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SHINRON: KOKUTAI
[Chapter One of “A New Thesis”: The National Essence (1825)]
by Aizawa Seishisai (1782-1863)

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Introduction

The divine land of Japan is origin of the sun and source of energy for all living things. The imperial throne has been and will continue to be graced for countless generations throughout all eternity by descendants of the Sun Goddess. Indeed Japan is by nature at the head of the world and sets the standard for all other nations. The august authority and virtue of his imperial majesty radiates boundlessly to the ends of the earth.

Now however, the Western barbarians, who are by nature destined to act only as the legs and feet of the world, race across the four seas trampling other nations in their wake. Oblivious to their own weaknesses and the catastrophe which surely awaits them, they have even set their sights on the divine land of Japan. How can they be so arrogant?

The earth appears to be perfectly round, without corners or extremities. Nevertheless, it seems that all things have their natural form. In the case of the world, the divine land of Japan occupies the position of the head. While it may not be imposing in size, it nonetheless reigns over the entire globe by virtue of having successfully avoided the revolutionary process of dynastic change. By the same token, the Western barbarians are naturally the legs and feet of the world. They are able, therefore, to travel around the earth at will. The great land in the middle of the sea which the Europeans have called America is the back of the world. Hence, its people are stupid and lack ability. It is all in the natural configuration of things.

Therefore, it is only right that they should stumble and fall of their own weight. Nevertheless, the energy of Heaven-and-

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2 Portions in parentheses are parenthetical in the original, and brackets indicate editorial insertions. Ellipses indicate the deletion of parenthetical material only; the main text has been translated in its entirety.
Earth waxes and wanes. As pointed out in the Shi ēh Chi [Records of the Grand Historian] “When human forces gather sufficient momentum, they are able temporarily to prevail over the justice of Heaven.” When that is the case, the whole world will be at the mercy of the deception and lies of the northern barbarians and meat-eating foreigners.

At the present time, people will inevitably greet with incredulity any plan designed to forestall such an eventuality. That is only because popular opinion is based on out-dated information and antiquated ways of thinking. In his Art of War Sun Tsu says, “Do not trust the enemy not to come; rather rely on your own military preparedness. Do not trust the enemy not to attack; rather rest assured that your preparations prevent him from attacking.” We should insure that our country’s political education is meticulous, its morals sublime; that those above and below in the social order abide in their duty; that the population is prosperous; and that military preparations are adequate. If such is the case, we shall not fail. Granted that we have not accomplished those things, however, what consolation is offered by the idle optimists?

People say, “They are no more than barbarians. They come in mere merchantmen and fishing boats rather than battleships. Surely they can do no serious harm.” Those who put stock in such rationalizations are “trusting the enemy not to come.” They depend upon the actions of the other side, but rely not at all on their own initiative. If you ask them what preparations we on our side have made to insure that the enemy will not dare to attack, they answer incoherently, betraying their ignorance. Right now we may hope that the foreigner will decide not to desecrate the rest of the world, including Japan, but when can we be certain?

Consumed with resentment and indignation over these circumstances, your servant has dared to offer his views on the true reliance of the state. First, in the chapter entitled “national essence” I will discuss how the gods founded the nation in accord with the principles of loyalty and filial piety, and then touch on their respect for the profession of arms and emphasis on the people’s welfare. Secondly, in the chapter entitled “general situation,” I have discussed trends among the nations of the world. Thirdly, in “intentions of the barbarians” I present facts concerning the designs on Japan embraced by the foreigners. In the fourth chapter, “defense,” I will expound on measures prerequisite to a wealthy nation and a strong army. In the fifth, “long-range plan,” I present a program for the strengthening of the people and the rectification of morals. All five chapters are premised on the hope that “When the will of Heaven is determined, it will triumph again over men (of evil designs).” In broad outline, I have revealed herein the values on whose behalf I pledge my life to Heaven and Earth.

Chapter One: The National Essence

I

It is not by intimidating the people and forcing them into obedience for one dynasty at a time that an imperial sovereign is able to pacify the four seas, govern in peace for extended periods, and preserve the realm in perfect tranquility. His only bulwark is that the people should be of one mind, love their ruler and harbor no desire to leave him. It is, therefore, no accident that from the time of the separation of Heaven and Earth and the initial appearance of man right down to the present day, the descendants of Amaterasu have dominated the four seas in unbroken succession.

Righteous performance of duty by the subject toward his sovereign [is the great duty of Heaven-and-Earth]. Affection between father and son is the ultimate of human concern. This greatest of duties and ultimate of human concern are combined in Heaven-and-Earth, diffused, and distributed among the hearts of the people. On this there shall be no change for eternity. Those very qualities are the true reliance of the emperor while ruling the realm and governing the people in an orderly manner.

Long ago, when Amaterasu laid the foundation of the nation, she acted on behalf of Heaven, her virtue was Heavenly virtue and her deeds Heavenly deeds. All was the work of Heaven. Her virtue was symbolized by the jewel, wisdom by the mirror and authority by the sword. She united with Heaven’s benevolence, usurped Heaven’s wisdom and seized Heaven’s authority, using them to exercise dominion over the world. When she passed them on to her earthly descendents, she made it clear that the three regalia (jewel, mirror and sword) should stand for the position of the emperor and symbolize the virtue of Heaven. She bade them
do Heaven's work and transmit the regalia to their descendants unto eternity. Inasmuch as respect for the bloodlines of her Heavenly ancestors was to be strictly inviolable, she established the distinction between sovereign and subject and clarified the paramount duty of the subject.

When Amaterasu transferred the regalia she took the mirror especially and said, "When you look into this mirror it shall be as if you look upon me." Thus down through the ages the mirror has been revered as the sacred body of Amaterasu Omikami, and as generations of emperors have gazed into the mirror they have seen her form. Appearing in the mirror is none other than the emperor but in his own image he clearly perceives her face. When that occurs, at the instant of supplication there is a mystical sense of mutual empathy between god and man. As a result the emperor will inevitably display a heart of filiality in worshipping his ancestors and never rest in the pursuit of virtue. In this manner affection between father and son is warmly observed and the ultimate of human concern is made to flourish. It was from these two principles [duty to sovereign, affection to father] that Amaterasu Omikami fashioned the moral way for human beings, and caused her teachings to be passed on through ages eternal. So the Way of ruler and subject, father and son, is the very apex of the Heavenly Way; affection as the ultimate of human concern flourishes within, the highest duty between subject and ruler is manifest without. Together they constitute the Way of loyalty and filial piety, which is the Great Way of Heaven and of man. Loyalty is reverence for the worthy; filial piety is love for one's parents. Hence it is natural that the hearts of the people should be united and affection prevail between those above and those below.

But how is it that the doctrine of loyalty and filial piety should exist without being spoken and the people be unaware that they practice it daily? The ancestors are in Heaven, shining forth across the land, while the Heavenly descendants on earth display a true heart and boundless deference, taking care to repay their debt to the progenitrix. Government and religion (worship and administration) are one; the callings of governance and acting in Heaven's stead are both a matter of serving the Heavenly ancestors. Respecting the ancestors and governing the people go together, and to the extent that the emperor is one with Heaven it is only natural that his position should be as eternal as Heaven's. The Display of filial piety on the part of successive emperors, such as worshipping at ancestral tombs and solemnly carrying out ceremonies and rites, results from their efforts to observe the virtues of sincerity and reverence. Rites and ceremonies are abundant, but for showing gratitude to the origin and respect for ancestors, the greatest among them is the Daijōšai [Great Thanksgiving Ceremony].

The Thanksgiving Ceremony is the emperor's first taste of new grain in the autumn and his offering of it to the gods . . . When Amaterasu received good grain it occurred to her that by this means she could provide for the lives of her people. So she planted the grain in the divine fields. She also pulled threads from the silk cocoon she held in her mouth and that was the beginning of silk cultivation. Thus she provided the basis for food and clothing for the people at large. To her imperial descendants she gave rice ears from the field of the gods [yuniwa]. That is how we know that she placed great importance on the livelihood of the people and was anxious that they have good grain. Accordingly, the Daijōšai consists in cooking new grain and offering it up in great quantities . . . Each detail of the ceremony is designed to show gratitude to the source. Misogi ceremonies are carried out to purify the participants in body and soul, and the emperor enters the ceremonial hall in bare feet. His arrival is not heralded, indicating the extent of his pious regard for the occasion. The emperor's use of a head-piece of evergreen and plain silk clothing reveals his attitude of respect and desire to avoid ostentation.

