CHAPTER 5: EMPEROR SYSTEM PAVES WAY FOR PEACEFUL PROGRESS IN JAPAN

1. Japan’s first emperors

From the time that the Japanese people were first unified by the Yamato Court up to the present day, a single dynasty of emperors has reigned over Japan. By contrast, China has been ruled by many successive royal families. The fact that Japan has only had one Imperial House contributed greatly to its historical development and the happiness of its people. This is something that I, as a Taiwanese man observing Japan from the outside, am able to understand better than the Japanese themselves do.

When the monk Chonen of Japan's Todai-ji Temple visited China in the late-tenth century, he mentioned to Emperor Taizong of the Song dynasty that an unbroken line of emperors had reigned over Japan since the earliest times. Emperor Taizong was struck with admiration for Japan's stable imperial succession, lamenting that this had been achieved on a mere "barbarian island". On the other hand, Japanese monks who visited China during the late-Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties took one look at China's dreary landscapes, devoid of temples or forests, and lamented having ever come to study there.

In fact, Emperor Taizong was suspected of having murdered his elder brother Taizu. He is also said to have killed more than ten thousand people and the entire family of the crown prince. Naturally, familicide within the royal family was certainly not limited to the Song dynasty. About two hundred people have been crowned as emperors in China's successive dynasties, but only one third of them died natural deaths. History was even more unkind to Korea's kings. About half of the kings belonging to Korea's Silla and Koryo dynasties were killed, often by members of their own families. According to Confucian philosophy, a man of great virtue would become emperor of all the peoples of the realm on the authority of the "mandate of heaven", but should his dynasty lose virtue, the mandate would pass to another person. In China, this is known as the principle of "dynastic revolution". Nonetheless, even China's most virtuous rulers oversaw considerable bloodshed, slaughtering not only their brothers' families, but also, in the case of Han Emperor Wudi, his sons, or, in the case of Tang Empress Zetian, her brothers, sisters, and children. Even Tang Emperor Taizong, reputed to be one of China's wisest rulers, ascended to the throne by launching a bloody coup d'état in 626 at Xuanwu Gate and executing tens of thousands of people, including his elder brother Crown Prince Yin, his younger brother Prince Qin, and their entire families.

As I explained in Chapter 3, it appeared to be a law of Chinese history that no new emperor could be crowned without massacring much of his own family and countless common people. For example, the emperors of the Liu Song dynasty fought among themselves so much and engineered so many mass murders of their own family members in Nanjing that eventually there was no one left to ascend the throne and the dynasty ceased to exist.

Of course, this is not to say that the succession to Japan's imperial throne has always gone smoothly either. In ancient Japan, the Yamato Court was for a time in danger of collapse when Emperor Buretsu failed to produce an heir. Ultimately, a fifth generation grandson of Emperor Ojin, who reigned over two hundred years earlier, stepped forward to claim the throne as Emperor Keitai and preserved the imperial lineage.

Sushun, the thirty-second emperor, came to power in 587 following a violent clash between two rival clans that saw the Soga clan, led by Soga no Umako, defeat and exterminate the Mononobe clan. Sushun himself soon came into conflict with Soga no Umako, who had Sushun assassinated by one of Sushun's own vassals. Thus, it is true that even in Japan an emperor has been killed by his vassal, though Emperor Sushun's death was the only case of this occurring.

As the power of the Soga clan grew, it seemed increasingly likely that they would usurp the imperial throne for themselves and, in the style of the Chinese, found a new dynasty. However, Prince Naka no Oe, later known as Emperor Tenji, and Nakatomi no Kamatari, the founder of the Fujiwara clan, formed an alliance and slew Soga no Iruka in the Imperial Palace in the year 645. This event, referred to as the Isshi Incident, averted the possibility of a "dynastic revolution" in Japan.

In spite of the Isshi Incident, the next phase of Japanese history would see the emperors gradually give up de-facto political control.

