

BOOK REVIEWS

Higher Education in Japan: Its Take-Off and Crash by Michio Nagai, Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press, 1971, ix+264pp.

Dr. Michio Nagai is one of the most outstanding educational sociologists of modern Japan, and underlying his many studies is always the pulsation of his rich sociological imagination that enables him to view comprehensively the problems of education. In Dr. Nagai's perspective, we find sharp intellect blended with controlled emotion, and it is thus highly significant that the results of his work have been translated into English and published at this time.

I

Dr. Nagai was born in Tokyo in 1922. His father is Ryūtarō Nagai, a politician renowned for his eloquence in prewar days. After graduating from the Faculty of Literature of Kyoto University in 1944, Dr. Michio Nagai received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1952. Following his return from the U.S., he has successively held the posts of assistant professor at the Faculty of Education of Kyoto University and professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, followed by a productive stint as a member of the editorial staff of the *Asahi shimbun*. Since April 1972, he has been serving as Director of the Communications Institute of the East-West Center in Hawaii.

Almost simultaneously with his assumption of a faculty post at Kyoto University, Dr. Nagai turned his deeply perceptive gaze on Japanese education. The new system of education adopted in Japan after World War II appeared gradually to have reached a critical impasse in the mid-1950s. He was one of the first to see that resolution of the situation demanded urgent efforts. His views are most clearly represented in his "Kyōiku kaikaku no zentei" [Prerequisites for educational reform] subtitled "Sengo kyōiku no kaiko to tembō" [Postwar education: retrospect and outlook], which is included in *Kindaika to Kyōiku* [Modernization and education] (UP Sensho Series, University of Tokyo Press, 1969). There he lists the examination hell, the relationship and clash of educational freedom and politics, and the chaos on the campus as phenomena symbolic of the stalemate in which Japanese education now finds itself. He then indicates how the various educational problems of Japan are sharply reflected in these three phenomena, and attempts to suggest remedies to the problems. According to Dr. Nagai, his study of university problems began in the 1960s. The book under review could well be described as the summation of his studies to date.

II

The book is composed of two parts. Part I is titled "University and Society in Modern Japan" and is a complete translation of what he published as *Nihon no daigaku: sangyō shakai ni hatasu yakuwari* [The Japanese university: its role in industrial society] as a volume in the Chūkō Shinsho Book Series. In translation, slightly outdated

statistics were replaced with more up-to-date data. It is quite interesting that this paperback book which was so warmly welcomed in Japan (having received the Mainichi Shuppan Bunka Award) is now being introduced to the readers in other countries when one considers that until recently the social sciences in Japan were strongly influenced by European culture.

Part II is a collection of six essays selected from among those Dr. Nagai has written over the past twelve years and aptly described by the title "The Intellectual and the Changing Structure of Education in Japan."

Of these six essays "Mori Arinori and the Government Educational System in Meiji Japan" is an abridged translation of "Chishikijin no seisan rûto" [The production route of the intellectual] which appeared in Volume 4 of *Kindai Nihon shisôshi kôza* [Lectures on the history of modern Japanese thought] (Chikuma Shobô, 1959), and "The 'Take-Off' and 'Crash' of Modern Japan" is a complete translation of the essay of the same title which appeared in the April 1967 issue of *Chuô Kôron*.

Three of the essays in Part II, "Herbert Spencer in Early Meiji Japan," "Mori Arinori: Pioneer of Modern Japan," and "The University and the Intellectual" are reprinted from the *Japan Quarterly*, but there are nearly equivalent Japanese-language essays for the first two. The last essay in the book, "University Problems in Japan," was submitted to the Institute for International Studies of Notre Dame University.

Of all the essays in the book, the one which best shows Dr. Nagai's original perspective most clearly is the fifth essay in Part II, "The 'Take-Off' and 'Crash' of Modern Japan." Accordingly, I would like to summarize it here.

III

As explained in the preface of the book, the frame of reference for Dr. Nagai's consideration of Japanese educational development consists of three major theses.

First, Dr. Nagai notes that Japanese educational development is a reflection of Japan's own, internal historical development. Historically, a society tends to move from feudalism to capitalism and then to socialism, but this transition should be regarded as a trend and not as a strict law. As a trend, it has a universality transcending national or racial differences, but each individual country experiences this process differently through the medium of its own particular characteristics as a nation or as a people.

