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SOME PROBLEMS IN THE STUDY OF OCCIDENTAL HISTORY IN JAPAN

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I

The questions we should stop to ask ourselves seriously at present seem to be these: What meaning has the study of Occidental history had in Japan during the past years? What are the problems with which it is now faced? And in which direction should it proceed henceforward? To answer these questions fully and properly is doubtless beyond my power. But I strongly feel the necessity of reflecting upon these matters. Therefore I wish to state humbly in this little paper some of the problems I have had to face in the course of my own study of Occidental history, by way of inviting free comment and criticism from others engaged in the same study abroad.

In the first place, I think there are, generally speaking, very few countries in the world where so many people, as in Japan, are studying the history of foreign countries, particularly of Western European countries. One might say this is evident from the fact that in our colleges and universities the same curricula that were introduced from Europe in the Meiji Era are still being operated upon, or that history textbooks used in our secondary schools are mostly devoted to European history. The fact that latest tendencies in Western European historical scholarship are quickly made known in this country as "latest theories" also shows the uniqueness of Japanese scholarship in this field. The reason for this one need not go very far to seek; one realizes it when one examines the characteristic strides Japan has taken in the social, economic, and cultural spheres during the past hundred years. Most of our intellectuals in the Meiji Era looked upon Western civilization as a model to imitate, and made it their first aim to catch up with it. At the same time they did not doubt that their intellectual activities would lead to the "prosperity" of this country. It is small wonder then that they should have thought that the progress of the development of Western Europe might serve as "a standard" of universal validity and that it was "scientific" to apply it even in measuring Japanese historical phenomena.

Accordingly, there once prevailed a view that this habit, on the part of the Japanese, of persistently imitating one foreign culture after another, without making any serious efforts to develop their own, is a reflection of their "national character," and that it has caused the "discontinuity" of their cultural scene. This, however, is only a half-truth superficially arrived at from inadequate examination of what was going on in the Meiji Era and of the adoption of Chinese culture which had taken place long before that time, in the remote past. In the history of any culture, there are periods wherein, under the influence of some other culture, it made rapid progress. True, Japan provides an excellent example; she worked so vigorously in the imitation and adoption of European culture during the Meiji Era that she achieved an industrial revolution and all other processes of modernization in a remarkably short
span of time. It would seem very dangerous, however, to judge from this fact alone, and condemn the leaning of the Japanese towards things European as a flaw in their basic national character. The important thing is to analyse how and why the imitation of European culture took place in the Meiji Era as it did. It may be said, paradoxically enough, that it was exactly because of her persistent imitation of European culture that Japan somehow or other managed to achieve her modernization. In this sense, the efforts rendered by the Meiji intellectuals toward the modernization of Japan, taking the development of European society as the “standard,” should be rightly appreciated.

Now, since the eighteenth century, especially since the middle of the nineteenth century, historical scholarship in Europe has moved along two different lines, of which one was toward theorization and systematization. This resulted from the new, highly specialized social sciences. The other was towards nationally orientated political history, and this latter encouraged individualized national studies. These two directions of historical scholarship obviously correspond to two distinct phenomena that are seen in the history of Western Europe: the birth and growth of civic society on the one hand, and the growth of nationalism in the nineteenth century on the other. However, those historical facts from which European historians have abstracted and systematized their theories using the methods of social sciences are generally those of Western Europe. Hence, those theories can hardly claim universal validity; very naturally they lack sufficient understanding of the history of non-European countries, particularly Asian countries. The reason that such theories were once held to have universal validity is partly because they had logical consistency characteristic of Europe, but also because they had at their background what was then the undeniable reality, or the “superiority of Europe.”

When these two currents of historical scholarship, each different from the other, were introduced among the scholars in Japan, however, they created what might be called a “double image” on the scene: on the one hand, the purely historical concept of “nation” or “state” originating in modern Europe was identified with some sort of self-evident political unit existing from ancient times; and, on the other, those socio-scientific concepts of Europe, which were abstracted from the specific historical realities there, were too readily accepted as being applicable without qualification to phenomena in this country. It is due to these circumstances that there has been a tendency in Japan that the theory which emphasizes the characteristics of “national culture” and that which insists upon the law of social evolution vie with each other for victory in practical application in the conduct of national affairs, with no efforts being made to bridge the gap between them.