The emperors of ancient times served as both chief priests of the Shinto faith and leaders of the Japanese government. However, as state functions became more and more complex, the emperors began to disengage from day-to-day government administration and lost de-facto political power. Between the eighth century and the tenth century, real power was held by the Fujiwara clan. A closer examination of the period reveals that many reigning emperors passed the throne to their heirs as soon as possible and became retired emperors (*daijo tenno*). The few political functions that the reigning emperor still had left were actually exercised by the retired emperor, further diminishing the de-facto political power of the imperial throne. Many young children received the title of emperor in name only.

2. Japan’s emperors in the Middle Ages

In 1192, Minamoto Yoritomo established the Kamakura shogunate, under which samurai warlords working outside the Imperial Court wielded de-facto political control.

In 1333, Emperor Go-Daigo seized power, but this imperial restoration, known as the Kemmu Restoration, proved short-lived. The samurai Ashikaga Takauji rebelled against Go-Daigo, overthrew his government, and installed another emperor in 1336. There were now two men on the imperial throne, the emperor of the Northern Court selected by Ashikaga Takauji and the emperor of the Southern Court aligned with Go-Daigo.

After a brief period of civil war, the Southern Court was absorbed into the Northern Court and disappeared. The modern Imperial House descends from the lineage of the Northern Court. Still, the fact that the Imperial House was for a time split into two rival branches is a problematic point for Japan's "unbroken line of emperors" that we cannot simply disregard.

By the time of Japan's Warring States period, the Imperial House was threatened with extinction, having lost not only its power, but most of its wealth as well. The man who saved the emperors from financial ruin through his generous contributions was the greatest warrior of the era, Oda Nobunaga. And yet, as I wrote in Chapter 4, Nobunaga had been influenced by the Chinese historical theory of "dynastic revolution", and he was uncertain about what he would do with the imperial institution in the end. As I noted, Nobunaga refused to accept the court ranks that the Emperor tried to offer him. He also urged Emperor Ogimachi to abdicate and pressured him to change the era name that the Imperial Court had selected. There was a real risk that he might abolish the Imperial Court entirely. Though this is largely speculation, as I mentioned in Chapter

1, Akechi Mitsuhide may have been motivated to rebel against Oda Nobunaga to protect the Imperial House. It seems reasonable to say that this was at least one factor behind his revolt.

Judging from how he waged his wars, Nobunaga must also have adapted his battlefield tactics from Chinese models. Once he had seized absolute power in Japan, could Nobunaga have proceeded to abolish the Imperial Court and remove the Emperor? To me, it seems almost unfathomable. Almost unfathomable, but not entirely so.

Nonetheless, I can safely say that, even if Nobunaga had removed the Emperor, he could not have taken the title of emperor himself. Though he may have had the power to destroy the emperors, he could never have become emperor. The imperial institution carried the weight of over a thousand years of history within it, which, I can say with confidence, no amount of military might could ever have erased.

Even if Nobunaga had used force of arms to wipe out the imperial institution that is so intimately linked to even Japan's earliest legends, he surely could never have occupied the Chrysanthemum Throne and called himself "Emperor". History is not to be trifled with, for it carries within it the totality of the human experience.

3. Emperors during the Edo era

Japan's next rulers were the Tokugawa shoguns, who had unified the country through strength of arms and dominated the political system with an iron fist. Though they often forcibly meddled in the affairs of the Imperial Court, including their unilateral imposition of the Laws for Court Nobles, they never tried to abolish the Imperial House. If they had wanted to abolish it, they certainly wielded the military might to have done so. In that case, why did the emperors survive? The living ought to bear a sense of responsibility to future generations, and I believe that Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, being keenly aware of the history that lay behind the imperial institution, most likely also understood that.

Nevertheless, the Imperial Court maintained only a meager existence under the stifling hegemony of the Tokugawa shoguns. In such circumstances, what societal purpose was left for the Imperial Court to fill? Myself excluded, foreigners observing Japan from abroad often reflexively view the Imperial Court as just a senseless waste of money, and even a fair number of Japanese people would say the same thing.

Was it true that the emperors of the Edo period who discreetly occupied the Imperial Palace in Kyoto lived out their lives for no real purpose? This thought must surely have crossed the minds of even the emperors themselves.

What, on closer consideration, were the emperors actually able to do without real political power? The answer is that they dutifully performed the religious rites passed down through the imperial line, and prayed for the peace and happiness of the people of Japan.

