survive the 1960s. As WWII disposed these American historians to approve the national leadership's vision of the United States as the model for the rest of the world to follow, so the Vietnam War inclined the next generation to denounce it.

Shifting Focus to Methodological Innovation and American Imperialism:
The Two Lefts of Harry Harootunian and John Dower, 1968-1975

Looking at the world in the mid-1960s and noting that, in "transitional societies," people's wants were multiplying at a rate faster than the capacities of these societies to provide for them, Lerner suggested that "we are passing from a putative 'revolution of rising expectations' . . . to an incipient 'revolution of rising frustration.'"²⁶ His essay would have been richer had he included mention of the "revolution of rising frustration" taking place in societies assumed to have already made the transition to modern standards of living. If rising expectations were met in the United States with passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, rising frustration came to the fore in the summers of urban race riots that began with the Watts Riot of 1965. As the decade continued, the feminist movement, political assassinations, and protests against the Vietnam War exposed and exacerbated divisions within American society.

²³ Norman, 12.
The year 1968 appears in as a turning point for the field of Japanese studies. The least radical indication of change was highlighted by Hall in a speech he delivered in 1971. In his words, “as the series of seminars which comprised the Conference on Modern Japan was drawing to a close, interest in the success side of modernization had begun to fade.”77 The seminar held in 1968, the sixth and last of the series, he pointed out, addressed the troubled side of modernization, focusing on *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan* and asking the question “What went wrong?”78 But “growth,” he seems to have been unable to see, was still the issue. Fundamental challenges to the modernization approach came from younger scholars who committed, in the words of Carol Gluck, “intellectual parricide.”79 One important challenge came from Harry Harootunian, who studied under Hall at the University of Michigan in the 1950s, and another came from John Dower, who completed his degree at Harvard in 1972 under the direction of Edwin Reischauer and Albert Craig.

Trained during a time of peak optimism about social science by one of the most vociferous advocates of objectivity in historical writing, Harootunian revealed little of his own political views in his early published writings. One can read into "The Economic Rehabilitation of the Samurai in the Early Meiji Period,"80 an article based upon his Ph.D. dissertation, criticism of government policy that put growth before all else, insofar as he argued that “samurai rehabilitation was subordinated to the general program of the Meiji government, one which took the form of making Japan economically independent and militarily powerful.” But he muted his criticism by observing that, despite the failure of the rehabilitation policy to satisfy the samurai’s financial needs, “there is little doubt that the program had significance for the development of

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78 Hall, “Thirty Years,” 32.
modern Japanese society”: “It certainly contributed to the process of capital accumulation, it stimulated growth of an entrepreneurial class, and it provided a labor force upon which Japanese industry could be expanded.” This balanced view is what one would expect from a scholar trained in the ways of “value-free” history.

When Harootunian began breaking away from his mentor’s approach, he did so more through criticisms of methodology than through overt political attacks. In March, 1968, two months after The Conference on Modern Japan held the last of its six meetings, he joined Bernard Silberman, Kozo Yamamura, and David Aboseh at an Association for Asian Studies (AAS) meeting in Philadelphia in presenting a paper on Norman’s work as a scholar. The historians subsequently published their papers in the Winter, 1968-69, and Spring, 1969, volumes of Pacific Affairs. Harootunian opened his article with a scathing retelling of the devastating effects of anti-communist zealotry in the United States upon Norman, who committed suicide in 1957 partly in response to news that he was once again under investigation by the U.S. Senate Internal Security subcommittee. But, he continued, “[i]t is not the object of this article to discuss either the politics of U.S. internal security or the morality of the Norman case.” The object, as he defined it, was to recall and appreciate Norman’s talents as a historian. He agreed with Maruyama Masao, who contrasted Norman to “his North American contemporaries who came to Japan in the immediate post-war years, with little more preparation than a control of the Japanese language.” Norman, in addition to being fluent in Japanese, “suffered no deficiencies” in “the crucial area of historical consciousness.” “Any reader of Japan’s Emergence,” Harootunian argued, “will immediately recognize that Norman . . . substituted analysis for narrative, process for biography and theory for the ‘natural arrangement of facts.”

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absolutely, but Harootunian took it as a sign of his achievement that he set a task for himself that he could not hope to accomplish completely.\textsuperscript{86}

Lauding Norman's talents as a historian included, for Harootunian, praising him for laying down the task of "coming to terms with that process which somehow guaranteed the promise of modernity."\textsuperscript{87} The following passage is worth quoting at length, because it shows how Harootunian could support the study of modernization at the same time that he disagreed with the approaches taken by his teachers. Referring to the \textit{Rōnō-ha} versus \textit{Kōza-ha} debates in the 1930s, Harootunian wrote:

Norman learned from the Japanese what many of us still have not: that Marxism, rather than representing a tired formula (historians never tire of showing that its predictions are wrong), offered Japanese historians, witness to the agonies of modernity, not only governing metaphors with which to organize a specific historical experience which had not yet ended, but also a general theory for engaging the process of modernization itself. In a certain sense this debate in the 1930s was itself confirmation of the fact that Marx's greatest achievement was his identification of modernization and modernity as an analytic category. Norman knew this and it is for this reason that he refused to accept modernization as an historical process representing either the descent into an abyss or the ascent to a more elevated way of life. Rather what he was concerned with was to show, summoning the example of LeFebvre, that modernization in Japan was a process which, owing to the choices or selection of a specific route, resulted in significant political consequences.\textsuperscript{88}

Whether or not Norman, who in \textit{Japan's Emergence} more often used the word

\textsuperscript{86} Harootunian, "E. H. Norman," 552.
\textsuperscript{87} Harootunian, "E. H. Norman," 549.
\textsuperscript{88} Harootunian, "E. H. Norman," 550.
"industrialization" than "modernization," "knew" that "Marx's greatest achievement was his identification of modernization and modernity as an analytic category" is here irrelevant. The point is that Harootunian figured this out for himself. Thinking about how to use the concept of modernity in interpreting the past and in writing history subsequently absorbed much of his scholarly energy.