One need not say that all historical studies, no matter which of the two categories of scholarship they may belong to, should be solidly substantiated by concrete historical facts; they must not be mere amplifications of some concept or other, nor should they be too radically practical. In Europe, since the close of the nineteenth century, especially since the beginning of this century, the handling of historical phenomena made along the lines of historical positivism has made remarkably great progress: with the advance of textual criticism and improvements in the technique for distinguishing authentic ancient documents from the false, descriptive materials of history which had been used in a comparatively casual manner up to that time have since been thoroughly re-examined. Archaeology, historical study of settlements, study of place-names, folklore, philology, history of technics, and many other subsidiary sciences have proved each a great help to this new type of scholarship. The
theories against which the first severe criticism was directed as the result were those constructed on the theories of social sciences; above all the great variety of Ökonomische Stufentheorie maintained by the "historical" school were subjected to the severest attacks imaginable. Today, those "economic stage theories" have lost most of their practical significance, at least in the study of history, if not in the study of the theory of history. Only a handful of technical terms for those concepts about "stages" have survived as stereotyped technical terms used by some historians in their textbooks. Marxist historical materialism, however, provides one notable exception. This particular view of history, which remains "alive" behind many of the current practical theories for revolutions, is making very elastic interpretations possible in the study of history, not only in the academic circles in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, but also in those of Western Europe; where valuable studies from this particular point of view which, while being consistently true to itself, nevertheless is not chary of adopting the achievements of historical positivism, are coming out in succession, making notable contributions to the general advancement of this science, or the study of history.

But in Japan the effects of this mutual opposition of theoretism and positivism in Europe caused a chaotic situation. Opinions were divided among scholars and critics as to how the existing realities of Japan should be interpreted, what attitude should be taken towards them, and so forth. That "double image" which had been created by the two types of historical study previously mentioned, and which had been left unresolved, added to the confusion. Interpretative arguments by dogmatists also aggravated the situation. Controversialists tended either to bring about unproductive hurly-burly or to turn their back in exasperation upon one another. It should be noted that the termination of the Second World War provided a decisive turning point to our study of history, too. For, with it, the Japanese were given a common cause for which to work together, namely, the "democratization of the country," and Japan's post-war scholarship at large seemed to be orientated towards this goal. In this sense, it might be said to have found the right course to follow. The best evidence for this is that almost all the studies that appeared after the War assumed a character which might be described, in one sense or another, as socio-economic. This general tendency had continued until several years ago, when the old antagonism between theoretism and positivism reappeared on the scene. This antagonism has since become so intense that today the study of history seems to be in danger of losing sight of its original aim and of the track leading toward it. Among the factors that have brought about this new situation may be included the rapid shift of the international political scene in the past few years, the marvelous "growth" of Japan's post-war economy, as well as the "reactionary tendencies" among the people on the spiritual plane.

In this very critical situation, we should not sit back and watch, and let things take their own course. For we are keenly conscious of our living no longer in a world where "East is East, West is West," of the uselessness of textbook theories of reformation in reforming the conditions that surround us. We believe, therefore, that the more minute the procedures for substantiation become in the study of history, the more urgent it is for each researcher to establish his own method of study, and that a really new way of study should be developed wherein the sustained mental tension of the researcher trying to work out a harmony between substantiation and his own method of study may be taken to represent, as it is, his attitude toward life. The question then is whether it is possible or not for the researchers
in history to do what is thus required of him today, when the subject for each researcher has become so highly specialized. Before we take up this particular question we believe we must say a few words about a great change that is taking place in the historical consciousness of scholars in European countries after they have experienced two World Wars.

II

The greatest change that the two World Wars has brought about in the historical consciousness of European scholars may briefly be described as the "breakdown of the Western-Europe-centered view of history," or the loss of self-confidence in the validity of the "world theory." What then is the critical concern of a new historical study which, in a positive sense, would replace the old one? Let us have a look at some of the instances in point.

Though, of the various tendencies in European historical scholarship from the time of the First World War through the period of the Nazi regime up to this day, we may count many, I would like to point out here only two as the ones most pregnant. One is the tendency toward an attempt to turn away from the traditional study of history as a thing which concerns itself chiefly with a particular "nation" or "Volk," and to proceed to grapple with the "problem of Europe as a whole," and thus to abstract from the processes of the development of world history those characteristics which are peculiar to "Europe." The other is toward the same goal but diametrically opposed in method. This latter urges the need for a re-consideration of over-differentiation in each specialized field of study, and encourages studies attempted from all possible angles of each regional community in its concrete historical context.

To many Japanese intellectuals, the first of these two tendencies in historical scholarship is quite familiar. They have learned through the great works of Spengler and of Toynbee, which might better be labelled as historical philosophy or civilization criticism, that the Western-Europe-centred view of history has suffered a great change. Beside these, however, there are pioneer works of specialist historians who wrote along the same lines, though in a manner less sensational, from the First World War to the Second World War, which should not be left unmentioned. Let me take up some of the more representative of them here.