When Amaterasu Omikami transferred the realm, she commanded Amenokoyane-no-mikoto to divine the will of the gods, and asked Amenofutodama-no-mikoto to assist her. The descendants of Amenokoyane-no-mikoto formed the Nakatomi clan; those of Amenofutodata-no-mikoto formed the Inbe clan. Hence on festival days the Nakatomi recite their prayer for the emperor, and the Inbe clan offer up the mirror and the sword. Generation after generation has meticulously followed the original ceremonies, and it is just as if the mandate of Amaterasu Omikami is bestowed anew on each emperor. The Inbe clan is also in charge of providing a variety of implements. Those who participate in various aspects of the ceremony have inherited their function through generations, never abandoning or forgetting it. The care which they take in judging performance insures that the ceremony remains just as when performed by the Heavenly ancestor. Hence neither sovereign nor subject is likely to forget the beginning of the world . . .
When the direct descendant of Amaterasu reverently carries out these rites in her honor, an indistinct image of her august countenance rises before the eyes of the celebrants. Neither sovereign nor subjects fail to sense her presence and become profoundly aware of her nearness to them. As the officials respect and adore the emperor, they experience the spontaneous and irrepressible feeling that they are adoring Amaterasu herself. Their ancestors served Amaterasu, and her imperial descendants showed benevolence toward the people and correctly executed festive ceremonies. In turn, the leaders among them gathered numerous and led them in ritual worship... Inside they were filial to their own particular forbears, while outside they participated in the Daijōsai. In both cases they served their ancestors... Once they draw themselves up straight in remembrance of how their ancestors reverently served the emperor and the gods, how can they ever neglect their forbears or feel like they turned their backs on the emperor? That is how a spirit of filiality and sincerity is transmitted from father to child, child to descendants. The ancestral will and even occupations are passed down for countless generations. Filial piety gives rise to a spirit of loyalty to the sovereign, and loyalty is the result of following the will of one’s ancestors.

Hence loyalty and filial piety become one; the education of the people and the refinement of customs is accomplished without a word being spoken. Worship becomes government, and government has the effect of education, hence there is no essential difference between government and the education of the people. If the people concentrate on revering Amaterasu and look up to her descendants, they will all face the same direction and never go astray. Their intentions will converge and people will become one with Heaven. That is precisely what the sovereign relies upon in ruling the four seas and is the final essence and ground upon which the founder established the nation.

All things originate in Heaven and people are born of their ancestors. They receive their bodies from their fathers, but their vitality is bestowed upon them by Heaven-and-Earth. Therefore, when there is talk of the spirits of Heaven-and-Earth even simple men and women are moved to awe. But if politics, education and laws are indicative of reverence for Heaven and gratitude to ancestors, there is no reason for the minds of the people not to be unified. The human mind is of Heaven-and-Earth, and when the minds of the people are unified their vitality wells up. Hence when people are of one mind, the mind of Heaven-and-Earth is collected together too and its vitality flourishes. When the vitality of Heaven-and-Earth flourishes, the source of human vitality is filled to the brim. When people receive maximum vitality from that source at birth, the ethos of the nation is gracious and close-knit. That is called man becoming one with Heaven. The people never forget antiquity, their morals are sincere, they honor their origins and return to the source. In this there is never a change.

(To quote the Book of Changes):

‘Kwan shows its subject like a worshipper who has washed his hands, but not (yet) presented his offerings; - with sincerity and an appearance of dignity (commanding reverent regard).’ - (all) beneath look to him and are transformed ...

When we contemplate the spirit-like way of Heaven, we see how the four seasons proceed without error. The sages, in accordance with (this) spirit-like way, laid down their instructions, and all under heaven yield submission to them...

(The trigram representing) the earth, and that for wind moving above it, form Kwan. The ancient kings, in accordance with this, examined the (different) regions (of the kingdom), to see the (ways of the) people, and set forth their instructions.3

The trigram Kwan has to do with the one above looking down upon those below in order to examine them, and those below looking up to the one above in order to be taught. Each is ever mindful that, “Mutual regard and correct relationships, that is called sessa takuma [diligent application].” The wind also symbolizes commands from above...

Heaven covers all; the entire earth comes under its purview. Its virtue flows incessantly like a river, and its nurture is earnest. For commands to be sent down from on high and for those below to obey them is the spirit-like way of Heaven. Those below watch their ruler and are deeply moved. Nothing is more sincere than the spirits of Heaven-and-Earth, and the precise moment when the worshipper has purified his hands and is about

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to make his offering marks the height of communion between man and the gods..."

In antiquity the Kuni-no-miyatsuko [Provincial Governors] and Tomo-no-miyatsuko [Official Section Chiefs] carried on their ancestral functions and never discontinued the rituals of worship. In the Nara and Heian periods, nobles and courtiers maintained their court rank by controlling their own clans. In the Kamakura and Muromachi eras as well the warriors and generals placed great emphasis on their position as leader of a warrior band. They cherished their own lineage and relations and therefore none failed to honor the descendants of the Sun Goddess. They knew well that the imperial throne was inviolable. Since the distinction between loyalty and treason was so clear, the people never supported traitors and indeed refused to tolerate their very existence. Rebels were even unable to gather together bands sizable enough to engage in rape and pillage. As a result, while the nation faced occasional difficulties, respect for the imperial throne was unchanged. Occasionally an emperor or retired emperor was even driven into exile, but no one ever dared to entertain designs on the imperial regalia. At the lower levels of society retainers wielded great power, but none ever seized the position of his overlord.

Ever since the gods founded the nation on the principles of loyalty and filial piety, their ethos has been preserved among the people. Therefore it is not surprising that the lineage of the Heavenly ancestors is unchanging as Heaven-and-Earth. The foundation upon which the gods established the nation is exceedingly firm and the flow of Heavenly blessings is eternal. But does that mean that there have been no lapses in the execution of benevolent administration and the dissemination of the imperial virtue? Naturally defects are never lacking in the things of this world, and the failings of the realm as it exists are innumerable. The first may be called *jisetsu no hen* [changes in the momentum of time; the tendency of virtue to dissipate]; the second *jasetsu no got* [the evils of heretical doctrine]. If we are to straighten the warped and revive what has declined, we must pay particular attention to them.

What are these changes in the momentum of time *jisetsu no hen*? Long ago, when Amaterasu Ōmikami laid the foundation for the Heavenly undertaking, she nurtured the people and made them secure by establishing *Ame-no-muragimi* [village leaders] and pacified the land by selecting gods of martial courage. As a result, the people honored the court. But it was still a primitive age and the surrounding terrain was not yet peaceful. Powerful families and local chieftains were spread out and even after several generations failed to attain unity.

The emperor Jimmu, however, pacified the land and established provincial governors to keep it secure. They governed all the people and worshipped the gods. Old families and hereditary monarchs were controlled through the granting of titles and official positions. Thus both land and people were under the dominion of the court, and the realm was well-governed...

As ages passed, however, the institutions established by the emperor Jimmu became lax and from time to time rebels appeared. Now the emperor Sujin punished the outlaws, extended political institutions, carried out a census, set up tax rolls, appointed an increasing number of provincial governors and pacified the borders. As a result of diligent administration, his achievements did not recede for many generations. Imperial benevolence was extended and the borders were widened. All land was imperial land and all people the emperor's people; the popular will was unified and the realm well-governed.

Subsequently, however, idleness became customary and time passed in peace without incident. The court lost its far-sighted wisdom and ministers of state used their authority for private gain. At the time there were *miyaka* [officials in charge of imperial rice fields] and *minashiro* [namesake groups]; there were also *otai* and *kuraji* [titled officials], *tomo-no-miyatsuko* and *kuni-no-miyatsuko*. Since all these had their own private land and slaves, the land and people of the realm were gradually split apart.

Soon, however, the restorationist hero, Emperor Tenchi, punished the gangsters of the Soga clan and as imperial prince took a direct hand in government. He swept away outmoded practices and went through with the Taika Reforms. He overturned the former decentralized system and replaced it with a system centralized on the Chinese pattern of *gunken* by establishing governors to rule the provinces. He abolished all private holdings of land and people, attaching all to the imperial court. The realm now consisted only of royal land and royal subjects, and it was accordingly well-governed.

