

FOUR STAGES OF THE JAPANESE KOKUTAI [NATIONAL ESSENCE]

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The most original political idea ever developed in Japan was that of the ***Kokutai*** [National Essence]. It served from the Meiji Restoration to 1945 as an inspiring and unifying ideology, and provided the national political framework within which to place the system of constitutional monarchy borrowed from the West under the Meiji Constitution of 1889. It solves many of the puzzles of understanding that Constitution.

However, unlike the idea of democracy which has universal appeal, the idea of the ***Kokutai*** was useful only in Japan, and contributed nothing whatever to the development of political ideas anywhere else in the world, even when imperial Japan tried to export it to subject countries. In addition, its fundamental irrationalism is appalling and offensive to many, though this is a characteristic shared by many other political systems based on religious ideas. I shall not dwell on these major defects, but will explain the development and applications of ***Kokutai***.

Stage One: ***Shinron*** [New Theses, 1825] by Aizawa Seishisai.

Aizawa Seishisai (1781-1863) of the imperial loyalist Mito han made the first extensive statement of ***Kokutai*** in his 1825 work ***Shinron*** [New Theses]. All the ingredients for the system had long been at hand, in the form of traditional ideas about Japan and the emperors, and latterly in Tokugawa Confucian thought about government and society. Aizawa was the first to pull them all together into coherent form, though with much invention and exaggeration. This was unremarkable, since invention and exaggeration had been practiced in Japanese political thought since Japan's first histories ***Kojiki*** [Record of Ancient Matters, 712] and ***Nihon Shoki*** [Chronicles of Japan, 720]

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Let us quickly summarize the basic traditional ideas. According to ***Kojiki*** and ***Nihon Shoki***, Japan had been founded by the deities, eight million of them, who dwelt in the Plain of High Heaven. The greatest of them was Amaterasu Omikami, the Sun Goddess, who sent down envoys to pacify the unruly nature and inhabitants of Japan. Later she also sent down her Heavenly Grandchild to begin the dynasty of emperors, vowing to protect the line forever, coeval with Heaven and Earth. He bore the mirror, jewel, and sword that became the symbols of the imperial line and its indwelling virtues, which emanated necessarily into the political system. His fourth generation descendant was the first human Emperor Jinmu,

meaning Divine Warrior (r. 660-585 B.C.) (1) The imperial line descended in an unbroken line, as vowed by the Sun Goddess, and according to some it continues to the present Heisei Emperor (r. 1989-), 125th in the succession.

All this was taken as historical fact throughout Japanese history. Although a few historians briefly challenged some aspects in the 20th century, the imperial state saw to the universal education of the people in the myths as historical truth. The ideas were quite simple, though like all religious ideas they were treated as profound and mysterious truths for 1,500 years, which guaranteed their status as such. Ceremonies at government offices, palaces, and Shinto shrines throughout the ages ensured their perpetuation. Confucian rational scholars offered some criticisms in the Tokugawa period (1603-1868), but they were sharply answered by the **Kokugakusha** [National Scholars], the greatest of whom was Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801). Norinaga in particular appropriated the superb scholarly methods of the Confucians, and turned them into the service of the national myths. He established **Kojiki** as an utterly unimpeachable source about Japan, rendering it through his scholarship into a work of marvellous revealed truth, characterized by intelligence and consistency. He considered it the standard for all Japanese behaviour - political, social, religious. With Norinaga, the values of ancient times were reified into eternal truths, and no-one ever complained about the inflexibility and intellectual poverty of fixing ancient times as the final, unchanging source of Japanese values. However, Norinaga did not develop a systematic political theory.