Under the Tokugawa shogunate, the only societal purpose of the Imperial House was thus to offer prayers for the peace and happiness of the people. And yet, precisely because the shoguns had been ceremonially granted the authority to govern Japan from the emperor, they were unable to disregard the wishes of the people and rule arbitrarily. Officially, the leaders of the Tokugawa shogunate held only the imperial title of *seii tai shogun*, meaning "barbarian-subduing great general", and for this reason it was impossible for them to become despots and exercise power tyrannically as the Chinese emperors did.

In 1779, as the reigning Emperor Go-Momozono lay dying without a male heir to succeed him, he hastily adopted the sixth son of Prince Kanin Sukehito, Prince Sachi, who later took the name Tomohito. Tomohito ascended to the throne the following year as Emperor Kokaku at nine years of age, but, just a few years later, Japan was gripped by the Great Tenmei Famine lasting from 1782 to 1787. The desperate masses began to congregate around the Imperial Palace and pray for relief. They gave up on the Tokugawa authorities, who had turned a blind eye to their plight, and instead came to throw money offerings over the palace gate and beg the Emperor for help. What was at first just a few passersby became, within ten days, an enormous crowd of 70,000 surrounding the entire palace. Emperor Kokaku was so moved to witness this that he personally asked the governor of Kyoto to distribute aid to the people, and made sure that his request was carried out.

This was the first time since the formation of the Tokugawa shogunate that an emperor had intervened in the shogun's domestic political jurisdiction. Moreover, what made the event so consequential was that the shogunate did obey the Emperor's wishes.

Komei, the 121st emperor, reigned from 1846 to 1867 and was the father of Emperor Meiji. The years that elapsed between his ascension to the throne at age sixteen and death at age thirty-six encapsulated the momentous fifteen-year period between the arrival of Commodore Perry's fleet at Uraga in 1853 and the death knell of the Tokugawa shogunate just before the Meiji Renovation. This was truly Japan's time of trials. Deep within the recesses of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, Emperor Komei endured great loneliness and composed poems like the following ones.

The ships of foreign lands
Haunt my soul that desires only
That my subjects may live in peace.

This spring I forsook
Even the smell of flowers and chirping of birds
For the sake of my subjects.

Without knowing the will of the deities
It pains my foolish heart
To sit upon this great throne.

Through these poems, we see that the Emperor's mind was always preoccupied with Japan's territorial integrity and the wellbeing of its people. However, because he was a firm advocate of "expelling the barbarians" and opposed to opening Japan to foreign influence, there have been rumors that he was secretly poisoned. Still, no one can doubt the sincerity of his heartfelt commitment to the needs of his subjects and the fate of his country. None of his thoughts or actions betrayed a hint of the selfish motivations that dominate the hearts of so many ordinary people.

4. Emperor helps surmount crisis in last days of Shogunate

Under the aegis of the emperors, who reigned in an unbroken line since the country's foundation, how did Japan manage to overcome the unprecedented national crisis confronting it between the downfall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the subsequent Meiji period?

The conflict that broke out in the final years of the Edo period was, to put it in plain terms, a power struggle between the Tokugawa shogunate and the domains of Choshu and Satsuma that had been shunned by the shoguns since their defeat at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. If

Choshu and Satsuma had rebelled against the Tokugawa with the intention of forming their own shogunate, the struggle would definitely have been a far bloodier affair, not unlike a Chinese-style "dynastic revolution" fought for control of the shogunate. However, Satsuma and Choshu always affirmed that their objective was not to establish a shogunate, but rather to restore power to the Imperial Court. The leaders of the Tokugawa shogunate thus found it easier to surrender to the Emperor than to their inferiors, the rebel domains of Choshu and Satsuma.

In 1868, the forces of the shogunate and the Satsuma-Choshu alliance clashed at Toba-Fushimi in Kyoto. Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the last shogun, was aware that his army was at least equal to those of his enemies, and yet he lost heart the moment that he saw them hold aloft the golden Imperial Standard. Though not yet willing to admit defeat, he immediately fled Osaka with his closest subordinates such as Matsudaira Katamori and returned to Edo in order to avert further loss of life. Some Japanese people have seen Yoshinobu's desertion of his own men and retreat to Edo as a cowardly act, but this sentiment may be unfair. If Yoshinobu had remained where he was, the fighting would inevitably have continued, but his bold withdrawal from Osaka Castle prevented that. Therefore, Japan was able to overcome one of its greatest crises thanks to the prestige of its Imperial House, the venerable Yamato Court.

