

Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

Band: 35 (1981)

Heft: 1

Artikel: Two roads to modernity : some reflections on economic preparedness in nineteenth century Wakayama and pre-industrial Britain

Autor: Metzger-Court, Sarah

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146616>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 05.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

TWO ROADS TO MODERNITY: SOME REFLECTIONS ON ECONOMIC PREPAREDNESS IN NINETEENTH CEN- TURY WAKAYAMA AND PRE-INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN

SARAH METZGER-COURT, UNIVERSITY OF ZÜRICH

So much has been written about Japan's spectacular economic successes during the past one hundred years, and so much terrain has been scrambled over in the search for the *primum mobile* of those achievements, that any further effort in the same direction would appear to require some sort of apologia on the part of its author. At the very least, there should be an attempt to describe the framework within which the historical quest for explanations has been continued and to indicate the type of personal bias that is bound to have affected the conclusions reached. For, in subscribing to the school of economic history that believes in the value of researching the smaller and less numerically accessible corners of the past and of being able to fit the resulting pieces into a jigsaw that is both quantitative *and* qualitative in nature, one runs the risk of placing oneself among an unfashionable minority.¹ Certainly, much of the recent analysis of the Japanese economy in the early stages of its growth – that is to say, in the period from the Meiji Restoration down to the First World War – has tended to concentrate upon what might be termed the «big» developments in the industrializing process and more particularly upon those aspects of industrialization that are statistically measurable. While there is no doubt that such analysis is necessary, the result has often been to produce a somewhat distorted view of Meiji economic development, in that real interest focuses upon the mid and later years of the period at the cost of the earlier portion (which, of course, has not yet undergone the type of radical transformation that would enable it to be clearly distinguished in economic terms from the preceding Ba-

1 An interesting discussion of the «old» and «new» schools of economic history, of the «overwhelming interest» in quantification and the use of economic theory (stemming from the positivism which decrees that «nothing matters unless it can be counted, measured or weighed») is to be found in F. Redlich, '«New» and Traditional Approaches to Economic History and their Interdependence', *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XXV, December 1965, No. 4.

kumatsu years). The tendency among late twentieth century economists and economic historians to underrate smaller developments – to ignore, as it were, the foundations of the house in favour of more exciting architecture above ground – has been well described by D.C. Coleman in his recent work on *The Economy of England, 1450–1750*, «One of the most difficult problems in presenting the economic and social past is that posed by the need to balance change and continuity. Change is the greater temptress; continuity appears as the bore to be avoided. The effort to reveal the shifting patterns in the complex texture of a whole economy and society only too often results in an over-emphasis on dramatic movement, an under-emphasis on the quieter, less obvious mutations which lie concealed beneath the screen of continuity».²

It will be the contention of the present paper that, in Japan as in England, it was precisely such mutations within a strong traditional economy – the application or modification of experiences and techniques gained under an older system – that made possible a relatively smooth and successful transition into the modern world. Limitations of time and space will not allow anything more than a cursory examination of selected aspects of English economic development in the late sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, although it is hoped to indicate that this is a period which bears a number of striking similarities to the nineteenth century economic experience of Japan – and, more particularly, to that of Wakayama, the microcosm selected for this study.³ By treating Wakayama comparatively, it is intended to give such developments as will be discussed a somewhat wider significance than they might otherwise appear to possess and, in particular, to demonstrate that, while there are a number of pitfalls to be avoided in comparing Japan and Britain in a preindustrial context, valid parallels can and should be drawn.⁴ This,

2 D.C. Coleman, *The Economy of England, 1450–1750* (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 91.

3 For some reasons as to why Wakayama should constitute a suitable model, see my previous paper, «Roots of the Meiji Economic Miracle», published in *European Studies on Japan*, ed. I. Nish & C. Dunn (Paul Norbury Publications, 1979), p. 122.

4 This stands, of course, in direct contrast to large parts of Frances V. Moulder's *Japan, China and the Modern World Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1977). Prof. Moulder, besides maintaining that it was not so much differences in the traditional societies and economies of China and Japan as differences in the pressures and economic penetration exercised by «the imperialist nations» that accounts for the failure of the one and the success of the other in the face of the nineteenth century challenge of industrialism, also tends to brush aside – without any sound foundation for her views,

not only in relation to the purely economic side of the picture (for example, the build-up of a relatively efficient communications and internal marketing network, the stimulus given by urban growth to the commercialization of agriculture, the spread of smaller handicraft industries into the countryside and the steady rise of middlemen and a new rural merchant class to take advantage of opportunities thus offered), but also vis à vis the vexed question as to how two societies that were politically so dissimilar yet managed to arrive at approximately the same result – namely, the creation, either from the centre or at the local level, of an environment in which significant and ever more rapid commercial and industrial progress could take place. It will be argued here that, if viewed from the level of economic activities and policies *within* han boundaries, then the so-called «disjunction» between economy and polity in late Tokugawa Japan, which has so irked historians like Professor Albert Craig,⁵ loses a good deal of its reality. While it would be too much to say that the Kii han authorities, down to 1868, pursued policies or lines of economic thought which were consciously mercantilist in nature, the practical consequences of many of their actions can be said to have provided something very similar to the beginnings of a mercantilist tradition. At the very least, the emphasis upon what might be termed the pursuit of corporate profits, or «national prosperity» (*kokueki*)⁶, even if restricted in practice to the

