

Timeline of Nitobe Inazo

1862: Born in Morioka, Iwate, Japan
1877: Enrolls into Sapporo Agricultural School in Hokkaido
1883-90: Studies at Tokyo University, and universities in the US and Germany
1890: Obtains a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics (University of Halle)
1891: Becomes a Professor at Sapporo Agricultural School
1899: Publishes *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*
1901: Appointed as Technical Adviser to the Colonial Government in Taiwan
1906-13: Becomes the Headmaster of the First Higher School
1909: Becomes a Professor at Tokyo Imperial University (Colonial Studies)
1920-26: Works as the Under-Secretary General of the League of Nations
1927: Appointed as a Member of the House of Peers
1933: Dies in Canada briefly after the Pacific Conference

Introduction Nitobe Inazo was a Japanese economist, educator, and internationalist in the pre-World War II period. In this research, I examine his unique contributions to Japanese modernization and focus on his three significant contributions:

- (1) His view on education as a principal of the First Higher School
- (2) His theory on democracy
- (3) His fight for liberalism against Marxism and militarism

He tried to introduce British forms of manners, personality, and liberty in a way that the Japanese could reconcile them with Japanese traditions. I define his ideas as conservative liberalism.

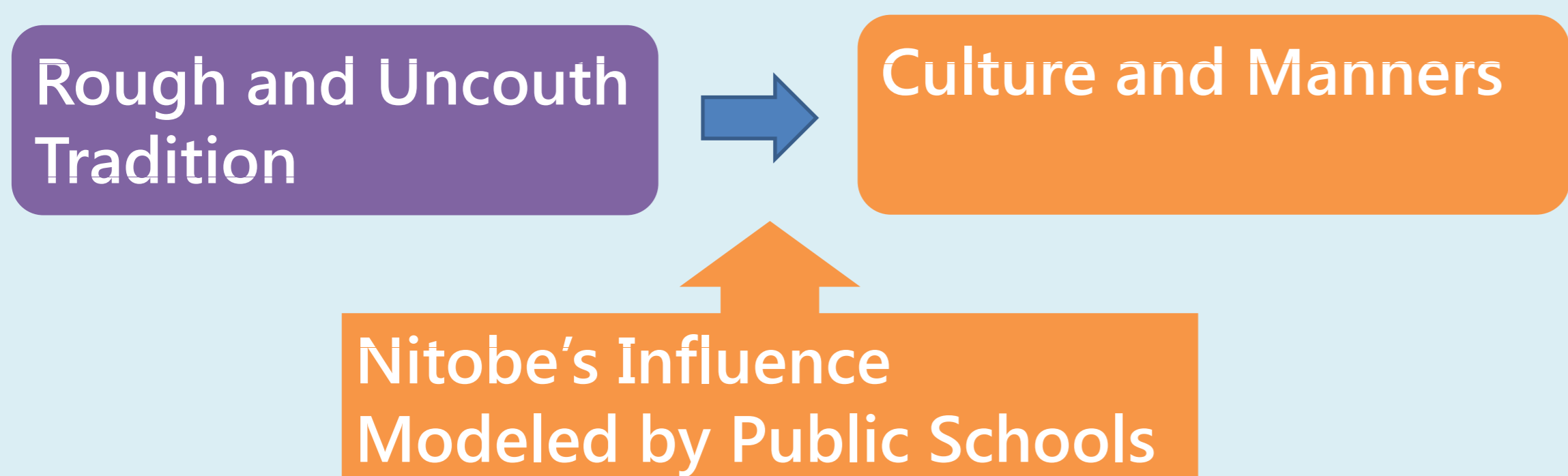
(1) Culture and Manners at the First Higher School

Nitobe assumed the role of a principal of the First Higher School (Daiichi Koto Gakko) in 1906. Isolated from society, the school was known for rough and uncouth traditions by the time he became the principal. He introduced culture and manners to the students that went against the convention. He also encouraged them to learn self-government through their school life.

Nitobe modeled this educational format after Britain's public schools. He saw that, in public schools, students learned culture and manners that enabled them to perform as able future leaders. He believed that British self-government and colonial rule were derived from educational systems in public schools, as P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins argued in their research on gentlemanly capitalism.

Nitobe thought that political leaders played an important role in building democracy in Japan. His reforms in the First Higher School produced many political leaders and intellectuals such as Yanaihara Tadao, Nambara Shigeru, and Tsurumi Yusuke.