After several generations the Fujiwara seemed to have arrogated all power to themselves and it became normal for lesser
lords and stewards to be forward and insolent. They fought among themselves and by establishing private estates [shōen] they brought land and people under private control. Meanwhile warriors attached themselves to powerful courtiers who divided public lands amongst themselves, took villages under their control and often made slaves of diligent peasants. The realm came to be decentralized into a collection of disunited principalities.

When Minamoto Yoritomo became Constable [sōsudōshi] of the realm all lands and peoples were united to the Kamakura Bakufu. Once leaders of the Kamakura and Muromachi Bakufu were named Shogun, there was never the same degree of flux in the degree of political order. On the whole, however, the rule of the shoguns was based only on their coercive control of land and people and they were prone to countermand the orders of the court. Moreover, old families and local clans seized land and people and fought amongst themselves; bandits rose up in succession as the weak fell prey to the strong. As the realm fell into disorder the people suffered endlessly. Split up as they were into a number of different bands, they fought bravely and died for their lords. Nevertheless, the supreme duty to the emperor and the principle of adherence to names and statutes were so unclear that their loyalty was not true loyalty and their filiality not true filiality. Hence the doctrine of loyalty and filial piety degenerated day by day.

The likes of Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu even got down on his knees to become a subject of the Ming dynasty in China. When he who embodies supreme power in the realm becomes known as a subject of a foreign country, our imperial court will be relegated to the status of a provincial satrapy. Even though it involved immeasurable harm to the national essence, no one in the realm rose to question his act. Devotion to duty and fidelity to principle were dashed to the ground and the overriding obligation of subject to sovereign was also abandoned. The ways and customs of the people daily became more corrupt and depraved. The principle of “showing gratitude to the origin and returning to the beginning” was forgotten. Instead of due regard for lineage, people thought only of their private interest in obtaining an heir to preserve the household. Some even adopted sons from totally unrelated families. If strangers can become father and son then father and son can become strangers. If that precedent is followed, who would realize that Heavenly principle is ineluctable? In extreme cases sons and descendants of the emperor joined Buddhist orders, and even when the imperial line was close to fading out altogether none protested. Ethics were flouted and affection between father and son declined . . .

If land and people cannot be unified, political doctrine cannot be effective. As a result, loyalty and filial piety will decline and the Great Way of Heaven and Man will crumble to the ground. Nevertheless, fluctuations between disorder and stability are common occurrences throughout history. Hence eventually, as if Heaven had grown weary of disruption, heroes rose up in succession. Toyotomi Hideyoshi came up from lowly origins to quell the fighting. As Kanpaku he dictated to the empire. He unified land and people and revered the imperial throne. Next, Tokugawa Ieyasu arose to construct a foundation of loyalty and filial piety which resulted in the achievement of two hundred years of peace. His descendants carried on the ideals he left to them and worshipped their ancestors. From time to time they led groups of daimyo to Kyoto where the emperor decorated them with court ranks and titles. Now the land and people of the realm were governed uniformly and the entire country was unified. All paid respect to the benevolence of the imperial court and obeyed the just rule of the Bakufu. Truly, the realm was again well-governed.

However, it is natural to become bored and lazy after a long period of peace. Indeed, daimyōs tend from birth to be idle. They are unconcerned when preparations against the possibility of a poor harvest are neglected, and they make no attempt to prohibit bandits from roaming freely across their land. The foreign enemy may probe our borders but they entertain no fear. Indeed, they have virtually abandoned the land and people of Japan. The people of the realm [including the samurai], on the other hand, consider only their own advantage and give no thought to the demands of loyalty or the need to rack their brains on behalf of their country. By their lazy indolence they insult their ancestors and neglect their duties to sovereign and father. How can the land and people be unified when both those above and those below engage in such self-abandonment? And how can the national essence [kokuta] be maintained?

When a run-of-the-mill leader, on the other hand, seeks to stay in power, he is afraid that the people will rise up [against him]. He therefore seeks to make everything appear peaceful and calm, and even when the foreign barbarians run rampant before
our very eyes he equivocates, calling them traders and fishermen. Those above and below conspire in such deception. Even though a tendency to make light of the foreigner is the surest way to bring us to calamity, they look on serenely with folded arms. They congratulate themselves for a wise policy as they adopt one makeshift remedy after another. In fact, they are walking towards a precipice. They should be pitted. Anyone with an ounce of sense is moaning with grief.

Now the Bakufu has decisively ordered that foreign intruders should be driven away on sight. Finally it has been made clear that the entire nation must treat them as enemies. As the order was disseminated there was not a man who did not pluck up his courage and resolve to carry it out. Obviously the temper of the nation is still sound.

We have a "feudal" [hōken] system of government because that is how it was established by Tokugawa Ieyasu. Furthermore, the system which he founded on the basis of loyalty and filial piety is heir to the immortal doctrines of Amaterasu Ōmikami. If we readjust that system with attention to the continued health of the national temper, administer the land in the spirit of the foundation laid by the gods, rectify the duty of subjects to their sovereign, deepen affection between father and son, and draw all corners of the nation into a coherent unity, there should be little difficulty. We have before us an opportunity that comes once in a thousand years. In order to meet the challenge, your servant has attempted through a discussion of jiset no hen to detail some of the evils which should be overcome.

What are the evils of heretical doctrine [jasetu no gai]? In antiquity the divine sages laid down their doctrine in accordance with the Way of the Gods. They brought the hearts of the people together on that basis alone, and gave original determination to the Way. Their spirit of service to Heaven and worship of ancestors was conveyed to later generations and the meaning of showing gratitude to the origin and returning to the beginning was understood.

When the Emperor Jimmu served the gods by punishing the recalcitrant he never tired of worshipping the gods. Finally, he established a shrine on Tomyama for the worship of Amaterasu. Emperor Gojin put great emphasis on the rituals, paid respects to Amaterasu Ōmikami, and propagated the order of worship. Thus, the true meaning of gratitude to the origin and returning to the beginning was spread across the land. The realm looked up to the imperial court in the same manner as they revered the gods. It served the sovereign in a spirit of filiality, its hearts were united and its intentions converged in the pursuit of loyalty. Public morals were warm and sincere.

Confucian texts entered Japan for the first time in the reign of Emperor Ōjin, and came to be widely accepted. They expounded the doctrines of Yao, Shun, the Duke of Chou and Confucius. But the land of China is next to Japan and its climate and culture are very similar to ours. The doctrines of Confucius are based on the mandate of Heaven and the mind of man; they clarify loyalty and filial piety, teach service to the emperor and worship of ancestors. Hence they are largely the same as the immortal doctrines of Amaterasu Ōmikami.

(In the Doctrine of the Mean it is written that "the ceremonies of sacrifice to Heaven-and-Earth are meant for the service of the Lord on High, and the ceremonies performed in the ancestral temple are meant for the service of ancestors. If one understands the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, and the meaning of the grand sacrifice and the autumn sacrifice to ancestors, it would be as easy to govern a kingdom as to look at one's palm." The ceremonies are the essential factor in making it "as easy to govern a kingdom as to look at one's palm," and they signify service to the Lord on High and worship of ancestors. This matches the intentions behind the divine establishment of doctrine in our nation.)

If we were to put those immortal doctrines into practice, clarify the government and doctrines of the founder, and forever foreshadow idleness, the benefits would be innumerable. But in reality we have been scourged with heresy and delusion. Among us are believers in magic; Buddhism; rigid, hidebound and distorted forms of Confucianism; Christianity; and other creeds which disrupt imperial benevolence and public morality. They are too numerous to mention.

Amaterasu and her descendants consolidated the rites so that they, together with all the people of the realm, could serve heaven and worship the ancestors. The rites are of universal import and applicability, without differentiation. Nevertheless,

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4 "The Order to Repel Foreign Ships" of 1825.

there are some archaic families that remain bound to particularistic creeds that have not been purged of error. In outlying regions and in private quarters they continue to worship false gods, concerning themselves only with prayers for good fortune and the pursuit of happiness. They know nothing of such basic principles as worshipping ancestors and serving Heaven. Those who observe evil customs and crave the mysterious often weave distorted theories which blur the distinctions between gods and man. Eventually they become believers in magic. Moreover, in recent times they have dressed up their theories with words and ideas borrowed from Confucianism and Buddhism. As a result, while they may be said to be serving the gods, out of greed they act counter to the principle of showing gratitude to the origin and returning to the beginning which was propounded by Amaterasu and her illustrious descendants. Ultimately, the very basis for the subject's loyalty and respect for the sovereign and the son's filiality to his father becomes obscure and the will of the people is fragmented.