Aizawa Seishisai did so. He came upon these ideas in Japan's first modern time of crisis, created by the advent of the great Western imperial

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powers into East Asia. He understood the problem as one of national unity, above all as a spiritual problem. Perceiving that the Western powers possessed great unity and strength, he attributed them to Christianity, holding the religion to be the central unifying and motivating force of

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those nations. He observed that in Japan this unity had existed in ancient times, in the form of **saisei itchi**, the unity of government and religion. It was originally established by the Sun Goddess, and the knack of maintaining this unity was passed on to her descendants, the Emperors. She established the virtues of the three imperial regalia of mirror, jewel, and sword, and began the great ceremonies of worship that were carried on by the Emperors, which automatically brought about unity and harmony. There were also sage Emperors in the Chinese mould, such as Emperor Nintoku (313-99). He observed the poverty of his people and gave them a tax remission for three years, and thereby won the trust and affection of the people, so that Emperor and people were one. (2) As put by Bob Wakabayashi, "This national spiritual unity - the voluntary affection and trust the commoners felt for their rulers - was what Aizawa basically meant by **kokutai** in **New Theses**." (3) This was a devising of ideology, and had no necessary relation to the social reality of the brutal Tokugawa governing system. Aizawa also claimed that it was the Sun Goddess who had devised the fundamental social values generally thought of as Confucian, especially loyalty and filial piety.

Thus the term National Essence entered the language, and its earliest meaning was spiritual, having no reference of systems of political organization or law. Its comprehensive nature is evident, permitting Aizawa to bring together traditional Japanese and Chinese Confucian political thought.

It is remarkable that this farrago of myths, inventions, and exaggerations was not immediately attacked by Confucian scholars who resented the seizure of their values by the Sun Goddess, or intellectuals who had been exposed to corrosive Western rationalism. Instead it was welcomed as a superb expression of the National Essence, and it served without modification through the Meiji Restoration, providing the ideological basis for the new state. In 1868, few acknowledged their intellectual debt to Aizawa Seishisai, but everyone could state the essential ingredients of the National Essence.

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Stage Two: The Liberal Interpretations of Katô Hiroyuki and Fukuzawa Yukichi

Katô Hiroyuki (1836-1916) and Fukuzawa Yukichi (1830-1901) both were active in the 1870's, the era of *Bunmei Kaika* [Civilization and Enlightenment]. They were members of the famous Meiji Six Society, which promoted the values and institutions and practices of the advanced countries of the West. In its short-lived journal *Meirokei Zasshi* [Journal of the Meiji Six Society] the members tackled every aspect of Japanese society in light of the superior institutions of the West. They fully believed in the superiority of Western civilization, unabashedly recognized the backwardness of Japanese society, and urged progress upon the Japanese nation. Katô and Fukuzawa are remarkable because they wrote the first and last original, and liberal, interpretations of the National Essence. After them, liberal interpretations were smothered by the resurgence of conservatism in the 1880's and 1890's.

Katô Hiroyuki is the more interesting, because in his later career he was well known as a crusty conservative president of Tokyo Imperial University, who fully supported the imperial state as expressed in the Meiji Constitution, and viciously attacked Christianity as antithetical to state purposes. But back in the 1870's, under the influence of contemporary English and French liberal thought, he held that the National Essence consisted in natural human rights.

Katô Hiroyuki: The National Essence and Natural Human Rights

(a) Natural Human Rights

Katô Hiroyuki was one of the few who understood the social contract theory of the state.

His early thought in the 1860's and 1870's was also distinguished by his rare ability to understand the taxonomy of states, which had eluded all the Confucians, who thought monarchy was the only possible type of government. In *Rikken Seitai Ryaku*

[Outline of Constitutional Government, 1868] he presented a systematic outline of the general theory of government, discussing limited or constitutional monarchies as well as

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democratic republics, the separation of powers in states, and civil liberties. (5) This lifted him far above the contemporary nationalists who could not see beyond the absolutist Emperor of Japan. He also introduced a fresh idea about the nature of the National Essence, advocating natural rights as its essential nature. This was the first and last time that such a claim was made about the National Essence, and it could only have occurred in the 1870's era of Civilization and Enlightenment.

Katô's ***Kokutai Shinron*** [New Theory of the National Essence, 1874] was written specifically to attack traditional Asian theories of government, and the theories of Japanese National Scholars in particular. He began with a fairly vicious review of Asian theories of the state, in which the land and the people are the possession of the ruler. The theory also holds that the ruler is always virtuous. This, says Katô, is not always so. He described the unthinking service of the people to the state envisioned by the National Scholars as the behaviour of cattle and horses. Taking recourse to the theory of natural rights developed in the West, Katô went on to develop a theory of the state in constitutional monarchies, which he thought the most appropriate form for Japan, which after all had a monarchy, not yet bound by a constitution.