in my opinion – the validity of comparing the pre-modern economic patterns of Japan and Europe. I would particularly dispute her contention that Japan was in «a dynamic of development» quite distinct from that of Europe (and more especially Britain) at the point where industrialization began and would dismiss as erroneous, on the basis of findings with regard to Wakayama, her rather puzzling assertion that «on the eve of the Western intrusion, as Baran puts it, «conditions in Japan were as conducive, or rather as unfavorable, to economic development as anywhere in Asia» (*ibid.*, p. 26. *Italics mine*). Albert Craig, while less extreme than Prof. Moulder, also expresses caution as to the validity of attempting to «see the orderly evolution of the Japanese economy as roughly parallel with the European pattern of development», but he demurs rather on the grounds of what he terms differences in the relationship between economy and polity (A. Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*, Harvard U.P., 1967, pp. 33ff.). David S. Landes, however, in «Japan & Europe: Contrasts in Industrialization», (in W.W. Lockwood, ed., *The State & Economic Enterprise in Japan*, Princeton U.P. 1965), self-evidently feels no such scruples and is not slow to find close correspondences between Japan and Europe in the period immediately preceding the breakthrough to industrialization, see e.g. p. 106, n. 20.

5 A. Craig, *op.cit.*, pp. 33ff.

6 For a lengthy and interesting discussion of this concept in its relationship to the trade monopolies of Wakayama han, see Fujita Teichirō, *Kinsei keizai' shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1966), Chapter 5, pp. 134–184. See also Kasahara Masao, «Wakayama han

han itself, meant that the later transference of such concepts to national levels after the Meiji Restoration became infinitely easier. It is in overlooking some of the more special aspects of the economic case with regard to Japan – peculiarities of time and place, which only emerge when one examines a given area of the country, such as Wakayama, under the historical microscope – that the greatest weaknesses of Professor Frances Moulder's thesis (as set out in *Japan, China and the Modern World Economy*) would appear to lie. While it may remain true that, in contrast to China, Japan from the mid-nineteenth century onwards enjoyed «a more autonomous position, which permitted an advance into industrialization within the capitalist system»⁷, that «advance» owed its relative speed and success to well-established roots in the economic life of the late Tokugawa period.

In this latter respect, Japan, although quite literally a world apart in so much else, has a great deal in common with Britain. Indeed, unlikely though it might appear at first glance, one can profitably make a number of comparisons – of nature, if not of degree – between the earliest phases of industrialization in the English Midlands⁸ and such steps as were being taken in the same direction in nineteenth century Wakayama. In both areas, one is immediately struck by the extent and variety of economic activities, rural and urban, that were undertaken in response to the manifold wants of their respective pre-industrial societies. Professor Court, writing of the seventeenth century existence of Midland men, observes that «. . . it would be easy to exaggerate the monotonous uniformity of the occupations of the Englishmen who lived under the Stuart kings. The most deeply rural community must have its craftsmen, its merchants, and its professional classes. The simple life is a complex affair . . .».⁹ The inhabitants of pre-Restoration Kii, taken as a whole, also led economic lives that were remarkable for their complexity and high degree of specialization. Indeed, the han's chief form of commercial agriculture, the production of mandarin oranges,¹⁰ alone presents a striking example of a pre-industrial oc-

no shokusan seisaku to sono hatten» (in Andō Seiichi, ed., *Kinsei Wakayama no kōzō*, (Tokyo, 1973), Chapter VII, pp. 214ff.

7 Frances V. Moulder, *op.cit.*, preface, p. vii.

8 The classic discourse on this subject is to be found in W.H.B. Court, *The Rise of the Midland Industries 1600–1838* (Oxford University Press, 1938).

9 W.H.B. Court, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

10 Professor Seiichi Andō has written a number of valuable articles on the *mikan* industry, which was (and, indeed, still is) centred on Arita gun in the northern portion of

cupation that had reached very considerable levels of organisation and employed a significant amount of manpower in all its various stages – cultivation, picking, basket-making, packing and sealing, loading and shipping.¹¹ Kishū's mandarins enjoyed a truly national reputation and were dispatched rapidly and efficiently by sea to satisfy the demands of markets as far afield as Edo, Osaka and Kyoto. Nor was Arita *gun*, the centre of the mandarin orange industry in Kii, the only part of the han to demonstrate marked economic specialization of this sort. For, while Ito *gun* seems to have relied upon the cultivation of silkworms and the reeling of silk as the most important aspect of its subsidiary agricultural activities during the Bakumatsu period (and, indeed, until well into the Meiji period)¹², Hidaka *gun* early established itself as an important area not only for the growing of cotton and the production of cotton thread, but also for the manufacture of hand-woven cotton textiles. There was considerable demand for Hidaka *gun*'s cotton products in Osaka and Kyoto and that such demand was increasing would seem to be indicated by the fact that, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was sharp competition, leading incidentally to an improvement in the quality of goods offered, between established guild merchants and new groups of merchants within the han itself, who were presumably anxious to «cut in» on the profits.¹³ In any event, the production of cotton thread and cotton cloth constituted an exceedingly important side-line for the farming population of Hidaka *gun* in the late Tokugawa period and was to be instrumental in contributing to the area's successful transference to the machine manufacture of cotton flannel during the early Meiji period.¹⁴

the han. Of these articles, two of the most important are «Kinsei Kishū mikan no ryūtsū kōzō», in *Kinsei Wakayama no kōzō*, pp. 267ff., and «Edo Kishū mikan tonya no seikaku», published in the series *Kishū keizaishi kenkyū sōsho*, No. 23, May 1973. See also *Nanki Tokugawa shi*, vol. 7, pp. 321–25.

