XXXIII.—A Sketch of Japanese National Development, more especially with reference to Education. By Baron Kikuchi, M.A., D.Sc., LL.D., Emeritus Professor of Mathematics in the Imperial University of Japan (ex-Minister of Education, and formerly President of the Imperial University).

(An Address delivered at the request of the Council, 17th June 1907.)

FIFTY years ago, Japan was almost a mythical land to the Western world; what little was known of it was through the medium of the Dutch, who were allowed to trade in the single port of Nagasaki. What we Japanese knew of the outer world was also derived mostly from them, and from such books as were brought into the country by them. In 1853 came Commodore Perry, and demanded that we should open up our country to the commerce of the world; we were but ill prepared for such a course, but it was not in our power to resist the demand, and unwillingly enough the Shōgun's government was obliged, notwithstanding the strong opposition of the Imperial Court and of the conservative elements in the country, to contract a treaty of commerce with America, which was speedily followed by those with other nations.

Brought thus face to face with the Occidental nations, we saw how immensely superior to us they were in power, and that if we would not be treated as inferiors—nay, if we would preserve our existence as an independent nation—we must acquire the knowledge and learn the arts which gave them this power. We therefore earnestly and resolutely set to work to do this. The results, some of which were manifested during the late war, seem to have astonished those who have not watched us closely. In fact, I think in former days we were not taken seriously by the world. We were regarded as children, merry, carelessly enjoying the life, never earnest in anything; Japan was regarded merely as a land of curios, of ivory netsukés, of flowers, of pretty sceneries and pretty arts, of geishas, of Madame Chrysanthèmes. One of my friends who was in England at the time of the war told me that he was asked how the Japanese had managed to jump out of their skin. Now, I hope to show you to-day, as well as I can in so short a time, that we did nothing of the kind—that all we have done is simply a natural outcome of our historical development.

I think it may be said to be one of the most characteristic traits of the

Japanese people that we are eager to find out what other people have got to teach us ; we are apt pupils, and when we think that the adoption of new methods, material or intellectual, is conducive to the progress of our country, we do not hesitate to adopt them, wherever we find them. I know that we have been reproached for this: we have been told that we are nothing but a nation of plagiarists, only capable of imitating what other people have done and not of originating anything. For the present, we are quite content to bear this reproach ; we have been so busy with introducing Western civilisation that we have not perhaps done much original. And yet I think, in some respects, we have succeeded, if not in doing anything original, at least in adapting what we have adopted from others to our needs, and in improving upon them so far as our own circumstances are concerned. I would even point out on behalf of my countrymen, if I may be allowed, that we have already made some original investigations in science, the results of which are very important, and some, I have been told, even epoch-making ; but it is not now my purpose to enlarge upon this point.

The present is not the only time that we have deliberately introduced an alien and, as we considered, a superior civilisation. In the sixth century we were brought into contact with the Chinese civilisation ; at first through Corea, and afterwards directly, it was introduced into Japan. Our ancestors saw, as we see in more recent times, the superiority of the new civilisation, and, perceiving that its adoption would tend to the betterment of their political, social, and moral conditions, deliberately set about to adopt it. We learned many new arts and crafts ; we had no letters, so we borrowed their ideographs, we even adopted their literature bodily ; astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and other branches of knowledge were imported and taught to our young nobles in the University. And, because our old and somewhat primitive system of government was not fitted to the new and more complex state of society induced by the introduction of the new civilisation, and also because many abuses had crept in, laws and administrative system were reformed after the Chinese model ; “ the Reformation of Taikwa era ” (middle of the seventh century) and the promulgation of “ the Taihō code ” (701), covering the whole range of government administration, including what would not now come under such, can only be compared to the reforms and changes of the present era of Meiji. We have thus twice within the historic age made almost complete changes in our system of government, in our laws, and in our institutions, entirely after foreign models.

Yet, amidst all these changes, we have kept the essential characteristics of our nationality. That we should have been most deeply affected in our thoughts and ideas by the Chinese literature is only natural, and quite true.