When Buddhism was introduced to Japan there were those in the court who pointed out that since modes of worship had already been established in our nation it was not fitting that we should serve barbarian gods. Unfortunately, however, a traitorous courtier by the name of Soga no Umakô became a believer in Buddhism and founded a temple in collusion with Shôtoku Taishi. From that time onward Buddhist bonzes proliferated, Buddhist doctrines were widely disseminated and the hearts of the people were turned away from the Way of the Gods. The Taisho Codes put the Shinto Jingûkan in a position superior to the Daijôkan [Supreme Council] and placed bonzes and nuns under the Genbaryô [department in charge of foreign affairs], so the authors of the Codes obviously knew the national essence. But their separation of religion from government shows that the sensitivities and morals of the people at that time were not pure, as they had been in antiquity.

Under Emperors Jûmu and Kôken, Buddhist matters became more prominent and the new faith pervaded the politics and administration of the court. Eventually national [Buddhist] temples were established in connection with provincial offices. As their laws were promulgated throughout the provincial areas, the government became thoroughly Buddhist. Since those above carried out their administration according to the Dharma, those below, in turn, competed to adopt Buddhist ways. They moved with the prevailing winds toward the exclusive worship of barbarian gods. With the advent of the honji suijaku setsu 6 bona fide Shinto deities were capped with Buddhist names. Hence Heaven was flouted and the Japanese people deceived. Objects of popular veneration were made into offspring and followers of the Buddha. The Land of the Gods was turned into an Indian country and its people became followers of the barbarians. When people become barbarians of their own accord, how can the national essence survive? Even such an eminent former emperor as Go-Shirakawa complained of his inability to control the yamabushi [mountain priests]. It was the inexorable trend of the times.

With the advance of Ikko-shi [Pure Land sect of Buddhism], it was forbidden to worship at even the most prominent [Shinto] shrines. Hearts accustomed to showing gratitude to the origin and returning to the beginning were oppressed and only the Buddha was worshipped. By that time the people were well-acquainted with India but were ignorant when it came to Japan; they were aware of bonzes and nuns but had forgotten about rulers and fathers. At the time of the Ikko uprising those who called for destruction of the rebels in the name of justice were labelled enemies of the Dharma and in some cases loyal samurai took up arms against their fathers or lords. Those were truly extraordinary times, in which loyalty and filial piety declined and the will of the people was split . . .

The teaching of the Sages is none other than the Way of cultivating ourselves and teaching others. The narrow-minded Confucians and scholars who cater to the public mood do not understand the basic teachings of the Sages. They expound in an opportunistic manner, competing to be the most novel in their sophistic interpretations of the classics. They flaunt their erudition and seek fame and favor by composing poetry or stylish prose. But they are harmless enough.

There are also, however, those who are so ignorant of their duty to the emperor and the need for discriminating names and status that they refer to China under the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties as the Land of Cultural Splendor [kakka] or Central Kingdom, thereby insulting Japan's national essence. Those who are swept up in the trends of the time [josei], forget their supreme duty and disturb the correct order of status [taigî miibun], treating the emperor like a refugee in his own land - "above," they despise

6 A syncretic theory equating Shinto deities with Buddhas or Bodhisattvas.
the august virtue of the unbroken line of emperors, “below” they
depreciate the justice of the Bakufu; those make intricate
calculations, studying profit and daring to call it the art of
governance [ketei no gaku]; those who affect an austere manner
in the study of Sung Neo-Confucianism - with high-sounding
words and irresponsible conduct - but remain unmindful of the
crisis facing the nation and therefore fail to respond to the needs
of the time. None of them are loyal and none filial, nor do any
follow the Way of Yao, Shun and Confucius.

Thus the teachings of Amaterasu and her descendants are
disrupted by magic, modified by Buddhism and reduced by vulgar
Confucianism. Doctrines contradict each other, splitting the
hearts of the people. The supreme duty of subject to sovereign and
affection between father and son are in disarray. Where on earth
is the Great Way uniting Heaven and Man? Long ago those who
ruined the hearts and minds of the people were at least native
Japanese. Now, however, the foreigners of the West, where every
country believes in Christianity, seek to absorb other nations by
force, putting temples and shrines to the torch, deceiving the
people and seizing their land. They seek to make the ruler of every
country a subject; and will not rest until the people are their
slaves. Their onslaught is gathering momentum. Luzon and Java
have already fallen under their sway and they have begun to covet
the divine land of Japan.

Long ago they desecrated Western Japan, using the same
methods they applied to Luzon and Java. It was certainly not
villains and scoundrels alone who were deceived by Christian
doctrine. Fortunately our enlightened rulers and wise ministers
were able to see through their plot and as a result stamped them
out so thoroughly that none survived. It is entirely by virtue of
that wise policy that even the strongest Christian gangs have been
unable to sink roots in Japan. For two hundred years the
Japanese people have been free of their seductive doctrine.

Nevertheless, the Great Way of the Gods is still not clear
and the people have nothing in which to place their trust. Wicked
men are as numerous as ever. Usually they have followed
shamans or bonzes at one time or another, and if not them then
sometimes a vulgar Confucianist instead. Japan is like a patient
who has barely escaped death from a usually fatal disease. The
patient has not yet recovered full strength and does not know how
to do so. And since he lacks a strong, inner constitution he is
readily susceptible to infection from without.

Also, there has recently appeared a school of thought
called Rangaku [Dutch Studies]. It originally began among
interpreters and had to do with little more than reading and
understanding Dutch. Thus it was not particularly harmful.
However, some translators have come to believe the inflated
theories Westerners banter about. They have extolled such
doctrines, published books about them, and sought to remake our
beloved Japan in the image of a foreign country. Moreover,
unusual gadgets and mysterious medicines have caught the eye of
some, mesmerizing their minds and leading them to yearn for
Western ways. If their weaknesses should ever be exploited by the
evil Westerners, these seduced ones would convert completely to
the inferior customs and morals of the West, and it would be very
difficult to stamp them out. It is written that “Light frost in early
winter soon becomes a sheet of ice when trod upon.” Great evils
should be wiped out completely before they grow and spread. We
must endeavor to foresee serious problems far in advance and
take timely preventive measures.

Right now, foreigners with lawless ambitions threaten our
borders; internally, evil doctrines flourish. Hence we must ever be
on our guard. If the enemy is let in, ordinary people will conspire
with him, officials will succumb to material desire in joining
forces with him, and the realm will be cast into turmoil. When all
of this is considered together, one wonders if this is really Japan
at all. It could just as well be the Ming or Ch'ing dynasty, or even
India or a Western country. What has happened to the national
essence? Surely there can be nothing called a human being
without a body. How, when a nation has lost its body, can it
rightfully be called a nation?

Some say facilely that “building a wealthy nation and a
strong army” [fukoku kyōhei] is the most essential task in
providing for the national defense. But at this very moment
foreign enemies are focusing on our lack of unity, surreptitiously
attempting to lure away those living near the coast and capture
their minds. Should the hearts of the people be won away, the
realm will belong to the foreigner before the fighting even starts.
Wealthy it may be, but the nation would no longer belong to us.
The result would be like lending weapons to rebels and giving food
to thieves. Surely we do not want to exhaust ourselves building a
wealthy nation and a strong army only to deliver it into the
hands of bandits. No one with the least knowledge of realities will
fail to burn with indignation at the prospect.
Finally, the Bakufu has resolutely set down its command, that no one is permitted to enter into contact with foreigners. No longer will the cunning barbarians be able to seduce and disturb the minds of the people with impunity. As that order was promulgated throughout the land there was no longer anyone, whether intelligent or dull, who failed to realize that he should despise and detest the evil designs of the foreign devils. It is apparent that the fibre of the national will is still vibrant.

While we are admittedly a long way from antiquity, the emperor whom we solemnly revere retains the correct lineage of Amaterasu Ōmikami. Similarly, the people over whom he rules are descendants of those who loved her. If we rely on the hearts of those who are strong and upright; if we establish education, premising our efforts on the spirit in which the gods instructed and nurtured the realm; if we serve Heaven, worship our ancestors, show gratitude to the origin and return to the beginning; if we thereby rectify the duties of sovereign to subject, and infuse the affection between parent and child with warmth; if we educate the people so that their hearts and minds may be unified; nothing will be too difficult for us to accomplish. We are confronted with one chance in a thousand and must not let it pass. Toward that end, I have been obliged to dwell on the evils of heretical doctrine in order that we might ascertain the source of evil. Nevertheless, heroism is capable of reversing a situation and bringing remarkable transformation; no task at any time is beyond its powers.

