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Abstract

In the West, the mainstreaming of the extreme right has become noticeable. Japan's postwar conservatism, which was inherited before the war, has a character in common with the recent extreme right populism of the West. In Japan, favorable Western values have been accepted as the state and capital have achieved capitalist modernization. The denial of the values of modern Europe and the West, popular among Western extreme right-wingers, has become a kind of common sense for Japan's dominant ideology based on traditionalism: specifically, the idea of a “normal” state characterized by ethnocentrism and the exclusion of others. In Japan, the Emperor System is responsible for Japanese extremism. This paper will explore these circumstances in depth and excavate a nationalistic view of Japan from the notion of a “native” Japanese identity.

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Introduction

Before and after the birth of the Trump administration, popular support for the extreme right all over the world has been expanding from the political realm into other sectors of society. In the West, the mainstreaming of the extreme right has been quite noticeable recently. People with which this ideology resonates question values such as equality and democracy, insisting on a return to traditional values. This increasing embrace of white supremacy in particular has perplexed the left wing, which is more puzzled than ever by the right-wing populist phenomena.

Japan's postwar conservatism, which survived the war tribunals and subsequent liberalization of Japanese society, has a character in common with this recent extreme right-wing populism in the West. In Japan, favorable Western values such as equality, democracy, and private property, have been accepted as the country has successfully achieved capitalist modernization during the postwar years. The denial of such values, propagated and choreographed by the extreme right-wing of Europe, has been considered a kind of common sense for Japan's dominant ideology based on traditionalism: specifically the idea of a “normal” state characterized by ethnocentrism based on the exclusion of others. For example, postwar Japan has consistently shut the door to

immigrants and refugees. The myth of a nation with a single ethnicity has been established and has become commonly aspect of Japan's identity as a nation state.

Far right-wing activists as Alain de Benoist and Jared Taylor insist on a causal relationship between Japan's exclusion policy and high economic growth, pointing out the absolute absence of ethnic conflicts and multiculturalism on the island country. However, their ignorance grossly misrepresents both the pre- and postwar circumstances of ethnic minorities in Japan. During the prewar period, the Japanese imperialist regimes actively imported colonial workers into Japan in the name of development. After its defeat and the loss of colonies following World War II, Japan promoted the idea of exclusion and population homogeneity despite the vivid presence of minority groups in the country. Since it has become so natural to believe that Japan is a homogenous country, it is not surprising to find only few people who deny the homogeneity myth. Even among left-wing activists, a sizable number of people take a negative stance on immigration and refugee acceptance.

Underlying the phenomena of racism and exclusionism in Japan is the Emperor System, which has been cloistered as a symbol in the postwar constitution of the unity of the Japanese people. The war crimes that the emperor system had committed during the war have, until now, resulted in no official criminal punishment. The emperor's war crimes, however, remain a guilty act: not only has there not been an apology from the emperor's own speech, but also most Japanese tend to not take the emperor's war crimes seriously. The military remains the only entity responsible for the war. Moreover, the viewpoint regarding war responsibility most susceptible to the Japanese public is the responsibility and victimization of losing the war symbolized by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The emperor's responsibility for war, colonial rule, and aggression will not be seriously debated in the Diet.

In this paper I would like to argue that Japan as a political entity surrounded by the Emperor System advocates democracy (i.e., freedom, equality, and human rights) but has an ideological effect on its people. Unlike in Western Europe, where the modern concept of democracy carries a republican message with no religious or symbolic inclination to the emperor system or national religion like Shintoism, the postwar Japanese democracy is obstinate in terms of its religious and imperial connotations. Against this backdrop, I think that the leftist movement in Japan should redefine some of the basic concepts of postwar Japanese democracy, including peace, war, the constitution, electoral politics, and religion by highlighting the hidden function of the Emperor System, which seems apolitical on the surface but in reality is very political. Among the concepts that need to be redefined, I would like to delineate the concepts of peace, war, the constitution, politics, and religion in relation to the emperor system. I simplify these issues as follows:

- Peace: Western countries including modern Japan are not in a situation of peace, but are all at war although most people feel otherwise; the concept of peace is nothing more than rhetoric and an illusion to conceal war.