11 One receives a wonderfully vivid impression of the many skills involved in the growing and marketing of *mikan* from a series of illustrations to be found in *Kii meisho zue*, vol. 3, pp. 338–345. These are followed by a short account of the industry, p. 346.

12 See *Ito gun shizen*, pp. 516–17 and *ibid*, pp. 131–36.

13 See Fujita Teiichirō, «Kishū Hidaka kase no ryūtsū kōzō» (in *Kinsei Wakayama no kōzō*), p. 263.

14 *Hidaka gun shi*, vol. 2, pp. 988–89, notes the widespread importance of cotton handicrafts in the area during the Tokugawa period. See also *Hidaka gun shi*, vol. 2, pp. 991–97, for a short account of developments in the textile industry during the early Meiji period and more particularly after 1880, when the manufacture of cotton flannel really began to establish itself.

For there can be little doubt that this ability among farmers of the Edo era to diversify and to set their productive sights above and beyond the narrow confines of a particular village or hamlet, while not constituting real «mobility of occupation» such as that noted by W.H.B. Court among the population of middle England as early as the seventeenth century,¹⁵ was nonetheless to play a crucial role in preparing a potential workforce for subsequent rapid industrialization. Moreover, any tendency to think that variety and specialization are a monopoly of modern industry and commerce is quickly corrected by a look at the relevant materials on the late Tokugawa economy, as represented by Wakayama. There we find presumably average Kishū farmers producing an enormous range of products, from cinnamon, pickles and ginseng to sugar and sweet potatoes, from cumquats, loquats and water melons to hemp, tea and tobacco,¹⁶ for the commercial market as well as for home consumption, we observe Kishū fishermen «harvesting the sea» in all manner of ways, including whale hunting and the culling of laver or edible seaweed,¹⁷ we read of the foresters of the interior, notably in Kumano and Hidaka *gun*, providing necessary supplies of lumber and charcoal,¹⁸ and, in the region of Kōya san to the north of the han, supplying the raw materials for the manufacture of a special type of fine-grained paper.¹⁹ The long-established production of this luxury paper (referred to, indeed, as «*Kōyagami*») was located in the rural areas at the base of Mt.Kōya. It received its main stimulus from the proximity of the Buddhist temples and scribes of Kōya san and made the fortune of a number of leading village producers in the region.

15 W.H.B. Court, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

16 These, and a number of other agricultural activities, are fully described in *Nanki Tokugawa shi*, vol. II, pp. 466–487 and pages following.

17 For whale-hunting and allied processing industries, which were centred on the area around Katsuura in southern Kumano, see *ibid*, pp. 477–81. For the development of the *nori*, or edible seaweed, industry during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, see *Wakayama shi shi*, pp. 387–89.

18 There are a number of accounts of the charcoal industry, which – in the less fertile and economically developed region of Kumano – tended to be undertaken in conjunction with other occupations, such as farming the land and fishing (i.e. a form of «multiple» farming was the general rule in the area). See *Nanki Tokugawa shi*, vol. 7, pp. 349–50, and *ibid*, vol. 2, pp. 484–94. Also, *Higashi murō gun shi*, vol. 2, pp. 246–48.

19 For accounts of paper manufacture in e.g. Kōyama and Kudoyama, see *Kii zoku fudoki*, vol. 3, p. 172, and *ibid*, vol. 2, p. 181, *Kishū kyōdo geijutsuka shōden zoku*, pp. 232–35, and *Kudoyama chō shi*, pp. 126–31. The latter contains a relevant map and illustrations.

The tendency for particular areas and, indeed, for given villages and towns to become especially noted for the manufacture of one main product, which would appear to be among the characteristics of societies in a fairly advanced state of economic development, is also marked in Wakayama towards the end of the Tokugawa period. In some cases, the reputation was of very long standing, as in Yuasa in Arita *gun*, where the making of soya sauce on a relatively large scale went back at least to the beginning of the thirteenth century and probably even earlier. The waters of the area around the city of Yuasa were particularly suitable to the process of fermenting the bean paste from which the soya sauce liquid is ultimately extracted.²⁰ Since soya sauce was in very general use, both as a household commodity on a country-wide scale and as a preservative in, for example, the shipping of perishable goods such as fish and vegetables to Osaka, it was perhaps not surprising that demand for it was steadily on the increase throughout the latter part of the Edo period. That this was so seems to be indicated not only by the appearance towards the end of the eighteenth century of a well-knit and highly organized group of *tonya* merchants, trading exclusively in soya products,²¹ but also by the fact that after 1815 contemporary sources variously estimated the number of soya sauce manufacturers in Yuasa as being anywhere between 33 and 90. It is perhaps significant that the lower figure represented the number of government-sponsored manufacturers, since the soya sauce industry constituted the leading han monopoly of the day. Although a not inconsiderable casualty rate among individual manufacturers can be presumed, in a «high risk» industry that suffered heavily from such untoward events as the Oshio Heihachirō riots of 1837 and the great fire of Osaka and was in addition subjected to burdensome border fees and shipping costs, it would seem that the production of soya sauce continually attracted new entrepreneurs and that some of these even managed to operate successfully outside the normally tight controls of han supervision and tax-collection. Not that Kii annual revenues would have suffered unduly from any such «moonshining», or illicit distilling, among the *shōyu* manufacturers of Yuasa, even if it occurred. According to a report of 1873, the maximum amount of the han's monopoly income from this particular

20 For a brief account of the soya making process and the suitability of Yuasa, see Andō Seiichi, *Wakayama ken no rekishi* (Tokyo, 1970), pp. 108–9. An interesting account of the traditional method of making soya sauce at the village level is to be found in R.P. Dore, *Shinohata: Portrait of a Japanese Village* (Allen Lane, 1978), pp. 80–81. For the origins of the soya industry in Yuasa itself, see *Arita gun shi*, pp. 179–83.