Though he was influenced by German political theory, his discussion in ***Kokutai Shinron*** in 1874 seems mostly to reflect classic English liberalism, which held that the only purpose of the state is to protect the life, liberty, and property of the people, and nothing else. When it fails to do so, it is no longer a legitimate state. Katô was prepared to face up to

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the implications of this position, as he held in chapter five that the people have the right to resist bad government, like the American colonies which resisted allegedly bad English government in the American Revolution.

He did not long persist in his liberal positions. Like many other Japanese intellectuals, he moved across the political landscape from left to right, becoming a firm upholder of the authoritarian state of the late Meiji period. He said this happened because of a change in thought, derived from fresh learning. Following his early exposure to classical liberalism and natural rights theory, he encountered the theory of natural evolution and Social Darwinism, and came to hold that human rights are not natural, but are gained by the strong. They extinguish the weak. Katô returned to the classical theory of the ***Kokutai***.

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(b) The National Essence and the Form of Government

In chapter seven of ***Kokutai Shinron*** Katô made a distinction between ***Kokutai***, the National Essence, and ***seitai***, the form of government. Whether or not he was the

first to think of them does not matter. They became the key terms for the discussion of political and constitutional theory until 1945, for better and for worse.

The ***Kokutai-seitai*** distinction enabled conservatives to identify clearly as ***Kokutai***, National Essence, the “native Japanese”, eternal, and immutable aspects of their polity, derived from history, tradition, and custom, and focused on the Emperor. The form of government, ***Seitai***, a secondary concept, then consisted of the historical arrangements for the exercise of political authority.

Seitai, the form of government, was historically contingent and changed through time. Japan had experienced in succession direct rule by the Emperors in ancient times, then the rule of the Fujiwara Regents, then seven hundred years of rule by Shoguns, followed by the allegedly direct rule of the Emperors again after the Meiji Restoration. Each was a ***seitai***, a form of government. In this understanding, the modern system of government under the Meiji Constitution, derived this time from foreign sources, was nothing more than another form of Japanese government, a new ***seitai***. The Constitution was nothing fundamental.

Fukuzawa Yukichi: The Last Sensible Interpretation of the National Essence

In ***Outline of a Theory of Civilization***, Fukuzawa held more explicitly than Katô Hiroyuki, who was vague on the subject, that the concept of National Essence did not apply solely to Japan; every country has one, China, India, all the countries of the West. This simple claim deflated the importance of the discussion, for most conservatives up to 1945, and especially Shintoists, believed without much thought on the matter that only Japan had a National Essence.

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Fukuzawa’s next point about the National Essence was completely unintelligible in the current discussion of his time. The National Essence, he said, could change:

The national structure of a nation is not something immutable. It is subject to considerable change. It can unite or divide, expand or contract, or even vanish entirely. Its existence or disappearance does not depend upon such considerations as language, religion, and the like. (6)

This contradicted everything that was known about the National Essence. Starting with Motoori Norinaga and the National Scholars, and proceeding through Aizawa Seishisai and all the patriots who carried out the Meiji Restoration, everyone believed that the fundamental characteristics of the National Essence were found in ancient times. Nothing that had happened to the Japanese in history ever changed the National Essence, not the importation of Chinese civilization, the breakdown of the ancient imperial state, feudalism, the sixteenth century contact with the West, the opening of Japan and the advent of Civilization and Enlightenment, the

general improvement in material and cultural life since ancient times, the vast accumulation of knowledge through the ages.

It is important to understand this point about Japanese political ideas. To say the least, this kind of thinking was not very supple. Its rigidity would be endlessly displayed in the twentieth century by thousands of writers and speakers, learned and not-so-learned alike, all insisting upon the same points about the National Essence, as determined in ancient times.

Next, Fukuzawa held that the most important aspect of the National Essence was national sovereignty, making the point repeatedly. Without the survival of Japan as an independent nation, discussion of the National Essence was beside the point. His use of national sovereignty as the main aspect of the National Essence brought him back to his principal and urgent concern, the survival and progress of the Japanese nation. This identification of the National Essence with national sovereignty, and not with matters of ancient Japan, was original with Fukuzawa.