Secondly, the first thing we must note in looking at the Japanese case is that Japan was an underdeveloped country. An underdeveloped country is strongly affected by more developed ones, but in most cases it follows a different course of development. Not only politics and economics but also the educational structure and popular consciousness are thus subject to similar historical restrictions.

Third, Japan is a non-Western culture. In having a non-Western cultural tradition, Japan differs from Prussia and Italy, countries which were also underdeveloped but which were part of Western civilization. It was not for the first time after Japan came into contact with the West that the Japanese demonstrated a curiosity about foreign cultures and an earnest willingness to learn and adapt from them. Even before that, Japan had shown a similar reaction toward the cultures of the Asian Continent. In addition there is a seemingly eternal quality to the uniformity of Japanese culture and the unity and seclusiveness of the Japanese people. An awareness of such circumstances is essential in understanding such cultural phenomenon as education.

Integrating these three theses, Dr. Nagai attempts to understand the development of Japanese education structurally, particularly the transition from its positive aspects (the "take-off") to its negative aspects (the "crash").

In this essay, he introduces W. W. Rostow's concept of the stages of economic growth as a theory on the stages of historical development, and the theory of cultural lag formulated by W. F. Ogburn as a clue to understanding the cultural transformation which Japan underwent as an underdeveloped country. These theories are, however, but materials for consideration. The logic which develops in this essay rests upon a perspective which is Dr. Nagai's own.

Rostow cites Japan as the first non-Western society to have reached the take-off point, and states that the take-off period was approximately two decades between 1878 and 1900. This take-off was not confined to structural and quantitative changes in the economy but presupposed changes within the political, social, and institutional frameworks, naturally including educational changes.

While it is certainly true that education in Japan played an important role in the beginning of the Meiji period, Dr. Nagai makes the very suggestive observation that "If we are to be able to understand the development of modern Japanese education, however, it will be necessary to deal at some length with the nature and causes of the crash. For any tentative statements about the excellence of education during the take-off period must be accompanied by a recognition that this same educational development later contributed to Japan's fall." (p. 212) In this way, Dr. Nagai views Japanese education from the early years of the Meiji era until defeat in World War II as one uninterrupted process from take-off to crash. He says, "Thus the question that should be asked is 'What kind of education was it that served Japan during the take-off but later contributed to the crash?' In my opinion, an approach that begins with the assumption of continuities and tries to develop a conceptual framework through which the structure of Japanese education and the changes that occurred in the course of its development can be understood is an effective method by which to proceed to further empirical inquiries into the particularities of each period." (pp. 212-13)

At the same time, he finds contemporary Japanese education confronted by a serious impasse and is highly conscious of the problems involved. "Japan has now reached a second take-off stage; educational expansion and economic growth are proceeding at an explosive rate, exceeding that of the early Meiji period. What does the future hold? Will the course of education be smooth, or will it again end in a crash? If it does not crash, will it continue on its present low-altitude course?" (p. 213) To this, he adds, ". . . unless something is done, any significant improvement will remain problematic. Moreover, insofar as contemporary education exhibits many of the same structural features that characterized prewar education, the possibility of a second crash cannot be excluded." (p. 214)

Basing his thesis upon this historical perspective, Dr. Nagai begins his analysis of the early Meiji education by fixing Japan as a non-Western, underdeveloped country and goes on to analyze the intertwining three factors of (1) Japan's internal historical development, (2) Japan's nature as an underdeveloped nation, and (3) Japan's non-Western culture. (pp. 215-27)

To go into the historical development first, the prerequisite conditions which were to allow education's take-off already existed in Japan, both socially, and educationally, before the Meiji Restoration (of 1868). However, it was the external impact which stimulated internal change and prompted the bold Japanese decisions to move ahead

toward an unknown future. Behind the overwhelming military strength of the West lay a modern civilization which was superior in many aspects to that which Japan had created. Awareness and understanding of this created a tension within the national elite and made them decide upon their bold quest.

As for education, there was not one among the chief educational institutions of the early Meiji period, including schools, from the elementary to the university level, or textbooks, and teacher training methods, that was devised or designed by a Japanese. Japanese leaders invited foreign advisors and imported foreign systems. Pressed both from within and from without, education began to tread the path of modernization.

