COMMENTARY FOR THE GENERAL DISCUSSION ON JAPAN IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Selcuk ESENBEL

Bogazici University

This Symposium was organized for the discussion of Professor Eisenstadt's thought-provoking book on Japanese Civilization; A Comparative View, that has been recently published by the University of Chicago Press. The work is based upon the fundamental conceptual contrast between the rise of Axial Civilizations such as that of China, Europe, and India, which were defined by the universalistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism and experienced the tension between the transcendental and the mundane, versus, the pre-existing Non Axial civilizations that reflected the particularistic cultural self conceptualization of local communities. These communities organized as tribal orders and reflected ethno-communal animistic religious traditions. Non Axial civilizations tended to be dominated by the institutions and cultures of Axial civilizations as in the case of the Germans who converted to Christianity or the Turks who converted to Islam. Others were pushed out of the margins of history such as in the case of the Mongols. Japan is the only Non Axial Civilization that has given birth to a continuous, autonomous history which produced a sophisticated culture that can only be found in Axial Civilizations. According to Professor Eisenstadt, it is this "unique" character of Japanese history that explains the strong inclinations toward the Japanization of processes of change particularly during the revolutionary transitions that entail the acceptance of Axial Civilizations. Such processes can be recognised in the case of the acceptance of Chinese Civilization in the seventh century and in the case of the acceptance of Western Civilization in the construction of Japanese Modernity. The voluminous work that handles Japanese Civilization from its Antiquity to the rise of Modern Japan with the 1868 Meiji Restoration is structured as a comparative study with Europe, China, India and other historical experiences that situates Japan in a global historical framework. The contention of the author is to take Japan analysis out of its familiar restrictions of an Euro-centred bilateral contrast or the parochial Nihonjin ron or Japaneseness approach and in turn explain the character of Japanese Civilization in a truly multi-faceted comparative framework.

A work of this magnitude is an important opportunity to discuss the

larger questions of methodology in social sciences that is not simply related to the study of Japanese Civilization. Here a number of issues come to mind that invite a discussion of methodology together with an evaluation of this monumental work, Japanese Civilization. First, the book makes it once more clear that we need to develop a fruitful systematic method of collaboration between social scientists who are interested in general patterns of human behaviour and the specialists such as historians, anthropologists, economists and so on of a particular area of study. In this case, it is obvious that the two groups have advantages and disadvantages which need to be framed in a positive collaboration network in order to co-join the strong points of both approaches. The social scientists who ask questions of magnitude such as those of Professor Eisenstadt are able to construct a debating platform about the global context of human history that attempts to decipher the outlines of general and universalistic societal forms which relates to patterns of change which the specialist detects in local and regional context. The advantage of such a universalistic approach is the effort at trying to understand cultural behaviour in a comparative framework that will provide an explanation that can go beyond the terms of the culture itself. The method will therefore enable the expansion of the horizons of reflection about a particular culture in this case that of Japan by subjecting Japanese historical narrative to questions of Axiality, Non Axiality that have a universal platform. On the other hand, the specialist as in the case of those who work in Japanese Studies, has the advantage of language skills, the use of local sources, that breeds familiarity with the internal discourse of the culture about itself in studies about the politics, religion, culture and so on of the Japanese people.

The advantages and disadvantages of the two different methods are clear in Professor Eisenstadt's book about Japanese Civilization. By the very nature of the requirement that the social scientist has to rely on the studies of the Area specialist of Japan, the author has to use these secondary sources on Japanese society as primary sources without practicing "internal criticism" of documents that the father of modern history Leopold von Ranke advocated for the construction of a historical narrative by a scientific method. While as historians, we may no longer be so confident about the scientificity of Ranke's historical methodology that relied heavily on the use of primary sources and a naive belief from our perspective on the uncontested ability of the written document to tell history as it actually was, still most students of history know that the written word contains not just information but also an argument about the information which imbeds the subjective perspective of the source. Thus, while the discussion of Japanese Civilization is based upon the series of studies of Japan specialists, the author cannot penetrate into the historiography of the literature that serves as the foundation of