Regardless of the extent to which Harootunian considered modernization an important analytic category, in the late 1960s the term was not used in the way that he thought it should be and, besides, he wanted to find other strategies for interpretation. At the Conference on the Status of Studies in Modern Japanese History, held in New York from November 8-9, 1968, he argued for the need for a new approach to the study of Tokugawa intellectual history:

The excessive concern with modernization is an ideological stance toward the study of thought that defines the subjects to be studied. It is now no longer adequate, however, to 'unmask' ideologies based on the dichotomy of modern/anti-modern. Approaches embracing the totality of thought in a given period, such as Geertz's *Ideology as a Cultural System*, are needed.  

In other words, if historians were to study "the totality of thought" in the Tokugawa period, for its own sake, they might learn something unexpected about the relationship between thought and society. The "lock-step approach" of modernization should be abandoned in favor of "going barefoot" through the sources and considering discontinuity as much as continuity.

Although political concerns contributed to Harootunian's break with the postwar social science usage of modernization, he emphasized methodological issues in his writings—and he

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90 SSRC-ACLS Joint Committee on Japanese Studies, 223-4.
emphasized them with an acute consciousness of being a historian, rather than a Japan specialist. *Japan's Emergence* was important to him as “the first really serious book [he] read on Japan,” by which he meant that it “[met] the critical standards of European historiography.”

Contributing to American knowledge about Japan, as encouraged by area studies, mattered less to Harootunian than establishing the study of Japanese history as a “serious” discipline.

If Harootunian couched his objection to the approach represented by The Conference on Modern Japan in terms of methodology, Dower expressed his in those of politics. As a graduate student, he joined the editorial board of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, the first issue of which was published in 1968. According to the “Editorial Comment” in an issue of the following year, the *Bulletin* functioned “to lay bare political assumptions and to support the aims of scholars on the Left while reminding those wedded to scholastic ‘purity’ of the implications of their own assumptions.”

Dower contributed an article to this issue titled “The Eye of the Beholder: Background Notes on the U.S.-Japan Military Relationship,” in which he criticized American assumptions about the necessity for and benefits of a military alliance between Japan and the United States. In 1972, he published the third version of a paper that charged the Nixon Doctrine with representing “little more than the new face of American empire.” A New Left historian, Dower began his career first and foremost as a critic of postwar and Cold War American imperialism.

In the early 1970s, Dower, like Harootunian, resurrected Norman as a model historian, though not for the same purpose. Dower turned to Norman as a scholar who was open about his political sympathies, as opposed to historians devoted to “objective” or “value-free” scholarship

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who submerged their political commitments. In 1975, three years after receiving his degree, he published *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E. H. Norman*, for which he wrote a hefty, hundred-page introduction. Titled “E. H. Norman, Japan and the Uses of History,” the introduction exposed a tight relationship between what Dower called “the government-foundation-university interlock” and the kind of scholarship produced by American scholars about Asia. As a former Harvard student and a member of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, he knew something of the (then alleged, now accepted as real) connections between faculty in charge of area studies programs and the Central Intelligence Agency. In the case of the Japan field, the most relevant instance of “government-foundation-university interlock” seems to have occurred between the CIA and the Ford Foundation, which together are said to have played a role in setting the “modernization” research agenda in the 1950s. Dower did not go so far as to suggest a conspiracy, but he did want readers to take note of “the fact that much American scholarship on Japan has tended to be congruent with the objectives of the American Government, and that concerns of the cold war have influenced scholarship concerning the prewar development of Japan.” Reischauer, Jansen, and Hall, needless to say, did not emerge from Dower’s introduction in favorable light. As someone

“concerned not only with the uses of power but also its abuses, and with issues of human values

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rather than ‘value-free’ examination of diversification and decision-making,” Norman unquestionably appeared to have been the superior historian, if not human being.

Dower’s *ad hominem* attack elicited a much stronger reaction from scholars committed to the modernization approach than did Harootunian’s call for methodological innovation. Hall responded with a reassertion of what might be called the pioneer argument: Norman’s work deserved to be considered a classic, but thirty years of subsequent scholarship turned it into an outdated resource for the student of the 1970s. Continuing to place high value on objective treatment of reliable data, Hall cited “[t]he stream of empirical studies which have come out since 1950, many of which are based on new and more strictly primary materials” to support his claim. George Akita engaged in what Herbert Bix called “footnote excavation,” digging through four chapters of *Japan’s Emergence* to “prove” that Norman did not deserve admiration for his skills as a historian. He argued that Norman did not use many primary sources; that his citations revealed greater reliance on English than on secondary Japanese language sources; that a significant number of his concepts and conclusions were already available in English language sources; and that some of his key concepts were based on hasty scholarship and distortion of sources. Neither Hall nor Akita addressed the point made by Dower (and by Harootunian) that Norman’s book was still worth reading despite errors of fact or interpretation because of the important questions to which it directs the student’s attention. A three-way divide opened up among participants in The Conference on Modern Japan, Harootunian, and Dower.

