

The economic base does not necessarily determine the superstructure- -the Reform Movement of 1898 and Meiji Reform as examples

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Abstract

the comparison of the reform movement of 1898 and the Meiji reform is an old topic , but this article explores the success and failure of the reforms from a new perspective. According to Marx philosophy principle, the economic base determines the superstructure, but this theory does not apply to demonstrate why the reform happened in China is failed ,but in Japan is successful. Because there are data to prove that Japan's economic development level is not as good as china.

Keywords

Economic foundation superstructure the Reform Movement of 1898 Meiji reform.

1. Introduction

Table 1 grain yield per mu after the Opium War in China

Population (10000)	Time	The grain yield per unit area (jin / mu)	Per capita cultivated land area (Mu)
38,868	1865	201.9	3.493
39.728	1870	204.7	3.448
40.588	1875	207.3	3.403

——Wu Hui”*Study on grain yield per mu in Chinese history*”^[1]

According to this table to calculate, the grain yield per unit area multiplies per capita cultivated land area,we can get the grain yield per capita each year: in 1865 is 705.2 jin,in 1870 is 705.8 jin, in 1875 is 705.4 jin,which means Chinese per capita grain yield is about 705 jin in that period.

Table 2 Prediction of total food intake in Japan in the early Meiji period (g)

Name	Production
Rice	368.8
Wheat	23.1
Barley	49.0
Rye	42.1
Sweet Potato	95.3
Others	65
Total	643.3

——Hiroshi Shinbo, Osamu Saito edited, Li Rui translated, "*The history of the Japanese economy II* ——*modern growth movement*"^[2]

Per capita daily production volume multiplied by 365 and divided by 500,we can obtain that per capita grain yield in Japan is about 470 jin,much lower than the Chinese 705 jin.The above data show that in the late nineteenth Century, Japan's per capita grain yield is much lower than China.

Table 3 China and Japan's share of world GDP (world total =100)

Nation Time	1820	1870
Japan	3.0	2.3
China	32.9	17.2

—Angus Maddison , *The World Economy:A Millennial Perspective*^[3]

Table 4 population comparison (1000 persons)

Nation Time	1820	1870
Japan	31000	34437
China	381000	358000

—Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective*^[3]

Tables 3 and table 4 show that in 1870 China's GDP was about 7.5 times as Japan's, China's population was about 10.4 times as Japan's, and China's per capita GDP was about 0.72 time as Japan's.

From the data analysis of the table, we can see that the economic base of Japan is not as strong as China, but the reform in Japan has been successful and the reform in China has failed. This shows that the economic base is not the key factor to determine the success or failure of the reform between the two countries. Therefore, we should analyze from other perspectives about why there is such a big difference in the results of the reforms between the two countries. This article will explain the reasons from the political system, leadership quality, reform forces, educational foundation, international environment and geographical environment.

From the political system, the degree of centralization of political power in Japan is not as high as in China.

On the eve of Meiji Reformation, Japan was the system of "Shogunate". "Japan was feudal into 260-270 vassal states, each by a vassal Lord (daimyo) rule, he wealth of the Lords from the land tax levied on farmers. The Lords have their own armed forces, in order to maintain the fief, these forces were selected from the hereditary warriors. Daimyo has administrative and judicial power in fief, but they must pledge loyalty to the state ruler: Shogun." ^[4]This shows that the supreme ruler of Japan is the shogunate, the emperor is just a puppet, and the daimyos are local political entities. Under this system, as long as the daimyo and the samurai support the reform, the resistance of the feudal political system to the reform is limited, and so is the fact. Mr Tang Degang also wrote in *The final seventy years of Qing Dynasty*" The social structure before the Meiji reform of Japan was very similar to the social structure of the late feudal society in Western Europe, and the structure was the hotbed of the Industrial Revolution. Japan has this hotbed, and is ready to go, so as soon as the contact with Western Europe arises, an eastern industry revolution came into being."^[5]From this we can see that before the reform, Japan was similar to Europe, and the resistance of the feudal system to modernization was limited.