the book's argument. On the one hand, the debate within the field of Japanese studies between different generations of scholars in Japan and in the English language literature produced primarily in the United States, or, the possibility of factual weaknesses or mistakes in the literature of the specialist, do not / can not enter into the analytical framework of the social scientist's evaluation. On the other hand, the specialist may have the advantage of being sensitized to the existing discourse about Japan as a separate phenomena than the information about various aspects of Japanese behaviour. However the specialist such as myself may end up so engrossed in the particulars of the world that one has chosen to study that such universalistic issues at the level of Professor Eisenstadt's work escape our attention. Furthermore, Japanese studies publications will reflect the limited vision of the author about any comparative framework. For example, Western scholars of Japan will sometimes posit a concept of the West as a contrasting or comparative framework to that of Japan for the sake of comparative analysis that remains superficial at the level of "we in the West" or "in contrast to the West" simply on the basis of being a native member of the western world. And this self-confidence of positing the West as a comparative frame in the hands of the specialist is sometimes done without a clear picture of the state of the art in the historiography about the construction of history of the processes about the so-called Western World. In this sense, Professor Eisenstadt's work is superior to that of many specialists for the author sets the comparative analysis of Japanese Civilization in a systematic framework that discusses at length the various components of comparison within a conscious rational understanding of the history of the idea of the West in its own discourse.

However, how do we solve the problems which are inherent in both approaches? I think that Professor Eisenstad's work can provide an opportunity to discuss the possibilities of devising a new framework of collaboration between social scientists and the specialists in Area Studies. My suggestion would be that a monumental study such as this one about Japanese Civilization would have benefited greatly if there was a process of collective interaction between the specialists and the author to expose the questions of debate and the pitfalls of the specialist literature prior to the preparation of the work. I am thinking in terms of possible committees, or workshops that bring the two types of minds together to help the construction of the narrative by the author. This indicates our need to restructure our approach to Area Studies.

The framework of Area Studies which was formed in the post-war period and was primarily a product of the development of scholarship in the United States now needs to be reconsidered to handle new and different questions. It is clear that the existing framework lacks the ability to infuse Area Studies with the

currents in theory and other fields of study so much so that an approach that was supposed to enrich the understanding of a particular culture such as that of Japan now exhibits the character of a limited and familiar debate about Japan in which almost the same themes come back and back again: Nihonjinron, Japanese modernity, conflict versus harmony, feudalism, uniqueness versus universality. The framework is always the West as a monolithic entity which is frequently the United States in the back of the minds of the authors. However, surely Japan will look different if the comparative framework and the questions of the study of Japan are asked for example from the history of the monarchy in Europe, the caste tradition in India, the empires of the Near East.

Professor Eisenstadt has brought emphasis on an important thesis for the understanding of the history of modern civilization as the relationship between state and society. In the case of Japan, his argument stresses the primary role of the state and the relative weakness of an autonomous civil soeiety, which contrasts the Japanese experience with that of Western Europe, United States, and Canada taken to represent the West. Basing its roots in the highly regulatory character of the Tokugawa state during the Japanese history of feudalism, in Eisenstadt's view, the Meiji state and its vestiges create an image of Japanese modernity which is unique in the sense that it derives from the dominance of state structures, state oriented elites and counter-elites, and political networking which is concurrent with a relatively weak civil society. This historical situation is argued to be unique to Japan due to its Non-Axial civilization that is not rooted in an Axial civilization with universalistic principles, and has resulted in the "conflation of state and civil society within the broader national community". 1/(Eisenstadt, p.35).

The theme of Japan's modernity and its post war democracy as a highly regulated form of a modern capitalist society that contrasts with the asssumption of the separation of state and a civil society capable of an autonomous political / economic / social history in the West is perhaps the most significant thesis of the study in terms of understanding the variations in the global history of modernity in our age. Since the second half of the nineteenth century the global history of modernity is not only continuing in the societies ideologically and historically accepted to be part of the West but it is also increasingly shifting to the region of the late developers or the newly developing societies of the Non-West, namely those countries in Asia and other continents that have became integrated into the world system that was inititally formed with the rise of the West.

