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# AN ENCOURAGEMENT OF LEARNING

Yukichi Fukuzawa

Leadership from an Asian Perspective

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Fukuzawa Yukichi

It is said that heaven does not create one man above or below another man. Any existing distinction between the wise and the stupid, between the rich and the poor, comes down to a matter of education.

**In the first chapter of the book, Yukichi argued that equality in society and the potentials to be a true leader are for everyone. It will be determined by their efforts rather than inborn traits. This philosophy empowered Japanese people from all walks of life to be the leaders of their life.**

Yukichi did not explicitly show the principles to be true leaders and followers due to certain historical circumstances. In fact, in the 19th century in Japan, the notion of leadership would be considered rebellious. Besides, the main purpose of this book is to encourage the learning of Japanese in the 19th century, so Yukichi tended to use the term “scholars” and official posts instead of leaders.

For the sake of this summary, I would like to develop four basic principles that a leader must master in order to be a true leader after reading the book. These principles are based on the four principles of one of the most influential books in China, Four Books, Five Classics by Confucius.

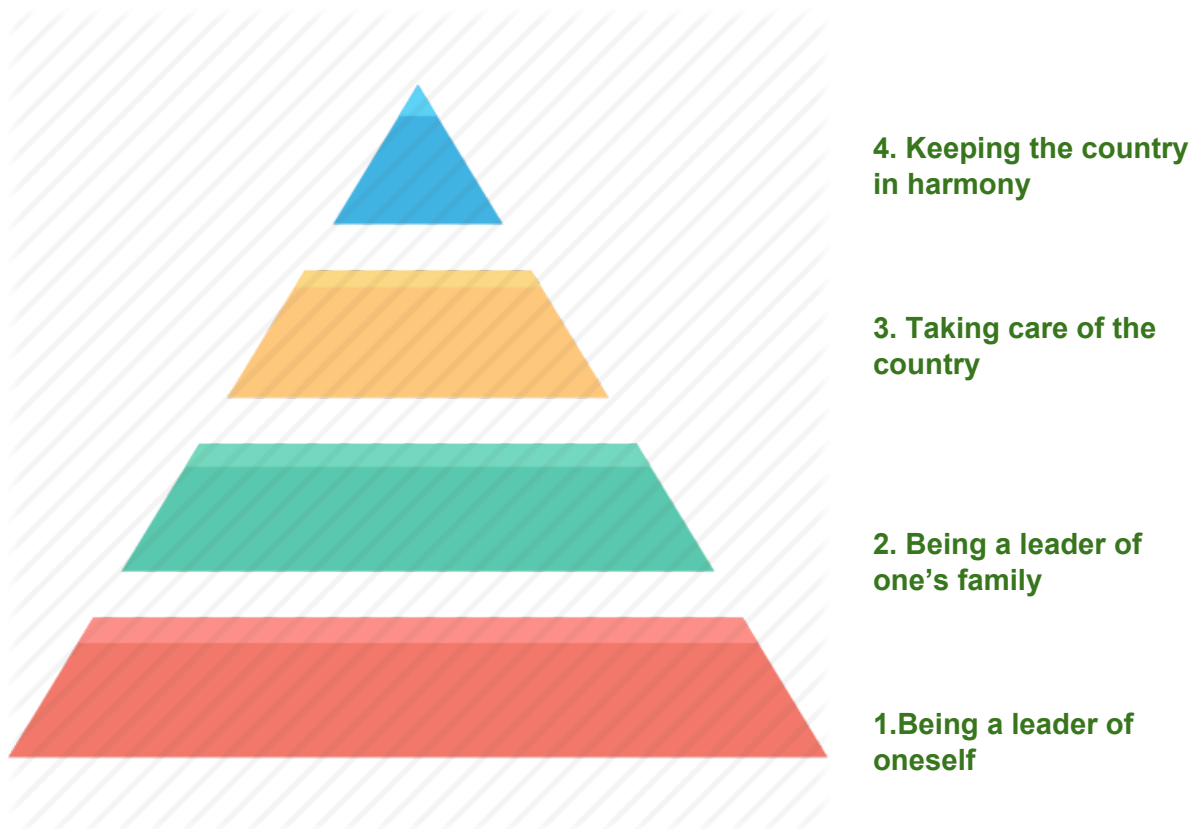
## Being empty prior to learning leadership traits

*"I hold that Japanese civilization will advance only after we sweep away the old spirit permeates the minds of the people." (p.54)*

In order to learn new things, the author suggested that we should commit to sweeping away the old and outdated spirits and ready to learn.

He also indicated that everything comes from the minds; so does leadership. Therefore, leadership training means mentality training.

After getting rid of the old spirits, readers will be able to learn about the four fundamental principles of leadership as follows.



## Principle #1: Being a leader of oneself

### Understanding/mastering private self is a starting point for leadership



*“Such scholars and gentlemen are aware of the existence of **official posts** but unaware of the existence of their **private selves**”*

In the text, Yukichi argued that **being aware of their private self is a stepping stone for understanding and fulfilling official posts**. This is because understanding oneself works as an anchor to know who they are and what they will be regardless of any changes in society or any organization. He criticized those who are called themselves are scholars or leaders when they fail to understand themselves.

Learning about oneself, and self-control and personal independence is the first and most vital step to do other things, argued by the author.