As early as 1918, Alfons Dopsch, a Vienna historian, published an enormous volume entitled Wirtschaftliche und soziale Grundlagen der europäischen Kulturentwicklung (The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization), in which he attempted in a purely academic manner to remove from the minds of Europeans the fears of European civilization being on the verge of ruin. In this book, he set himself the task of pointing out the continuity of cultural development and the variety of social and economic life, and of convincing European people of the vitality of European civilization during the "Völkerwanderung."

Since then, efforts directed toward the same goal but along different lines have crystalized in works that attempted to promise, to borrow Ferdinand Lot's words, "perpetual prosperity" of modern capitalistic society, or possibility of its eternal development. Most of such works aimed to stress the fundamental uniqueness of the social and economic development from the Middle Ages to modern times of Western Europe, as distinguished from ancient Mediterranean worlds—classical Greece and Rome. This attempt obviously has something in common with what Max Weber in the late nineteenth century had so penetratingly summed
Christian scholars also gave voice to their own views. One of the most typical of such views was that the European crisis had been brought about by the spread of nationalism which culminated in the emergence of Soviet Russia immediately after the First World War, and that the only way to get over this crisis was by returning to the days when Europe had not yet been divided into contending nations, but was one peaceful Christian cultural community. The Catholic historian, Christopher H. Dawson, in many of his works champions this particular view; which, because of its bitter condemnation of the modern industrial world, in which people surrounded and oppressed by monstrously gigantic industries symbolic of the age of mechanical civilization were rapidly losing their religious human nature, should not by any means be ignored as a mere medievalist catholic view of history. In this sense, his works such as The Making of Europe (1932), Religion and the Modern State (1935), and a recently published collection of essays entitled Dynamics of World History (1957) are worth reading thoroughly. Dawson in his Religion and the Modern State sums up the situation at that time roughly as follows:

No bright future awaits today's Europe, which has been divided into as many as twenty-four countries, each of them having decided to place restrictions on its import and build up its armaments. What we need today is not that type of self-killing nationalism which ignores the existence of the spiritual community bonds of cultures, nor that kind of internationalism which tends to level mechanically all nations, from those "pocketable" nations along the Baltic Sea to the Soviet Union which stretches from the Baltic Sea east to the Japan Sea, and from the Arctic Ocean south to the Oxus Desert, and to pay no attention to the historical realities of each nation. Unification of Europe, in some form or other, is imperative: the only way to achieve it is by going back to the old traditional pattern of Christian Europe for a belief in the spiritual rather than in the secular values such as blood relations or classes.

Written in 1935, this book aims to suggest a way for Europe of coping with the dangers of Nazism and communism at that time, but, regrettably enough, goes no further than to urge the need for a revival of the European spirit, and fails to propose any concrete method of "re-organizing Europe." Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that as early as 1935 the problem of conquering nationalism was taken up in this book for critical examination.

Lastly, let us consider the very unique view of history of Henry Pirenne, a Belgian historian. His book is an attempt to understand the genesis of Europe in relation to foreign invasions such as those made by the Islamites. He interprets the driving forces working behind the processes of the development of European society in relation both to movements outside Europe and to the esprit de corps in numerous social communities large and small formed in Western Europe (particularly towns and cities) and the parts played in them by their individual members. This he does most vividly, taking up those forces in their flowing or moving phases. And he stresses not so much the significance of oppositional relations among nations or of "stages" of economic development in some nation or other, as that of the accumulation of human activities within the framework of Europe, their regional significance being always weighed in their relation to the whole. In this sense, Pirenne's theory, though not very systematic, may yet serve as an excellent example of a deep and flexible understanding of Europe and its history. That great work, Histoire de l'Europe (History of Europe), which he
wrote out in January in 1917, without consulting any single reference book while he was
confined informally in a war-prisoner camp at Holzminden, should long be remembered as
an academic monument left by a devoted historian pure and simple, in which, none the less
his harsh personal experiences during that period are reflected.

We have so far shown some of the representative points of view from which the “prob-
lem of Europe” was taken up by pioneer historians between the First and Second World
Wars. The Second World War, as we know too well, destroyed towns and villages alike in
Europe on an unprecedented scale, causing a drastic change in the international political
scene. The “balance of Powers” of which Leopold v. Ranke had once drawn so graphic
a picture was now broken. And Europe found itself thrown into the dark valley between
the two soaring peaks of America and Soviet Russia. Mainland China joined the communist
bloc, and today, many colonial states in Asia and Africa are fast becoming independent. In
such a world situation severely unfavorable to Europe, what sort of European history should
the historian seek? What meaning will the nineteenth-century-fashion study of history, chiefly
concerned with each nation, have henceforward?