After this, the army of Japan's new Meiji Government attacked the northeastern domains, initiating the so-called Boshin War, which did produce many casualties. However, apart from that, the dramatic political revolution known as the Meiji Renovation was achieved largely without bloodshed.

Even if France and Great Britain had wanted to intervene, the speed of the transition permitted them no such opportunity. Yoshinobu was offered military support by the French minister, but he refused.

The inescapable conclusion is that Japan only survived this national crisis thanks to the existence of the Imperial House. The fact that the emperors have existed since the earliest times carries great value. I was born in Taiwan, but I cannot overstate the global significance of Japan's imperial institution, which is truly enviable from the perspective of China or Korea. Even Chinese President Xi Jinping sought to elevate his stature as he rose to power in China by receiving an audience with the Emperor of Japan. This palpably demonstrates how globally respected, and how truly unparalleled among nations, is the Imperial House of Japan.

5. The Meiji Restoration: A grand achievement

And so, Japan handed power back to the emperors with minimal violence and established a centralized government. To make the government's new direction clear, it had to officially return the land and people to the authority of the emperors. Under the old Tokugawa shogunate, Japan was divided into domains, and local feudal lords ruled both the land and people of these domains as their personal fiefs. What was needed was a restoration of the system of "emperor's land, emperor's people" that had first been instituted under the Taika Reforms of 645.

To achieve this, the Meiji Government declared, in the name of the Emperor, the abolition of the domains. In 1871, all the domains were abolished and replaced by prefectures responsible for local administration. Due to this reform, all of Japan's samurai, who earned their salaries from the lords of the domains, were put out of work. The samurai were Japan's warrior class, who during the Edo period openly wore their swords at their sides. They were a force to be reckoned with and, one would think, ought to have rebelled rather than accept the new order. And yet, they did not rebel. This was partly because the reform had been carried out in the name of the

Emperor, and Japanese society had been long inculcated with the notion that submission to the emperor was a virtue. It was also partly because the now unemployed samurai accepted that the reform was necessary to make Japan stronger and, as warriors, they felt that it was their duty to die for the sake of a greater cause. One might call this the triumph of the spirit of self-sacrifice.

New History Textbook, which was compiled by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform and used in middle schools between 2012 and 2016, contains the account of William Elliot Griffis, an American citizen who was working in Fukui at the time. According to *New History Textbook*, "When the news arrived from Tokyo that the domains had been abolished, there was uproar and a great deal of anger from the now unemployed samurai of the domain. And yet, even amidst this tumult, several of Griffis' samurai students at the local domain school enthusiastically told him that, 'Now Japan will take a position among the nations like your country and England.'"

The samurai of Japan, who had held all the positions of power in the shogunate, accepted the new reforms at the cost of their own careers and livelihoods, and agreed to go quietly into the night to ensure the success of the Meiji Renovation. Japan should rightly be proud of this remarkable accomplishment, which was unlike any the world has ever seen.

However, it was only possible thanks to the authority of the emperors and the bushido spirit of the samurai.

Next, let's turn to the subject of the Meiji Constitution, promulgated in the year 1889.

A constitution, needless to say, outlines the nation's fundamental character. A society must already have accumulated a common repository of national wisdom and developed national institutions before a constitution can be drawn up and enacted. If it does not yet have such an accumulation of experiences, the rashly enacted constitution will end up having no effect.

As is well known, the Meiji Constitution was the first constitution promulgated in Asia.

First of all, what is a nation? The modern nations that arose within Western civilization have delineated national borders and came into being for the purpose of preserving and promoting the safety and happiness of the citizens living within those borders. These nations, both large and small, all enjoy the same right of "sovereignty". As such, sovereignty within the international community means recognition of a society's achievement of nationhood. Fellow nations respect each other's sovereignty and ultimately aspire for the happiness of all human beings. In other words, nations are man-made creations that are constructed at certain stages of history. I referred to this stage as "national civilization" in Chapter 2 where I discussed how the people of Western civilization came to organize themselves into nations.