Over the course of his career, Dower stayed with the theme of problems in Japan-U.S. relations. In 1979, he published an expanded version of his dissertation, in which he adopted a

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term coined by the Japanese left to characterize Japan's postwar relationship to the United States as one of "subordinate independence," and in which he wrote of the emergence of a "new imperium" in Asia based upon the slogan "U.S.-Japan economic cooperation."103 War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War, published in 1986, exposed the virulence of wartime racism on both sides of the Pacific.104 Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays continued the wartime and postwar focus,105 and, most recently, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II returned to the theme of American imperialism with a chapter titled "Neocolonial Revolution."106 Since the publication of his first book, Dower has turned consistently to non-academic presses, reflecting a goal to communicate with a broad audience. Extended meditations on methodological concerns do not find their way into his work. His contribution lies primarily in his determined effort to raise awareness about the politics of Japan-U.S. relations and their effects upon ordinary people, although one might also appreciate him as a pioneer of what has come to be called "transwar" studies.107 Dower's focus on Japan-U.S. relations, one might say, gave him a shortcut to a comparative framework that bypassed the need to consider "modernity."

Following his resurrection of Norman's work as an emblem of theoretically-informed history and his announcement that it was a time for a new approach to the history of Tokugawa

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107 In Empire and Aftermath, Dower stated that one of the reasons he focused on Yoshida was that the man's accomplishments "reflected a personal, political, and ideological consistency which, in the larger view, repudiates the conventional easy separation of 'pre-surrender' and 'post-surrender,' or 'prewar' and 'postwar,' or 'Imperial' and 'democratic' Japan" (2). Looking back on this book in the 1990s, Dower wrote it "was motivated by a desire to explore, at an essentially political and ideological level, the linkages between the presurrender and postsurrender periods." John W. Dower, "Sizing Up (and Breaking Down) Japan," in The Postwar Development of Japanese Studies in the United States, ed. Helen Hardacre (Boston: Brill, 1998), 31. Sheldon Garon included Dower's book alongside studies by Chalmers Johnson (1982), Andrew Gordon (1985), and himself (1987) in discussion of studies that "demonstrate that much of what makes up postwar Japan was built on the statist developments of the 1930s and early 1940s." Sheldon Garon, "Rethinking Modernization in Japanese History: A Focus on State-Society Relations," The Journal of Asian Studies 53, no. 2 (May 1994): 348-9.
metanarrative of modernization that has yet to end. In his search for alternatives, he followed the “linguistic turn” of the late 1970s and 1980s and consequently alienated those of his colleagues who did not join him. His experiments brought him, by the year 2000, to the formulation “coeval modernity,” which offered the possibility of a politically acceptable (in the context of the 1990s) replacement for “modernization,” a point addressed in this paper’s conclusion.

In a 1988 review of yet another publication about Norman’s life and scholarship, Harootunian criticized New Left historians of the late 1960s and 1970s for their “easy dismissal of theory.” Dower, in an essay published a decade later, commented sarcastically that “many poststructuralist intellectuals still associate themselves with a nebulous ‘Left.’” Though both Harootunian and Dower committed “intellectual parricide” by criticizing the approach of their mentors, they did not agree on the strategy that should be used to negate its effects. They in effect inaugurated what may be seen as a two-pronged Left in the field of Japanese history. Contestation over the meaning of the Left and who represents it among American historians writing about Japan is a product of this Vietnam War era of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Denying Japanese Uniqueness:
The Theoretical and Comparative Strategies
of Harry Harootunian and Carol Gluck, 1975-1988

In Japan, “high economic growth” throughout the 1960s contributed to the emergence of nihonjinron, “theories of the Japanese,” in the 1970s. These “theories” read like hyper versions of modernizationist arguments like Bellah’s in Tokugawa Religion, which explained Japan’s

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“successful” industrialization in terms of “the Japanese value system.” They conjured an image of a unique society composed of a racially homogeneous people who communicated with each other instinctively and worked and lived in harmony with one another. Ideologically, nihonjinron worked to discourage conflict and criticism within Japan by deflecting attention to a putatively shared national cultural endowment. This conservative discourse received reinforcement from books like Ezra Vogel’s Japan As Number One, which became a bestseller in Japan after it was published in 1979. President Ronald Reagan meanwhile reinvigorated the waning Cold War with talk of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire,” with the result that, in American media, “the Japanese economic threat” vied with “the Soviet military threat” for the status of the nemesis Americans most feared during the 1980s.

The Vietnam War generations of historians responded to the rise of celebratory nationalism during the 1970s and ‘80s in a way opposite to how the World War II generation responded to anti-Communist rhetoric of the 1950s and ‘60s. Whereas the WWII generation received their training from the U.S. government so that they might contribute to a winning a war that most thought that America was justifiably fighting in, the Vietnam War generation went through graduate school during a time of protest against the government. In keeping with the anti-Establishment stance that they had learned and cultivated, they demonstrated a concerted effort to break with the modernization approach, which had supported the developmentalist narrative that prioritized rising levels of per capita income.

published in 1982, Hane asked how modernization “affect[ed] the lives of the people who carried its burden and paid its costs?”