21 See *Yuasa chō shi*, pp. 398–405.

product was already in the range of 910 *koku* (1 *koku* = 4.96 bushels) by the close of the Edo period – a figure that puts the production of soya sauce in Kishū only a little way short of the standard definition of a full-scale «manufacturing industry» (around the 1,000 *koku* mark).²² Moreover, although by no means of the same significance in terms of official incomes derived from it, the vinegar production of Kokawa²³ – a small town, located north of the Ki river, whose streams made it a favourable location for vinegar manufacture – also remained among the more profitable of the han's monopolies until the very end of the Bakumatsu period and retained its importance as an independent industry into the succeeding years of the Meiji era.

Even if one assumes that production of most commodities in Wakayama prior to 1868 remained on a medium or small scale, this does not detract in the slightest from the continuing importance of their individual roles in the industrializing process of later years. Professor Court has long since drawn attention to the dangers of attempting to establish norms of technological development and of assuming that significant economic progress *must* be founded upon the appearance of ever-larger units of production. He points out that, in the case of the various embryo industries of the English Midlands during the preparatory period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, increasing returns to industrial effort by no means «lead invariably towards the great capitalistic undertakings, but often merely to a new swarm of domestic producers»²⁴ (this tendency was apparently particularly strong in the nail industry of the Black Country). Even down to 1750, the industrial scene in Britain as a whole seems to have been typified by slow but steady growth in a wide range of enterprises (both old and new), most of which were not remarkable for their size. «A large number of small units rather than a small number of large units; this was still the characteristic structure of almost all industries in the land . . .».²⁵ In their various ways, W.W. Lockwood,²⁶ T.C. Smith,²⁷ and

22 See Andō Seiichi, *op.cit.*, p. 110. See also Andō, «Yuasa shōyu gyō no kenkyū», (*Wakayama ken jūyō kōgyō chōsa*, VI, 1954).

23 See Andō, *Wakayama no rekishi*, *op.cit.*, pp. 111–12.

24 W.H.B. Court, *op.cit.*, preface, p. vi.

25 D.C. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

26 See W.W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan* (Princeton University Press, Revised edition, 1968), pp. 18 & 25, where he specifies, *inter alia*, that «the bulk of new economic activity in this gestation period [i.e. down to 1880] was along more traditional lines, which required no sharp break with the past».

27 See T.C. Smith, *Political Change and Industrial Development in Japan: Government*

David S. Landes²⁸ have confirmed that, down to 1880 and even beyond, these judgements also hold good for Japan in the initial stages of industrialization. Furthermore, there was a persistent and natural tendency for such private investors as there were to choose «enterprises [mainly in manufacturing] calling for no great outlay of capital and in which the productive process was not highly mechanized».²⁹ Early efforts to invest on a large scale or to rationalize production by the application of new techniques in the heavy industries, such as iron and steel, very often led to disaster during the Bakumatsu period³⁰ and recent research has shown that, even in the Meiji era, traditional methods of construction and production remained of considerable importance for the development of this same industry.³¹

Although Wakayama in the nineteenth century must be classified «poor» in terms of the availability of such raw materials as iron and coal (and in this respect, of course, presents a strong contrast to large areas of the British Isles, including the Midland Counties), the efficient and successful use to which the region put its other natural resources – whether agricultural, maritime or simply geographical – cannot be in doubt. Indeed, one of the striking features of Kii han during the late Tokugawa period is the well-developed nature of its communications and trading networks, not only internally but also with other parts of Japan. Possessing the inestimable advantage of a long coastline and three major, navigable, east-west flowing rivers (the Ki, Arita and Hidaka rivers), the han authorities promoted the building of a considerable fleet of coast-going vessels (mandarin oranges and soy sauce were only among the most important of the products shipped in han «bottoms», flying the official flag) and encouraged the transportation of goods by water wherever possible. It was

Enterprise, 1868–1880 (Stanford University Press, Second Printing, 1965), especially Chapters IV & V.

28 D.S. Landes «Japan and Europe: Contrasts in Industrialization», *op.cit.*, p. 106.

29 The quote is from T.C. Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

30 See Donald W. Burton, *The Origins of the Modern Japanese Iron and Steel Industry, with special reference to Mito & Kamaishi 1853–1901* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1972) for a detailed account of the ultimate collapse of the Mito *hansharo* project and of the enormous difficulties encountered in financing and setting up blast furnaces in the Kamaishi region at Nambu during the 1860's. See also Erich Pauer, «Japans Eisenindustrie zwischen Tradition und Moderne: Der hansharo/Flammofen und Kōro/Hochofen in der Bakumatsu-Periode» (in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplement III, 2, 1977), pp. 1302–1315.