What comes first to our mind in this connection is either such conservatively orientated
assertions as are found in The Limits and Divisions of European History (1950) by Oscar
Halecki, a Polish historian now living in America, or that kind of history of the human mind
with marked inclinations toward civilization criticism of which one notable example is El
Rapto de Europe (1954) by L. Corral, a Spanish historian who visited our country some years
ago. It is to be regretted, however, that the task of drawing a new “full dress” picture of
European history has not yet been successfully done. Reading the papers covering a wide
range of topics read by history specialists on the theme of “Europe” at the conference held
at Mainz in March in 1955, and the reports which record their questions and answers, one
gets the impression that the solution to the problem remains yet to be sought. The implica-
tion of this is that as far as the study of history is concerned, no such great work has yet
appeared as would supersede those new ideas conceived by the above-mentioned pioneer his-
torians under the painful shock of the First World War, which still have an undiminished
value even after the Second World War.

On the other hand, the appearance of what is known as EEC has made Europe in recent
years look quite different from what it did in the post-First-War days. The first problem with
which EEC is concerned is of course economic, but it is worth noting that, with the start of
this organization, active cultural movements have arisen from various quarters; and that
books which have long been lost in oblivion, and which can hardly be called scientific in
their point of view, are increasingly attracting the attention of those who are in search of
some ideal toward which they believe their cultural movements should be directed. For ex-
ample, Coudenhove-Kalergi’s book of political enlightenment is being taken seriously in
some quarters. We, however, who are trying to seek a new way of historical study, find his
work not merely unsatisfactory to us but even somewhat dangerous, because we fear that it

1 The ten-volume Historia Mundi, the most recent of its kind, which was originally planned by Fritz
Kern, and which, with the co-operation of many a specialist, was completed after the War, is the first
outcome of the efforts to determine the place of European history in the history of the world. This
monumental work, with all those prominent scholars participating in it, fails to satisfy us, and makes us
feel all the more keenly how difficult it is to re-write the history of the world.

Wiesbaden 1956.
might play the same sort of part as Chamberlain’s *Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts* did at the rise of the Nazis. The reason, as we see it, is that Europe, which has never been based upon such a foundation as would accelerate its unification, shows topographical aspects today which are entirely different from what they were at the time when Coudenhove-Kalergi voiced his views.

Europe today is eagerly waiting for the arrival of many a great historian with fresh ideas. And there are signs here and there of such historians coming up. We may mention only two of the most promising of them here: G. Barraclough, by far the greatest figure representing historical scholarship in Great Britain today, and Otto Brunner in Hamburg, an authority on medieval social history, who is under the influence of Max Weber. We shall later touch upon the points of view of these scholars.3

III

We have so far explained how historians have looked at the “problem of Europe,” and in so doing have pointed out some of the circumstances in which the so-called “nation-centred” way of thinking has lost some of the influence which it once exerted upon historical scholarship. Despite this general tendency, the relation between the “problem of Europe” and the “nation-centred” history remains yet to be investigated even in the academic circles of Europe, not to say of Japan, the matter having been discussed so far exclusively, as it were, in the manner of the nineteenth century, that is, in terms of the relation between individual historical phenomena and any history as a whole.

By the side of this rather outdated type of historical study, however, there has appeared another type which has practically become the main stream of historical positivism—the one I called the second type at the beginning of the previous chapter. It attempts first to gain a comprehensive understanding of the history of each individual regional community, that is, from every possible point of view such as of geography, geology, archaeology, history of settlements, economic history, political history, and constitutional history. It then attempts to trace the development of the social units in that community, assuming that these social units are the embodiment of the history of the region in which they are found. Finally, by repeating such procedures with one regional community after another, tries to abstract the “specific Western European” elements from the actual social life of these communities. But since such elements cannot be deduced all at once, the historical researcher regards each individual study of this nature as Vorarbeite, or preliminary work, leading to his ultimate goal. I myself call this particular type of study the “study of regional history” (*geschichtliche Landesforschung*). It is my belief that unless we take into account the valuable results brought about by such study of regional history, we can seriously discuss neither the constitutional history nor the economic history of Europe before the Ancien Régime. We can hardly conceive the development of history if in considering historical phenomena we ignore the geographical, political and cultural conditions under which they occurred.