The book argues, most Western scholars seem to have difficulty understanding the basic cultural and institutional feautures of modernity as it developed in Japan, especially its status as a highly controlled yet non-totalitarian, indeed,

formally and to some extent actually democratic society. This observation of Professor Eisenstadt is very important for it points to a common intellectual barrier in the minds of Western scholarship on Japan in which frequently the idea of the West in the mind of the student of Japan is a pristine vision of the West which lacks the decontruction of the ideology of being Western. This vision which forms the contrasting "other" for Japan (one can cite other entities such as India, China, and so on as well) is often derived from the intellectual and ideological idealization of the political process in the compressed idea of the vision of the West that is derived from the intellectual heritage of Western thought. It is frequently the idea of the West as we have learned from such great savants as Locke, and Hobbes who form our ideas for the idea of democracy, liberty, constitutionalism, or, our concepts for the role of rational bureaucracy and the industrial urban classes as seen in Weber and Marx in the construction of modernity in the West. The idea of the West is used without a clear discussion of the intellectual paradigm itself or an awareness of the historical complications of the actual praxis of these ideals in action in the history of the West. Therefore, those who have difficulty in understanding Japanese political behavior, contrast it to the ideal of politics in the image of the West. They probably would have difficulty in understanding the actual historical experience of the societies that are seen as part of the West which frequently contrasted with the ideal models of the great Western savants themselves.

I would like to discuss this issue with an example from the book. Professor Eisenstadt cites the difficulty of most Western scholars to understand the workings of Japanese politics in Western terms. One suggestion would be that in order to overcome the difficulty in understanding Japanese parliamentary politics, it would be perhaps more relevant to study the practice of politics in the history of prewar and postwar Italy, and take into account the role of the United States in Italy in the immediate post-war period, the political domination of Christian Democrats in national governments in the post-war period despite the visibility of Socialists and Communists in local Italian politics, and an informal network of power holders as seen in Italian regional politics which remain in the hands of "unofficial/unlawful" forces such as that of the Mafia. Such a comparative study might explain better the seemingly mysterious workings of decision-making in Japanese politics that is argued to be based on behind the scenes negotiations between differents participants, and the accommodative tendency of the ruling party to the opposition, all of which represent the weakness of an ideological dimension. 2/(Eisenstadt, p.150)

This comment does not intend to bring out a strong counter-argument that the Japanese due process of politics does not have its culturally defined

modes of behavior. It is just that frequently much of the assumptions of Western oriented scholarship on Japan inflates the conceptual framework of uniqueness or Japaneseness because of an analytical framework that takes a "should" be approach of a pristine image of politics in a monolithic idea of the Modern West. The idea of the West is frequently not dominated by countries such as Italy or Spain which are also part of the history of the modern West, but probably by the perception of the experience as an ideal in the United States. The work of Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner on the variations in the model of Japan in different cultural and generational environments has been an important corrective step in questioning this binary opposition of the idea of the West versus Japan in contemporary scholarship by showing its historiographic process. 3/(Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner, Othernesses of Japan: Historical and Cultural Influences on Japanese Studies in Ten Countries (München: Monographien Band I Harausgegeben vom Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien der Philipp-Franz-von-Siebold-Stiftung, 1992))

Recent scholarship on the Middle East is also concerned with the debate on the similar issue of what if there was any role of Civil Society in the Middle East. It is significant to note that the recent study edited by Augustus Richard Norton begins with a critical discussion of Max Weber's brief remarks on the nature of Islamic urban life. Lacking what he considered to be the decisive feature of formally organized urban communes (Gemeinde), he disqualified Middle Eastern cities from consideration as autonomous political units, unlike the cities of mediaeval Europe. 4/(Augustus Richard Norton, Civil Society in the Middle East, Volume Two (Leiden E. J. Brill, 1996), p.xi) The whole argument of the work is to show that there were and still are civilian networks, organizations, institutions which function as a kind of civil society in the Middle East. The articles try to counter the Weberian image by deciphering local/indigenous historical phenomena that extends the definition of civil society to a comparable common platform.