Compared with Japan China was not so lucky, autocratic centralization system in China had existed for over two thousand years, the Qing Dynasty is the last dynasty, This system of autocratic centralization has been highly perfect, if there is no ability to overthrow the system, and without the support of supreme ruler, no reform can be successful." Since the failure of Wang Anshi's political reform in Eleventh Century, Chinese history has shown a law. Under the political pattern of the literati, no political reform is possible."^[6]At that time, the Empress Dowager Ci Xi who grasps the real power regard the reform as a conspiracy that would seize power from her control. So she launched a coup to imprison Emperor Guangxu, arrested the reformers and abolished the reform. The scholar officials "in the 103 days, Emperor Guangxu does these shocks across the country through the rotten officials, they are like the ants being picked up the nest, in great confusion." ^[6]The reform in the abolition of stereotyped writing makes the intellectuals hate this reform, Because in addition to pass stereotyped

writing to seek office, they can do nothing; some old governments were revoked offended those who rely on government officials' interests again; Confucian representative Xu Tonglian never walked in front of the foreign building, He insisted that even let the state perish, but never reform; Manchuria officials vowed they would rather give the country to friendly nations, but not give to slaves (Han). Mr Jiang Tingfu said: "Internal affairs are the basic factor determining the strength of the country"^[7], the internal conditions of social change in China and Japan, China's feudal system has a special stability, and the resistance to social change is greater than that of Japan.

From the leadership quality, the leadership quality of the Reform Movement of 1898 is not as good as that of Meiji reform.

Because of the weakness and compromise of the bourgeois reformers, they lack of the courage for anti-imperialist and anti-feudal ,take the improvement measures only, and have the illusion of the feudal forces and western powers, keep away from people. They are afraid of the peasants' struggle, and they regard the reform movement as means of preventing the peasants' revolution, so they can not get the support of the masses. As a supporter of the reform, Emperor Guangxu was an emperor without power. The reason that he support the reform was mainly to recapture the real power from Ci Xi. Because the reform broke the literati's interest, also cannot get their support, in the other hand, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and other reformers are very weak. The reform forces in Japan are powerful." Innovative forces in samurai unite the southwest nobility, such as Sanjo Emi and Rim. In the 'honour the king and drive off the barbarians' slogan, they launched a campaign to reform the government, resist the humiliation of the outside world, and promoted to overthrow of the shogunate with force under the impetus of the masses." ^[6]It can be seen that Japan's reform has been supported by the emperor, the royal family, the daimyo, the samurai, the rich businessmen, the rich peasants and the lower classes, and the reform forces have exceeded the resistance of the reform.

From the educational foundation, The Japanese people were more educated than Chinese.

Thanks to the popularity of educational institutions such as temple houses, about of 40%-50% men and 15% of women have been educated (the leading warrior class of the reform were educated 100%). Most social education in the late Qing Dynasty is still stagnated in the traditional college education, while new schools receive strong support, and the selection system has changed, the level of education is still lagging behind the social populace, and deteriorating.

From the international environment, the international resistance encountered by Japan's reform is far smaller than that of China.

During the Meiji Restoration of Japan, the world was still in the period of capitalist free competition, imperialism was not yet formed, and the world market was vast. In addition, the second half of the nineteenth Century, the Western powers invaded Asia mainly in China, Afghanistan, Iran, Java and the Northwest China(Xinjiang) was invaded by Russia forces, Southwest China was invaded by France, Tibet was invaded by British. Japan was invaded in 1853 and began to reform in 1868. The Western powers have little resistance to Japan's reform, and Japan had a relaxed international environment for reform. While Chinese reform, world capitalism has made the transition to the imperialist stage, the colonies have become the lifeline of imperialism, therefore, the big powers set off a frenzy to divide China, and China has gradually become a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Even if the reform is intensified, it will be difficult to fight against the west. If China becomes stronger through reform, it will inevitably expel its interests in China, so any attempt to make China strong will be thwarted by the west. For example, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement, the Westernization Movement, the Boxer Movement, the 1911 Revolution and the national revolution were all thwarted by the reactionary forces of China and foreign countries, so the resistance to reform in China was much greater than that in Japan.

From the geographical environment.

Japan is in the "East Asian farming culture zone" and "edge" position, and Japan's mountainous agricultural production is difficult to expand, grain yield is low. The island features make the formation of ethnic consciousness, they are willing to contact with the outside world, are more likely

to accept the western industrial civilization. China has vast plains, fertile land and the self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy, closed thinking, the communication channels were blocked, it is not conducive to the reception of external civilization. "The Chinese have a sense of security in the economy, but the Japanese don't," [6]

From the above analysis, we can see that economic factors are not the decisive factor when other factors are stronger than economic. This is not the negation of Marx's philosophy, this article is to show that when we are facing the historical problems, we should start from various angles, using a variety of historical thinking. A relaxed academic atmosphere can help us to be closer to the historical truth.

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