31 See Erich Pauer, «Die traditionelle Eisenindustrie Japans in der Meiji-Zeit» (in *Bonner Zeitschrift für Japanologie*, Band I, 1979, pp. 309–26).

certainly no accident that the Kishū coastline was dotted with so many thriving ports and commercial centres. In fact, the town of Minoshima, at the mouth of the Arita river, relied more than most upon maritime contacts with distant parts, since it imported from Kyūshū the raw materials for the major local industry – porcelain and pottery making.³² Although no precise figures are available for the period down to 1868, pots seem to have been «thrown» and household wares produced on a very considerable scale. The size of the firing kilns alone³³ tempts one to use the term «mass production», despite the pre-industrial context. In any event, the finished products were distributed, again via a complex system of wholesale merchants and dealers, to the market towns and shops of the region. A fair proportion found their way to more distant centres of consumption, such as Osaka and Edo. Indeed, it was partly the enormous demand of the Tokugawa capital – already grown to a city estimated to hold a total population of almost a million – for articles of everyday use that accounts for the flourishing condition of another of Wakayama's coastal manufacturing industries, the making of lacquerware in Kuroe (modern day Kainan).³⁴ One of the oldest manufacturing arts of Japan, it was long-established in the region and was perhaps even less susceptible to really large-scale production than pottery or porcelain, since it invariably required the employment of highly-skilled artisans to carry through an essentially lengthy and intricate process. Nonetheless, it seems to have been mainly lacquered household goods – eating utensils, trays, containers and so forth – that were produced in Kuroe and which, always under the strict controls of han monopoly supervision, fed a constant demand for such articles, both near and far. In fact, the elegance and high quality of such lacquerware goods produced in Japan during the pre-modern period seem to have been indirectly appreciated in the most distant corners of the globe. The rapid development of the so-called «japan trade», in which the «japanning» or lacquering of tin-plate or papier mâché with bright colours and attractive designs predominated, is one of the features of the eighteenth century industrial development of the Midland towns of Wolverhampton and Birmingham.³⁵ It was perhaps no coincidence that England, together with

32 See *Minoshima chōshi tachibana no sato*, pp. 231ff.

33 See especially *Kii meisho zue*, vol. 3, illustration on pp. 550–51.

34 For short accounts of the lacquerware industry in the Bakumatsu and early Meiji periods, see *Kaisō gun shi*, pp. 807–8, and pp. 1073–75. See also *Kishū kyōdo geijutsuka shōden zoku*, pp. 237–39.

35 For an interesting account of the «japan trade» in the eighteenth century Midlands, see W.H.B. Court, *op.cit.*, pp. 232–38.

Germany and France, was among the first foreign customers for Kuroe lacquer-ware in the early Meiji period.³⁶

At this point, he who would seek for parallels between the English and the Japanese economy, as represented by Wakayama, in the years immediately preceding the onset of full-scale industrialization, can profitably stop to admire the remarkable diversity of Kii's manufacturing base, even in the first half of the nineteenth century. From north to south and from east to west, the han was liberally sprinkled with such centres of production, apparently catering for the whole range of domestic consumption needs, from the merely household to the frankly luxurious. Despite being deprived of solid statistical evidence, in the shape of prices, wages or indicators of market demand, for almost all of Wakayama's industries in the pre-industrial period, one can nevertheless readily appreciate the importance of such diversity in the manufacturing sphere. Moreover, the healthy state of the domestic market, testified to in a number of ways already referred to, was surely an immense advantage in an economy otherwise cut off from all possibility of manifesting «an internal response to the stimulation of oceanic trade»,³⁷ due to the seclusion policies pursued by the Tokugawa shoguns. Indeed, even in regard to the English case after about 1650, there is an increasing tendency to favour those «arguments which have stressed the width and depth of home market demand as particularly important in the coming of the first industrial revolution».³⁸ W.H.B. Court, in a vivid and unusual phrase, pointed out more than forty years ago that «much of the business of a modern industrial district consists in taking in its own washing on a colossal scale».³⁹ The population of Wakayama in the late Tokugawa period seems to have been superlatively equipped, albeit on a far more modest scale, to go in for this kind of «wash-day» activity within its own boundaries, while at the same time being well-acquainted with the possibilities of carrying out economic transactions on a somewhat wider scale. Even for such a common-place industry as wax-making (the provision of an adequate supply of candles was, of course, vital in the days before electricity), the manufacturers of Naga gun and Arita gun did not hesitate to supplement home stocks with the import of wax berries from Kyūshū via Minoshima,⁴⁰ perhaps in the self-same

36 See *Kaisō gun shi*, pp. 1074–75.

37 The phrase is taken from Albert Craig, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

38 D.C. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

39 W.H.B. Court, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

40 See e.g. *Naga gun shi*, pp. 963–73, and *Yuasa chō shi*, pp. 422–3.

ships that brought clay materials for the pottery makers. The special techniques developed by the wax-makers of Kii, consisting of a so-called «wringing» or pressing process,⁴¹ proved so successful that they were carried over into the Meiji period.

Of another apparently common-place and perhaps equally vital industry in pre-modern Wakayama – the tanning and associated leather-working trades – we regrettably know very little indeed. This, despite the fact that Kii leather seems to have enjoyed an exceptionally high reputation since at least the close of the Ashikaga period and despite the fact that the industry itself has grown to hold a position of very considerable importance in Wakayama's modern industrial sector.⁴² The social stigma attaching to those who had anything to do with the killing of animals (most of which seem to have been among the smaller variety, such as cat, dog, fox or badger, rather than cattle or horses) or with the working of their skins was of course enormous. Indeed, the Tokugawa period as a whole saw an increasing tendency (the hard but logical extension of the official policy of dividing society into strict classes along neo-Confucian lines) to isolate persons associated with the leather-trade, or similar socially non-acceptable professions, into special communities, the notorious «*buraku*». There were a number of these communities in Kii, notably in the valley of the Ki river, and Professor Andō gives a short but interesting account – based on early Meiji records – of one such village in his *Kinsei zaikata shōgyō no kenkyū*.⁴³ Of accounts in contemporary Edo records or documentary descriptions of leather-making as a trade, there are almost none at all. This particular gap in our knowledge is the more unfortunate, because one can here point to actual occupational similarity between pre-modern Wakayama and the Midland town of Birmingham, on the eve of its rise to industrial greatness. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the tanners and the leathermen were among the wealthiest and most respected inhabitants of Birmingham. Admittedly, in after days the industry «declined much in relative and in absolute importance», since «returns to capital in tanning, in such a district as Birmingham became, were less than the returns in other and later trades».⁴⁴ This, however, was