Imperial rule over the four seas depends upon the Great Way of Heaven and Man. Its outward form may change but its meaning is eternally the same. Therefore there is no reason why the fundamental principle according to which the gods governed Heaven-and-Earth - causing the people to manifest toward their ruler an inalienable affection - cannot be realized even now. At the present time changes in the momentum of time and the evils of heretical doctrine are causing the realm unbearable grief. Nevertheless, if we really want to galvanize the hearts of the people, all we need is a policy equal to the task.

II

The nation was established through military force, and since antiquity arms have been maintained in order to conquer surrounding territory. Bows and lances were already in use in the age of the gods, and the sword is one of the three imperial regalia. Hence Japan was known as Kuwashihokochitaru-no-kuni [the land of fine weaponry]. When Amaterasu Ōmikami granted the land of Japan to her Heavenly descendants she was accompanied by Amenoshitichi-no-mikoto who led the soldiers of Kume. Again, when the Emperor Jimmu launched the Eastern expedition he used the armies of Kume as a special strike force against the enemy soldiers, and thereby pacified Yamato. He then joined the Kume band to the Mono-no-be and gave them the task of guarding the imperial palace and keeping order in the land. And when the Emperor Sujin sent generals out in the four directions to punish the recalcitrant Ebisu he granted rule over the land to Prince Toyoki.

When the peasants were not busy with farming they were allowed to hunt and present their game as tribute. They were also made to perform military duty in the campaigns. Once such a system was established, it was honored for generations. Our nation's borders expanded day by day as the Ezo were put down in the East, Kyūshū was purified in the West; finally Sankan, Benkan and Shinkan were pacified and a government office was established over them in Mimana. These were the benefits of an effort to create a powerful armed force.

During the reign of Emperor Nintoku the land was at peace and it was unnecessary to resort to arms. From the time of the Emperors Richū and Ankō the national strength began to wane. After ten or twelve generations the outpost at Mimana fell and Sankan, Benkan and Shinkan ceased their tribute.

The restorationist hero Emperor Tenchi was indignant over the falling of imperial benevolence, and took a position in a forward base established to reconstitute the government in Mimana, but fared badly in battle. The major government of the time, however, was directed toward the east where the Ezo were beaten back and an imperial outpost was established in Shiribeshi...

An expedition was sent out against Chinese pirates [shukushin] during the reign of Empress Saimi. Aid was provided by a crown prince who later became the Emperor Tenchi. Expeditionary forces advanced as far as the Gulf of Pohai, and

7 Located in the southern part of what is now the Korean peninsula.
Pohai itself sent emissaries bearing tribute. Japan again enjoyed the fruits of a strong army.

Even a hundred-odd years later, despite a decline in public morality and spirit, the Emperors Kanmu and Saga were able to put down internal rebellion and expel the Ezo from Honshū Island. It is apparent that military power had no yet dissipated. To suppress rebels and develop new land is the grand policy bequeathed to her descendants by Amaterasu Ōmikami, and her imperial descendants have ever maintained and developed that policy. Hence in the Norito, consisting of prayers to Amaterasu, it is written that, “Wherever the gods illumine, whether the extremities of Heaven or the furthest reaches of the earth, small places are made large, steep places level, and the far is made near as if hauled with many hausers.” It is a prayer for the expansion in all four directions of the august virtue of the emperor. Obviously, for the sake of the founding of the nation the court knew the meaning of respect for military arms.

Nevertheless, it is the way of the world for things to change from age to age and military institutions are no exception. In antiquity the Kume and the Mono-no-be were the primary fighting forces while ordinary soldiers were recruited from the masses. Provincial officials such as the Kuni-no-miyatsuko and Agata-nunshi also developed forces and used them to protect the people. Such, on the whole, were the beginnings of the national military system. Subsequently, this changed to a system of military detachments, and then changed again to a general military system. Under the latter system the military gradually became hereditary to families called buke, marking the beginnings of separation between the military and agriculture. In the Sengoku [Warring States] period, rivalry and strife broke out among local chieftains. Eventually that conflict developed into a trend toward “feudalism” [hōken] as the daimyo gained land in various parts of the country, and the military system changed accordingly. That is the broad outline of changes in the system over time.

Were we to characterize military changes in somewhat more detail we would note that the system was transformed in three stages. In ancient times, weapons were kept in the shrine and on the occasion of a military campaign the gods were invariably consulted. Even emperors did not rashly take matters into their own hands, but rather always sought the mandate of the gods prior to action. Therefore people were of one mind and there was no dispersion of power. The army consisted of soldiers of the gods.

The mind of the people was divided after Buddhism entered the country from India. No longer were the people united in their feelings of awe and respect for the emperor, and the meaning of receiving the command of Heaven became vague. Military affairs split away from religious affairs, becoming a purely secular matter. This was the first major change. The second change came following the emergence of Minamoto Yoritomo when the Kamakura and the Muromachi Bakufu gained control over the fighting power of the realm. Thirdly, soldiers had always been close to the land, but as disorder and rebellion spread heroic warriors left their plots and wandered about in search of a lord to lead them. Even after the fighting subsided, warriors who had given up their land now became concentrated in castle towns. Hence the third major change consisted of the split between warriors and the land. These three transformations were not just institutional, but also involved far-reaching changes in the trends of the time [kōei].

When the warriors are on the land and the emperor receives the mandate of the gods [before military action], Heaven, land and man are one body. If standards were to be established with such a principle as the foundation, and then training carried out; if in times of peace weapons were still stored and then swiftly mobilized when it became necessary to clarify the authority of Heaven-and-Earth and aid the divine spirits, the glory that would be ours beggars description. In fact, times changed. After a while people no longer revered Heaven and became estranged from it; the Way of unifying the hearts and minds of the people was lost.

When the Kamakura and the Muromachi Bakufu controlled military power, the great clans and famous houses were scattered in the provinces. With the Sengoku period some fell while others prospered. As they fought each other the warriors of the realm came to be attached to one or another of these houses and as the domestic scene fell into confusion military power was dispersed. Nevertheless, the warriors were reliable enough to stay on the land. For fighting men to live on the land is like the presence of water in the soil. No matter how remote the region, warriors inhabited its furthest reaches; no matter how small the area, protectors made it secure. Hence despite the decline of the court and the descent of the realm into confusion, the strength of its energy had not abated. Mongol
pirates were destroyed and an attack was launched on the capital of Korea. Military might was wielded just as before, but this time on external enemies.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi was afraid there was excess energy in the realm so he forced all the daimyo to reside in Osaka. There he had them reconstruct the city or sent them off on campaigns. They did not have a single day to spend cultivating their own armies. Tokugawa Ieyasu, too, strove to strengthen the “trunk” [Bakufu] at the expense of the branches [daimyo, local areas]. He saw to it that warriors were concentrated in the various castle towns, giving them no chance to develop armies on their fiefs. The masses no longer heard the fanfare of troops and never laid eyes on weaponry. Hence the warriors declined in numbers, the people languished in ignorance and the energy of the nation at long last abated. Even those known as lifelong military heroes became silent and obeyed the command of the Bakufu. Such were the signs of Ieyasu’s rapid success in pacifying the realm.

Wherever there is a private interest in the world there is damage. Weakness results, which in turn always ends in inactivity and stagnation. But why (at the time of establishment of the Tokugawa Bakufu) was weakness in the momentum [ikio] of the nation not externally evident? Ieyasu’s intention in founding the Bakufu was to train and harden warriors in fidelity to principle; for their part the warriors went forward to death unstintingly. None dared to stand up to such soldiers even when they greatly outnumbered them. Even after the realm was at peace, warrior retainers all remained sensitive to their reputation for fidelity and respected bravery at arms. Nor did the general populace soon forget the war; they never shirked even when asked to help quell a disturbance. Hence even though the momentum of the realm had weakened, the strategic areas and cities where the warriors were concentrated did not betray evidence of that weakening.

However, once a system was established to support the warriors with taxes in kind, wealth tended to concentrate in the vicinity of the warriors. Of course, where wealth has collected, merchants also tend to swarm. And merchants are always caught up in the fashions of the moment. Forever in pursuit of outrageous profit, they are constantly moved by the strange and unusual. That is fine, if our purpose is to make brave and dashing warriors forget war and enjoy a period of unbroken peace. But as their bad habits continued they developed opulent lifestyles which were inconsistent with their social status. As they became slaves to desire, they soon forgot propriety and righteousness. Hence in a situation where they had wealth without learning cultivation they became haughty and proud, negligent and self-indulgent. As wealth and luxury overflowed, poverty appeared and along with poverty came weakness.