But there was something peculiar to our people, which has persisted through all those changes, and that is what we call "Yamato Damashii," or the Japanese spirit. This spirit, which Motoori, the founder of Neo-Shintoism, has characterised in a famous ode as "like the blossom of the mountain cherry blooming in the morning sun," consists essentially in the intense love of country and reverence for and devotion to the Imperial House. The peculiar reverence that we Japanese have for the Imperial House, our loyalty and devotion, is a heritage of many centuries. The relation between the Emperor and the people is not simply one between the present Emperor and the present generation of the Japanese people, but a relation between his ancestors and our ancestors for many centuries. On this point we are in direct opposition to the teaching of Chinese philosophers, for the Chinese are democratic in this respect; two of the most revered of their Emperors, Yao and Shung, bequeathing their throne not to their sons but to whom they deemed to be the worthiest successors. We have borrowed a great deal from China, but in our exaltation of loyalty and reverence to the Imperial House we have kept throughout all ages our own peculiar ideals as distinguished from the Chinese, notwithstanding the respect in which the Chinese ethics have always been held.

This relation between the Imperial House and the people is the fundamental character of our nationality. It goes back to the days of mythology, when the first ancestor of the Imperial House, the goddess Ama-Terasu-O-mi-Kami, or the great goddess of Celestial Light who reigned in the Taka-Ma-ga-Hara or High Heavenly Plain, sent down her grandson to Japan, saying, "This is the land of which my descendants shall be the lords. Do thou proceed thither and govern it. Go! *The prosperity of thy dynasty shall be coeval with Heaven and Earth.*" These last words are continually occurring in our literature, and are regarded as "the charter of the land" by the Japanese. It was, however, the great-grandson of this prince who finally succeeded in establishing himself in the province of Yamato, and founded the Japanese empire. From this first Emperor, known as Jimmu Tennō, there has been *one unbroken line of descent* to the present Emperor. This unique character of our Imperial dynasty, together with the ancestor-worship or reverence for ancestors, has brought about the peculiar relation that I have mentioned as existing between the Imperial House and the people.

The ancestor-worship which I have just mentioned is another of our national characteristics which has persisted from the earliest times to the present day, and it is closely connected with the relation between the Imperial House and the people; for were there no spirit of reverence for

ancestors, this relation would not derive the importance it has from the fact of its persistence for generations of our ancestors.

I have tried to explain briefly the essential or fundamental characteristics of the Japanese people: I would refer you to my inaugural address at London University, published in the *Nineteenth Century* for June, for some further details, and now pass on to a brief account of what happened within more recent times, in order that you may know in what condition we were just before we were brought into contact with the Occidental nations.

From the beginning of the sixth century, and for more than a century after, some of the great noble houses took advantage of the somewhat peculiar condition of the Imperial House at the time to usurp a great deal of the power of government into their hands; and, although it was restored for some time into the Imperial hands, the great house of Fujiwara again succeeded gradually in establishing itself in authority. Empresses were always chosen from daughters of their house, and none but issues of these ascended the throne, and the Fujiwaras became practical rulers of the land; high government offices were almost exclusively conferred on members of their house. The court was given up to refinement and luxury, and governors of provinces stayed in the capital, preferring easy and pleasant life at the court to the rough and hard duties in the provinces. Under such conditions it is not to be wondered at that maladministration and abuses of all kinds were rampant; then it was that the military class first came into existence. At first they were willing to serve in minor and rougher offices about the court, and to undertake military expeditions into outlying provinces, and even to serve as guards to the nobles of the Fujiwara house. Gradually the two houses of Taira and Minamoto, who were both of them descended from the emperors, became leaders of this class, and, as was almost inevitable, they were not content long to occupy subordinate positions. At first the Tairas got hold of the government, but they soon followed in the footsteps of the Fujiwaras, and became arrogant, luxurious, and degenerate. The Minamoto house, which had been almost destroyed by its rival, the Tairas, arose under its able leader, Yoritomo, and in its turn destroyed the Taira house entirely. It is a remarkable fact, as showing the reverence in which the Imperial House has always been held through all its vicissitudes, that in the rising of Yoritomo the Imperial rescript given him to rise and destroy the Tairas and deliver the court from their arrogance played a highly important part. Yoritomo, wise enough to perceive the mistakes of the Tairas, established himself in Kamakura, instead of Kyōto, and, leaving the court to itself, proceeded to frame a

scheme by which all the real powers of government became his in virtue of his offices as the generalissimo of forces to subdue the barbarians (Sei-I-Tai-Shōgun) and as the superintendent of the police for sixty-six provinces (Rokujūroku-Koku-Sō-Tsuihoshi). I cannot enter into the most adroit manner in which all these changes were accomplished; but since this, which we may perhaps date from 1190, the year of the appointment of Yoritomo to the office of the superintendent of the police, until 1868, with a very brief interval in the fourteenth century, the country was under the rule of the military class, the Shōguns or their regents being the practical rulers of the land. Again I repeat that nevertheless all this time the people in general, including the military class and the rulers themselves, held the Imperial House in utmost reverence. I lay great stress on this point, because, as I have stated, I consider this a most important factor in our national development.