41 See *Kanaya chō shi*, vol. 2, pp. 952–3.

42 See Andō Seiichi (ed.), *Wakayama ken hikaku sangyō shi* (Wakayama, 1973). The book was commissioned to celebrate a hundred years of successful growth in Wakayama's leather industry and even records that, in May 1962, the industry's factories were honoured by a visit from the imperial couple.

43 Andō Seiichi, *Kinsei zaikata shōgyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1958), pp. 27–28.

44 W.H.B. Court, *op.cit.*, pp. 34–5.

not before the tanning and leather industries had played a vital role in creating a considerable degree of wealth in the area and in bringing important branches of metal working into the district, in answer to the demand for saddlery.

Here, as in the early woollen textile trades, it was the actual fact of commercial experience gained and capital accumulated in older occupations, rather than their extent, that was to prove of prime importance for the industrial future of the Midland Counties. This point can, of course, profitably be made again with respect to the textile trades of nineteenth century Wakayama. The production of both cotton and silk thread or cloth was by no means limited to Ito gun or Hidaka gun (previously mentioned), but was spread on a fairly even and flourishing basis throughout the han. To the south, there was Tanabe (admittedly, a semi-autonomous political unit during the Edo period, but like Kōya san and Shingu-ryō, it can legitimately be subsumed under the heading of Wakayama for the purposes of this essay), which was the centre of a long-established silk industry.⁴⁵ To the east, at the base of Kōya san, there lay Kudoyama⁴⁶ and Kōyaguchi⁴⁷ which served not only as the focal points of a fertile region long famous for both silk and cotton cultivation but also as the location for the manufacture of cotton thread and cloth on a significant scale. To the west stood the castle-town of Wakayama itself, which not only absorbed large quantities of the materials and clothing produced in other parts of the han, but housed within its own bounds a not inconsiderable number of hand-woven textile manufacturers.

In its possession of such prosperous commercial centres and townships, pre-modern Wakayama conforms readily to another of the standard requirements for subsequent successful industrialization. The high degree of urbanization in late Tokugawa Japan has already been duly commented upon and evaluated a number of times. It suffices to say here that the region of Wakayama fits well into the general picture that has emerged from such studies. For instance, there seems little doubt – although an actual survey of inter-relationships between rural and urban areas in pre-

45 See *Tanabe chō shi*, pp. 552–55, in particular for an account of silk worm cultivation and silk reeling in the nineteenth century.

46 See e.g. *Kii zoku fudoki*, vol. 5, p. 285, for a brief description of Kudoyama and its occupations during the Edo period.

47 For a comprehensive survey of Kōyaguchi's textile industries – both ancient and modern – see «Kōyaguchi tokushū orimono no kenkyū» (*Wakayama ken jūyō kōgyō chōsa*, III, March 1952).

modern Kishū has yet to be carried out – that the presence of urbanized populations, whether in the larger towns of Wakayama, Minoshima, Tanabe, Shingu and Kōya san⁴⁸, or in the smaller market-towns, such as Kokawa, Kudoyama or Hashimoto, did indeed act as that «constant source of upward pressure on the conditions of rural life»⁴⁹ which Professor Landes sees as having played such an important role in pre-industrial Europe. It certainly seems to have stimulated «the spread of commercial manufacture [on however small a scale] from the towns to the countryside»⁵⁰ in Kii and there is ample evidence to show that, by the nineteenth century and even earlier, the farmers of the region were profiting from an ever increasing demand for their agricultural products. Although certain areas, such as the extremely fertile and otherwise geographically «advantaged» districts of Arita gun or Naga gun⁵¹, undoubtedly derived greater benefit from these developments than, say, the less fortunate Kumano region, one nonetheless receives the impression that Wakayama as a whole towards the close of the Tokugawa period was bearing out the truth of D.C. Coleman's observation on England after the mid-seventeenth century that «in any changing economy, the larger the share of the population which is becoming wholly urban or otherwise not contributing to agriculture, the higher does productivity have to be in the agricultural sector».⁵²

It could perhaps be argued that, in contrast to certain areas of Britain such as the Midlands, pre-modern Wakayama held a distinct advantage in terms of the ease and efficiency of connections and communications between its urban and rural sectors. Before railways and canals were ever heard of, the rivers of Kishū served as the «lifelines» of the region in more ways than one. They provided the wherewithal for the essential irrigation networks of paddy farming, they offered the possibility of transporting all manner of products (including such bulky goods as lumber and cotton bales) far more cheaply by water than over land and they must undoubtedly have helped to maintain that vital economic sense, so necessary

48 See Andō Seiichi, «Kōya san no jinai machi» (*Kishū keizai shi kenkyū sōsho*, No. 17, July 1968), especially pp. 4–12 for a short account of conditions of commercial life on Kōya san in the Edo period.