Figure 1. Transition of the First Higher School

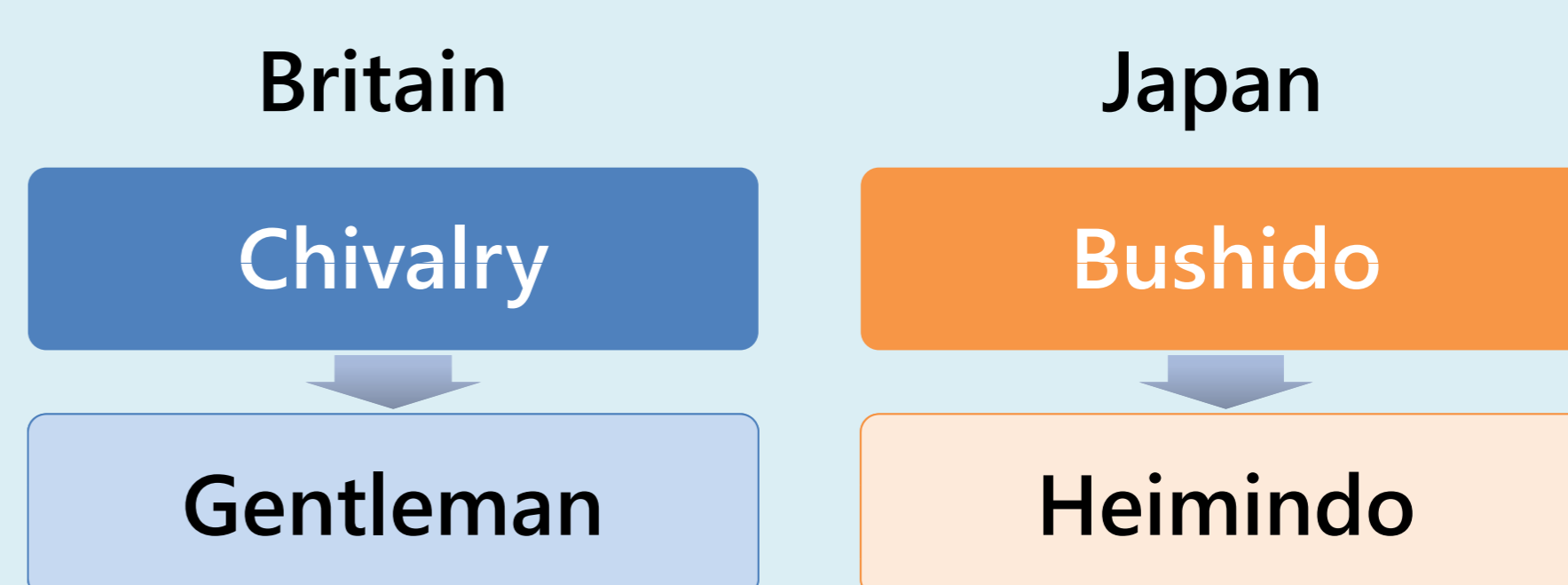


(2) Personality as a Base of Democracy

In 1919, Nitobe published a series of essays on democracy in a popular magazine. He defined democracy as Heimindo, the way of commoners, which he thought should be the modern version of Bushido, the way of warriors. He borrowed the concept of Heimindo from the spirit of gentleman, the modern form of chivalry. ↗

He claimed that British gentlemanship and Christianity created a concept of personality and enabled the British to build a sound democracy in their society. He used Heimindo to introduce the concept of personality to the Japanese so that each person could help develop democracy in Japan.

Figure 2. Modernization Process in Britain and Japan



(3) New Liberalism in pre-war Japan

Nitobe openly supported the new liberalism movement in Japan during the late 1920s when both Marxists and militarists criticized it. He promoted social reforms to reduce social inequality within the democratic system. Quoting Edmund Burke, a British politician, Nitobe insisted that social reforms should be gradual, taking each nation's traditions, superstitions, and even prejudices into account. Therefore, he rejected the expansion of Marxism in Japan in the 1920s.

Moreover, he defined liberty as tolerance and advised against the rising tide of nationalism and militarism as well as blocking economic trade from all over the world in the 1930s.

Figure 3. New Liberalism in Japan



Conclusion Non-Western countries often face conflicts between their own cultural traditions and Western ideas as they experience developmental processes. Nitobe's efforts to modernize Japan demonstrates a unique example, because he did not intend to merely replace Japanese traditions with Western conventions, rather he attempted to find ideas or parallels that allowed us to reconcile the different cultures.