The result was a necessary corrective to often fatuous paens to the Japanese “miracle,” which Norman was fighting already in the late 1930s and which resurfaced in connection with the economic booms of the 1960s.

Other historians tried to attack the foundations of the modernization approach by experimenting with ways of writing history that eschewed assumptions about the linear sequence of past events that flow from one to the other in a continuous stream of cause and effect. Aside from the political contestations of the Vietnam War period, which sensitized Americans to conflict, pluralism, and rupture, theoretical scholarship—much of it written in continental Europe amid sweeping changes in everyday life in the aftermath of WWII— Influenced decisions to take a synchronic, rather than diachronic, approach and to focus on discontinuity, rather than continuity. In his introduction to Conflict in Modern Japanese History, Tetsuo Najita explained that, in workshops that led to the publication of the edited volume, contributors arrived at the view “that conflicts in modern Japan did not occur as one confrontation after another in a linear series.” They occurred, rather, in the context of “discontinuous systems of historical action,” one of which could be said to have been in operation from 1850 to 1880 and another of which functioned between 1900 and 1930. Each of these “conflictual ‘systems’” contained its own comparable “coherent set of internal identities.”

As one might infer from the argument and from the footnotes citing Claude Lévi-Strauss, Najita and his colleagues found much that appealed to them in structuralist theory, which held that meaning arises from the relations of signs in a closed signifying system.

From the time of the conference at Hakone, scholars had noted that the modernization

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111 Mikiso Hane, Peasants, Rebels, and Outcastes: The Underside of Modern Japan (New York: Pantheon Books), xi.
approach minimized attention to ideas. What attention there was tended to focus on “attitudes,” “values,” or “motivations” that contributed to explanations for why people acted (or did not act) in pursuit of political or economic goals. In 1971, John Hall indicated that he thought a change was taking place. He made a link between “premises which begin with a skepticism about the direction which modern society is taking and look for alternatives to accepted developmental norms” and “fascination with problems of finding meaning in a changing world and of generating the motivations to absorb change.” Intellectual history, he suggested, was the next big thing:

Intellectual history, not viewed simply as the chronology of the transmission of ideas, but as inquiry into the real intellectual struggles of Japanese, of left or right, in working out their personal and national identities under pressure of modern change, this is the subject that seems to hold out the most prospect of relevance for a growing segment of the present generation of scholars.

As representatives of the “growing segment of the present generation,” Hall mentioned Robert Lifton, Irwin Scheiner, and Harry Harootunian.

Over the next couple of decades, intellectual history did indeed turn out to be a vibrant field, but Hall’s prediction about the kind of intellectual history that would interest scholars proved to be less prescient. The intellectual history taught and practiced at the University of Chicago by Harootunian and Najita, in particular, did not concentrate on struggles to work out personal and national identities and in fact eschewed a biographical approach. These historians cared not about “finding meaning in a changing world,” but about producing meaning, and not about “generating the motivations to absorb change,” but about forming subjectivities capable of bringing about change.

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115 Hall, “Thirty Years,” 34.
116 Hall, “Thirty Years,” 34.
Hall, in fact, missed the point of Harootunian’s 1970 book *Toward Restoration* when he suggested that it was primarily about a struggle to work out identities. As the subtitle indicates, the book was about “the growth of political consciousness.” In a twist on Maruyama Masao’s study of the development of modern consciousness from Chu Hsi (neo)Confucianism through the thought of Ogyû Sorai to *kokugaku*, Harootunian traced the development of a revolutionary political consciousness from the *sonnô jôi* (revere the emperor, repel the barbarian) theory of the Mito school through the vision of a new political space articulated by Sakuma Shôzan, Yoshida Shôin, and Maki Izumi to the practical sectionalism of Yokoi Shônan, Takasugi Shinsaku, Kido Kôin, and Ôkubo Toshimichi, which made the Meiji Restoration thinkable, and hence, doable.\textsuperscript{117} Twenty years later, in a new preface to the paperback edition, he noted that *Toward Restoration* “was not driven by theory” and that, since its publication, “theory and cultural studies underwent a revolution.”\textsuperscript{118}

This “revolution” included not only structuralism, but also the more radical poststructuralist conception of “an endless chain of signifiers in which meaning is always deferred and finally absent”: “Unbound, ungrounded, relieved of their referential burdens, words became protean and uncontrollable.”\textsuperscript{119} This understanding of language opened the way for a new approach to texts—now viewed as productive of “multiple readings and divergent meanings,” rather than as closed systems susceptible to a limited number of interpretations.\textsuperscript{120} For historians, poststructuralist theories meant that “documents” (renamed “texts”) could produce different meanings depending upon what they were read together with and that the meanings of their own histories were not stable either. With Paul Ricouer’s idea that action, too, can be read


\textsuperscript{118} Harootunian, “Preface: The Space of Restoration,” *Toward Restoration*, xii, xi.