49 David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 18.

50 Landes, *ibid.*

51 See Andō Seiichi, «Kihoku no fudoki to rekishi» (in *Rekishi techō*, vol. 3, No. 3, March 1975) for a detailed and fascinating description of climatic and other benefits conferred by nature on the northern portion of Kii.

52 D.C. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

in the days before the telegraph and the telephone, of not being impossibly far distant from one's source of supplies or one's markets. A number of important market towns in the plains of the Ki river, such as Kudoyama and Hashimoto,⁵³ probably owed their very existence to its proximity and it certainly seems of some significance that the modern industrial area of Wakayama is located strategically in the estuary of the Ki river. Throughout the Edo period, the successive daimyō of Kishū and their various advisors were able to appreciate – with a single sweeping glance from the walls of their heavily fortified castle (the construction of which was commenced in 1585, under the orders of Hideyoshi himself) – the enormous strategic and economic benefits to be derived from simultaneous access to the sea and to the interior of the han.

Nor can the han authorities be accused of «dragging their heels» when it came to the exploitation of their various economic assets (always bearing in mind, of course, that the domain of Kii started off with the very considerable advantage of having an assessed value of at least 550,000 *koku*). On their own doorstep, so to speak, they kept rigorous controls on all prices and commercial transactions taking place within the bounds of the *jōkamachi* of Wakayama itself.⁵⁴ Further afield, the stern grip of han authority was felt, via the manifold workings of the monopoly system at the local level, in a huge variety of commercial and manufacturing activities.⁵⁵ In the nineteenth century, this monopoly structure went under the somewhat coy title of «*Shiiregata*» (lit. «laying-in of stock method») and, generally speaking, the more important the product – as in the case of mandarins, soy sauce or cotton – the more anxious were the officials who implemented han policies to push their monopolistic privileges to the limit. The policies themselves seem to have been fairly regularly revised towards the close of the Tokugawa period, with an eye to stepping up han incomes from this particular source. However, despite the fact that Professor Andō has condemned the imposition of exclusive rights to the products of the farming and manufacturing population of pre-modern Wakayama as representing simply another aspect of the «parasitism» inherent

53 For a description of the origins and special privileges of Hashimoto, which lay within the jurisdiction of Wakayama, see Andō, *Kinsei zaikata shōgyō no kenkyū*, *op.cit.*, pp. 266–68. For a more general account of the rural commerce taking place during the late Edo period in the district around Hashimoto, see *ibid.* pp. 176–83.

54 See e.g. Andō Seiichi, «Bakumatsu Wakayama jōkamachi no shōgyō tōsei» (*Kishū keizai shi kenkyū sōsho*, No. 18, November 1969).

55 See *Wakayama shi yō* (Wakayama, 1915), p. 297, for a comprehensive list of products and economic activities that fell under the auspices of the han monopoly system.

in the political power of feudal lords,⁵⁶ the daimyō of Kii were not the sort of parasites who made the mistake of killing off their host, or even greatly harming it. Unlike many of their «robber baron» counterparts in mediæval Europe, they seem rarely to have crossed the delicate boundary that lies between simple exploitation and downright extortion. On the contrary, it would not be unreasonable to claim that the han government, insofar as it promoted shipbuilding and shipping, provided trading facilities and equipment, controlled the quality of goods produced and urged the producers on to greater efforts, stood – albeit unconsciously – in a quasi-mercantilist relationship to its own economy. Although the philosophy that lay behind the monopoly system as such was inimical to freedom of individual enterprise and must frequently have been responsible for a good deal of hardship and injustice, the combined, practical results of official policies were of such a nature that one is driven to conclude that they had a stimulating rather than negative effect upon the economic conditions within which they operated. Insofar as the han authorities retained control over the economic situation within their borders and insofar as they continued their efforts to promote the health of the body economic,⁵⁷ the better to serve the needs of an increasingly impecunious body politic, it can be said that as the Tokugawa period drew to its stormy close political requirements ran at least in partial tandem with those of a strong, developing economy. That such economic and political pragmatism was by no means confined to Kii is confirmed by turning in the perhaps unlikely direction of Satsuma. An examination of the *Shūmon tefuda aratame jōmoku*,⁵⁸ issued by the Satsuma leadership in 1852, shows clearly that in southern Kyūshū, too, economic and political self-interest set the prevailing tone and that «so long as the traditions served their purpose, they were maintained, but when the han interests dictated a change, the rules and regulations were modified without apologies. Benefit to the daimyo was sufficient reason for change».⁵⁹ The importance of this type of flexible approach, when applied at national levels after 1868, hardly needs to be emphasized.

56 Andō Seiichi, «Yuasa shōyu gyō no kenkyū», *op.cit.*, p. 3.

57 See, in particular, Kasahara Masao, *op.cit.*, pp. 214ff., for a description of han efforts in this direction during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

58 Translated and edited by Robert K. Sakai et al., *The Status System and Social Organization of Satsuma. A Translation of the Shūmon Tefuda Aratame Jōmoku* (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1975).