- War: War is a complex situation that requires effort to understand; spending a fun day at Disneyland is compatible with experiencing a day of war; the reality of present war technology is that it allows governments to kill as many people as possible without getting their hands dirty.
- Politics: We must realize the slogan of the women's liberation movement "the personal is political"; politics is not simply what takes place in the parliament, the cabinet, or the courts, but involves everywhere else as well, such as streets, workplaces, families, cyber space, and "inner space"; culture is politics in itself, and this last point is important for understanding postwar Japanese politics as an ideological system of the emperor.
- Religion: Religion provides a fictional worldview that justifies customs and traditions of Japan in addition to its traditional function of providing holy doctrines and scriptures; in Japan the Emperor and Shinto are the manifestations of this worldview through which most Japanese affirm the "sacredness" of the emperor without their own personal conviction or religious experiences.
- Constitution: The constitution is a framework for the rule of law that regulates political power; therefore, people in power have the knowhow of evading the rule of law and making the constitution worthless; universal ideas such as the founding philosophy of a nation-state are used as a means to justify war, globalization, capitalism, and nationalism; therefore, I think it should not be assumed that the constitution is the only rule of the highest governance. It is only a legal contour of the modern world system that has engendered nation-states and capitalism.

It is difficult to imagine a war from a "peaceful" life that is maintained by armed guards and high forts protected by surveillance cameras. When government officials emphasize "peace," it in fact means there is an ongoing war with outsiders. It is a rule of people in power who try to display fake peace, conceal war, and by doing so, gain the support of the people.¹

Extreme Right to Sweep the World

This year (2019), Japan had two elections for the local governments and the House of Councilors. During the elections few have showed interest in the issue of minority politics because the majority interests were prioritized by the public who dismissed the lesser issues of human rights and the lack of voting rights among minority groups. If the "enemy" is foreign, diplomacy and security policies will be a means to divert the voters' attention to the outside and avoid criticism of the present administration. The whole electoral system as electoral politics in Japan tends to justify chauvinism, nationalism, and social exclusion, as voters and politicians deliberately avoid some of the crucial agenda items of Japanese politics. The issue of the emperor system, for example, is closely related to issues of historical recognition, the responsibility of the war, immigration and refugee

acceptances, and human rights of sexual minorities deviating from the traditional family system, etc. None of these were in dispute in the elections.

Around the world, right-wing racists are influential in elections. The “extreme right” has been mainstreamed for it is able to use legal means as well as radical violence and terrorism for its ends. It has taken aim at the center of power. Few countries in the West are unaffected by the rise of the extreme right. In most countries, the extreme right is noteworthy at both the national and local level. For example:

- In Andalusia, Spain, VOX, which has been in existence since the midst of the Franco dictatorship, won its first parliamentary session (Shiraishi, 2018).
- In Italy, the far rightist alliance plays a part in the coalition government (Shiraishi, 2019). The other leader of the administration is the populist party, the “five-star movement.”
- In Greece, the Golden Dawn has had a seat in the Diet since 2012 and is now the third party.
- In the European parliamentary elections, the Italian Allied and the French National Union are expected to win majority seats in their respective countries. In addition, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Spain are also expected to make a big leap in this direction (Nikkei, 2019).
- In Poland, the government has recognized the extreme right’s participation in the 100th anniversary march (BBC Japanese, 2018).
- The Swedish Democratic Party, which aims to eradicate immigration, has 43 to 69 seats in the fall of 2018.² It is the third largest party in the parliament.
- In Hungary, Croatia, and Slovenia, the right-wing populist movements are intensifying their efforts to exclude refugees from Syria, etc. The far right in Hungary, Yobik, is now the second party in the parliament. In Slovenia in 2018, the Democratic Party, which advocates anti-immigration (centered right) is the first party.
- In the UK, right-wing parties like UKIP lead the pact for Brexit, which aims, among other things, to block immigration.
- Legislations that prohibit hijab wearing in public by Muslim women is widespread in countries like Austria.
- The expansion of racism in the U.S. using the new social media from the Tea Party movement to the presidential election is remarkable. The number of racist groups will reach a record high in 2018. The downward trend under the Obama administration has consistently risen under the Trump administration, reaching a record high, 1,020 groups in 2018 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019).