Thus Professor Eisenstadt's concern in attempting to explain the relation of state and civil society in Japan in a historical and sociological comparative perspective can be understood as the reflection of an intellectual movement to overcome two binary propositions about Japanese Civilization: The classical rejection of the cultures outside of the West including that of Japan is the explanation of the idea of Modernity. This Euro-centered/Orientalist view was developed by the great Western thinkers of the nineteenth century such as Marx/Weber and others. However, the Occidentalist counter argument was also developed by the

Asian thinkers who were frequently well-versed in Western thought and were motivated by the search for a national identity in their own modern experience. The counter-argument for unique Japaneseness, nihonjinron, developed by Japanese thinkers which challenged the nineteenth century western rejection of Non-Western forms of modernity by an alternative and nationalist explanation of modernity is quite typical of the critical Occidentalist mode. I would suggest that Professor Eisenstadt's work that takes Axiality / Non Axiality as a basic universalistic paradigm which makes Japan unique but explainable beyond the nationalist perspective, and the articles of the Norton volume on the Middle East that seek to redefine the idea of civil society in Islamic turf, represent a trend in Western scholarship that intends to "decipher" in new terms the role of Non-Western civil society/societies that aims to cut across the above binary opposites perspective. However, it is also clear that in these works, the centrality of the conceptualization of state and society is clearly derived from the Western idea of the history of the political economy of modern Western civilization which argues that civil society has been crucial for the emergence of the modernity of politics in terms of liberty and democracy: Civil society is seen as the embodiment of autonomous, self-regulating institutions that have the potential to be the foundation of self government and democracy that can counter the power of the state.

Here, I would argue that the image of the potent role of the state and the relative weakness of civil society that is acknowledged as a major aspect of Japanese modernity by Professor Eisenstadt is in need of discussion. This is in view of the importance of the relation constructed between the state and civil society in the political economy of the politics of modernity as defined above. I would like to begin with a question about the book's evaluation which sees an imposing role of the state in Japan throughout its history that exhibits itself as the conflation of state and society with historical deep-set roots. Needless to say, there has always been a sense of unity between the culture of civil society and that of Japanese polity during the time of the Yamato state as well as the later Heian court or the feudal governments in so far as sharing the idea of a culturally and ethnically homogenious tradition. And it is also convincing to argue that the idea of national polity, kokutai, as it was argued by the Japanese, especially the nationalist Mito school during the Tokugawa period and later by the Meiji thinkers entails the unity of state and society under the sacral entity of the Emperors without a clear line of division between state and society. But, according to my understanding, the Japanese state "forced" a conflation of state and society by and large as a result of the state building process after the 1868 Meiji Restoration. The relationship of the Tokugawa state to the "non-state" civil society of feudal

Japan, if the feudal class structure and the institutions of the commoner popula-
tion of merchants, peasants, and artisans in the town and the village can by seen
as part of Japanese civil society, was quite ambivalent. In the words of Philip
Brown, the early modern state in Japan exercised the mannerisms of a flam-
boyant state with great claims to authority but when it came to practice there
was great acceptance of autonomy and diversity which was exercised by the non-
state institutions of society. In my opinion as well, the Tokugawa state's stance
toward the village which housed more than 80 percent of the civilian population,
existed in a great deal of autonomous political / economic / social space which left
the peasants in self-governing bodies as long as they were not rebellious. It is
noteworthy that in the case of rebellions as well, while the feudal authorities lost
no time in suppressing them, in actuality, many of their demands were accepted.
This was not because of a voluntary choice on behalf of especially the Tokugawa
Shogunate to be particulary nice to peasants (a contradiction in terms in any
feudal polity) but it was due to the "limits" of state power in view of the auton-
omy of the countryside in historical terms. In my opinion, by destroying and
reorganizing Japanese society, both its towns and villages, for the sake of mod-
ernity, the Meiji state, modeled on the nineteenth century European nation state,
instigated this conflation of society into the state power structure. 5/(Philip
Brown, Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Mod-
ern Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Selcuk Esenbel, Even the
Gods Rebel: Peasants of Takaino and the 1871 Nakano Uprising (The Association
for Asian Studies Monograph, 1998); James W. White, Ikki: Social Conflict and
Political Protest in Early Modern Japan, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995))

