

The author has devoted five years of unremitting labour to the compilation of this work. As a result the economic history of Japanese civilization is given with a wealth of detail and a scholarship that will make the book invaluable to all those interested in the growth of Japan.

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THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS
OF THE
HISTORY OF THE CIVILIZATION OF JAPAN

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YOSOBURO TAKEKOSHI

THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS
OF THE
HISTORY OF THE CIVILIZATION OF
JAPAN

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PREFACE

WHEN Viscount Motono, who was Japanese Ambassador in Paris between 1901 and 1906, met Mon. Gustave Le Bon, a distinguished evolutionist, the latter referred to the recent rise of Japan as marvellous and unparalleled in the world's history, and compared her progress to that of a comet which flashes across the sky, but pursues an irregular orbit, is dangerous to approach and extremely uncertain as to its appearance and disappearance. Japan, he further commented, like the comet, may some day abruptly pass away from sight yonder beneath the horizon. In reply, Viscount Motono pointed out that Japan had not appeared on the sky with any such abruptness as Mon. Le Bon appeared to think; that, on the contrary, she had, through her long history, passed through various stages of progress till finally she emerged on the stage of the world's theatre fully prepared and ready to play her part. Her rise had only followed its natural course. Mon. Le Bon thereupon urged the publication of a work dwelling upon Japan's progress, and when subsequently Viscount Motono was home on leave, he told me of his interview with Mon. Le Bon, and suggested that I should write a Japanese history to enlighten not only Mon. Le Bon himself, but many others in Europe who might entertain a similar idea regarding Japan, promising at the same time that, should I complete such a work, he would himself take up the task of translating it into French and publishing it. Moved by Viscount Motono's arguments, I agreed, but shortly after I got involved in the political crisis brought about by the much disputed question of two additional army divisions. I was busy touring and speech-making, and the Dissolution and General Election which followed so occupied me that I had not time to touch the history, and the voluminous papers connected with Mon. Le Bon's requests and propositions which had been translated by Dr. Uchida remained unused in my desk.

Now comes on the scene the late Mr. Eiji Asabuki, my senior college mate and a broad-minded man with a profound interest in Japanese history. For instance, he had always regretted the slur cast upon the memory of Mitsunari Ishida, a lieutenant of Hideyoshi, by the literature of the Tokugawa period, and endeavoured to remove it by divulging the truth in a biography of Mitsunari, which he caused to be compiled by well-known scholars. Mr. Asabuki felt distressed at the fact that there was nothing but records of wars and conspiracies in Japanese history, and eager to see a history viewed from the point

of the economic development of the nation, he urged me to write one. My readers will see that his purpose exactly coincided with that of Viscount Motono, but owing to the political career I was then pursuing, I could not find time to comply with Mr. Asabuki's suggestion.

In 1915, however, I was defeated at the General Election, and Mr. Asabuki renewed his suggestion, which I accepted. As a preliminary step, an association was organized for the purpose of compiling an economic history of Japan, at a meeting promoted by Mr. Asabuki at the Kojunsha Club, Tokyo, on June 20, 1915. There were present at the meeting, beside Mr. Asabuki, Baron Go, Messrs. N. Ikeda, S. Imamura, T. Hayashi, T. Wada, K. Kagami, M. Naruse, Y. Muto, M. Kushida, and Baron K. Morimura. The charter members assembled elected Mr. Asabuki the chairman of the association, and Mr. Ikeda the auditor, and with the support of some seventy prominent men of Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe, a start was made for the goal by entrusting me with the work of compiling the history.

Thus it was that I opened editorial rooms in November 1915, and have now completed this work after some five years' labour. My hearty thanks are due to those friends of mine who have lavished large sums of money to the end that I might accomplish this great task. From the very start I made up my mind to repay them by doing my best, and that end I have sought by shutting myself up in my study since the opening of the editorial rooms, avoiding visitors of all kinds, abandoning my intention to stand for Parliament in the General Elections, and preserving an absolute silence over the serious problems arising from the Great War in Europe, even sacrificing the chance of attending the memorable Peace Conference at Versailles, to which Prince Saionji invited me. I have been at my desk at 8.30 every morning, and in the evening perused histories and old documents till far into the night, at the cost of impairing my eyesight. My friends and supporters, I hope, will fully appreciate my undivided efforts rendered uninterruptedly for the past five years. My deepest regret is that Mr. Asabuki died in January 1918, that is, before the completion of this work. A comforting thought, however, I have had in the fact that I was enabled to take a finished portion of the work and show it to Mr. Asabuki some four weeks before his death. I read to him passages on Japanese abroad from the MS., and told him of the progress of the work I was pursuing. Further misfortune, however, was still waiting for me, for the death of Mr. Asabuki was not long after followed by that of Viscount Motono, which occurred in September the same year. Human life is indeed like bubbles of water, it passes away like a shadow, a phantom, or a dream. From

my story it will appear that although the work of compiling the *Economic History of Japan* was not perhaps directly inspired by Viscount Motono himself, yet a side-light will undoubtedly be thrown upon the questions asked by Mon. Le Bon through the Viscount.