Yukichi advised that spending most of one person's time to deal with themselves.

## Principle #2: Leaders of one's family



After being a leader of themselves, the author argued that being a leader of their family is the next step to become a true leader. A leader is able to deal with the basic and simple things in their life rather than big business.

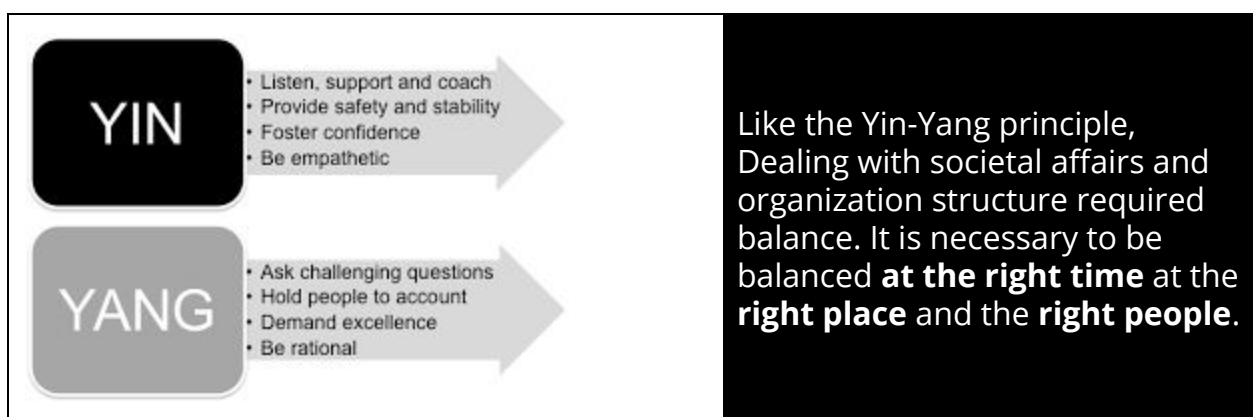
He pointed out that leadership would be useless if “Their knowledge of economics has no influence on their family business. Their knowledge of moral theories has no bearing on their own moral cultivation.” (p.89)



## Principle # 3: TAKING CARE OF SOCIETAL AFFAIRS

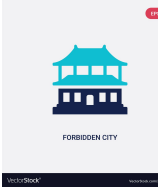
“The same principle obtains with a nation of people. The government is a country's internal processes. Their **harmonious** functioning for the maintenance of national independence requires a **balance** of **internal** governmental power with the **external** power of its outside stimuli. Our national independence would also not last a single day were the external stimuli removed and the government left with only its own inner organs.” (p.28)

**Understanding and coordinating organization structure are the way to master leadership at the society level.**



Like the Yin-Yang principle, Dealing with societal affairs and organization structure required balance. It is necessary to be balanced **at the right time** at the **right place** and the **right people**.

The author pointed out some drawbacks of the society in Asia, which might be detrimental to the leadership in Asia. They are as follows:

Many Asians are <b>less mobile</b> because they do not want to leave their family, friends, and homeland.	
Most Asian cultures <b>appreciate harmony</b> ; anything that <b>destroys harmony</b> is <b>considered bad</b>	
<b>Communication</b> tends to be <b>indirect</b>	
Asians are <b>behaviourally</b> more <b>reserved</b> , and therefore developing relationships may take <b>longer</b> .	

Being balanced in social relationships might address some social drawbacks in Asia.

## Principle #4: Keep the harmony in the society

Similar to the third principle, Yukichi showed that if the leaders' role is flexible, then there is harmony in society.

**“A true scholar must when alone, be as silent as deep water, but among people, he must be as active as a flying bird; he must be deeply introspective, yet at the same time have boundless public energy - only then can he call himself a true scholar” (p. 89)**

Democracy, Yukichi learned from the West, is a great way to keep a country stable.

Therefore, leaders are advised to be able to keep society democratic and independent by letting everybody in that society be independent and liberated by learning to be the leader of their life and their society.

“Let us suppose that there is a country of a million citizens, of which **a thousand are wise**, and the **more than 999,000 are ignorant**. Suppose that the **great majority could be controlled** by the **talent and virtue of the wise minority, who would love them as children or tend them as sheep.**” (p.21);

The author asserted that “if it is the case, this hypothetical nation’s people are divided into **masters and guests**. The **masters** are the **one thousand intelligent** persons who direct the affairs of the state, **the rest are ignorant guests. Only being guests, they have a few real concerns**. They rely entirely on their masters without taking any initiative themselves. Therefore, their solicitude for their country will not be as great as their masters.” (p. 21)





*“It is only the person who has studied diligently, so that he has a mastery over things and events, who becomes noble and rich, while his opposite becomes base and poor.” (p. 96)*  
*What matters is to keep learning and being a leader of oneself.*

Encouragement of learning (1872-1876) by Fukuzawa Yukichi is well known as one of the most influential books in Japanese society. This book is the collection of his educational philosophy of the author after spending time in different countries in the West. Being exposed to Western culture and philosophy solidated his belief that being a leader of one's self is the most and fundamental way of being a leader of society.

Although the book is not a typical leadership book, the principles written in the book is still valid for many modern leaders, especially for those who are interested in learning about leadership in Asia.