Outside European and American regions, other remaining countries also ride the bandwagon of curbing minorities through their authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. For example, in Russia, Putin's regime is having a far-reaching right following behind "Eurasianism"; in Turkey, Erdogan's regime cracks down on Kurds; in India, Hindu BDP, a fundamentalist party, is in power; in Brazil, Bolsonaro, who is an anti-communist and supporter of the former military dictatorship, took over the presidential palace; in China, Xi Jinping's regime will continue severe oppressions against ethnic minorities, labor movements, and various social movements. For the majority of the G20, therefore, it will be difficult to adopt policies that ignore the influence of political forces on the far right.

The rise of the extreme right in Central and Eastern Europe, the former socialist zone, is remarkable. Ogino (2013) writes as follows:

Globalization, along with the collapse of the socialist economy in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries and along with the development of information and communication technology, accelerated the freedom of trade of money, goods, people, and services across borders.

The progress of globalization has promoted the diversification of values in the international community, leading to a relative decline in the prestige of the nation-state. However, at the same time, anti-globalization movements are more visible than before in various parts of the world. In Europe the extreme right-wing parties, which emphasize the existence of a nation state, were able to expand their support base by opposing European Union (E.U.) integration. The rise of right-wing extremism in the West was the backlash of the policies in favor of immigration and cultural diversity and was brought about by the free movement of workers after EU economic integration. On the other hand, for the Central and Eastern European countries that have joined the E.U. since 2004, in addition to the rapid social changes experienced since the transition period, the disillusionment and distrust of the E.U. have led to a reassessment of traditional values in the nation-state. It brought about the rise of the extreme right-wing power as an excessive form. What does this mean?

It seems that the leftists had an unrealistic expectation of the next better society after capitalism. When the Cold War ended with the victory of capitalism, the mass movements in the socialist countries began to develop a fantasy about Western democracies, which they thought would lead them to freedom and liberation from the exploitation of the state apparatus. Whatever the reality was, it seemed to the West that there was a more liberal and democratic option to them than the so-called socialist regime. Western capitalism took full advantage of freedom and human rights in attracting the Eastern masses who developed fantasies about the West. However, this fantasy was quickly shattered.

For the people of the Third World who chose socialist or capitalist regimes for their newly independent countries in their struggle for liberation from colonialism, for independence, and for freedom, the consequence of globalization was devastating to them as the gap between the rich and the poor exponentially widened, as they were caught up

in an armed conflict due to the war on terrorism. The Nordic-type system was expected to serve as an alternative for those disappointed with typical capitalism and socialism. However, there is a limit to relying on the capitalist system to support the side effects of a highly managed society as well as a limit to the financial basis to support high welfare.

All these existing systems have led to people's disappointment due to the fact that they are betraying society, which they have set out principles for. On the other hand, the anti-globalization movements that have arisen since the end of last century and have distinguished themselves from the existing socialism and capitalism systems, lack the tools that can address several important issues. In particular, the "alt" or anti-Globalization Movements have not tackled the issue of religion, which is at the heart of the war on terrorism. As a result, they have not come close to addressing war at its core. On the other hand, the sympathy people have for issues such as post-modernist values, antagonism towards multinational corporations, and community reconstruction from the bottom-up have not always led to support of left-wing governments and politicians. The left could not accurately read the danger of the extreme right taking over these issues. From the perspective of the right wing, the appeal of "alt" or anti-globalization is used as the basis for strengthening national sovereignty and excluding immigrants. Moreover, the portrayal of the national community as natural with an ecological basis relates to this exclusion of outsiders. Still experiencing the trauma of socialism's failure in the 20th century, the left continues to seek a new concept of socialism and communism. On the other hand, the right-wing's appeal of a return to tradition before neoliberal consumerism is easy for people to understand. It is this symbolic phenomenon that is part of France's yellow vest movements, which has formally and informally stated its policy of immigrant exclusion.

Redefinition of War - The War on Terrorism

The war on terrorism has fundamentally changed the definition of war, and the concept of the sovereign state has also been changed drastically. As in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, the independence of the war-torn countries has been taken away, and military intervention by the great powers has become constant. Despite most Western countries and allies of the United States being among the wars' participants, those who live there do not have a sense of the people carrying out the war.