When one is poor but nevertheless constantly attracted to luxury, one focuses one’s mind on the economics of life. Once one pays heed to the economic dimension of life one begins to worry about one’s assets, and once one does that one thinks only of personal profit to the exclusion of any attention to duty. Those above as well as below are soon consumed by lust for profit and lose their sense of shame. When the realm loses its sense of shame weakness become apparent.

A warrior regulates his behavior between the poles of advance and retreat, fast and slow, attack and repose, in accord with the actions of his enemy and the lay of the land. But today’s warriors live only in the castle towns. All they talk about is women, eating and drinking, actors and dramatic productions, gardening and floral arrangement, birdcatching and fishing. Their fencing practice and lance work are only for personal vendettas; their study of the bow and of gunnery are solely for show; their riding just for ceremonies. Armor and lances are kept only as ornaments. They cannot discriminate the varieties and uses of clothing and weapons, and have no idea what “far and near, impregnable and accessible, broad and narrow, death and life” [Sun Tzu] mean with regard to battle terrain.

A true warrior makes use of his physical strength. He is able to run, jump, make steep climbs with ease, bear wind and rain; he wears simple clothing and eats simple food, enduring hunger and thirst. Hence when a strategist selects a warrior, he will choose first from those with the straightforward, honest ways of the country, no matter how rustic. He will stay far away from the slick youths from the city, no matter how smart they appear. Today’s so-called warriors grow up with townsfolk and therefore are frivolous in their manners and etiquette, appreciative of delicate beauty; they drink and eat well, so that their bodies are fat while their arms and legs are weak. They have a knack for indoor ceremonies and meetings, but they cannot stand privation or danger. It is danger that our strategists dislike the most because when wartime emergencies arrive the warriors are of no use.
The above circumstances are hardly conducive to the cultivation of fighting men. As it says in the Records of the Grand Historian, “Those raised in an ordinary manner will be of no use.” Their weakness is obvious.

The original reason for providing the samurai with a stipend is so he might employ servants [such as ashigaru and chūgoku]. If, on the other hand, he squanders the stipend on luxury and thus sows the seeds of his own poverty he will no longer be able to pay servants. Most samurai now employ only idlers from the city to perform such tasks, so when an emergency arises a generously stipended warrior is just as badly off as one with no stipend whatsoever. As long as that is the case, there will hardly be any real soldiers. At the present time commoners are all laboring to pay the high taxes which support the samurai class and therefore are no longer available to be drafted for battle as they once were. Not only that but they are cowardly and thoroughly incapable of aggressive struggle. That being the case, there are no real soldiers in the entire country even among the direct retainers [fudai] of the Tokugawa house. There is no one to protect the outlying reaches of the realm.

The samurai all live in the towns, and it is there they practice their fencing. If we look only at the towns the warriors appear numerous and they give the impression of strength. But from the point of view of the country as a whole, those available to defend the land are extremely few and their weakness is unimaginable.

The original function of the samurai is to defend the land. Conversely, the primary function of the land is to support the samurai. The two elements are by their very nature inseparable. If they are split apart the land becomes empty and barren, and the samurai few and weak. This is the natural course of things. Therefore the samurai have languished in the towns far too long. The number of their houses has doubled but the number of true bushi [samurai] has dwindled markedly.

In our present situation both trunk and branches of the social order have deteriorated, and hence we are guilty of turning our backs on the intentions with which Tokugawa leyasu established the great peace. The system is supposedly designed to cultivate strong warriors but this is only nominally true. In fact, they are feeble. Can we afford to ignore the admonishment to “secure the foundations”? Of late our way of life has degenerated into luxury and the daimyo are profligate beyond their means and status. The reason they do not rebel, despite their lack of devotion to the Bakufu, is that they are preoccupied with their pleasures and have not the means. There is bound to be conflagration when the poor harbor resentment against their rulers, and in this case that is prevented only by cowardice and their ignorance of how to deploy troops. Bandits roam the outlying villages and believers in heresy fill the land. What are these but signs of impending calamity? The land is not yet in the throes of disorder only because central rule is lenient and compassionate, and prudent measures are instituted regularly. Sudden changes in policy are avoided so as not to spark a revolt.

It was intended that the realm should become weak, and so it is weak; it was intended that the people should be ignorant and they are. As long as they are weak and ignorant, they are incapable of rebelling even if they wanted to. In other words, the reason the realm is not in disorder is easy to see: “It is only that they are afraid to fight.” Down through the ages, when those few words appeared in the Records of the Grand Historian it has been evident even to children that the country in question is weak. Is it not shameful for a nation with an illustrious tradition of arms to timidly submit now to fear of battle? It was not long ago that Japan gave up Mimana, and that Pohai stopped sending tribute. Hokkaido is being nibbled away bit by bit and foreign barbarians sail around right offshore from the main islands as if our seas belong to them. Like the people of Chou, as recounted in the Book of Songs, we have reason to lament that “The sages of old expanded the realm by a hundred li a day, but now it shrinks at the same rate.” Langushing in a mood of contraction and retrogression, we now confront a foreign enemy who has developed considerable expansionist momentum; despite our fear of battle we pretend to be able to resist a veteran of a hundred wars. Surely this is a matter for grave concern.

Some commentators think only of the past in connection with military affairs, and persist in believing our armies to be just as strong as during the Bunroku and Ketchō campaigns. They are sorely deluded. Of course the enemies we face are little better than dogs or sheep, so we need not dwell on their strong or weak points. Nevertheless, they are exceedingly cruel and war is an everyday pursuit for them. The foundation for a nation does not rest well on the ignorance and weakness of the people. As a result they are able to register and draft their entire population into a fighting force if necessary. They can also gather soldiers from
overseas colonies, so they certainly cannot be underestimated in terms of numbers of troops. Moreover, since they make war their primary occupation and their people are accustomed to combat, they cannot be disdained for weakness either. They feel their people with mystical doctrines so that all are of common belief. Hence they are well-suited for war. Cannon and huge ships have always been their specialty, and they are more than adequate to menace other countries. Hence they already rule the seas and carry out aggression at will. They certainly cannot be despised as stupid.

If we are going to fight them, then, how can we continue to rely on a former policy of cultivating stupidity and weakness? Is it adequate to fold our arms idly, neglecting to develop a program that meets the needs of the time? Certainly, to make the people ignorant and the warriors weak can be called a smart policy in the context of domestic politics. But where there is advantage there is also disadvantage, so we must rectify that situation. Fortunately, the Bakufu has already decided to drive away foreign intruders, so naturally we will soon witness a turn from a small elite force to a mass army, and hence from weakness to strength.

In terms of training samurai in fidelity, above all we can learn from the grand design of Tokugawa Ieyasu how to strengthen the trunk [i.e., center, Bakufu]. On the other hand, to allow the daimyo to develop strong armies within their domains, and to let retainers cultivate their own troops on their fiefs, putting samurai and land back together again, is a policy of strengthening the branches. When both trunk and branches are strong, and both warriors and weapons abundant, the people will be brave and attentive to principle; the entire nation will be overflowing with a spirit of dutifulness. Only if domestic strength is completely mobilized in the formation of an expeditionary army, and if the foreign intruders never again dare to approach our borders, will the national essence be saved from disgrace.

Some critics will no doubt object that, "If those on the periphery are allowed to foster strong armies they will be extremely difficult to control." In my humble view, however, a heroic leader is able to steer the nation by reading the trend of the times, tightening and loosening the reins of power as appropriate, and carrying out his decisions with unrestrained vigor while at the same time avoiding any disruption of the realm. He is able to do so because his magnanimity is broad and open, he is able to adapt to change, and he rules the life and death of the nation through laws that are strict and impartial. Now the Bakufu's courageous decision is known throughout the land, and all who hear it are inspired to comply in unison. No one will dare to oppose it. Therefore, at this particular juncture, if all domains are treated with good faith and allowed to train their own strong military forces, I do not think any will oppose the Bakufu. Should any brutal, stubborn daimyo rely on his own forces to countermand the order, he should be punished decisively with a force drawn from the loyal warriors of the land. When I say, "strong armies should be raised on the fiefs" I do not mean totally revamping the old system in such a way that the cities will become barren and all will return to the countryside. The sages of old have often advocated a policy of returning the warriors to the land, and in that they were far-sighted indeed. Since they discussed the "feudal" system of their time only in terms of a model of centralized government [gunken seido] however, their policy could never be implemented. I have my own views on that subject but I cannot go into them in detail here.