We have to consider this idea of the conflation of state and society in a
country such as Japan as also reflective of the compression of time and space in
our imagination of the modern experience. In contrast to the eighteenth century
and even the nineteenth century which was dominated by the transportation and
communications technology of the clipper ships and pony expresses, only to be
quickened by the introduction of railroads and other automotive means in its
later phases, the twentieth century has been a turbulent and fast moving process
in our imagination both with its World Wars, Holocausts as well as automobiles,
jet planes, satellites, and now the internet. Eric Hobsbawm has astutely touched
upon this quickening process in our minds by the title of his recent work on the
twentieth century as the Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century.
6/(Eric Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991
(London: Abacus, 1996)). Here, I would also argue that the compression of time
in our imagination about the twentieth century is also due to the extraordinary
expansion in the role of the state in the hands of power holders to manipulate

everyday life for the construction of modern industrial civilization in twentieth century terms-this relates to the extraordinary domination of the state over society that the author notes in the history of modern Japan even compared to Germany and Turkey. The acceleration in the potency of the state to control society in the twentieth century contrasts with the historical process of the industrial revolution as we note it in Europe starting with England and its gradual spread to the continent. We should remind ourselves that our century has experienced a re-industrialization process with the strong intervention / guidance of the state in view of the World Wars and the Great Depression that makes the image of an Adam Smithian vision of the gradual and evolutionary emergence of market economy, the English Industrial Revolution of the merchant industrialists of the cities of Lancaster or Manchester, recede back in our memory as slow-moving times. Furthermore, it is not just late developers such as Germany, Japan and Turkey that have relied on state mechanisms and the systematic manipulation of so-called civil society for constructing a modern industrial civilization but when looked at carefully, the New Deal of the United States, the Stalinist Industial Revolution of the Soviet Union, have many things in common with the experience of Japan or for that matter the other so-called late-developers in magnifying the role of the state over that of civil society. I am not suggesting that the experience of the United States, Soviet Union, or Japan are identical, but one suspects that there was a lot of conflation of society into the state in the bastions of the West that frequently do not enter into analysis.

Furthermore, in such situations as that of Japan and Turkey the process of civilization in the terms of Norbert Elias has a double-burden of constructing modern industrial civilization as not only a means of integration into the modern age but also as a means for national resistance against Western imperialism and domination in cultural terms. The enigmatic character of Asian nationalism should be taken into account to explain the lack of serious ideological differences on universalistic principles in politics: Frequently it is not the lack of principle, but the existence of the nationalist perceptions that have given priority to the principle of resistance against the West over the political principles of the left or the right in political behavior that has colored the state engineered modernities in Japan and Turkey to seem as "a conflation of state and society". Both societies have their share of political behavior that does not look quite explainable from the perspective of the ideological left and the right as defined by Western political thought. For example, the contradiction of the need for a nationalist agenda against the West in the politics of modern industrial civilization explains why sometimes outside observers find it difficult to explain the existence of Japanese Marxists who collaborated with prewar militarists by serving in the South

Manchurian Research Organization that was an arm of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, or that some even "converted" to nationalist causes. To explain such behavior as simply the ambivalence of principle in Japanese political behavior is not a sufficient explanation to the ears of the historian. The recent work of Louise Young on Japan's total empire shows us the inside story of how the construction of Manchukuo in the thirties was not the conspiracy of a few wild nationalist officers but actually entailed the collaboration of a wide range of "civil society" groups. Many leftists and liberals as well as nationalists saw Manchukuo as a utopia for a settler's paradise, the actualization of a Modern Asia that was an alternative to the British Baj, Dutch or the French Indo-China or the Foreign Settlements in Shanghai that dominated for a long time the form of modernity for the Asians. 7/(Louise Young, Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)).

Similarly, observers of modern Turkish history have found it difficult to explain the lack of "principled behavior" by sections of the Republic of Turkey after its foundation in 1923. The observers have frequently commented on the collaboration of former Marxist intellectuals with the cause of the Turkish revolution. Even the neutrality of the government during the Second World War which astutely played the Allies against Germany and remain a non-belligerent state in a policy of active neutrality has been at times criticized as an unprincipled behaviour for not having taken a firm stance against fascism. 8/(Selim Deringil, Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War. An Active Neutrality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.185 for criticism of foreign policy) The seemingly ambivalent forms of political behavior in Turkish politics as cited above can only be understood in the context of the nationalist ideology of the young Republican generation which sought to construct a western style state to save the nation in their minds from the dangers of colonialization by the western empires after the destruction of the Ottoman empire at the end of the First World War.