The same is true for Japan. Japan is a country that participates in the wars as a U.S. allied nation. Currently, Japan is a war-ridden country although there is an argument made that the Self-Defense Forces of Japan may not have shot one bullet. Nevertheless, Japan has been integrated into the U.S. Army's joint command chain, which provides a base for the U.S. military. Japan plays a role in logistics as a part of the worldwide military force of the U.S. military, and more than 10,000 U.S. forces in Japan entered the Iraq war.

Cyberwarfare and Article 9 of the Constitution

Another war is the "cyber war." While there are no flying bullets in cyberspace, the cyber world is about to dominate warfare by having almost the same effect or the power to regulate the use of real-world military forces. Now that computer networks are the foundation of social infrastructure, it is possible to have the same effect as a conventional weapons attack by carrying out attacks on infrastructure through the network control system.

If one uses the term "cyber war," there may be those who argue that these "wars" by their nature deviate from the definition of war and extend the term "war" excessively. However, if something acts as violence that physically destroys a social system, whether it is a bomb or a computer program, the final effect will end up the same. Most real weapons do not operate without the command of a computer. Rather, the center of the weapon is not a visible weapon but can be operated several thousand kilometers away from the network behind it (drone bombing is a typical example). Such networks are not unrelated to our daily lives; they sometimes coexist with, or use, networks of communication that are essential to our daily lives. The same is true of cyberspace as the military uses a private airport, or tanks and battle vehicles on and off the road. However, the world of this network is not realized in our daily lives; it is difficult to grasp the reality of the use of force, and it is easy to overlook or neglect it.

The war abandonment clause of Article 9 of the Constitution is in a critical state (I cannot but conclude that it has already become almost a dead sentence), so one must be able to accurately determine how cyberspace prepares for the "war state." Without such an understanding, one cannot understand whether the Article 9 Abandonment for War can have a practical effect. Even without a base as a real place, an army can still exist, and a "cyber war" can use violence and take life. In order to realize the substance of the war abandonment clause, we must be able to confirm that the government does not use computer networks for war purposes. Even if we do not have such technology, that is not a good excuse. As a sovereign people, we need "permanent efforts" to acquire such technology.

Article 9 is no longer a sentence of reality because the Self Defense Forces exists. In addition to this, it is necessary to re-examine the effectiveness of Article 9 to see if wars and cyber wars that have become reality through the war on terrorism can be abandoned. The parties in support of and against the amendment for Article 9 abandonment may not realize that the idea of the state is nothing more than a laughingstock when viewed from the outside world. France has continued to deny it has racial discrimination against immigrants, under the excuse of the slogan of "freedom, equality, and fraternity" of the government. This has been experienced by former colonials in their own lands.

Immigrants and minorities in the United States are aware that the United States Constitution's principles of justice, peace, welfare, and freedom have been used as an excuse to rationalize injustice, poverty, and discrimination. So, they may choose not to

raise flags or sing national anthems. Asians know that the “peace” spoken by the Emperor is only a form of this kind of deception. Perhaps similarly, Article 9 is not a necessary and sufficient set of words to stop modern war at all. The words of the law must have the power to stop the real war. However, Article 9 is not a war abandonment clause that some Japanese peace movements depict. Rather, it has become something that the world can be proud of as a justification to carry out war while calling for “peace” and “war abandonment” (Ogura, 2019).

Extreme Right View of the World

The extreme right is not a monolith with a single worldview. However, I dare to pick up some of its pillars. In particular, by highlighting the issues common to the claims raised by the left wing and the anti-globalism movement, the following points can be emphasized.³

- **Anti-globalism:** In particular, the neoliberalist criticism of globalization. The view that cross-border activities of multinational companies have promoted poverty and inequality. Elimination of the impact of foreign capital. Protectionism to secure employment of one’s own people.
- **Consumerism criticism:** Criticism of American consumption culture.
- **Competitiveness, Criticism of Competency:** Denial that competitive egalitarianism is the basis of the “equality” mechanism brought about by modern capitalism. Denial that talent can be determined by the market. Instead, as outlined below, a prioritization on order based on tradition and community.
- **Traditionalism:** Reconstruction of a community-based lifestyle. To that end, the value of communities connected by common values is important. Rather than encompassing diverse values, the community should cultivate the same values across generations to create the most stable society in which communities are integrated by one cultural tradition and values that members share.
- **Nature = Naturalism:** The lifestyles of people who have lived across generations in the geographical area are the most suitable “nature” for the land. Bringing in a different culture from the outside disturbs the way of life of this ideal community. Immigrants should return home.
- **Family values:** Belief in traditional patriarchy and gender roles as “natural.”
- **Anti-modernism (overcoming of modernity):** The denial of universal human rights and individualism. The belief that “universality” undermines community-based inherent values or diversity. The belief that Individualism undermines community cohesion.