When a hero exercises his power to loosen up in one place and tighten up in another, or to employ in one case and reject in another, he rejects only to use better elsewhere and loosens only to tighten at a later date. The realm is now in a tightened state; there is no alternative but to loosen up with regard to the concentration of taxes in kind and currency in the towns. There are certain standards to be applied in deciding to leave slack in one place but to tighten up in another, to pass over here but to employ over there.

Everything should be kept in daily use, for if set aside things will deteriorate. The daimyo, elders and retainers of the various domains must be encouraged to have spirit, and not be allowed to dissipate. In order to avail ourselves of this opportunity to beat back the foreigners we should encourage the domains to develop strong armies and bestow on them a sense of duty. A decision to use those troops today is only an expedient measure, not necessarily a permanent system. Moreover, those who employ such troops should be admonished to great exploits and retained in the service of the kokka [Bakufu]. That is because the realm is a public implement [kōkō] and should not be set aside as a private possession.

There are ways to make ad hoc decisions concerning the appropriate time to tighten and to loosen, when to use and when to set aside, and there comes a day when those ways should be put
into practice. It is impossible to deal with such matters as the number of alternate residences in Edo, the length of time the daimyo and their retinues are required to stay, the amount of tribute, whether or not to require military duty, and so on, according to hard and fast rules. The secret of preventing the spread of resentment among the people is an ability to seize the moment. The only other alternative is to try and preserve the realm through blind adherence to precedent. However, should the small number of warriors who guard the shoreline be subjected to defeat by foreign enemies, the daimyo must return to the domain at all cost [from Edo]. Moreover, if the daimyo is allowed to return only after the situation has clearly worsened instead of taking the initiative in a decisive manner, the Bakafu will be ridiculed. It is truly said that, "he who arrives early will control others, while he who is late will be controlled." If one would exercise control over the realm under present circumstances he must . . . recognize the opportunity of the moment and swiftly make up his mind. The ancients also said, "if it is done decisively the spirits will leave it alone." Indeed, if we take action the spirits should actually help.

Long ago Ieyasu respected arms in order to build a foundation and he rendered the people ignorant and weak in order to allow the realm to rest. In other words he tightened up and then allowed leeway. At the present time the barbarians are waging war day by day, setting their minds on aggression, and alternately probing our borders. Our situation is like that of Ieyasu when the Oda, the Takeda and the Hōjō territories surrounded Hamamatsu. Since it was not time for slackness, he had to tighten what had formerly been loose. Therefore, his intention of laying the foundation for the nation should continue to be honored, but there is no need to follow his precedent of rendering the realm ignorant and weak. This is a good example of changing times. It is written in The Book of Changes, "the inchworm shrinks in order to expand." Hence that which has slackened is preparing to tighten and that which has been set aside is intended for use. What we are now using should be set aside and that which has been loosened should be tightened; what has just been set aside should be employed and that which has just now been loosened should be tightened up.

Without getting caught up in details, we should focus all our energies on our urgent needs, disdain formality and seek out actual effectiveness; we should accordingly tighten what was tightened long ago and use what was used long ago. How this should be put into practice depends on the person. When Ieyasu was on the ascendancy his reputation was thundered across the realm by the powerful armies at Hamamatsu. To render all of Japan like Hamamatsu and spread its name to the ends of the earth, we should even now follow Ieyasu's policy of training his warriors [shishū]. Accordingly a foundation for administration should be laid, doctrine should be clarified and soldiers should invariably receive the command of the gods; Heaven and man should be unified, the multitude be of one mind, the virtue of the ancestors be made manifest and their meritorious deeds sung; the glory of the nation should be expanded across the seas, the barbarians expelled and the homeland reclaimed. Only then can the profound meaning of the oracle of Amaterasu and the great achievements of her imperial descendants be fully vindicated.

III

Amaterasu Ōmikami cherished her people and initially developed the basis for their clothing and food. The rice seedlings from her divine fields and the silk cocoons from her cultivators were disseminated across the realm, and the people have basked in their blessings to the present day. While this too is the result of Amaterasu's infinite grace, the land of the realm is highly suitable for grain. The divine land of Japan is by nature in the East, facing the rising sun. The Book of Changes says, "The empire arises in the East." In terms of the five elements, the East matches wood. It is therefore good for raising grain; also, of the four seasons it matches spring, which makes it suitable for the generation and growth of all things. It is not accidental, therefore, inasmuch as people long ago did not stoop so low as to eat meat, that Japan was known as the "Land of Rice Seedlings" [Mizuho-no-kuni].

In ancient times, the son of Heaven [tenshi: emperor] received the august grain from Amaterasu and it nurtured the life of the people . . . Wealth in the days of yore was based on the natural abundance of Heaven-and-Earth. In later ages natural wealth was gradually dispersed, and soon passed into the hands of the samurai class; in a further transformation it moved into the hands of the merchants. As a result of the latter development
the realm has been subjected to countless injuries, and I should like now to turn to a thorough discussion of this point.

Long ago, through the Daijōsai, the emperor together with the people of the realm worshipped the gods with sincerity and reverence. When grain ripened there was invariably a ceremony using the grain, and afterwards the emperor partook along with his subjects. The people of the realm were aware that the grain they ate originated in the seeds distributed by the gods. Hence they were in awe of the will of the gods and worked hard to develop the productive potential of the great Earth. The minds of men were united with the mind of Heaven and Earth, and all shared wealth equally. Hence there was no fissure between Heaven and Earth. However, in the early age the doctrines were not yet scrupulously observed and the imperial government experienced a number of reverses. Some seized the wealth of the realm as their own private possession. The emperor Tenchi reformed such deep-seated evils by prohibiting private ownership of land and the private accumulation of profits, thereby restoring unity between the realm and its wealth. The system was adjusted considerably by the time of the Taihō Codes. In olden times things were simple, and people sought only to exchange their labor for the labor and products of others. Production advanced in all directions and consumption was limited.

As the court grew attached to opulence, however, funds for the state were curtailed and squandered instead on women. Buddhist clergy were selfish in conduct and thus squandered state funds on temples and used the grain of the realm to nourish parasitic elements [Buddhist monks and nuns]. By the time the Fujiwara clan had gained an ability to manipulate the power of the realm at will, houses with influence began to accumulate private fortunes. They arrogated people to their private purposes and spread their private estates [shōen] across the land. Those who collected proper taxes and put them in the national coffer were few indeed. Furthermore, the constables [shūgo] and land stewards [jitō] who were servants of the powerholders [the Kamakura shōguns] also accumulated private stores of grain. Soon, as their lust for riches grew, they came to completely monopolize the realm and the wealth of the nation passed into the hands of the warrior class.

Warriors, however, have the function of maintaining order in society and thus even though they gathered private bands of soldiers this did not entail the waste of food. Therefore, few suffered privation even during times of turmoil. Why, then, with the realm now at peace, are the exalted as well as the lowly restless and grieving from poverty? It is because the wealth of the realm is not employed and managed according to the proper way.

Inevitably, when the warriors leave the land they no longer employ and raise a large number of servants. They get by with the services of unemployed city dwellers, setting them to a wide variety of tasks. Although these idlers fill the castle towns, if it should ever come to war they will be of no use whatsoever. They saunter around feasting on whatever strikes their fancy, so the waste they incur is immense. Furthermore, Buddhist temples in the realm total about 500,000, and monks, nuns and other functionaries may number as many as several million . . . The huge tiled roofs of their temples exemplify the pinnacle of splendor. At any rate, a considerable number of artisans and merchants make their income by dealing with such unemployed idlers and religious practitioners. Who knows how many beggars pass their occupation down from generation to generation? Who can count the number of gamblers who constantly overrun rural villages? Or the healers and diviners who make their fortunes by bilking the people? Or the actors? The waste is overwhelming.

That is not all. The varieties of sake, rice cakes, dumplings and noodles that use up rice have proliferated endlessly. Moreover, all the rice converges on the towns, but in the course of being transported shipments are often destroyed by fire or sunk to the bottom of the sea. Cultivation of tea, tobacco, madder, sugar cane, pear-apples [nashi] and other crops that interfere with rice-growing has expanded tremendously. Because there are so many who eat without being productive, so much waste of rice, and so much production of other crops, our effective annual harvests are now relatively small. It is also very strange that while the realm constantly seems glutted with a surfeit of rice leading to cavalier handling, parts of the same realm continue to suffer the depths of poverty.