59 Robert K. Sakai, *ibid.*, p. 41.

Although Satsuma, even in the Bakumatsu period, still seems to have been in possession of a strongly regimented social and economic base, there were increasing signs in Kii that the han authorities were beginning to lose their grip on certain aspects of the domain's economic life and that some of their policy-making was being outstripped by events beyond their control. As in other areas of late Tokugawa Japan, Wakayama witnessed an increasing number of conflicts between the older and officially privileged groups of merchants and those newer, unquestionably ambitious traders, whose base of operations lay usually in the rural districts. The «in-fighting» appears to have been particularly fierce with regard to cotton and in the vicinity of Kōya san, as in Hidaka gun, the authorities were constantly forced to intervene on behalf of one or other party. The peasant rebellions of Wakayama during the first part of the nineteenth century often reflected in a violent form this marked dichotomy within the marketing structure. On some occasions, as in 1823 in Ito gun,⁶⁰ the riots were partly a protest against the extortion and extravagance of the newcomers, the rural merchants, the huge range and variety of whose activities embraced even the smallest village. At other times, as later in 1855,⁶¹ the disturbances had as their chief cause resentment at the imposition of the han monopoly system and the workings of its agents and merchants. In this latter connection, the han government of the day can have been a good deal less than pleased to learn of the demands that were circulating in the more prosperous districts of northern Kii, not only for a loosening of restrictions on rural trade and commerce, but also for the opening of the small fishing village of Kada, located on the coast to the north of Wakayama, as a free port.⁶²

To what extent these winds of change, blowing in the economic sphere of mid-nineteenth century Wakayama, stemmed from the emergence of a significant number of entrepreneurs, «new» men equipped with fresh ideas and methods, is not at all clear. The role of the entrepreneur in economic development is in any event ambiguous, even in Britain, where, as Professor Mathias says of them, «They sprang from economic opportunity as much as they created it. They depended everywhere upon a necessary creative environment. They join the circle of other factors in economic growth as part cause and part effect, a dependent attribute and a

60 Andō, *Kinsei zaikata shōgyō no kenkyū*, op.cit., p. 178.

61 Andō, *Wakayama ken no rekishi*, op.cit., p. 108.

62 See Fujita Teichirō, «Bakuhansai teki shijo kōzō no hōkai», (*Wakayama ken shi no kenkyū*, No. 3, 1975), pp. 2ff.

creative part of industrial progress». ⁶³ As individuals, they are difficult to locate in Bakumatsu Kii, with one or two notable exceptions, such as the Nasako family of Fukimura village ⁶⁴ (*gōnō*, who made a fortune in agriculture and the tea trade and went on to play an important role as promoters of the first railway networks in Wakayama during the Meiji period), the enterprising founder of the area's frozen *tōfu* industry, Ueda Haneuemon from Ito *gun*, ⁶⁵ and a certain Maeda Yasusuke of Kōyaguchi, born in 1838 as the second son of a local farmer, who built up a profitable silk and cotton textile firm during the Meiji period. ⁶⁶ However, there seems little doubt that future research will only serve to confirm the impression that Wakayama was as well-equipped in terms of human resources as in any other and that the region was particularly well-endowed with entrepreneurial talent in its rural sector. A survey of relevant publications of the late Meiji period, such as the *Teikoku shinshi meikan: Wakayama ken no bu* (or *National Directory of Gentlemen – Wakayama Prefecture Section*), a commercial and industrial «Who's Who» published in 1906, would seem to bear out this latter fact with considerable force. Of a total of 865 names – covering the whole range of industrial and commercial enterprise in Wakayama towards the close of the Meiji era – a very large proportion originate in the rural sector and more particularly in Arita and Ito *gun*. As one might expect, there is a notable predominance of these entrepreneurs in industries having their roots in the countryside of the late Tokugawa period, such as textiles and sake brewing. The energy and financial contributions of rural individuals, in the building up of a comprehensive banking network after about 1885, is also deserving of remark. ⁶⁷

The present paper has undoubtedly only served to demonstrate that, in the quest for the sources of economic growth and the origins of that whole complex process known as industrialization, there are of necessity no easy solutions. Indeed, the search for «first causes» is almost by definition endless, since each new generation of investigators will come equipped with a radically different set of ideas and assumptions. In econ-

63 Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation. An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1914* (Methuen, London, 1969), p. 151.

64 See *Kii zoku fudoki*, vol. 2, p. 200.

65 See *Kōyaguchi chō shi*, vol. 2, pp. 113–15 and pp. 816–17.

66 For a short biography, see *Kōyaguchi chō shi*, vol. 2, pp. 818–21.

67 See Andō Seiichi, «Kindai kigyōka no keifu. Wakayama ken no baai» (*Kindai keizai no rekishi teki kiban*, Minerva Press, 1977), pp. 435–46, esp. table on p. 439.

omic history, as in all other aspects of life, the answers given are closely correlated to the questions asked. The intention here has simply been to demonstrate, with reference to nineteenth century economic conditions in one particular han, the high degree of Japan's readiness for «take-off» into modernity. To extend the metaphor somewhat, any aeroplane must have a minimum amount of fuel in reserve to enable it to get off the ground in the first place – and there seems every indication, based on this analysis of pre-industrial Wakayama, that the «tanks» were a good deal more than half-way full. The brief comparison with Britain – that «first historical instance of the breakthrough from an agrarian, handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture»⁶⁸ – has served to show how important such assets were in the earliest stages of development. Furthermore, there seems little reason to believe that Kishū was in any way exceptional in either the nature or the extent of her pre-modern economic advantages. It is to be hoped that future research will reveal even more clearly than at present that in choosing continued reliance during the Meiji period upon a well-founded base of light industries and small but efficient units of production, Wakayama selected an optimum path for economic development, even if some of the social costs of that development remain to be paid in the second half of the twentieth century.

68 David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus*, *op.cit.*, p. 1.