What are the original aims of regional history, then? And what are the present results of this particular study? The study of regional history, as we take it, aims primarily at a

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critical scrutiny of historical material on the one hand, and, on the other, at a deepening of studies of specific subjects carried out with the aid of various subsidiary sciences such as geography and so forth. But behind these proposed aims may be found a change of attitude on the part of historians themselves. They have come to realize, in the first place, the limitations of that highly theoretical and systematic habit of thinking which characterized the specialized social sciences of the nineteenth century, or, in other words, the limitations of those rash attempts at theorizing and systematizing made then in such fields as economic history, social history, constitutional history, and so forth. Secondly, they have come to realize that many of the so-called basic ideas developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are liable to distort the realities of history, because such ideas are recognized as inventions of the modern state or rather of modern civic society. Thirdly, they have been led to the belief that so long as one continues to regard the state or people as a self-evident unit, one can hardly understand the political and legal system in the Middle Ages.

As a matter of fact, the world of the Middle Ages knew nothing of the clear, fast boundaries which today divide France from Germany, Germany from Italy, and Italy from France. Despite this solid fact, the fact remains that, with the appearance of histories which regarded the state or people as being its own highest value, that is, as if it were the supreme unit, it became customary to burden medieval history with adjectives designating particular nations. This has created the mistaken impression that from the very beginning each nation had its distinct existence and possessed its own characteristics. One typical example of such "idealistic" thinking is seen in the Nazi school of historical scholarship which confused German-entum with Deutschtum.

Such, as I see it, is the background from which has emerged a new approach to history, behind which, as is seen from the example mentioned above, there lies the assumption that a new reconstruction of history can be achieved only by a thorough reappraisal, based on the historical material now available, of the content of the ideas developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and then by representing as concretely as possible the original state of a community at a given period. This certainly applies to the study of medieval European history, if not of medieval Japanese history.

What then has actually been achieved by this new approach? To answer this question in full detail, it would be necessary to dilate upon the scope and method of study involved. Here, however, I must content myself, for want of space, with mentioning a few of the problems which I have had to face in my own studies.

Take the idea of "freedom" for instance. Merely to trace this particular idea through the history of thought itself is no new undertaking, but it is only in comparatively recent years that this problem has been squarely treated in the fields of socio-economic history and constitutional history. The traditional view which dates from the nineteenth century holds, for example, that Old Germanic society had at its very core the ideal of "free people," that this society operated on the principle of equality, and that the free Markgenossenschaft and the free village community (or community of free peasants), which made its appearance in the middle of the medieval age and later, a period when the manorial system was everywhere predominant, were all remnants of the Old Germanic Age. However, with the progress

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4 On the origin and development of this particular type of historical study, see the present writer's article, "Utility and Limit of the Studies of Local History," *The Hitotsubashi Review*, XLVII, iii (March 1962).
of the study of regional history from the 1920's onward, a new theory was evolved by which it became more and more clear that the "free village" with its "free peasants" had no direct connection, topographically or otherwise, with the idea of freedom which existed in olden times, but that it really was the product of the work of reclamation (Rodung) carried out in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This new view further gave rise to questions as to the nature of the freedom which is supposed to have existed at that time. The questions have been asked: Who originated such freedom? What are the characteristics of such freedom? How does such freedom differ from freedom as it is generally understood today? And so forth. As a result, even the theory of "Gemeinfreie" which was considered fundamental in the Frankish time is now the target at which shafts of sharp criticism are being shot by a group of persons who advocate the theory of Königsfreie.5

All this has, moreover, made it clear that ideas such as "freedom" and a "free people," which scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries talked about as if they were capable of being put in the same category, date no further back than the French Revolution, and have a character quite different from, and sometimes apparently contrary to, that of the medieval idea of "freedom." Investigation has shown that there were actually varieties of freedom: there were, for example, various kinds of freedom enjoyed by the peasants or groups of peasants in the villages, as is seen in the Weistümer or customary law of the villagers; there was also civic freedom stipulated in the city law; there was also the freedom enjoyed by the Church. None of these varieties of freedom, with their delicate nuances, with their background of conventional or unconventional principles of law, corresponds with freedom as it is generally conceived today. The historian, therefore, must set himself the task of studying the institutions of each period and its legal system in his attempt to find out the reasons why they (these institutions and systems) were considered "free," and of making clear what relations, if any, they may have with the idea of freedom which came to be established from the eighteenth century onward. In the world of historical scholarship, however, only the heterogeneity and variety of freedom in the Middle Ages have so far been pointed out; and the relation between the medieval and the modern ideas of freedom remains yet to be investigated.