And here I must say a few words about a particular sect of Buddhism, viz., the Zen, which has exercised a very great influence on the military class, from the time when it became the ruling class of the country. Its influence is felt in our character even at the present day, and something must be said about it if we would fully understand the spirit of our people. The Zen sect was first introduced into Japan just about the time of the establishment of the feudal system by Yoritomo; it was warmly welcomed by the military chiefs, just as the earlier sects introduced had been by the court; and many Zen temples were built by them in Kamakura and afterwards in Kyōto. There were many reasons why it should be so well received by the military class. It teaches a man how to arrive, by means of a certain form of contemplation, at a habitual state of mind which will enable him to meet with calmness any event and endure with indifference any hardship. Such a power of perfect self-control and undisturbable peace of mind must indeed be invaluable to a man of any profession, but more especially to a Samurai of old days, whose life had to be spent amid continual dangers and hardships. There was also charm in that it did not require on the part of its votaries any profound book-knowledge; it was also in accord with that simplicity and frugality which were the characteristics of the Samurai. I may mention that at the present time there are many earnest young men who perform this contemplation at the temples of the Zen sect.

Coming down now to the fifteenth century, we find that, owing to the weakness of the central government, military chiefs arose in all parts of the country and were continually fighting against each other. Among these, there appeared three great men. The first was Nobunaga, who from

being a petty lord of Owari brought the whole of central Japan under his power. After he was attacked and killed by one of his generals, another of his generals, Hideyoshi, better known by his subsequent title of the Taikō, succeeded him in power and established his authority over the whole country. After his death in 1598, Tokugawa Iyeyasu, who had been gradually strengthening himself, biding his time and patiently waiting for his opportunity under Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, became the Sei-I-Tai-Shōgun in 1603, and established his government in Yedo, where his successors ruled for fifteen generations until 1868.

By the defeat and death of Hideyori, Hideyoshi's son, in 1615, Iyeyasu's authority became undisputed, and the country enjoyed profound peace for two centuries and a half, during which the feudal system of government received its most perfect development, and the Bushidō or "the Way of Samurai" was fully elaborated.

The first three Shōguns of the House of Tokugawa, all three men of great capacity, assisted by many followers of devoted loyalty and highest ability, succeeded in thoroughly consolidating their authority and in completing the organisation of government. As an example of the method by which the Shogunate kept the daimyōs completely under their power, I may take the case of Maeda, the daimyō of Kaga. As this was a powerful house, whose territories extended over the three provinces of Kaga, Noto, and part of Echizen, and whose annual revenue exceeded one million *koku* of rice, a cadet of the Tokugawa house was made the Lord of Echizen, to block the route of Maeda to Kyōto, and several faithful retainers of Tokugawa were made to be daimyōs in Echigo, to the north; thus completely shutting in Maeda. A similar policy was pursued towards all daimyōs who were likely to be a cause of anxiety to the Shogunate. Another device was that of requiring the sojourn in Yedo of every daimyō at fixed intervals and for a fixed period; while their wives and children were obliged to reside in Yedo, thus serving as hostages. Thus, although daimyōs enjoyed almost complete autonomy within their territories in almost everything, financial, military, judicial, educational, and industrial, the Shogunate seldom interfering except in extreme cases, yet this device effectually obviated too dangerous independence.

So well was this policy towards the daimyōs planned, that the shutting up of the empire from all foreign intercourse, which, as you are aware, was deliberately ordered by the third Shōgun, and consequent absence of all external competition and stimulus, was compensated for by the balance of power, as it were, between the different daimyōs, and did not give rise to such stagnation and decline as were likely to happen to a nation situated in such

circumstances. On the contrary, the daimyōs and their counsellors were ever strenuous in their endeavours to uphold and increase the power and honour of their clans, on the one hand by promoting the education and training of their retainers and stimulating their spirit, and on the other by encouraging the industrial arts and crafts, tending to the increase of wealth within their territories. Indeed, the propagation of education and the development of industry, fostered by peaceful rivalry, were the two great products of two centuries and a half of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which not only preserved the country from stagnation and decline during that period, but enabled the nation, when it was brought face to face with the Occidental nations at the close of that period, to assimilate their knowledge, and gave it flexibility enough to adopt their methods.