The rice available to the nation is by nature never abundant. It only appears so under certain conditions. When objects are dispersed to a number of locations they never appear numerous no matter what their numbers. When gathered together in one place, however, they naturally look numerous no matter
how few. Hence when a single koku\(^8\) of rice is stored in a household it will not be called a great amount, but when that is combined and thrown on the market together with the same amount from 10,000 households, no one would consider it small.

When the warriors live in the cities, spend their entire annual stipend on extravagant food and clothing, and take care to please their women, they have nothing left over to equip themselves with weapons and take care of attendants. Instead of storing their rice in a frugal manner they dump it all on the market for cash. The farmers, although poor, seek luxury and thus send their entire harvest to market. The more the rice sold in the market the lower its price will fall, and the lower the price the more each farmer must sell to make ends meet. He sells an increasing amount but makes no more than before. Hence he is forced eventually to abandon his home and become a drifter, leaving his land idle. While that land may be dormant, rice tax and corvee attached to the land remain the same. Hence income is continually inadequate to obligations. Obviously a daily increase in those who sell their rice means a daily decrease in the amount of rice available to support the people; moreover, corresponding to that decrease is a constant increase in the volume of rice brought to the towns. In other words, people suffer shortages because the towns have a surplus. Moreover, there are few facilities in the towns for the large-volume storage of rice. Therefore, although one might say there is too much rice in the towns, that only means there is more than the population can readily eat. It does not mean that there is really a surplus.

In fact, while there is usually not much difference between the real amounts involved in a shortage as opposed to a surplus, the effective difference is like heaven and earth. If a man who has eaten his fill is given just one more bite it seems like far too much; by the same token if someone is not getting quite enough, the subtraction of just a little more from his portion makes him feel like he is the victim of a great shortage. The quantitative difference between a surplus and a shortage is not, therefore, very great. But from the point of view of someone experiencing a shortage, a situation of surplus seems an unbridgeable distance. Truly, as I have said, the rice available to the realm as a whole is certainly not abundant and neither is the rice available in the city.

Some worry that the price of rice is too low and that there is insufficient currency in circulation. In fact, however, the rice price is not low and currency is not lacking. The problem is that commodity prices are inflated. If the price of one to is five morume and that of cotton quilt is supposed to be the same, one to of rice will be adequate to the purchase of one quilt. Under present circumstances, however, one must sell six or seven to of rice to have enough money for a quilt. That is because quilts are too expensive, not because rice is too cheap. Rice is only for the purpose of filling stomachs. Hence demand for it is limited to that function. In the case of commodities, however, there is no effective limit since they compete for buyers. A woman’s necklace, for example, may cost as much as a middle-level farmer’s entire output. If something for which demand is limited is chasing items for which demand is unlimited, the amount of the former it takes to purchase the latter is bound to rise. The problem is high commodity prices, not a low rice price.

Similarly, currency is only a standard for measuring value. When there are a large number of commodities, their value is low while that of money is relatively high. When the value of money is relatively high no inconvenience will be experienced even when circulation volume is low. Thus long ago, even when the volume of currency in circulation was small there was no fear of poverty. However, from the Keicho era (1596-1615) onward gold production increased markedly and currency manufacture also expanded tremendously. When the circulation of currency is increased, its value drops. As it drops, prices naturally rise. Moreover, even as prices rise people seem to think that the large volume of currency in circulation is insufficient.

(A foreigner has pointed out the following truths: "Ever since the Western Europeans started trading with the country in the east called America the gold and silver they gain from commerce has increased annually. As a result the value of gold and silver has dropped and the prices of grain and commodities have risen. It appears that men of intelligence predict that a surplus of gold and silver will present problems in the future, but profits from trade are higher than ever so it is impossible to stop."\(^9\) Even the foreign barbarians are aware that a surplus of

\(^8\) See footnotes 3, 4, 9, and 10 of De’iri Gunhoki for this and other units of measurement referred to in this essay.

\(^9\) From a geography book in Chinese by the Italian priest Giuglio Aleini.
gold is a problem. Can we who are born in Japan afford to be ignorant of that fact?

Apparently it is possible in the world, when something is inordinately heavy, for other things to be considered light even if they are not. So when prices are inordinately “heavy,” currency is seen as extraordinarily “light;” when prices are high, people think rice is too cheap.

The samurai are concentrated in the towns, so they must obtain on the market everything they need for the entire year. They take their rice stipend - which is further reduced each year - and exchange it for currency, which is constantly being devalued. Then, with that debased currency, they seek to purchase commodities at increasingly inflated prices. From the outset they are unable to meet their expenses, but the servants and help they employ are all accustomed to luxurious living so they cannot be maintained cheaply. As a result, the samurai are forced to turn to annual contract labor, but that also soon becomes too expensive. Now they resort to employing townsmen, but townsmen are also accustomed to luxury and their wages rise daily. Concern arises that even attendants of that sort are beyond the samurai’s means. Moreover, household expenses, wives’ and mistresses’ allowances, entertainment, and such costs increase day by day. Soon it is no longer possible to make ends meet. As a result, the samurai become accustomed to receiving loans from the rich townsmen. Even among daimyo and other fief holders there are virtually none who do not borrow. Crafty plutocrats wield unlimited power in the area of finance, treating kings like children they can bounce on their knee. As a result, wealth has largely passed into the hands of the townspeople.

Rice by its very nature is treated by emperors with great care. Even the son of heaven partakes of it reverently and only after giving thanks for the blessings of Amaterasu. So it must be, because rice was a gift bestowed by Heaven for the sustenance of the people. Now, however, the power to buy and sell rice is concentrated in the hands of hateful merchants. Princes and men of consequence are forced to kneel at their command without a word of protest. The life and death of the people is now in the hands of the townsmen; it is not surprising that no provision has been made for poor harvests, nothing has been put away for time of war, and it seems there is no rice in the country at all. They stand with arms idly folded, worrying that there is a surplus of rice. What sort of deception is this?

Amaterasu Ōmikami placed great emphasis on the welfare of the people, and her blessings have been perpetuated down to our own day. The grain we eat originated in the seedlings distributed by the august progenitrix. But not only do people fail to treat rice with suitable respect and use it frugally, they also complain that there is too much rice and fret that stores should have been further depleted by now. They even dare suggest that Japan trade with the barbarians and solve the “problem” by shipping rice overseas. Despite their birth in the Mizuho-no-kuni they are unaware of the value of rice and think we could gain by casting it away to the foreign equivalents of dogs and sheep. Certainly that is inconsistent with the duty of the subject to repay the debt to his ancestors.

It should not be difficult to see that we ought to store rice in the countryside rather than send it overseas. There are approximately 25,000,000 koku of rice produced in wet fields nationwide. Peasant households average about ten koku production per household, so that means there are about 2,500,000 peasant households raising paddy rice. If each of those were to store one additional koku out of each harvest, the total would be 2,500,000 koku. That is more than annual sales at the Osaka market, which amount to about 2,000,000 . . . One should also be able to estimate the volume of the other major markets. If in one year the total sales volume of rice could be reduced by 2,500,000 koku, and if daimyo and other fief holders would accumulate stores in addition to that, the value of rice would rise naturally. If the price of rice were to rise as a result, the farmers would be able to make a living without having to produce huge volumes. Moreover, if the rice sold at market were to decrease there could be no more outrageous waste even in the towns, and the people would continue to think only in terms of a shortage. Once the outflow of rice from the countryside was staunched, the country would actually become richer in rice according to the logic of surplus and shortage as outlined above. The reason the people would not be poverty-stricken even if rice were abundant is that it would be stored privately in widely-dispersed locations. Hence if we decide to set aside rice there are plenty of places where it could be done. Why is it necessary to even consider “saving” the land from poverty by shipping rice overseas? If we decide to store rice privately there are numerous methods and institutions by which to do so. Once we are enlightened about the need for rice to be set aside domestically, and then resolve to do so, we will be able
at the right moment to select from among any number of suitable methods and institutions to accomplish that goal. If rice is stored and no one suffers poverty the stability of the people will have been developed, and the abundance of Heaven and Earth will allow all equally to enjoy the blessings of Amaterasu Ōmikami.