The second problem I wish to consider here is the change of concept of social status (Stände) in Europe, especially of the peculiar status of the "nobility." In Japan, the idea of social status refers only to the social order within her boundaries, while in Europe it has long been recognized at transcending the boundaries of tribe and nation. Its origin may be traced to the idea of social order that existed long ago among the members of a tribe living in a small district, but, after the time of tribal migrations, its super-tribal character came decisively to be observed; and when the King of the Franks achieved the unification of his kingdom, the so-called Reichsaristokratie was formed irrespective of tribal and racial distinctions. It is for this reason that the super-national character of the royalty and nobility in Europe is clearly seen throughout the Middle Ages. The predominance of the nobility, sacred and secular, throughout medieval Europe thus provides a key to an understanding of that unity known as Europe. This fact is so important that it must be recalled once again by all in Japan who are engaged in the study of Occidental history. Furthermore, it must be noted that since the Investiturstreit, with the above-mentioned change in the idea of "freedom,"

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the traditional sense of "social status," has come to be superseded by a sense of "vocational status," by which not only the noble and the cleric, but also the knight and the citizen, and even the peasant, have come to share, as it were, the same, super-regional and super-national outlook and feeling. This change has not only taken place in ways of thinking and of living. The estates of the noble, for instance, were not always found within the boundaries of one country. The super-national character that is seen in the relationships of blood, marriage, and inheritance within a noble family is also manifested in the so-called Streubesitz of that family. By way of illustration, it will suffice to remind the reader of the way in which the Habsburg family owned its estates, and of the Ballei and the Komturei which were the economic foundation of the Deutsch-Ordensstaat. The feudal system in Europe can never be rightly understood by regarding it as if it were a kind of "one-country" feudal system, which epithet being more suitably applied to Japan's feudal system.

The study of regional history, as I see it, has made another contribution toward historical scholarship. I mean its attempt to reconstruct in full detail the state of villages as they actually were at a given period. Many of the traditional theories on the Middle Ages have regarded the classical manor as the system in which the idea of "feudal land-property" is most typically embodied. This classical manor, according to those theories, developed through the processes of substitution of rents in kind for labor service and "commutation" into the "rental manorialism," or Rentengrundherrschaft as the Germans call it. Thus, the transition from feudal to modern (capitalistic) society has traditionally been ascribed to the dissolution of the medieval peasantry and the breakdown of the village communities in the medieval period. It is highly questionable, however, whether the actual way of living of the medieval peasantry might accurately be understood by such abstract theories; still more so, perhaps, whether that theory for theory's sake which, in explaining the village community and "non-economic compulsion" (ausseröekonomischer Zwang) bases itself upon the nucleated village (Gewanndorf) operating on the three-field system, might fully be supported by the historical facts known to us today.

It is indeed out of these simple doubts about too abstract, too systematic an approach to history that the efforts have been made, with the co-operation of specialists in such fields as archaeology and the historical study of settlements, since the 1920's, to trace, as far as detailed and largescale observation is possible, the development of a village and its field system. They have made it clear that the appearance of a nucleated village which operated upon the three-field system can be traced no further back than to the eighth century, or to the end of the seventh century at the earliest; that its formative processes, that is, the nucleation (Ballung) of an original village (Urdorf) and the Vergewannung of its arable land, continued till well past the twelfth and the thirteenth century when commutation was becoming the practice; and that in no other regions did original villages nucleate themselves earlier than in the regions north of the Alps between the Seine and the Rhein (especially the royal and ecclesiastical estates in those regions); and so forth. Therefore, even if we admit that the principle of classic manorial rule (which consists of demesne and land in villeinage) could be maintained, in other words, the so-called "feudal land-property" was possible, even in villages...
other than those nucleated ones in which the three-field (or, for that matter, the twofield) agrarian system was predominant, we must further ask ourselves questions such as: Why did the nucleated villages appear, and why did the village communities develop, as they did, in their typical forms, and in those particular regions, and not in others? What were the differences, in structure and character, in the form of rents and whatnot, between the seigniorial rule over the peasants in those particular regions and the so-called Einzelhof or “Weiler” regions? What are the historical implications of such differences? There is, obviously enough, not much point in leaving all these questions unanswered, in explaining “feudal land-property” merely as a general term, for in that way it is inevitable that the historical meaning of such facts of “Feldzwang” and Gemengelage should be lost, and the peculiar character of Western Europe should be completely ignored as a natural consequence.