Up to the beginning of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Buddhist temples were almost the only places where people could obtain any learning; even the sons of military chiefs were mostly taught at these temples, and they continued to be schools for the common people long after. It is also to be remarked that from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries most of the great generals and lords were assisted by the counsels of priests, mostly of the Zen sect. There were in those days, indeed, no learned scholars who were not Buddhist priests. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, a man named Fujiwara Seikwa, who had been a Buddhist priest but had renounced Buddhism, was the first to teach Confucian moral philosophy as interpreted by Shu-shi, a philosopher of the Sung dynasty, and distinct from Buddhist teaching. Iyeyasu was a great admirer of Seikwa, and the teachings of the Shu-shi school of the Confucian philosophy formed the basis of the teaching of Chinese classics, that is to say, of the education of the upper classes, thus causing the emancipation of our moral teaching from all religious influences. Other schools of Confucian philosophy arose, but none of them was so influential as the Shu-shi school.

Iyeyasu and his immediate successors were, however, too busy with the work of consolidation to do very much for the advancement of learning and education; but Tsunayoshi (1680–1709), the fifth Shōgun, who was a great Chinese scholar, gave a great impulse to the study of Chinese literature. He himself delivered courses of expository lectures on Chinese classics, which were attended by daimyōs and his own immediate retainers. An Academy was opened for the first time in Yedo, where learned scholars of Chinese literature gave expository lectures of classics and made commentaries on them. This Academy continued till the beginning of the present era of Meiji to be a sort of University for the Chinese learning. Daimyōs established schools in their territories for their retainers, not only

for the study of Chinese learning but also for training in military arts, such as archery, fencing, use of spears, riding, Jujutsu, swimming, etc. The education of Samurais in those days consisted almost entirely of the study of Chinese literature and training in military arts. The former was chiefly cultivated not so much for literary purposes as for the humanities. Its system of moral philosophy was studied, that they might thereby be better fitted for the task of regulating their own individual conduct; of properly managing the affairs of their house, that is to say, their family relations; of taking share in the conduct of government of their lord's territories in a fit and proper manner; and, if need be, of helping their lord in the wider sphere of national administration and government. History also was read, not for historical facts but for the lessons it gave of how states rose, declined, and fell; how great men of the olden days dealt with different problems of government, and so on.

Pedagogically speaking, there was great waste of time. Boys not older than five or six were made to learn books of Confucius. At first they were taught merely to read without understanding the meaning, but as they grew older they were taught to understand it, partly by lectures, which often consisted as much in moral sermons hung on to these texts as in their exposition, partly by their own thinking. Time, however, was no object in those old days; and the mental culture and moral training they obtained in this way were very valuable indeed. Those who would not or could not acquire mental culture still obtained a certain amount of moral training; and for the rest, they went in for military exercises, which also were largely encouraged, and in which they got a great deal of discipline and moral training. The masters demanded and obtained implicit obedience from their pupils, and considered themselves not mere teachers in the practice of these arts, but mental and moral mentors. Whether in literature or in military arts, if anyone showed special proficiency, he was allowed or even sometimes ordered to proceed to study with noted masters at schools belonging to the Shōgun's government, or to some other daimyō, or at private schools. A daimyō who was fortunate enough to have a great master among his retainers was proud of the fact, and not averse to those of other daimyōs coming to receive instruction from him. Then, again, there were some masters who were unwilling or unable to serve a daimyō, and opened schools which would often be very largely attended for the sake of their teaching. It may also be stated that going in their lord's retinue to reside in Yedo was a very good education, giving them opportunities of obtaining views of a larger world and coming into contact with a variety of people.

Other studies besides Chinese were often taken up by different individuals, either according to their own taste or by the order of their lords. Thus, those who would be doctors had to study the Chinese system of medicine with other doctors, for there was no school at which it was taught. Mathematics, originally introduced from China, were cultivated by some few. Seki, a contemporary of Newton, was a great mathematician. He invented a system of algebra, which was entirely original and gave him immense power in his further investigations. The results obtained by Seki and his disciples by their original investigations in metrical geometry, algebra, theory of series, etc., were of a very high order. In natural sciences, also, some progress was made, and Siebold, when he came to Japan to study our flora and fauna, found some very eager and enthusiastic pupils. There were many other branches of learning which were pursued by various people. Fine arts, industrial arts, and even games, such as Go and Chess, were encouraged and pursued with good results. Foreign learning was not wholly unknown towards the latter part of the Shogunate. I cannot forbear from telling you of one doctor named Maeno Rankwa (1723–1803), who, after succeeding in getting a knowledge of the Dutch alphabet and some two or three hundred words with great difficulty, got hold of a Dutch book of anatomy, and, comparing the figures in it with the body of an executed criminal which he secretly dissected, and being greatly struck by their correctness as contrasted with the old Chinese idea, determined with a few friends of like spirit to translate the book. It was almost like deciphering hieroglyphics, but after four years of hard work he at last succeeded in the task. Such was the spirit which actuated some, at least, of the old Samurai in their search for knowledge.