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Last we must consider Fukuzawa's position on the imperial house, which everyone identified as the core of the National Essence. Almost everyone said that Japan's National Essence was unique, because of the unbroken succession of Emperors begun by the oath of the Sun Goddess. Fukuzawa too said that the unbroken succession of Emperors was unparalleled in the world [*gaikoku ni rui nashi*] (7), but he had already made himself clear that this did not constitute the National Essence; national sovereignty did. His point was that the unparalleled succession of Emperors could be used to promote Japan's national sovereignty, by focusing the sentiments of the people. This functional approach to the imperial house distinguished him from all other writers.

Fukuzawa used the standard nationalist words to describe the imperial house -its majesty and sacredness [*songen seishin*], its unbroken descent [*bansei ikkei*] for ages eternal [*mukyû*]. Indeed his 1887 work *Sonnô Ron* [Essay on Imperial Loyalty] began, "The ruling house of our imperial Japan is majestic and sacred." (8) This seemed to

place him with traditional nationalists, who always opened their books with worshipful statements about Japan and the Emperor, which constituted their whole point. But just as he scathingly criticized the scholarship and institutions of the Tokugawa period, so he maintained a clear and critical view of political authority. In a memo sometime in 1875-7 he wrote, "The holy Son of Heaven of blessed reign [the Emperor] - that is a falsehood. In modern times, Emperors and Shoguns have been nobodies." (9) He had not belief at all in such ideas, but understood their utility. He was far from the National Scholars of his day, who believed in the literal truth of the ancient myths about the Emperors. "To my embarrassment," he wrote, "I am not a scholar, and do not know the history of the Age of the Gods, and find the ancient records obscure." (10)

Instead he found the imperial house useful as the independent head of state, above politics, that is found in most modern societies such as England, France, Canada. An

exception is the United States of America, where the president is both the head of state and the leader of government, a frequently unsatisfactory arrangement.

In the 1880's, as Japan moved toward constitutional government under the Emperor as sovereign in the state, Fukuzawa's position was washed away. To summarize, he identified the National Essence with national sovereignty, and not with the succession of Emperors in a line unbroken for ages eternal. While recognizing hereditary succession as the

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basis of the institution, and saluting the Emperor with such terms as majesty and sacredness, he held that the imperial institution had only functional value as the head of state. This I call the last sensible interpretation of the National Essence. It was beyond Fukuzawa's imagination that the Emperor **was** the National Essence.

Stage Three: The Political Thought Behind the Meiji Constitution

In 1881 the Emperor of Japan, that is, his government, announced that a constitution would be established by 1889. Conservatives immediately took control of the process of drafting it, ousting the liberal Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) from the government. The court noble Iwakura Tomomi (1825-83) laid out principles for a draft constitution by the Council of State:

- 1 The Constitution shall emanate from the Emperor and the policy of a gradual approach toward constitutional government shall prevail.
- 2 The Emperor shall have supreme command over the army and navy, declare war, make peace, conclude treaties, etc.; moreover, the Emperor will direct the national administration.
- 3 The organization of the cabinet shall not be subjected to the intervention of parliament. (11)

After the expulsion of Okuma, nobody in the government had a democratic constitution in mind, though many among the intelligentsia and the general public did. At this time, explicit discussion began of the **Kokutai** and **seitai** as the framework within which modern Western institutions would be placed.

Prominent men were clear on the point. During political discussions at the imperial court, in 1879 Motoda Eifu (1818-91), a Confucian advisor to the Emperor, wrote a submission. It established the principles of the state for conservatives, employed the language that would become standard and compulsory in political discussion, incorporated the inventions and exaggerations in use since Aizawa Seishisai's time, and referred to the religious and historical myths that justified the system, without a trace of scepticism or irony.

The National Essence [**Kokutai**] of the country of our ancestors must be preserved forever. The form of government [**seitai**] by the court must change with the times.

This is the general principle not only of our country, but also of each country in the world, in accordance with the Way of Heaven and Earth.