Those who believe that a history is built on a basis that can be, like the physical sciences, verified at any time will neither be satisfied with a poetic or chronological record, a genealogy, nor a biography of heroes in its place. Hardly any of our histories may be considered other than the kind mentioned above. There are several opinions respecting history: some regard it as a mere mockery of human society; others consider the turning-points of history are the deeds of heroes; while still others think that history is the path left by the progress of a certain natural law, and that men, great and small, are but puppets manipulated by the unseen hand of Nature. These views, however, when closely investigated, will be found to be nothing more than an impression obtained from a casual glance upon the glittering crest of the undulations constantly passing over human society. The true power that actually causes these undulations lies elsewhere; for as man is said to be an inborn social animal, so he may be called an inborn economic animal. It is man's inherent nature to seek food when born, clothes to cover his body, a house to shelter himself when grown, and good food, good clothes and better shelter when more fully grown. The origin of a state and legal enactments may be traced mainly, if not solely, to man's economic demand. Thus a single individual's economic need is the need of the millions, and it is these needs that give rise to social institutions and legal enactments. Because of the existence of man's economic need, nations have suppressed their internal foes and waged wars against and conquered foreign nations. Most of the great law-givers who have cherished the welfare of their people, and the great men and heroes who have led their races, have been impelled by the economic need of the millions. The leaders in these movements have been unconsciously driven on to do what they did by this human need. At all times and in any state, therefore, the true key to history must be found in man's economic activities.

In Shakespeare's great tragedy of *Julius Cæsar*, Brutus assassinates his friend Cæsar because he loved the country and his people more than he did his friend. History generally tells us that Brutus's motive for the assassination was political. Study by modern historians of the old literature and records, however, has revealed that Brutus was not acting according to current belief. There was a capitalistic class in Rome, who usurped political power and loaned their money to the people at a high rate of interest. Cæsar, backed by popular

support, tried to annul the people's debts, adopting a policy of benevolent administration. This led to a feud between the two classes, for the capitalistic class perceived that unless Cæsar were got rid of they would lose what they had. Brutus, who was a capitalist, and represented that class, came forward and slew the leader of the people, the debtors, in the Senate House.

Thus, even what history has termed the romantic act of a hero, had for its real motive the economic problem. As for Japanese history, when the Emperor Gosanjo directly ruled the country without the help of the Fujiwara family, who owned many great manorial lands, establishing a registry and escheating the manors, those historians who believed it the best policy to extend the royal authority unrestrictedly admired with one accord the new administration and panegyricized his spirit. But the administration of the Emperor Gosanjo made the local authorities, the owners of the manors in the country, submit themselves to the authority of the Minamoto family, and not only hand over their manors to the Minamoto to save themselves from being deprived of them, but even present their own bodies to the family in order to be free from exaction. Thus the royal authority fell to the ground instantly. This, too, shows that the dramatic history of the rise and fall of the powerful family is an economic problem. I do not deny the power of moral causes in history. I do not deny that the dramatic act of a hero is a centre of public emotion. But I do not hesitate to say that man is above all an economic animal (as the first desire of human kind lies in the economic existence), and the first cause of history lies in the economic cause. In writing this book I have been greatly impressed by the fact that the strata of human history are nearly common throughout many countries, many races, and many languages. In the slave economic age of Japan, England, Italy, and China were also in the age of slave economy. It is equally true throughout the world that after the disappearance of the slave economic age, the age of land economy followed, and after the land economic age the money economic age cropped up. With the appearance of the money economic age, all the countries in the East and West alike began to form commercial systems and build up organizations. At the time when Spain and Portugal made political expeditions abroad and carried out mercantilism economically, Hideyoshi turned his attention to Formosa and the Philippine Islands, attempted an expedition to Korea, and carried out a gold-collecting policy vigorously. The age when Hamburg and Bremen became free and independent cities as members of the Hanseatic League was that of the za-merchants of Japan, who built up a kind of interior Hanseatic League, making the provinces around the Imperial capital