- Xenophobia: In particular, they have a strong sense of exclusion against immigrants, refugees, and foreign workers, and at the same time dislike gender equality. However, they have empathy for the values of the community, ecology, and traditional culture. In the background of these extreme rights values and claims, transgenerational traditions and cultures and sometimes ethnic myths, are sometimes brought out. However, many of these values had been rebuilt or excavated as a means of resisting modernity during the modernization period of the 19th century. Therefore, this has not been maintained by the country and its society and community. In the case of Japan, the *kokugaku*, in Western Europe in the 18th century and after, Romanticism, have become part of the soil of the later ideology.

When the anti-globalization movement is interpreted in the context of the extreme right, it is sometimes linked to a conspiracy theory that there is an international Jewish network behind multinational capital and finance capital. In the process of decline from the age when Japan was at the top of Asia, the sentiment of *Russanchiman* and *Sakai* has fostered hostility as the economic powers of the large country ceased to exist. When it comes to countries overtaking Japan, both the Japanese government and the media blame these rival countries way as if they were sneaky and unfair. They criticize these countries as having a discriminating, rule-ignoring economy, as if it were part of their national characteristics.

Unlike in the 1980s, when the leading role of globalization was developed under the leadership of Western countries and Japan, now its leadership is shifting to emerging countries such as China and India. Moreover, these Asian countries are also countries that have a huge market with a huge population under their own control. At the same time, this movement of global capitalism's core has led to a crisis for the Western worldview. In the midst of this crisis, the norms of global governance (the UN, IMF, WTO, World Bank economic governance, and ICANN Internet governance) that the West built after the war have suffered a legitimacy crisis. It may be the time of the second crisis, following the unprecedented Western crisis brought about by the First World War in the early 20th century.⁴

Akihito's "Words" – "Word" Itself

What kind of effect does the Emperor narrative have? In particular, the ambitions of the emperor's strong desire for "peace" were contrasted with Abe's stance of constitutional reform, and some voices of support from the peace movement to Akihito came to be heard. Below are the words that seemingly convey these ambitions:

On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of my reign, I would like to offer my deep gratitude to the government of Japan and to the people both in Japan and overseas for the congratulatory messages I received.

As I look back on the great number of events that have gone by since I ascended the throne thirty years ago, I am deeply moved to be able to mark this day today blessed by the many felicitations from people both in Japan and overseas.

During the three decades of the Heisei era, Japan has been free of war for the first time in modern current history, supported by the strong desire of the people for peace. However, the thirty years was by no means an uneventful time as our country encountered many unanticipated challenges. As the world entered a cycle of climate change, Japan, too, has been struck by innumerable natural disasters. Our country also faced a great deal of social phenomena never experienced before due to the demographic changes arising from the aging population and the declining birthrate. As an island nation under comparatively favorable circumstances, our country has been able to cultivate a distinctive culture. Today, in this globalizing world, however, I believe that Japan needs to open up to the world further, establish its own place in that world with wisdom, and build relations with other countries with sincerity and good will.

Ever since ascending the throne as Emperor and to this day, I have spent my days praying for peace in the country and for the happiness of the people and thinking about my role as the symbol of the State. However, this path of seeking the ideal role of the Emperor as the symbol of the State as designated by the Constitution of Japan, has been an endless one.

It is my hope that those who will succeed me will continue to seek the ideal role of the symbol of the State in the next era and the era after that, and that they will continue to add and complement to the role of the Emperor as the symbol of the State. I consider myself most fortunate to have always been able to perform my duties as the Emperor with the help of the people. The work that I have carried out was only made possible with the approval and support of various government organizations. I have been able to fulfill my duties thanks to the people of Japan, whose symbol of unity I take pride and joy in being, and the cultural level of this country which has been nurtured by the people of Japan over many years, from the past to the present. Throughout the past three decades, our country has been fraught with many natural disasters, and the people who had the misfortune of living in those disaster-stricken communities encountered and had to endure much grief, which they have done so bravely. At the same time, across the nation, people have shared in the sorrow of those communities as if it were their own and stood by their fellow citizens in various ways. These are among my most unforgettable memories during my reign.