Dr. Nagai expertly analyzes this historical process of modernization using Ogburn's theory of cultural lag. An underdeveloped country, however, does not necessarily follow Ogburn's thesis of having material culture precede non-material culture. The task which confronted this underdeveloped country was to achieve the opposite of Ogburn's diagram, to have the non-material culture precede the material as a result of pressures applied from above (meaning leadership exercised by the national government in the field of education), and further by joining the two processes so that modernization's slow upward curve would mark a steeper curve.

In addition, the success of Japanese education in solving this problem owes a great deal to the following two factors. First, Japanese education before the Meiji Restoration was far more advanced than in most newly independent nations of today before their independence. Second, the West which Japan took for its model, being the post-Industrial Revolution one, lay within the bounds of possibility for underdeveloped Japan.

Furthermore, the leaders who dealt with this situation were able to maintain an independent and flexible attitude. The early Meiji period was one of active vitality for diverse ideologies, and there was no absolute dogma to restrict the thinking of educational leaders thus allowing them to devise flexible and creative policies. It was only after the enactment of the Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education that Japan's course was firmly established.

In this way, early Meiji education found a clear solution for Japan's stage of historical development and backwardness, but how did it deal with the third problem of the inherent non-Western culture?

To be brief, the answer is that the traditional view of the country as one family was the main current of thought in Japan which also has a long tradition of the unity of government and education. This view of the country as one family acted as an internal support for the various institutions originating in a Western context of clear delineation between government and education. It goes without saying that the concept of unity of government and education later developed into the Imperial Rescript on Education. More important, however, is the fact that when this idea was joined to the administrative dominance which had already been established in the political field there was nothing which could check administrative arrogance. In the end, not only education but the whole of Japanese society was flying blind.

Meiji Japan flew fast and straight, enjoying victory in both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars and accomplishing its industrial revolution. Educationally, the percentage of school enrollment at the compulsory education level reached 98 per cent as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. At the same time Japan reached the second historical stage of development.

However, Japan never made any real attempt to tackle the problems inherent in the second stage. The administrative dominance, which had been supported by the concept of unity of government and education, led to a situation in which administration reigned supreme in a uniform conformity devoid of politics. As a result, people neglected the search for those policies necessary for an underdeveloped country to continue its advance past the second stage of development after the industrial revolution. The same was true of educational improvement, where attempts to solve the problems which an underdeveloped country should have faced after its take-off were abandoned. Among these problems were the dynamic structuring of "Japanization" and "Westernization" and the reorganization of education based upon the principles of freedom and uniformity. The result of this neglect can be seen most clearly in the confusion accompanying the expansion of the university system and the entrance examination hell.

There were indeed efforts made to build education from below, by the masses who ought to have been sovereign in educational revision, both by a group of people advocating liberal education in the Taishō period (1912–1925) and by a movement belonging to the socialistic movement. Yet these failed to bear fruit, the former because it lacked a historical perspective and the latter because it inclined excessively to political ideology.

Moreover, these struggles to revise education ended in a collision between political education from above, which had been growing more rigid since the Meiji era, and leftist political ideologies. The victory of the former put Japanese education firmly on the road to destruction, and education crashed along with politics.

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This then, albeit very rough, is a brief summary of Dr. Nagai's perspective. In actual fact, the three factors of Japan's spontaneous historical development, Japan's nature as an underdeveloped country, and Japan's non-Western culture are most flexibly employed in his discussion, sometimes as a framework for ordering the various social conditions surrounding education and sometimes as a framework for structuring and understanding the problems of education itself. Naturally, the meaning involved in each concept varies greatly depending upon the era being analyzed and the problem dealt with.

The essays included in this book demonstrate the effectiveness of the frame of reference which comprehends education from early in the Meiji period to defeat in World War II as one uninterrupted process from take-off to crash. While those included in Part II deal with specific problems in a detailed and concrete way, these also provide a magnificent relief of Dr. Nagai's grand perspective.

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Shina kōsenryoku chōsa hōkoku [Report on the investigation of China's war potential] edited by Mantetsu chōsabu [Research Department of the South Manchurian Railway Company], Tokyo, San'ichi shobō, 1970, 582pp.

INTRODUCTION

Shina kōsenryoku chōsa hōkoku [Report on the investigation of China's war potential] is a report compiled in 1940 by the Research Department of the now defunct South