Therefore, countries where the **Kokutai** changes, or is unstable, violate the Way of Heaven and Earth. Where they go against the standards of their ancestors, the country becomes disordered, and ultimately falls into destruction. This is amply demonstrated beyond doubt in both ancient China and modern Europe. And chaos was the original condition of our country when it was created by Heaven.

Then the deity Ninigi no Mikoto [the Heavenly Grandchild of the Sun Goddess] first opened up the country. The principles were established everywhere and forever, of the unbroken succession of Emperors for ages eternal, of affectionate relations between father and son, and of the duties of the ruler and the subjects, resulting in our prosperous country of the present day.

Our **Kokutai** based on the ruler must be preserved for ages eternal. However, the **seitai** has changed, according to the conditions among the people and local customs, and thus developed with the times, in accordance with the natural principle of non-action. (12)

With the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution, the **Kokutai-seitai** distinction became the underlying, widely accepted theory of the state. With the Emperor declared sovereign because of his descent in a line unbroken for ages eternal, as well sacred and inviolable, the essential conditions were established for the preservation of the **Kokutai**. Further, the divine founding of the country and of the imperial house during the Age of the Gods provided the ultimate justification for the **Kokutai**. This divine founding of the country was not mentioned at all in the Constitution, perhaps for fear of raising derision in the West. However, it was understood by everyone and taught as historical truth in Japan's educational system, from elementary schools through universities, until 1945.

The main problem clarified by **Kokutai-seitai** theory was whether the Emperor could be limited and bound by the Constitution. As its author, the Emperor could not be, unless he chose to be so limited, out of his undoubted, unbounded benevolence; nor could the **Kokutai**, which was primary, be limited by any **seitai**. The matter became extremely important in the 1930's with the development of extreme nationalism, which vigorously attacked theories such as that of Minobe Tatsukichi (1873-1948), who held that the Emperor was indeed an organ of the state, bound by the Constitution like the other organs such as the cabinet and the Diet. Yet the point was strictly one of fiercely contested political ideology, since in fact the Emperor, assuming extensive powers under the Constitution, was never expected to exercise them. It was the intention of the

framers of the 1889 Constitution that he remain largely a ceremonial, symbolic figure as his ancestors had been through most of history. (14))

The new *seitai* included most of the features of modern Western governments, with two houses, the lower one elected, the upper house appointed; regular parliamentary sessions; cabinet government, and so on. It is often wondered whether Japan's leaders were seriously committed to these unfamiliar, and perhaps uncongenial Western forms, or merely meant them as a cover for real power operating behind the scenes. It is my view that they did indeed work behind the scenes, and this occurs in every government. But they were in fact committed to these forms, made every effort to make them function successfully, and they never attempted to change the provisions of the Constitution by so much as a comma. They even held an election during the Pacific War. The conservative leaders of Japan could do this because they were confident about the fundamental nature of the imperial country [*Kôkoku*]. Arrangements for the political representation of the people in the form of government could never disturb the National Essence.

Stage Four: *Kokutai no Hongi* [Cardinal Principles of the National Essence of Japan], 1937.

Government did in fact develop in a democratic direction in the early twentieth century, in the period known as Taishô Democracy, named after the Taishô Emperor (r. 1912-26). Taishô Democracy had many drawbacks and weaknesses, and in terms of political theory, its greatest drawback was the inability of its supporters to devise a theory to supersede the *Kokutai-seitai* theory of the Meiji Constitution.

None of the supporters of Taishô Democracy, including its greatest theorist Yoshino Sakuzô (1878-1933), was willing to challenge imperial sovereignty, and they all professed belief in the National Essence. Even Minobe Tatsukichi did so, though in an abstruse and legalistic manner that confused his opponents into believing he denied the *Kokutai*. Yoshino Sakuzô was unable and unwilling to overcome the concept of imperial sovereignty and replace it with the concept of popular sovereignty [*minshu shugi*] that is essential in most democratic states, though not in Canada, where nobody knows who is sovereign. He compromised with a proposal on *minpon shugi* [The people are the basis of the state]. This

was fine with traditional conservatives, who held that the Emperors since Jinmu and Nintoku had always made the people the basis of their state, making the welfare of the people their first concern in their benevolent government, involving perfect obedience to the relations between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, etc. **Minpon shugi** thus provided no theoretical basis for political or social democracy; it was just a reinforcement of ancient imperial theory. Yoshino was left with a lot of practical proposals for making political democracy work - enlarge the franchise, enforce the election laws, educate the people. These had worked over centuries in Britain, but in Japan, time and nationalist, authoritarian political movements did not allow.