\textsuperscript{120} Harlan, 582-3.
as a text, the possibilities for signification expanded even further.\footnote{121}

To different degrees and in different amounts, Harootunian, Najita, and their students Herman Ooms and J. Victor Koschmann combined structuralist and poststructuralist theories of the production of meaning with the theories of Michel Foucault and the Marxists Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci about power, discourse, and ideology to write histories of the Tokugawa period that pursued questions of the relationship between thought and action. Probably in connection with their experiences during the Vietnam War era, the books these historians published during the 1980s reveal a particular concern for the political. Najita in writing about merchant “visions of virtue” and Harootunian in writing about kokugaku each considered how non-political discourses can come to authorize political action.\footnote{122} Koschmann attempted “to consider how thought, as ideology, enabled people to act under the historical circumstances that confronted them and, furthermore, to act in ways that sometimes undermined rather than supported the existing order.”\footnote{123} The problem of “motivation” here was reconfigured as a question of subjectivity. Koschmann quoted from Gören Therborn’s work *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (1980): “Ideologies not only subject people to a given order. They also qualify them for conscious social action, including actions of gradual or revolutionary change.”\footnote{124}

Ooms’ *Tokugawa Ideology* had more in common with Carol Gluck’s *Japan’s Modern Myths*, although a connection between the two seems not to have been made at the time, despite


\footnote{123 Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology*, 7.}

\footnote{124 Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology*, 7.}
their shared publisher and year of publication, Princeton University Press in 1985.\footnote{125} Ooms, who referred his readers to his essay “Neo-Confucianism and the Formation of Early Tokugawa Ideology: Contours of a Problem” for methodological discussion,\footnote{126} there wrote that because “[i]n general, the invocation of existing ideologies does not occur \textit{in toto} but rather is a partial and piecemeal matter,” one could assume with reasonable assurance that “ideologies never take shape all at once”: “Their establishment,” in other words, “is not an event but a process.”\footnote{127} Gluck similarly took a constructivist approach, arguing that “[i]deologies of the sort imperial Japan produced were neither created ex nihilo nor adopted ready-made” and that her subject would be the “fitful and inconsistent process” that constituted “the making of late Meiji ideology.”\footnote{128} For Ooms and for Gluck, contemporary theories of language, meaning, and power provided ways to write histories of Tokugawa and Meiji ideologies that challenged the interpretations of their Japanese colleagues. Neither Neo-Confucianism nor \textit{tennōsei} (the emperor system) would ever seem as monolithic again.

In the early 1980s, Dominick LaCapra, a historian of European intellectual history, noted that “[t]he field of humanistic studies today seems increasingly divided into two opposed tendencies.” On the one hand, there were those scholars who “more or less self-consciously” attempted “to rehabilitate conventional approaches to description, interpretation, and explanation” out of a “need to discover or perhaps to invent . . . unity and order in the phenomena under investigation and, by implication, in [their] own life and times.” On the other hand, there were those who exhibited a more “experimental” tendency in their work, evidence of an effort to expose the common assumptions upon which the conventional view rested. As a


\footnote{126} See Ooms, \textit{Tokugawa Ideology}, p. x, for the reference.


\footnote{128} Gluck, \textit{Japan’s Modern Myths}, 4.
strategy, they therefore “stress[ed] the importance of what is marginal in text or life as seen from
the conventional view--what is uncanny or disorienting in terms of its assumptions.”

In the field of Japanese history, there was indeed a noticeable division between
contventional versus experimental tendencies, which can be observed at its widest in the exchange
between Harootunian and Harold Bolitho published in Monumenta Nipponica in 1980. In the
Spring issue, Bolitho published a review of Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period, 1600-
1868: Methods and Metaphors, edited by Najita and Irwin Scheiner, in which he suggested that
the volume contained “papers of two kinds--those which address themselves to fairly modest
issues, and those which try to do more.” Harootunian’s paper, titled “The Consciousness of
Archaic Form in the New Realism of Kokugaku,” counted as one of those “which try to do more”
and which, in attempting too much, “fail.” Bolitho made clear that he did not appreciate
authors raising questions that they do not answer; invocations of “names from a shared
intellectual pantheon” for what seemed to him to be “some ritualistic purpose”; and writing in a
style which (in his opinion), “dense at the best of times, occasionally slops over into
unintelligibility.” “[T]he duty of intellectual historians,” in his view, “is to tell us--without
inflated rhetoric, without willful obscurity, and without slovenly English” “what the people of
the past thought (or rather, . . . what they wrote).” Two issues later, in Autumn, Harootunian
responded with a critique of Bolitho’s review, pointing out that “Bolitho never discloses the
reasons governing his preference” for the “more successful” papers. He suggested that Bolitho
could not understand his vocabulary “because he probably [did]n’t know the writers and thinkers
from which it is derived” and argued that “to demand that we write clearly and lucidly is to ask

129 Dominick LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language (Ithaca: Cornell
University Press), 68.
130 Harold Bolitho, “Concrete Discourse, Manifest Metaphor, and the Tokugawa Intellectual Paradigm,
131 Bolitho, “Concrete Discourse,” 91.
132 Bolitho, “Concrete Discourse,” 91-4.
133 Bolitho, Concrete Discourse, 96.
us to write the kind of history that he—Bolitho—believes is normative for all times and places.”135 Because Bolitho was not willing to entertain “the importance of the methodological and theoretical concerns [he] tried to articulate,” he wrote a review that did not engage the substance of Harootunian’s arguments.136 Bolitho’s rejoinder, published in the same Autumn issue, in turn criticized Harootunian for failing to respond to points raised about “his failure to communicate.”137 In his opinion, Harootunian had devoted himself “to making chaos out of chaos” in an extreme effort to avoid “impos[ing] artificial order” on anything and so “[could] not complain if few follow.”138