I would like to take this opportunity today to also express my gratitude to the people of other countries who showed great concern when Japan was in the midst of suffering and sorrow. Countless countries, international organizations and regions gave us their gracious and kind assistance. To those people I offer my deepest heartfelt gratitude.

Soon after the start of the Heisei era, the Empress composed a moving waka poem:

Tomodomo ni

Tairakeki yo o

Kizukan to

Morohito no kotoba

Kuniuchi ni mitsu.

“Together with you

We’ll forge a peaceful era”

So say the people

Ah, now the country is filled

And blessed by these words.

The Heisei era began with a period of deep mourning for the demise of the late Emperor Showa. As such, the words in this poem were by no means loudly proclaimed.

But to this day, we remember and hold precious the messages that we received from across the country at the time, filled with the quiet but firm determination to “build a peaceful Japan together with the Imperial family.”

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the people who organized this ceremony today to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of my accession to the throne. Finally, once again, I pray for peace and happiness of all the people in Japan and around the world.

(<http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/page/okotoba/detailEn/42#152>)

This emperor's message is a kind of “salvation” against Abe's arrogant attitude by showing its own achievements in a variety of deceptions and camouflages, pursuing the revision of Article 9 in a persevering manner, and not being in conflict with neighboring countries. It is a discourse that brings talk about peace; Japan should be mentioned for the issue of its colonial rule and war responsibility as the biggest issue that has been an impediment to resolving tensions with its neighbors. But in the Emperor's words, there are no words that suggest such historically important issues. There are many questions in his words, and his understanding of the current situation is unacceptable to us. In the next section, let us examine these words in some detail.

Peace and Vague Discourse Conceal the Darkness of the Times

During the three decades of the Heisei era, Japan has been free of war for the first time in modern current history, supported by the strong desire of the people for peace. However, the thirty years was by no means an uneventful time as our country encountered many unanticipated challenges.

Did the Japanese people bring a strong will for peace? In fact, those “Japanese people” with the “strong will” to pursue the issue of serious war crimes of Japan have never been the majority, and the Emperor has never mentioned this issue. In addition to acknowledging the Self-Defense Forces, he may have lent his support to the Abe administration, which supports its overseas dispatch and supports the constitutional amendment to “reinterpret” the war denunciation clause of Article 9. By calling the present Japan “free of war,” he denies that Japan is at war. How can we say that Japan has not experienced war when it is one party of the Japan-US alliance?

As the world entered a cycle of climate change, Japan, too, has been struck by innumerable natural disasters. Our country also faced a great deal of social phenomena never experienced before due to the demographic changes arising from the aging population and the declining birthrate.

The biggest “disaster” of the times of Akihito is the Great East Japan Earthquake, especially the Fukushima nuclear accident, but he does not dare to speak about Fukushima. Instead, he distorted the disaster with his vague wording of “many social phenomena never experienced before.” Additionally, assuming the attachment of the emperor to Okinawa, “social phenomena” over the base of Okinawa such as Henoko should be in mind. However, it is the emperor's past practice to not talk about such specific and important matters. The emperor's “words” have important meaning even when it comes to things that are not spoken. This suggests that they are matters that should not be spoken about, and this suggestion has the effect of dominating the speech space of this country.

The Emperor Who Cannot Talk About Politics and the People Who Do Not Want to Talk About Politics

The emperor is stipulated by the constitution that he cannot mention politics. This is a major feature of the postwar emperor system different from before and during the war. The significance of the postwar emperor's loss of political power is important for democracy. However, as a side effect, the political power of the public has been tamed, imitating the emperor, as being a non-political. In addition, as part of social etiquette, the leader, strong man, or the head of the organization has morality that admits that the political position or problem that touches the core is deceived in vague language. This is a political side effect of the postwar symbolic emperor system being forced to be non-political. In this sense, the emperor is non-political, which has created a vital social effect, that is, the morality of the people being non-political as the right behavior.

