

INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Social Studies, Hitotsubashi University, held a symposium on the topic “Cultural Changes in the Period of Transformation in the Capitalist World System: Some Reconsiderations” on September 19th and 20th, 1988, at the Convention Hall of the Komaba Eminence Hotel in Tokyo.

The purpose of the symposium was to have a multifaceted discussion and analysis of various characteristics of cultural changes in the contemporary world—which displays aspects of the transformative period—through diachronic and international comparisons. These transformative aspects are exemplified by structural changes in the world economy, such as economic conflicts among industrialised capitalist countries and the emergence of newly industrialised countries. These changes are occurring in parallel with an unrestricted nuclear arms race and the worldwide deterioration of the environment, all of which signify the crucial importance of this transformative period for the future existence of humankind.

All the more, therefore, the peaceful transformation of the existing world order is highly desirable. In order to effect this peaceful transformation, it becomes necessary not only to analyse political and economic structures but also to consider the changing consciousness of peoples and the changing character of national identity. Needless to say, there exists an extensive cultural gap between the North and the South, owing to historical circumstances. Cultural changes are directly connected with the transformation in the political and economic structure, but have a proper logic of their own. Analysing the process of cultural change by means of international comparisons demands the elaboration of a new and appropriate methodology.

We can observe in the contemporary world cultural changes taking place at various levels. There is, for example, criticism of industrialism which brings about the destruction of nature and the waste and exhaustion of natural resources; and there is also reflection on ethnocentrism. These are a consequence of damage incurred in world wars and the persistent search by ethnic minorities for new ideas apropos of regional integration and multi-culturalism. These trends are only a few examples, but, in many cases, they imply criticism of the conventional modernisation theory. The impact of these cultural trends of transformative aspects of the contemporary world and their significance for world history are worthy of serious reconsideration.

In this special issue of the *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* we have included the panelists' papers and a summary of each discussion period. We hope the readers will find that these have taken us a major step forward in examining the issues at hand.

September 19, 1989

The Organizing Committee of the Symposium