For someone reading this exchange twenty years later, it is difficult not to be more sympathetic to Harootunian’s position. “Communication” cannot be as black-and-white a matter as Bolitho imagined it to be if I can often understand Harootunian’s expressions—“entrapment” and “interiority” among them139—better than I can grasp the meaning of some of Bolitho’s phrases, which in two instances assume knowledge of Latin140 and French141 (he offers no translation) and in one instance leaves me at a complete loss: “hoist with his own petard.”142 The point here is that there does indeed seem to be a politics to language—a point that Harootunian was (and is) well aware of and Bolitho either was not or was not willing to admit, which either way speaks to his conservatism. For a more meaningful criticism of Harootunian’s experimental tendency, we need to turn to the writings of someone like LaCapra, who moved in the same

135 Harootunian, “Correspondence,” 370-1.
136 Harootunian, “Correspondence, 372.
138 Bolitho, “Correspondence,” 374.
140 Bolitho, “Concrete Discourse,” 92.
141 Bolitho, “Correspondence,” 374.
142 Bolitho, “Correspondence,” 373. To make sure that my point is not missed here, let me emphasize that the issue cannot be resolved by citing differences in language use that occur as a result of generational differences or educational background. These differences are not taken into account by Bolitho’s model of communication. An educated person, his review implies, should know Latin and French, period. And by his tautological reasoning, the person who does not know Latin and French is uneducated.
theoretical circles as Harootunian. The “danger” of the experimental tendency, he wrote, is that it will remain fixated at the phase of simple reversal of dominant conventional assumptions and replace unity with disunity, order with chaos, center with absence of center, determinacy with uncontrolled plurality or dissemination of meaning, and so forth. In doing so, it may aggravate what its proponents would see as undesirable tendencies in the larger society, become symptomatic where it would like to be critical, and confuse ordinary equivocation and evasiveness—or even slipshod research—with the kind of transformative interaction between self and other (or language and world) it would like to reactivate. 143

To determine whether or not Harootunian’s essay, or subsequent work which has also been harshly criticized by some, 144 succumbed to this danger requires a much more careful reading than Bolitho was willing to give it. 145

Bolitho, of course, was not the only reviewer of Japanese Thought. Carol Gluck’s review, published in the Journal of Asian Studies, sympathized with what Bolitho criticized. She acknowledged that “liminality in the Tokugawa village, neo-Confucian synecdoche, semiotics and the verbalizer suru” made for a disorienting reading experience, but, she continued, “[h]aving ventured successfully through, . . . one finds one’s attitude changed.” The essays of the second half of the volume, which Bolitho preferred, seemed to Gluck “unexpectedly lame” in contrast to methodologically and theoretically innovative essays of the first half. 146 One might wonder,

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143 LaCapra, 68-9.
145 While I cannot comment on the quality of the research that went into the essay, I can say that the language and theoretical framework Harootunian employed hardly seem radical today. In fact, his structuralism and assumptions about reality and experience outside of language are considered outdated, as Harootunian himself would be the first to admit.
though, if Gluck was being too understanding. If one truly “moves from one universe of
discourse to another” in the course of moving from part one to part two of the book, what are the
implications? How did her attitude change as a result of reading the first part? By taking Najita
and Harootunian in and restating their arguments in “plain” English, she seems to have diffused
their radical intent without warning her readers. She did not defend her slightly-left-of-center
position any more than Bolitho explained his reasons for being to the right.

Gluck did not openly define or defend her position, either, in Japan’s Modern Myths,
where one might expect her to have done so. The problem with this approach becomes evident
when one reads the book reviews. Atsuko Hirai, in a famously long and negative review,147
criticized Gluck for assimilating the Meiji emperor to a constitutional monarch and for translating
kokka as “nation” (instead of as “state”) and kokumin as “citizens” (instead of as “the nation,”
“the people,” or “the populace”). “[E]specially because she works cross-culturally, translating
as well as interpreting sources,” Gluck should, Hirai thought, show “greater fidelity to the basic
and well-established meanings of words.”148 Whether or not “the basic and well-established
meanings of words” are appropriate when one does not agree with the basic and well-established
histories is not a point that Hirai can entertain because she does not like Gluck’s history:
“Where Marx and Engels once were worshipped, Gluck erects a shrine to Clifford Geertz, Louis
Althusser, and Antonio Gramsci. The exchange of gods helps Gluck exonerate the Meiji
Emperor, the Meiji imperial system, and its architects.”149 Hirai did not like Gluck’s history, of
course, because of this last political issue. By controlling Gluck’s language, Hirai expected
(whether she realized it or not) that she would be able to steer her back in the direction of a
political position more critical of the Meiji state. But this is not where Gluck wanted to go
because she was trying to combat the view that Japanese were unique in the way they went