Proprietary Culture As Ethnocentrism

As an island nation under comparatively favorable circumstances, our country has been able to cultivate a distinctive culture. Today, in this globalizing world, however, I believe that Japan needs to open up to the world further, establish its own place in that world with wisdom, and build relations with other countries with sincerity and good will.

The above characterization is not considered a problem in Japan as it is kind of a common phrase. But what is the “distinctive culture?” What does it mean to be proud of it? The “distinctive culture” implies a tacit comparison with the culture of others and emphasizes differences, having emphasized its own culture as “distinctive” and suggested its superiority. This is a discourse of cultural identity that supports ethnocentrism or nationalism. In addition, the understanding that treats Japan “an island country” as if it is a closed place is proof that the emperor is bound by the agricultural nation-centered historical view.

The wording “open up to the world” is an assessment of the fact that in the context of globalization, Japan has established its position without losing its country's uniqueness. This is no different from the stance in which the extreme right emphasizes the uniqueness of its own country or ethnicity in the flow of globalization. The trend toward Britain leaving the EU, EU countries trying to close their doors against immigrants and refugees, and Trump's “wall” policy all involve the countries calling themselves “distinct cultures” and “establish[ing their] own place,” which is a position of exclusivity that can be shared in common with similar keywords.

Akihito does not mention *opening* to the inside, although he does say “open to the outside.” It is an expression that skillfully avoids the reality of Japan's immigration policy, which has restricted immigration and refugees. What was “opened” was the investment of capital, the “advancement” of Japanese capitalism as economic imperialism, and the overseas dispatch of the SDF. The fact that capital and military forces “established [their] own place,” as Akihito mentions here, emphasizes the need to establish a national identity in the era of globalization. This corresponds to the part later that mentions the way of the symbolic emperor system.

Which is the Preferred Choice for Peace: With or Without the Imperial Family?

We remember and hold precious the messages that we received from across the country at the time, filled with the quiet but firm determination to build a peaceful Japan together with the Imperial family.

There is no source given for messages referenced here, so I cannot confirm that these words are coming from all over the country. However, can peace in Japan be only reached with the imperial family? What kind of convincing relationship does the wording “with the Imperial family” have with peace? If peace were the most important issue, at least two

options would be discussed, such as whether the presence of the imperial family can or will not achieve peace. However, in postwar Japan, there is neither the atmosphere nor the circumstances under which the discussion among politicians about the pros and cons of the imperial family can be guaranteed. Rather, the formation of public opinion on the premise of the imperial family has been compelled by right-wing violence, public education, and the imperial praise from mass media. Among these contributing factors, it would be a political statement to speak of “a peaceful Japan with the imperial family” as a matter of course.

Not only Akihito, but from the time of Hirohito, the Emperor's peace discourse has concealed the truth by declaring that there is “peace,” no matter how much Japan's current situation contributes to war. At the same time, the postwar Japanese peacekeepers, even if they have been wartime perpetrators, have also fostered an atmosphere as if they were guilty of contributing to war.

The Political Effects Of Glossing Over Things

Perhaps, in a few decades, if a historian observes this era and compares the emperor with the Abe administration to make an evaluation in a positivist fashion, he or she would separate “war” from the emperor's words and will not detect a warlike wording. Here is the limit of positivism (or dataism).

Even if it is positivism, or a civil movement or a revolutionary movement that assumes that what has been told is an objective fact, it is prone to fall behind various fake ideologies. It is easy to argue for the desire for “peace” from the Emperor's discourse. And I will try to interpret what is implied in the “peace” of this emperor with the implication of this word. If the meaning of “peace” must be one, it is the right way, but the abstract notion of peace has innumerable meanings, and even war could be said to be “peace.”

And by proving their “rightness” with objective data, there is the idea that the enemy's deceptions and lies are uncovered, and such exposure is the biggest blow to the enemy. However, there is no enemy who has been driven down by objective evidence; many unspeakable masses or voters lose confidence in the enemy in the face of peeling off the enemy's skin, and yet the enemy has a seat of power. In this series of ideas, expectations of the Emperor's “peace” discourse are also formed.

Aside from the facts, there is a dominant cultural practice in this country where it is important and courteous to say things neatly. It may be bad to criticize hosts at a wedding or funeral. One who understands such a predicament is considered an “adult” who is also respected by others. When we analyze the words of the emperor, it is necessary to observe his remarks and “status” separately.