In connection with these questions, the very idea of Dorfgemeinde needs critical examination. Do the scholars in general take this term to mean a community spontaneously grown out of the needs for agrarian management, or a co-operative body? Or do they understand it as meaning a community having its own legally-organized system of self-government as the lowest sub-structure of society? Connotations of such an important term as this must strictly be examined. For, with the villages at the stage of classical manorialism, the Mehrherrschaftsdorf was the rule, and these villages were far removed in character from the ones which came to appear after the middle of the medieval period, in which the seigneur himself exercised jurisdiction over the villagers. It is for this reason that it has become customary in Western Europe today, especially in the academic circles in Germany, to avoid the application of the term Dorfgemeinde to the villages that existed before the eleventh or the twelfth century. The researcher in history in Japan is free, of course, to employ that term in an extended sense, but then it would be necessary for him to start by defining strictly in what particular sense he intends to use it, and to show at the same time clearly enough the historical meaning of Dorfgemeinde in its accepted, narrow sense, or of “Dorfgemeinde” which made its first appearance in history in the eleventh and the twelfth century.

Innumerable indeed are the contributions made in recent years by historical positivism, especially by the study of regional history. Besides those we have so far taken up, there are many similar things worth considering; there are, for example, such problems as the making of “Land” as a factor in the making of a nation, the idea of the medieval city, the realities of Renaissance society, the essence of peasant revolt or Bauernkrieg, and so forth. The implication of this statement is that the study of regional history, too, has rocked the traditional “nation-centred” approach to history to its heels, and forced it to realize the need to modify its basic premises.

All this does not necessarily mean that this “nation-centred” way of thinking has altogether lost its significance in the study of history. In fact, we believe we are right in thinking highly of the historical significance of the freedom achieved by the French Revolution. We must do so, however, from the very realization that the freedom which existed in the Middle Ages is essentially different from the freedom which came into existence after the French Revolution. The same can and must be said of such concepts as “state” or “nation.” We must try to decide in what respect and in what sense a certain nation can be characterized as “specific Western European” in modern times. Were we to care naught for all these
distinctions, we should simply be obliterating part of the greatest cultural assets our modern society has so far accumulated, and that would be nothing but mere reactionary medievalism.

IV

I have so far pointed out what particular problems confront today's historical scholarship in Europe which has experienced the two World Wars, and outlined the direction in which it is moving. This I have done by introducing to the reader two diametrically opposed directions of study that are seen there. The more penetrating and able-minded of historians in Europe are convinced that those two directions, although one is concerned more with the "problem of Europe" in general, and the other with the study of "regional history" in particular, should nevertheless move towards the same ultimate end. Accordingly, they are striving to combine the two and to build up what might be called a co-operative system of historical research. They are sharply aware that today, when the field of research has extended so widely and research in specific subjects itself has deepened so much, it is next to impossible for a single scholar to construct a whole system of history in the manner of the nineteenth century, all by himself.

What, on the other hand, is the state of affairs in the study of Occidental history in Japan? As I see it now, there still remains intact the "double image" of the "nation-centred" way and the "socio-scientific" way of thinking. In consequence, there still emerges on one side an endless succession of studies in specific subjects which are done with no definite purposes but are merely concerned with introducing latest theories. And on the other side we observe a group of scholars, especially those armed with Marxist theories, making wherever possible far-fetched comparisons from that viewpoint. While there is no common ground for discussion, nor any material that is recognizable as positive evidence, both these men are wasting their energy over disputes as to the definition of various historical concepts and stages of history. It is in quite recent years that the "problem of Europe," which we have repeatedly referred to, has come to be realized as one of the greatest concerns of our historians; or that it has become a matter of great urgency for us Japanese, who are in the eyes of Europeans a strange race, pagans so to speak, to reconsider the problem: from what angle or angles should we, as foreigners, approach the history of Europe? It was not until after the Second World War that we began to realize that so long as we regarded Europe as the only standard for historical evaluation, we should never be able to grasp the meaning of the movements in Communist China or India, nor would any of the problems of Japanese society be solved satisfactorily. It is also only after the Second World War that we began to feel that what we need most of all to know is not so much the history of Britain, France, Germany and Italy, or the national character of these nations, as those things hitherto thought too lightly of, which might be variously called the "dynamics of European history" or the "specific character of European society." Speaking paradoxically, this means that the world of historical scholarship in Japan depended, until quite recently, so much upon that in every European country.

It is true that the specific character of European culture has long been studied in Japan in the form of the history of the mind, in the form of the study of the development of Christianity and European thought in general. There is indeed no question about it, especially
when we think of the influence on Japanese scholars made by the studies of W. Dilthey, E. Troeltsch and others. But what really concerns us today is whether or not it is possible for us to understand the character of Europe, not through that kind of study of the history of thought and of the mind, but through the study of the secular aspects of the people living together in this and that community, which the development of the social sciences has made possible.