Since the dawn of history, the protective barrier of the sea has provided Japan with its own natural border, behind which the people lived their lives in peace. They grew into their own community, naturally fulfilling the prerequisites to become a "nation" and entering the stage of national civilization.

In the West, communities that usually had common languages and religions formed nations guaranteeing the rights and liberties of their citizens, often with a king as their head of state embodying the nation's sovereignty.

There were also nations like France and the United States that did away with the monarchy and, arguing that the nation's sovereignty lied with the people, elected a politician such as a president as their head of state. Nations can come in diverse forms, but in all cases they have defined

borders and exist to preserve and improve the peace and prosperity of citizens residing within those borders.

Japan has had a national border and a government committed to the safety and happiness of its people since the dawn of its history. Therefore, it would be fair to say that Japan had already effectively realized nationhood long before the Meiji Renovation.

In summary, Japan did not become a realm within the orbit of Chinese civilization, or *tianxia*, as the Chinese referred to their governing philosophy. Rather, Japan developed a unique form of national civilization. As a general rule, a multiplicity of nations coexist within each modern civilization. Nonetheless, as Samuel Huntington noted in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*, Japan is unusual in being a civilization represented by only a single nation.

6. The Charter Oath and the Meiji Constitution

In response to Tokugawa Yoshinobu's announcement that political power would be transferred to the Imperial Court, the Emperor released the Decree for the Restoration of Imperial Rule on January 3, 1868 (December 9, 1867, under the old calendar). On September 8, 1868, the era name in use in Japan changed from Keio to Meiji, marking the start of the Meiji period. During this time, the Charter Oath was released. It was on March 14, 1868, that Emperor Meiji gathered the court nobles, feudal lords, and government officials to the Kyoto Imperial Palace's Hall of State Ceremonies for the swearing ceremony. On behalf of the Emperor, Senior Councilor and Vice President Sanjo Sanetomi read aloud before the deities all five articles of the Charter Oath, starting with "Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by open discussion." All the Emperor's vassals, with the Emperor himself standing before them, swore to the deities to support the new government. However, this was not an order issued by the Emperor to his vassals. The Emperor also took the same oath to the deities as a demonstration of solidarity between sovereign and subject.

The Charter Oath

- *Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by open discussion.*
- *All classes, high and low, shall be united in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.*
- *The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall all be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there may be no discontent.*
- *Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.*
- *Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule.*

After swearing the oath, the Emperor passed down an imperial rescript declaring that, "We will lay down the government's policies and forge a path that shall safeguard all people." In this manner, the Meiji Government made clear that the objective of its policies would be "a path that shall safeguard all people."

In other words, by proclaiming this as its nation-building goal, the Meiji Government showed that Japan was already endowed with the conditions for nationhood on a conceptual level. It would be fair to say that the Meiji Constitution did nothing more than express this fait accompli on paper. For this reason, the process of enacting the constitution proved no great national trial for Japan.

Indeed, the concept that the nation exists for the betterment of the people and citizenry was already recorded in one of Japan's oldest works of history, *The Chronicles of Japan*, which includes a famous story about Emperor Nintoku. According to *The Chronicles of Japan*, Emperor Nintoku noticed that smoke was no longer rising from residences and became concerned that the people might be too poor to cook their food. In response, he decided to cease collecting taxes for three years. Three years later, he ascended a nearby hill and, seeing once more the smoke rising from the ovens of private homes, he remarked, "The deities permit an emperor to rule solely for the sake of the common people. Therefore, it is the emperors who serve as the foundation of the people."

Emperor Nintoku may have said this while recalling the legends of China's old emperors of virtue, but, at least from the time that the country was unified under Qin Shi Huang Di, China had never actually had an emperor like that. It would be no exaggeration to say that none of China's emperors since Qin Shi Huang Di attempted any achievement beyond personal self-gain through force of arms. Chinese people have themselves referred to their political system as a "family-owned realm" (*jiatianxia*), which derives from the concept of *tianxia* and appears to be synonymous with the "patrimonial bureaucracy" of which Max Weber spoke.