its centre. From this point of view I cannot help believing that all the world is really one state and a big house for human beings, and the Japanese history is nothing but a part of the world history. Only as it was later than other nations of the Continent that the Japanese race founded the state, the end of any age of other nations was the beginning of the same age in Japan; and though the historical stratum was equally common, the stratum might have some inconformity. For instance, Japan had many kinds of guild systems along with the feudal system as well as England. But in England it was from the 14th century to the 15th century that the guild system was most powerful, and in the 16th century the guild system changed to the system of regulated companies. In Japan the system of *za*, which corresponds to the guild system, wielded certain influence in the 15th century and during the mid-Ashikaga period. Later, *za* became *nakama*, and then unions; yet it was in the 17th century, the latter half of the Tokugawa age, that *za* exercised the most extensive power, and it was in the 18th century that they began to turn into something like companies. In these circumstances it is not all a hasty conclusion to say that Japan started economically two or three hundred years later than Europe. When the Japanese came into contact with all the countries in the world for the first time under the treaty in 1853, and entered the race for mastery, the nation was burdened with a handicap of two or three hundred years, and for the next sixty or seventy years strove to overcome it. Don't forget that it was the result of this handicap that the politics, production, and communication of Japan were very much complicated, and Japan has a just cause for pride in the fact that she keeps pace with European and American countries, although owing such a handicap.

In issuing this book I tried to get material from original archives, not second-hand, and attempted in this point to be as scientific as possible. For example, in the question of taxation, I studied it in the water-books of the villages, but the result sometimes proved to be the same as described in already issued books, therefore it seemed to be of no use from one point of view. Nevertheless, I did not grudge this useless labour, but tried to obtain first-hand materials. My great trouble was that the materials were not easily obtained. Though there are many reasons for the change in the standpoint regarding history, the study of the old archives was most important of all. When, in 1821, L'École de Chartres was established in Paris, and opportunity for the study of the old archives was given, all the scholars and literary men made light of it and took no interest in it at all. But in 1826 Dr. Ranke, a German historian, issued a book of material for a history of the

mediaeval age of Europe, by which he astonished the world, and at the same time in France, under the inspiration of Mignet and Guizot, the work of issue and explanation of the old archives was undertaken in earnest. English historians were finally influenced by this tendency, and in 1857 a book of historical materials for the mediaeval age of England, called the "Rolls Series," was published. Japan felt the effects of it, too, and for these twenty years past many studies of the old archives have been published, which have upset not a few established beliefs and brought condemnation on many acts which have hitherto been lauded. In addition, the fresh proofs extracted from the old documents have confirmed us in the credibility of many things for which we had no evidence. But most of the old archives already published are political documents and only a very few offer materials for economical histories. One reason is that the nobles in the old times were heedless and neglected finance, so there are few such documents, but another reason is that the investigators of the old documents knew little about economics and lacked the interest to dig out the economical truth of history. For instance, a *Book on Communication*, which was based on documents left by an official of the Shogunate, is good material for the trade in Nagasaki, though it is fragmentary. In the chapter on To-komo-gin-roku of the book, only the amount of gold and silver collected is stated and not the rate at which it was exchanged into the current money at that time. By this small point the value of the whole precious volume is vitiated. Fortunately I know the value of the amount collected, as I have a note-book kept by an official of the Shogunate. Such being the case, I was eager to have access to the old documents possessed by the nobles and the old families, but under various pretexts many refused me the privilege. It was in the 28th year of Meiji that I published the *Two Thousand Five Hundred Years' History*, when I was thirty-one years old and in high spirits. In spite of certain defects, there are some scholars who credit me with being the first to take the right method of painting the history of the Japanese nation. Now I am fifty-three years old; the evening shades are falling and my spirit is not what it was. Nevertheless, my work is very great and the time is not so long to do it. I know I cannot escape from censure on this book for being incomplete and full of defects. But I shall be satisfied if later scholars correct and supplement my work on my method and compile another history. I have only served as the master-mason, and for decoration must look to my successors.

Lastly, I must take the opportunity of naming those who assisted me to complete these volumes. Mr. Naoe Hirota took charge of the finance of the Shogunate and the feudal lords; Mr. Kaname Matsuura,

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Bachelor of Commerce, the rice-field system and taxation system since the monarchic age to the modern times ; Mr. Tetsuzo Ota, Bachelor of Commerce, the money and currency by the foreign communication ; Mr. Sogo Kimura, the economical system of the age of the Tokugawa Shogunate ; Mr. Tempo Imazeki, the relations with China.

Y. TAKEKOSHI

AT TOGUKARO, HIGASHI OKUBO

November 25, 1920

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