The events of the 1930's are well known, and need not be discussed in detail. They include the rise of nationalism and militarism, the independent action of the army in Manchuria and the consequent death of Taishô Democracy as the military forced its leaders into compliance with its foreign policy. Under a sense of crisis in world developments,

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government, the military, and the educational establishment all became concerned about threats to the essential nature of Japan. They were particularly disturbed by the advent of individualism, a necessary product of modern industrialism in which labour is a commodity, and its related evils: democracy, socialism, communism, and anarchism, which they discovered in alarming degrees among the youth of Japan, especially university students.

Even given all the explanatory causes, it is difficult to understand the depth and passion of their concern for Japanese values, which were not actually seriously threatened. The depth and passion were fully displayed in the Minobe Incident of 1935, in which Minobe Tatsukichi, a professor emeritus of law at Tokyo Imperial University, was forced to resign from the House of Peers. The reason was his theory of the Emperor as an organ of the state under the 1889 Constitution. This had long been acceptable: his distinguished scholarship was recognized in 1911 by appointment to the Imperial Japan Academy; he had given the New Year's lecture before the Emperor in 1932; and he was appointed to the House of Peers in 1932. Now it seemed all Japan was suddenly criticizing him for disloyalty, and he was even wounded in an assassination attempt. Press and parliamentary discussion was fierce, meetings were held everywhere, committees were formed, studies made, reports presented. The event consumed most of a year of public agitation, and resulted in a Movement to Clarify the National Essence [**Kokutai meichô undô**]. Finally a committee of Japan's leading scholars was formed to make a definitive exposition of the **Kokutai**, for the education and edification of the entire nation. This was published as **Kokutai no Hongi** by the Ministry of Education in 1937, and it was meant to be accorded nearly the same status in Japan's schools as the Imperial Rescript on Education and the portrait of the Emperor. By 1945 more than a million copies had been printed, including editions by private publishers. (15)

It is clear that at this stage in history, they were no longer dealing with a concept to generate spiritual unity like Aizawa Seishisai in 1825, or with a political theory of Japan designed to accommodate modern institutions of government, like the 1889

Constitution. The committee of professors from prestigious universities sought to define the essential truths of Japan, which might be termed religious, or even metaphysical, because they required faith at the expense of logic and reason.

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They were Japan's leading professors, and collectively they might be expected to be aware of modern trends of thought. These included astronomy, geology and geography, evolution, anthropology, and history, all of which would indicate that the conditions and matters of the Age of the Gods described in *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* were not historically true. Yet the professors displayed no sign of doubt, as they opened their book with a statement that "The unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Japanese Empire. This is our great and immutable national entity (*Kokutai*)." (16) By the Founder of the Japanese Nation, they meant the Sun Goddess. To explain the origins of this, they went straight to the Age of the Gods in those ancient works, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, much as Christians used to go straight to the Bible, and indeed many still do.

Next, the professors used the difficult formulaic terms of the Japanese language, many of them religious, that had accumulated since ancient times for expression of these truths. Perhaps this was really why their professorial knowledge and expertise were required: they knew the origins, derivations, and uses of these words in all the texts. It was not because of their special ability to produce a logical and concise explanation of the *Kokutai*, since these qualities were absent. As in many religious works, it was only necessary for the professors correctly to state the terms, in order for the relations among them to be understood. Real logical explanation would have been impossible. For example, it would have been fatal to belief if they had attempted to explain exactly the mechanics of how the virtues of the sacred mirror, sword and jewel flowed into the Japanese political system, making it flawless by definition. The mechanics are as difficult to understand as those of the redemption of all sinners through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which are better left unexamined, and just believed.