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147 Atsuko Hirai, “The State and Ideology in Meiji Japan—A Review Article,” Journal of Asian Studies 46,
no. 1 (February 1987): 89-103.
148 Hirai, 97.
149 Hirai, 97.
about their nation-making process. In one especially clear expression of her anti-uniqueness position, she insisted “once again” that “Japan was in its process of ideological formation a good deal less than unique, and should be seen in the larger context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century developments in the newly contemporary world of Barraclough’s description.” She also “stress[ed] that the process of converting the Japanese into kokumin was as complicated and drawn out as turning peasants into Frenchmen, Germans into a Germanic Volk, or immigrants into one-hundred-percent Americans.”\(^{150}\) In the context of the celebrations of Japanese uniqueness aired in speeches and nihonjinron literature during the 1970s and ‘80s, her historical argument carried a political message. She saved her references to this context until the very end of her Epilogue, however, where she observed:

The sense of nation, of being Japanese, was transmitted to the whole of the kokumin for the first time in the Meiji period and is not much diminished today. Nor is the postwar pride in the national achievements and international status of ‘our country, Japan’ (wagaguni), although the status of joining the ranks of the imperialist powers has been replaced with that of gaining preeminence among the economic and cultural ones.\(^{151}\)

Had Gluck been more open about her concerns regarding cultural nationalism from the outset, and acknowledged her political choice to emphasize commonalities in response to contemporary political circumstances, Hirai would have had to (or should have felt obligated to) demonstrate a similar level of political awareness in her review. As it happened, despite the little common ground shared between Hirai and Gluck, both wrote as if their arguments represented faithful, if not objective, renditions of the past, largely unaffected by contemporary political circumstances and undetermined by their individual political choices. This is a typical example of what Freud

\(^{150}\) Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, 39.  
\(^{151}\) Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, 286.
called "transference," noticeable also in the debates surrounding E. H. Norman,\(^{152}\) in which different political views in the present are "transferred" and played out in terms of struggles over interpretations of the past.

In contemplating Gluck's anti-uniqueness stance, one is made to realize how close her work is in spirit to Norman's (Japan's emergence is no miracle) and to Hall's (finding the appropriate comparative frame). Like Norman and Hall, in other words, she wanted Japan to be in "world" history. The main difference between Gluck and Norman or Hall was that, for disciplinary reasons, for writing good history as she conceived it, Gluck tried to see Meiji on its own terms, apart from what happened in the 1930s. Here she showed herself to be a historian of her generation, taking a relatively short slice of time--the late 1880s to 1915, about the same length of time as was considered in the two "discontinuous systems of historical action" discussed in the *Conflict* volume--and observing how all the different elements of the period interacted. She addressed change over time, of course, as the contributors to the *Conflict* volume ended up doing, too, but she did so while minimizing the effect of knowing where it all ends up.

Harootunian was also committed to an anti-uniqueness position. Like Gluck, he reserved discussion of the contemporary context for an Epilogue--in this case, the epilogue of *Things Seen and Unseen*--but his comments were more explicit. The "mushrooming of books, articles, and mass media performances" that "raised the question of Japan's unique cultural endowment and rehearsed its various scenarios" began in the 1950s, he explained, "in a context in which hopes for a genuine political democracy began to dim and massive economic expansion began to take off."

*Nihonjinron* "sought to turn people away from the disappointments of postwar democratic theory and practice to the blandishments of higher standards of living and consumption."

Obviously no friend to these theories of Japanese uniqueness, Harootunian joined Gluck in

\(^{153}\) Harootunian explicitly mentioned Freud and "transference" in his 1988 review of the volume on Norman edited by Roger Bowen. Interestingly, and typically, Harootunian did not include himself as an example of one who has used interpretations of Norman's work to make a political point.

\(^{153}\) Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 437.
resisting their exclusionist claims. But at least in the histories he published during the 1980s, his strategy did not involve comparisons of national histories. He made his point, rather, by insisting that theories developed outside Japan could be used to discuss Japanese history. He could do this without suffering from Hall’s anxieties about the application of the term “feudalism” to Japan, because he thought of the theories as reading strategies, and not as labels for realities in the past that could be objectively analyzed. His approach was more flexible than Gluck’s because it did not depend upon actual historical similarities. It should come as no surprise that Gluck has devoted her entire career to Japan’s modern period, when “commonalities” often derive from real connections and shared conditions.

The difference between Harootunian and Gluck, as I see it, is that Harootunian has, over time, come to commit himself to the role of an avant garde intellectual. Certainly by the 1990s, he seems to have been convinced by the Frankfurt School position that the culture industry of capitalist societies renders effective criticism of prevailing ideologies an extremely demanding task. He brings his disciplinary skills as a historian to this task, but his primary identity is that of an avant garde intellectual. Gluck, on the other hand, seems to be committed primarily to the practice of “good” history. Attempting to historicize her times and herself and speaking out as a historian about uses of the past seem to be her primary concerns. She is less interested in adopting the role of the critic than she is in being a critical progressive, sharply realistic yet optimistic about the future.