Therefore, sometimes the complexity of twentieth century history explains better the behavior of "Orientals" such as the Japanese or the Turks than comparative analyses of specialists in Area Studies which pose structural contrasts with the West. To give a similar example again from Japanese Civilization, in Japan the ruling party's accomodative stance and the weakness of the opposion in Japanese politics is seen as derived of a Japanese cultural norm in addition to the structure of the parliamentary system. Here, Eisenstadt's work refers to the evaluation of specialists who cite the prevalence of the ruling party's accomodation

to the politics of the disarmament treaty by adopting the politics of the opposition as their own. From the historical perspective, we should remember that Japan's prewar and immediate post-war developments made a profound impact in the minds of the post-war conservative ruling circles who firmly believed that the revival of a militarist Japan would be lethal for the future of the county even though they may have found the prewar ideological currents of nationalism not completely anathema at the time. Thus, this curious accomodation between ruling circles and the opposition is not so much a "cultural phenomenon" but it is quite understandable in view of the prevalence of a consensus in the post-war generation of ruling conservative circles of Japan for avoiding the resurgence of militarism and the economic drain of remilitarization after the "dark valley" of the thirties and forties. The conservative Yoshida Shigeru's vision of Japan's need to reconstruct her economy by making sure that the countries of south and southeast Asia would not conclude that Japan was returning to the path of militarism and the hope for the eventual expansion of economic relations with China is historically the immediate background to the seemingly close relations between the ruling circles and the opposition over the disarmament treaty rather than any anthropological explanation of Japanese political behavior. 9/(J. W. Dower, Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954 (Cambridge (Massachusetts): Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988), pp.387-388).

My final point in this general discussion of the symposium that is inspired from the monumental work of Professor Eisenstadt is that the vision of the Japanese generations that were involved in the construction of Japan's modernity in modern times makes more sense as a twentieth century modernist vision than an early nineteenth century one: this explaines the contradiction in the strong primordial, sacral vision of Japanese modernity as lacking a universal message. My personal desire for the work of Professor Eisenstadt's work on Japanese Civilization, especially the sections dealing with the period after the 1868 Meiji Restoration would have been to include the political / ideological / intellectual voice of the Meiji-Taisho-Showa Japanese individuals, for this collection of voices was very universalistic in claim while concerned at the same time by the need for a nationalist self definition though the primordial, ascriptive, sacral, natural terms of the native culture in the words of the book. Professor Eisenstadt hits an important point by bringing on the stage of Japanese modernity the role of the terms of the primordial, ascriptive, sacral, natural, and hierachal understanding of modernity in Japanese society. The reference to the primacy of the sacral and primordial terms of Japanese identity in modernity refreshes our memory by reminding us of the importance of Shintoism, Emperor-based nationalism, the

sacral / mythical basis for Japanese imperialism as part of Japanese modernity and the unique connection between the idea of ethnic homogeniety and Shinto with the idea of the Japanese nation. This may be my particular understanding of Professor Eisenstadt's emphasis on the Non-Axiality of Japanese civilization, but the book brings immediately to my mind the importance of the survival of the traditions of the native beliefs, practices, which are formulated from the heritage of the Shinto religion during the modern period as a framework for the self explanation of national identity that the Japanese have been constructing. It conflicted at the same time with their own modern desire for universality in the Japanese quest for modernity as an Asian phenomenon. It is this tension between the irrevocable components of the ideology of modern Japanese identity both as a sacral self at home that however has had universal claims abroad in Asia which is the interesting component Japanese modernity. The history of Japanese nationalism had a different profile on the Asian mainland than the sacral image at home. The crude reflections of this universal claim was represented in such slogans as Hakkoichiu (the eight corners of the world united) that was used by the Japanese nationalist imperialists to justify the foundation of an East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere during the Second World War. However, the slogan has its roots in the Meiji era, and the Japanese political and intellectual involvement in Asian revolutions was quite deep: The ups and downs of which remain to be studied. Japanese nationalism abroad was Asianism as a universal message, albeit with danger to the takers, that acted as a de-stabilizing factor by destroying the ingrained interests of older empires in Asia by helping Asian liberation. 10/(John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (Pantheon Books, New York, 1993), p.178)