Regardless, Japan did learn new ideas through contact with the national civilizations of the West. Japan had not previously conceived of people as having individual rights and liberties. Moreover, the concept of parliamentary politics, that the direction of the nation was to be determined through discussion in an open assembly, did not exist in Japan until the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate.

On the other hand, Japan had already naturally evolved the institution of constitutional monarchy, which in the kingdoms of the West was only achieved through a long, hard-fought historical process. In a constitutional monarchy, monarchs "reign but do not rule", meaning that they do not participate in national decision-making and thus are never responsible for misrule. In Western monarchies, the notion that the monarch bore no political responsibility was established at least in theory, if not always in reality.

And yet, the idea of constitutional monarchy was already influencing Japanese politics during the Heian period (794-1185) and was put into practice under the shogunate founded at the start of the Kamakura period.

I stated earlier that the idea of establishing a national parliament was entirely absent in Japan until the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. Still, it is worth pointing out that the final article of Prince Shotoku's Seventeen Article Constitution, which was written in 604, is, "Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone." Making decisions on the basis of dialogue with the people is the principle behind parliamentary politics. One could also go back even further and make the argument that the Divine Assembly convoked during the Age of the Gods was the origin of Japanese democracy.

The Meiji Constitution, officially titled the Constitution of the Great Japanese Empire, was promulgated on February 11, 1889.

Article 1 of the Meiji Constitution reads, "The Great Empire of Japan shall be reigned over by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal." Inoue Kowashi, who was involved in drafting the constitution in May, 1887, decided to use the Japanese word *shirasu* to mean "reigned". His intention was to make Article 1 an assertion of imperial sovereignty over Japan. Inoue submitted the draft to Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, who ultimately decided to replace the word *shirasu* with *tochi* prior to the promulgation of the constitution. Although the word *tochi* can mean "to

rule" in Japanese, Inoue explained its intended connotations in the following excerpt from *Goin Sonko*, a posthumously published collection of his writings.

"In ancient times, what word did we use in Japan to refer to the notion of governing the lands and peoples of our country? In the ancient history text, *Records of Ancient Matters*, it is written that Takemikazuchi was sent by the deities to confront Okuninushi, and he told him, 'Okuninushi, the lands that you rule are to be given to the child of Amaterasu as the land over which he should reign! What do you say to this?' In ancient times, we utilized the verbs 'rule' (*ushihaku*) and 'reign' (*shirasu*) in reference to the relationship between the sovereign and his lands and subjects. In that case, isn't there a distinction to be made between 'ruling' on the one hand and 'reigning' on the other? I believe that there is a stark difference between the 'rule' of Okuninushi and the 'reign' of Amaterasu's child. If we follow the interpretation of Motoori Norinaga, the word 'rule' is entirely equivalent to the European *occupare* or the Chinese *fuyou yanyou*, which mean wielding total control. The conduct of a powerful clan emulates the style of Okuninushi, who regarded the land and people as his own personal property. The proper emperor, who achieves glorious ascendency over our country, is one who reigns rather than rules."

Remarkably, the Western principle of monarchs who "reign but do not rule" can be found in reference to the emperors of Japan within the ancient myths about the inception of the Yamato Court.

Partly for this reason, there was no resistance whatsoever to this principle being enshrined in the Meiji Constitution. Both the Emperor and his subjects were able to accept as natural the idea of "reigning but not ruling".

Because Japan had already fulfilled the prerequisites of nationhood by this point in time, the Meiji Constitution was in many ways just a formalization of the preexisting situation. No further effort was necessary but to officially recognize Japan as what it had long been, a nation.

This is testament to the greatness of the long reign of the Japanese Imperial House. It is also an important reason why Japan's history ought to be carefully observed by all the peoples of the world.

7. Strange explications of the current Constitution

While we are on the subject of the constitutions, let's also examine Japan's current constitution. Its Article 1 stipulates that, "The emperor shall be the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power."