Harootunian and Gluck shared an antipathy for the modernization approach and for *nihonjinron* celebrations of national community, but their strategies for resisting the claims of these theories differed. In part, this was because they were starting from different diagnoses of the problems. For Harootunian, the hostility toward ideas that he detected in the modernization approach required redress. He made inquiry into the relationship between thought and action a
priority, and he did so by drawing heavily from contemporary structuralist, poststructuralist, and formalist theory developed in continental Europe and the United States. By emphasizing the importance of these theories, he was able to fight against arguments that Japanese history was so unique that only indigenous concepts would do. He was also able to make Japanese history into a field to be taken seriously by scholars who did not specialize in the study of a Japanese past, but could relate to the theories he used to talk about it. Gluck also drew upon some of the same theoretical scholarship, but for her, two other strategies were paramount. The first, directed even more at Japanese scholarship than at the modernization approach, involved emphasizing that ideologies of the Meiji period were not a consequence of smooth transitions orchestrated by a prescient elite bent upon oppressive control of the minds of the people, but rather the consequence of a trial-and-error process that reflected competing interests and partial successes. The second consisted of her strategy of comparison. She was one of those historians mentioned in her own historiographical essay "who had trained themselves to think of Japan as an instance of historical modernity commensurate with other such instances, from Korea to France." Here she was going against Norman’s argument that modernity in Japan was less complete than it was in England or in France and against the modernizationist perspective that Japan was a successful late modernizer and therefore a good model for the rest of the non-Western developing world. In retrospect, Japan's Modern Myths stands out historiographically as the book that resuscitated for the field of Japanese history the category of modernity as one useful to those interested in cutting across Japanese, American, and all other national exceptionalisms.

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Conclusion: The 1990s and Beyond

The Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 reminded people around the world that liberal economic reform did not necessarily mean the toppling of Communist leadership. Still, by 1991, when the Warsaw Pact officially disbanded and the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist, the Cold War was over. President George Bush, Sr., suggested in 1990 that a "new world order" would emerge, which would constitute "a community of nations bound by a common commitment to peace and restraint." But President Bill Clinton's often-criticized ad hoc foreign policy implied that finding one's way in the post-Cold War world was not so easy. Should the United States as "the world's only superpower" be "the world's policeman" was a major question of the decade. Ethnic nationalism--with the conflict among Serbs, Croatians, and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina providing the prime example--and "globalization"--associated with transnational corporations, such as Nike, and communication networks, like the Cable News Network (CNN) and the Internet--seemed to be the two features of the post-Cold War world that most often grabbed people's attention.

The "lack of surety in the present world," wrote Carol Gluck in the mid-1990s, "brings a (relative) absence of orthodoxy" in the writing of history. John Dower in effect agreed, asserting that "[n]o one . . . can any longer point to a dominant paradigm governing Western perceptions of Japan." Amidst diversity and innovation in approaches in the absence of a dominant paradigm, political circumstances and political choices continued to inform uses and disuses of "modernity."

The most exciting formulation of "modernity" in history-writing of the 1990s appeared in Harry Harootunian's masterful study Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community

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in Interwar Japan. He wrote of “co-eval modernity,” an expression intended to capture the “contemporaneity” of negotiations taking place around the world “between the local and received cultural habits—the culture of reference—and the requirements of the new global processes of capitalist expansion.” Unevenness, in his view, is part of capitalism, and the idea that any country would ever be completely modern is an unrealizable aspiration. Perhaps symptomatic of an intensified sense of simultaneity engendered by air travel, satellite television, and the Internet, Harootunian’s formulation offers hope for an escape from assumptions that “true time was kept by the modern West.” (Undergraduate students in a Columbia University seminar called this “moving the finish line”: As soon as other nations appeared to be “catching up,” the always already modernized West would move the line further ahead—become “postmodern” at the moment other nations were becoming “modern,” for example.) In this way, “co-eval modernity” fits with a politics declared in the statement of purpose found in the inside cover of every issue of positions: east asia cultures critique, a journal first published in 1993: “In seeking to explore how theoretical practices are linked across national and ethnic divides, we hope to construct other positions from which to imagine political affinities across the many dimensions of our differences.” Harootunian facilitated this imagination of affinities by placing Japanese and non-Japanese writers and texts of the 1920s and ‘30s “into direct relationship with each other” based upon their shared concern for “modernity.”

Also for political reasons, Gregory Pflugfelder chose not use the category of “modernity” in his book Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950. Published in 1999, the book can be read as a study of the modernization of the discourse on sexuality in Japan, although to read it this way would be to read it against the argument as it is carefully presented. The conspicuous absence of reference to modernity in the book is a clue to

158 Harootunian, Overcome, xvi-xvii.
159 Harootunian, Overcome, xv-xvi.
160 Harootunian, Overcome, xxxi.
Plufgfelder's (political) point that discourses on sexuality do not move forward or backward, but rather they change—and they can change again.161

Over the course of the period discussed in this paper, 1940-2000, uses and disuses of the category of modernity fluctuated in relation to political circumstances and political choices made by historians. The most significant fluctuation, which perhaps amounts to a reorientation, occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s when many intellectuals—in France, in Japan, in the United States, and elsewhere—modified, or even retired, optimistic hopes for socialist or liberal democracy and economic abundance, more or less equally distributed, for all. With the allure of the modern much diminished, historians began writing of quality rather than of process, of modernity rather than of modernization. At the end of the twentieth century, historians were still sorting out the meaning of this reorientation. Even more striking than this relative discontinuity, however, is the resilience of the category put into operation in English-language history-writing about Japan by E. H. Norman. At this point, I can only join other historians in hypothesizing that the world that came into being with technologies of long-distance travel and communication, capitalist expansion, the construction of nation-states, imperialist conquest and settlement, and mass social formations remained relevant over the course of this sixty-year period. In conjunction with the completion of this paper, I enter upon the stage in my graduate studies when I begin making political choices in reference to the political circumstances of my time, the first decade of the twenty-first century. The ways in which I choose to use, or not to use, the category of modernity will illuminate my political intent.

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