Attempts to see the European comparability of Japanese modernity for example by searching for the roots of the Japanese work ethic in Tokugawa ideology to explain the emergence of Japanese capitalism in compatible terms with that of Protestant Europe has also silenced the role of the Shinto religion both as an ideology as well as a social praxis of communal life: Specifically the role of the Japanese ideology of Shinto as religion in the construction of modernity. The overemphasis on the Western oriented heritage of Modern Japan from the early Meiji era also had silenced the dynamic process of Asianism that begins with the late Meiji period and develops as the idea of Modernity in the twentieth century which was defeated with the war, but before the war it was perhaps more potent than the Westernist early Meiji heritage in taking the message of Japanese modernity abroad. How this historical phenomena of sacral, primordial identity is to be reconciled with the loud voice of the modern Japanese which saw the role of Japan as also universal as an Asianist vision is an issue that needs to be probed

further. For the modern Japanese, as we see in their writings, this new Japan was not only a part of the history of the construction of modernity, but for many, especially in the pre-war era, Japan was to be total modernity: Even more modern and universalistic than the West. For the Japanese nationalists of the pre-war era the slogan was surpassing modernity (kindai no chokoku) that brought a special modernist ideology to the ideology of imperial loyalty and the sacral origins of the imperial household. The ambition to be more modern than the established modernity of the imperialist West, was the motivating agenda of the nationalists as well as the leftists some of whom were invariably interested in the compatibility of the vision, hence their collaboration at times with the empire-building agenda in Asia.

This contradiction invites me to introduce into the analytical framework of understanding the modernity of Japanese civilization to be not just the late-comer or late-developer form of modernity, but the historical frontiers of modernity in the twentieth century that actually destroyed the modernity of the nineteenth century, In other words, as is clear from the general framework of this commentary so far, I am taking the idea of modernity for Japan closer to our time to the period after the Meiji period which ends in 1912 to the period including the Second World War rather than the culmination of Japanese conditions of Modernity in the Meiji period or simply the post-war period. According to Modris Eksteins who creatively argues in his work on the Rites of Spring, taking its title from the avant-garde ballet and symphony of Stravinsky that attacked nineteenth century sensibilities for romantic music and dance, the Great War (First World War) and the Birth of the Modern Age emerged with Germany in Europe, the homeland of the avant-garde in the Arts as well as modernity in war and economy. Germany represented the frontier of modernity that defied Paris and London, the nineteenth century centers of modern civilization in the capitals of the colonial imperial powers of the West. By attacking the "West" from the frontiers of its modernity, Germany in this destructive fashion brought on the twentieth century. I would expand Eksteins's analysis and include Japan into the venture of constructing the twentieth century by destroying the nineteenth century of the western empires in Asia with its aggressive industrialization and imperialism that were more modern than those of the nineteenth century. 11/(Modris Eksteins, Rites of Spring: the Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), pp.55-90)

If during the nineteenth century, the vision of Modern Japan for the liberal intellectual such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, the founder of Keio University required

that Japan catapult itself outside of Asia which is expressed with his slogan of "datsu-A", and plunge into Western Civilization, this was not for a pacifist end. Fukuzawa as his later works acknowledge also argued that a Modern Japan will lead the modernization of Asia out of its slumber in a mission of Enlightenment. Many influential Japanese agreed with this one to one relationship from their own perspective. The list ranges from British style parliamentarian Count Okuma Shigenobu to the famous politician of civilian party politics of the twenties Inukai Tsuyoshi, and the familiar nationalist ideologues such as Tokutomi Soho and Okawa Shumei. Despite their important political differences, it is significant to note that all had a common agenda for a Japanese Asianist destiny in forming a modern empire in Asia as a universal vision which would also liberate the Asians from their own nineteenth century: The sociopolitical force which created Modern Japan was not just the national polity of sacrality constructed in Tokyo for the population of the home islands but also modern Manchukuo constructed in Harbin.

In conclusion, the work of Professor Eisenstadt is very important for it courageously confronts the larger issue of the meaning of Japanese Civilization which the specialist is incapable of confronting due to the particularistic approach of his / her methodology. It is the difficulty of reconciling these two approaches that provides food for the intellectual inquiry to study Japan. For this reader, the work has engendered new questions and issues about the understanding of Japanese Civilization which has made this commentary possible. The arguments about Non-Axial Civilization, conflation of state and society, the primordial, ascriptive, sacral nature of society and self-identity, are challenging notions that need to be discussed further together with the issues that remain outside of the orbit of the book's analysis.