To make this possible, researchers in all fields of history must start by having some fundamental critical attitude which they share in common. Otherwise it would be fruitless for them to compare and discuss the results of their individual academic efforts. And while it is necessary that scholars in history, whether they specialize in Occidental, Oriental, or in Japanese history, should share more fundamental critical attitude, they must nevertheless not forget to base their studies solidly upon concrete historical facts. Their argument, whatever it may be, must always be supported by accurate historical data. It is very well to speak, for example, of "feudal land-property," but in so doing we must remind ourselves that villages in Europe have assumed different aspects at different periods, in different regions, and that they might be far different from their counterparts in Oriental countries. Furthermore, if it can be assumed theoretically that feudalism operated most fittingly in those nucleated villages where the three-field system of farming functioned, then it will be our very task to inquire thoroughly into this matter with the methods of regional history. I believe that only in this manner can we understand the "specific Western European" realities with which we are concerned.

Similarly, it is said by some of our scholars that what unites together the European countries is the balance of power among secular nations, born and bred within the cultural bloc of Christian unity. This textbook-like statement hardly satisfies us, for it does not actually tell us what we really want to know. Does the phrase "Christian unity" explain to us clearly enough the specific character of social life lived within that bloc? We can hardly believe that the "balance of power," if any, has always remained the same in its essence. Our concern should be not to make that kind of general statement but to give answers to concrete questions such as: Why is it that Christianity in Byzantium, especially as seen in the esprit de corps of cloisters and their activities, was so conspicuously different from that in Western Europe? Why is it that the Byzantine monks and the monks in Western Europe show such a remarkable contrast in the way they acted upon the secular units of society (villages, towns, cities, guilds, and nations)? Why is it that even within the boundaries of Western Europe there was an essential difference in the influences of cloister-life between the regions in the north and the south of the Alps? And so forth. Therefore, from one point of view, what is here proposed may well be called a kind of "comparative social history." However, it is by no means a sociology like Max Weber's; it is a definitely different thing which claims the title of "history" by rights. The raison d'être of our approach as distinguished from Max Weber's may be found in the two facts: that Europe has changed, the world has changed, and in consequence the problems the world, Europe in particular, presents have changed so drastically from the time of Max Weber; that the method of the positivist study not only of European history, but of Oriental, and Japanese history, has added to its exactness and minuteness to such a degree that even a genius like Max Weber would have found it beyond his ability to pursue by himself its ambitious end.

The growing awareness in Western Europe of this situation has led, on the one hand,
to an effort on the part of scholars in history to work out a system for co-operative study; on the other hand, it has encouraged some specialists to bring forth, though tentatively as yet, new angles of historical study. Among such specialists there is, for example, G. Barraclough—we have already mentioned his name—who, with a new picture of the whole history of European perspective, suggests, from the point of view of emphasizing the processes of secularization of forms of religious order or their reflection upon the secular world, an attempt to look upon the Investiturstreit, Reformation, and Civil Revolution as the three major turning points in European history. Otto Brunner is another example. He attempts to center his search for the distinctive character of Western Europe before the Civil Revolution in the eighteenth century around the idea of “aristocracy;” he further attempts to make clear, with his characteristic socio-historical method, the basic difference between Western and Eastern Europe, by means of comparing the modes of towns and cities and the ways of living of citizens (cives, Bürger) under the feudal system. If these attempts and more of a similar kind are successfully carried out, the characteristics of Byzantine society, which have hitherto been practically neglected by us, will inevitably become for us, too, a matter of great interest and concern.

What I wish to emphasize here is the fact that the classical theories of history in Western Europe, which have been put forward since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and have aimed at gaining a theoretic and systematic understanding of history, are now being discarded, or at least, modified, by the more advanced among historians in Western Europe. Those of us who specialize in either Japanese or Oriental history, too, should therefore be warned against believing that the Western European “yardstick,” once in frequent use in this country, is still usable with any validity in measuring historical phenomena, especially in talking about them to Western scholars.

I have so far taken up some of the hard problems we students in Japan of Occidental history are faced with, and suggested along what lines we should try to solve them. Now I wish to close this little paper by emphasizing once again the urgent necessity for all those engaged in the study of history in Japan, no matter whether they are specialists in Occidental, Oriental or Japanese history, to make joint efforts toward the advance in this country of what we call “comparative social history,” or “comparative cultural history.”