This introduction of foreign knowledge may be considered a part of a remarkable intellectual revolutionary movement towards the end of the eighteenth century, somewhat similar to the Illuminism in Europe at the same period. It appeared in almost every branch of intellectual activity, in literature, in arts, in religion, and in politics. The rise of Neo-Shintoism and study of the history of Japan prepared the mind of more earnest thinkers to comprehend the real nature of the essential constitution of our empire. The usurpation of the powers of government by the Shōguns was beginning to be resented as an act of disloyalty and unrighteousness. Moreover, occasional collisions with the Russians in the north were enough to cause a great deal of anxiety in thoughtful minds. Thus the country was ripe for a great change when Commodore Perry first appeared on our coast, in 1853, and by introducing the complications of foreign relations hastened the downfall of the Tokugawa Shogunate. This took place in 1868, only

fifteen years after the coming of Commodore Perry. The cry of the opponents of the Shogunate was "Restoration of the Imperial Government," "Great Righteousness," "Loyalty to the Emperor," and with at least a large section of it, "The Expulsion of Barbarians." Yet scarcely was the last of the Shōguns overthrown than one of the first acts of the new government was to grant the foreign representatives an audience with the Emperor, an act without precedent in our history. This so incensed the Conservatives, who had really believed in the cry of the expulsion of the foreigners under the Imperial banner, that some of them attacked the British representative, Sir Harry Parkes, as he was proceeding to the palace; fortunately, they were prevented from doing harm by the bravery of two Samurai, who had been sent as guards. One of them, Goto, was afterwards a leader of the progressive party, who made earnest representations for a national assembly as early as 1874.

I must turn back and say a few words about the education of the common people under the Tokugawa Shogunate. There were no provisions made for their education either by the Shōgun's government or those of the daimyōs or by their own communities in cities, towns, and villages, where the people were allowed to enjoy a great deal of self-government in local matters, under their headsmen or mayors. But almost throughout the whole country there were private schools where elementary teaching was given in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Writing formed a most important part of the curriculum, and it was mostly through lessons in writing of Chinese ideographs that they learned to know them, and therefore reading was an adjunct to writing. The text-books from which they learned were, after they had mastered the Japanese alphabet, sentences in which Chinese ideographs were mixed with the Japanese letters; they were mostly moral maxims, so that here again we have moral teaching forming an essential part of the education. There were other books, by means of which knowledge of Chinese ideographs necessary in various arts and crafts, in geography, and in history was given. The fees for this tuition were very low, and facilities of education were thus within the means of even the poor people. The custom of going on pilgrimages to various shrines, scattered throughout the country, was very useful in imparting a practical knowledge of geography and even of history. There was, besides, a species of entertainment, very popular in some parts of the country, notably in Tōkyō, called story-telling, in which professional story-tellers gave accounts of historical events in a most graphic if not always very accurate manner. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these and the drama served to show people in general the standard of morals, especially of loyalty in men

and chastity in women, of self-sacrifice in performance of duty, that were demanded of the Samurai and even of the common people.

In April of 1868 the Emperor swore the following memorable oath, known as the Imperial Oath of Five Articles :—

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be established, and all measures of government shall be decided by public opinion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the plan of the government.
3. Officials, civil and military, and all the common people shall, as far as possible, be allowed to fulfil their just desires, so that there may not be any discontent among them
4. Uncivilised customs of former times shall be broken through, and everything shall be based upon the just and equitable principles of nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought for throughout the whole world, so that the welfare of the empire may be promoted.

Thus, as I said at the beginning of my address, we set out deliberately to introduce Western civilisation ; and I have tried to show that we were not wholly unequipped mentally and morally for the task, and that, through it all, we have tried to keep the Japanese spirit, the fundamental character of our nationality, intact.

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