This text has been unashamedly interpreted to mean that the emperor is a symbol of the state, but is not Japan's head of state. This is a serious problem. It is apparent even to a Taiwanese man like myself that this is an absurd interpretation with no grounding in Japanese history. Of what could the emperor be a symbol outside the context of the nation's history? The emperor is neither a representative of a certain political party nor of a certain social class. Rather, he is the representative of the citizenry as a whole, and therefore the representative of the nation. Does that not make him Japan's head of state? Taking a historical perspective, the emperor was the country's sovereign, and should that not still be the case in Japan's current constitution that was officially ratified under the amending procedure of the Meiji Constitution? I have heard, though I have not researched the matter in detail, that even General Douglas MacArthur, who imposed the present constitution on Japan, regarded the emperor as Japan's head of state.

Given that the present constitution was pushed through the very amendment process contained within the Meiji Constitution, why do Japan's legal scholars and others involved with Japanese law refuse to uphold the interpretation used in the Meiji Constitution based on the historic position of the emperors? This bizarre analysis needs to be called out for what it is. What could the legal establishment, from Japan's legal scholars on down, possibly be thinking? This made-in-Japan interpretation is making the Japanese constitution even worse than it already is.

Even though Japan lost the war with the United States, why must Japanese people continue to do harm to their own country by inventing a constitutional interpretation beyond what MacArthur himself envisaged?

According to Article 4, paragraph 1, of Japan's present constitution, "The emperor shall perform only such acts in matters of state as are provided for in this constitution and he shall not have powers related to government." However, this article appears to be essentially no different than the contents of the Meiji Constitution. Is it not the basic definition of a constitutional monarchy?

That is to say, the constitutional monarchy, under which the emperor is not involved in actual political decision-making, was at the very heart of the constitutional law put in place by the Meiji Constitution.

According to the Meiji Constitution, "The Great Empire of Japan shall be reigned over by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal." In Japan, this text has caused some confusion owing to the fact that it uses the word *tochi*, which tends to mean "to rule". Nonetheless, *tochi* in this case stands for the older Japanese verb *shirasu*, meaning "to reign". The clear intention of the Meiji Constitution was to enshrine the principle of monarchs who "reign but do not rule".

In consideration of these facts, a "head of state" and a "symbol" are just two sides of the same coin. One might say that Japan's constitution has itself proved that the emperor cannot be a "symbol" without also being a "head of state". And yet, the Japanese legal establishment seems to insist on reading the constitution in a manner so wrongheaded that even the US occupation army did not expect it.

Concerning the right of collective self-defense, successive Director-Generals of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, which provides legal advice to the government, have thoughtlessly clung to the peculiar interpretation that Japan retains the inherent right of collective self-defense, but cannot constitutionally exercise it. They have consistently maintained this deluded notion of Japan "retaining but being unable to exercise" the right of collective self-defense, despite that this problem puts the country's very security at stake. In light of this, should we really say that the Director-Generals of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau serve the Japanese government?

In order to do away with such ridiculous interpretations, it should ultimately be our elected government that decides how it will interpret the constitution, without relying on the bureaucracy. The problem is that Japanese society is still suffering the consequences of the War Guilt Information Program, the propaganda operation undertaken by the US Army during its occupation of Japan to indoctrinate the Japanese people with the idea that they needed to atone for the war.

Nevertheless, the continuing impact of the War Guilt Information Program over the past sixty-five years is no longer the fault of the occupation, which ended in 1952. Rather, it is the fault of Japanese people. The occupation army withdrew to the United States sixty-five years ago, and the Japanese people have since then been masters of their own destiny.

In regards to World War II, it has been said that Japan lost, but not every Japanese person lost out. It is those that profited from Japan's defeat who have assumed the US Army's role of instilling war guilt and who have attempted to portray Japanese history with a deliberately masochistic slant. Most of the

beneficiaries of the defeat, who embraced the War Guilt Information Program and perpetuated its influence after the withdrawal of the US Army, are bureaucrats, scholars, and journalists who did not fight in the war and know nothing of the bushido spirit. They have slandered Japan time and again, and, by doing so, they are not only damaging their own country, but are also causing great trouble for Japan's neighbors.