A summary of the contents of this work is not required here. Written by eminent professors, it was surprisingly, entirely repetitious of accepted truths. The professors had nothing new to say. Its effect surely was important, helping to inspire the Japanese nation to the utmost effort in World War II, and reinforcing the belief of the Japanese people, their leaders and its Emperor in the truth and importance of the *Kokutai*.

At the end, long after defeat was clear, the leaders of Japan could not surrender, because the safety of the Emperor and the imperial institution were not guaranteed in the Allied demand for unconditional

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surrender. They sought not immunity for themselves as leaders, or safety for the people of Japan. They needed only a guarantee for the imperial house, in which the

Kokutai was incarnate. It is a nice question, whether they would have decided otherwise, had they known the atomic bombs were coming.

It is also a nice question, whether the **Kokutai**, inherently irrational, could have survived if Japan had won the war.

Notes

(1) Traditional reign dates are given for the early Emperors. Since they did not exist, there is no point in correcting the reign dates.

(2) The story of Emperor Nintoku was copied entirely from Chinese sources illustrating the Confucian virtues of the Emperor.

(3) Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ***Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan*** (Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 124.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 149.

(5) Summary from Tabata Shinobu, ***Katô Hiroyuki*** (Yoshikawa Kôbunkan, 1969), pp. 76-7.

(6) D. A. Dilworth and G. C. Hurst, translators, ***An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*** by Fukuzawa Yukichi (Sophia University Press, 1973), p. 23.

(7) “Bunmeiron no Gairyaku,” [An Outline of a Theory of Civilization] in ***Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshû*** [Complete Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi], vol. 4 (Iwanami Shoten, 1959), p. 37

(8) Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Sonnô Ron” [Essay on Imperial Loyalism], in Fukuzawa, ***Nihon Teishitsu Ron*** [Essays on the Japanese Imperial House] (Shimizu Shobô, 1987), p. 99.

(9) Kano Masanao, ***Fukuzawa Yukichi*** (Century Books, Shimizu Shoin, 1967), p. 150.

(10) Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Teishitsu Ron” [Essay on the Imperial House], ***Nihon Teishitsu Ron***, p. 26.

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(11) George M. Beckmann, ***The Making of the Meiji Constitution. The Oligarchs and the Constitutional Development of Japan, 1868-1891*** (University of Kansas Press, 1957), p. 59.

(12) Imperial Household Agency, ***Meiji Tennô Ki*** [Records of the Meiji Emperor] (Yoshikawa Kobunkan), vol. 4 (1970), pp. 691-2, citing Motoda family archives.

(13) Deleted. Close up

(14) The Meiji and Taisho Emperors complied with this understanding. The truth about the Showa Emperor is now becoming more fully known. After World War II, both Japanese and Americans had an interest in preserving the imperial institution, and they tacitly colluded in presenting a version of the Emperor as nothing more than a constitutional monarch who had no choice but to endorse the proposals of his governments. See John W. Dower, ***Embracing Defeat. Japan in the Wake of World War II*** (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1999). Recent works by Peter Wetzler, ***Hirohito and War. Imperial Tradition and Military Decision-making in Prewar***

Japan (University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), and Herbert Bix, **Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan** (Harpercollins, 2000) claim that he knew everything, approved everything, and commanded some things.

(15) After the war it became extremely difficult to find copies of this work, produced in such abundance. When defeat was imminent, Japan's leaders, who knew precisely which aspects of their ideology were offensive to the enemy, ordered destruction of millions of such documents, and the officials and the people co-operated, with children even burning documents in schools. On top of that, liberals and radicals entered Japan's universities and libraries after the war, and cleared shelf after shelf of objectionable material into the garbage. The translator and editor of the English version of **Kokutai no Hongi** worked from a copy found in Brazil, where there was a large Japanese community. In the 1990's I still had great difficulty in finding a copy in Tokyo; not even the Library of Tokyo University has it. I obtained a copy from Cornell University Library. Later I learned there are some in Kyoto libraries. In October, 2000, a graduate student of mine in Tokyo found a copy in a used bookstore in Kanda, and sent it to me.

(16) R. K. Hall, ed., **Kokutai no Hongi. Cardinal Principles of the National Essence of Japan**, trans J. O. Gauntlett (Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 59.