Over the course of their existence, which stretches back to the Age of the Gods, the emperors of Japan certainly have experienced a fair share of crises, albeit nowhere near as bloody as the history of the Chinese emperors. Nevertheless, each generation of Japan's forbearers did their part to overcome these crises and strived to preserve the imperial lineage. Because of that, the Imperial House of Japan today stands out as by far the world's oldest dynasty.

As I described in Chapter 4, the preservation of this dynasty has been an inestimable boon to Japan's development. I believe that I have sufficiently explained how the Imperial House mitigated warfare in Japan and thus guided the nation through its long history with relatively little bloodshed. However, I would like to discuss one more pertinent topic that can be easily pinpointed as a historical phenomenon, namely religious culture.

When the Choson dynasty seized control of the Korean Peninsula, it launched a mass suppression of Buddhism, a religion that had been cherished by the Korean people for over a thousand years between the Three Kingdoms Period and the end of the Koryo dynasty. Buddhism was completely extirpated from Korean society. Until then, Buddhism was regarded as one of Korea's most precious spiritual pillars, but all that was wiped out in a stroke by the violent persecution campaign engineered by the Choson dynasty. The Korean people had no power to oppose the force of arms that was brought to bear against them.

In thirteenth century Japan, the Jodo and Nichiren schools were born amidst a flowering of popular Buddhist movements in the style of the Tendai school headquartered on Mount Hiei. This was not the product of any policy of force, but came from the natural growth of the faith itself within Japan. By contrast, as I recounted in Chapter 1, Yi Song-gye overthrew the Koryo dynasty in the Korean Peninsula in the fourteenth century with the military support of Ming China. China bestowed Korea with the name "Choson" and, in return, Korea revered the Ming Emperors as deities.

The Chinese people were also devoted to Buddhism, delving into the innermost secrets of the faith. And yet, in 664, Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei charged Buddhist monks with depravity as a pretext to wreck havoc on the growing religion. Temples and pagodas were demolished, and monks were banished. The persecution was an imperial order backed with military might, and no one dared resist it.

Furthermore, the Liang dynasty was founded in 502 in the southern half of China by Emperor Wu, an ardent disciple of the Buddhist faith. Regardless, he was repeatedly betrayed by the devious Ho Jing and his dynasty destroyed.

In Japan, Buddhism flourished around the city of Nara since the time of Prince Shotoku, and it did come under criticism for a time. Nevertheless, at no point were any of Nara's temples or Buddhist statues razed. Japan's capital was transferred to Kyoto by Emperor Kammu, Buddhist devotees set up a new headquarters on Mount Hiei, and the old Buddhism of Nara was left unmolested. As Buddhism spread to the masses, the Japanese people never attempted to attack or destroy the country's historic Buddhist temples by force, with the one exception of Oda Nobunaga.

After World War II, General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, did make efforts to Christianize Japan under the US occupation, but they went nowhere.

Today, the Japanese people still deeply treasure Buddhism. If Buddhism was as preponderant in the Korean Peninsula as it is in Japan, would the South and North Koreans be a more calm-tempered people than they are now? At the least, I doubt that they would be continually cursing Japan under the sway of primitive shamanistic social traits.

Thanks to the preservation of Japan's imperial line, neither Buddhism, nor any other Japanese cultural trend, tried to wipe out what came before it. Instead, Japanese history has progressed by gently overlaying the new culture onto the old culture. When Japanese history is observed from the perspective of an outsider, the significance of this looks very clear. Just as Buddhism and Shinto fused together as one, I can see that the principle of "syncretism" has always been alive and well in Japan.

Japan has a great history, and if the Japanese people were to show more pride in it, they would help not only themselves. The Japanese people must do this for the sake of we Taiwanese as well, and for sensibly-minded people in Korea and China. In Japan, there is no shortage of corrupt individuals who despise their own country, and the work of these self-loathing Japanese hurts not only Japan. It is important to know that they are also hurting other countries. Those who realize what is going on in Japan should clearly identify who these self-loathing Japanese are, what they are doing, and what they have done, so that their malicious influence will be condemned by society.

In this chapter, I illustrated how fortunate Japan is to have been reigned over by the emperors and the many ways in which they have facilitated Japan's development. However, I would like to close this chapter by noting that, regrettably, it is the Japanese people themselves who often fail to fully grasp this important reality.