Not the Emperor as an Individual, but the Emperor as a Structure is at the Center of the Problem

What kind of power does the emperor bring about? This question is about a structural issue of the emperor system. The whole issue brings back to mind the old question of whether the emperor is a person after all. Furthermore, in the worst case, since "individualism" resides at the center of rational human understanding, it gives one the illusion that "the emperor" can be isolated as an "individual." The emperor is a knot of a relationship, and a unique device is built in the background of this relationship construction. One aspect of the device is the religious aspect, but on the other side, there is the political aspect of the "constitutional" governance system. "Cultural" devices intervene too to connect these two aspects.

The religious aspect is the Shinto device in Japan, but the structure common to any modern nation-state is only expressed in a unique form. The structure that supports this emperor system--the reproduction structure of emperor consciousness--is an ideology that converges with a state and is essential to almost any country, as "Shinto" can easily be replaced with the term "faith" or an empathic structure that is essentially irrational. It is understood that it is a device. There is nothing unique about the Emperor System in this sense. Thereby, it is possible for the end of modern times to be the end of the Emperor System.

The Emperor Who Cannot Understand What Symbolism is: The Emperor's Conflict of Interest as an Agent of the State and a Shinto Priest

If the ministers and bureaucrats proclaim that they cannot understand what their role is, then the mass media and the opposition will not be silent. Therefore, it cannot be said it is surprising that Akihito, who had been in charge of that for 30 years, honestly expressed that he could not understand what role the symbolic emperor should play.

I have spent my days praying for peace in the country and for the happiness of the people and thinking about my role as the symbol of the State. However, this path of seeking the ideal role of the Emperor as the symbol of the State as designated by the Constitution of Japan, has been an endless one.

In particular, the wording "this path of seeking the ideal role of the Emperor as the symbol of the State as designated by the Constitution of Japan, has been an endless one" is simply a mystery. It is because he cannot understand what "designated by the Constitution" means. For the past 30 years, has Akihito gone through a process of trial and error for discovering the role of "symbol" without understanding his role? In what part of the emperor's national affairs, as defined in the Constitution, is it difficult to say, "The way to explore the emperor as a symbol is endless?" If the Emperor cannot understand the texts of Articles 1 to 8 of the Constitution, even if he has searched for the meaning endlessly, it means that no one can understand the symbolism of the Constitution of the Emperor System.

If the rule of law is a major premise of democracy, it is imperative that there be words in the constitution that the Emperor can easily understand. Emperors should be able to find their rights and duties in the constitutional wording of the Constitution, understand them, and act on them. The members of the parliament and the bureaucracy are all the same in this respect, and it is impossible for the Emperor alone to search endlessly and say, “I do not understand what my role as the symbol is.”

So, what did Akihito want to say in terms of creating this profound sense of nuance? He virtually imagines the role of the symbolic emperor, transcending the role of the emperor defined by the constitution, and this image is beautifully confused with the symbolic function of the emperor defined by the constitution. In other words, there is no separation between politics and religion in him. Therefore, it seems that we have sensed a contradiction between the symbolic emperor and the traditional priest. It is true that there is an irreconcilable contradiction between the Emperor as Shinto priest, or in other words between the Emperor as the bearer of the mythology, and the Emperor as the bearer of national affairs. If we respect human rights provisions such as the separation of politics and religion, as defined by the constitution, and equality under the law, the state symbol role of the emperor contradicts the provisions of the constitution in roles other than being an actor in national affairs. If he is doing both jobs, there is an obvious conflict of interest. If he chooses the Constitution, he should not be a Shinto priest. If he wants to protect religious freedom as a Shinto priest, he should give up its role as a national symbol. Nevertheless, the implication of clinging to this dual notion of emperor is that, from the side of the emperor as a priest, the constitution is “constrained” and contradictory and does not benefit the existence of the emperor system.

Is it Possible to Separate Politics and Religion While Keeping the Symbolic Emperor System as it is?

In the Constitution, the Emperor is defined as a symbol of national unification. On the other hand, the Constitution also guarantees freedom of thought and conscience and freedom of religion as the rights of the people. While various religions are guaranteed protection under the law on the premise of religious freedom, there is an “emperor” as a symbol to unite everyone as “the people,” including those without faith. In this case, it is a logical contradiction that the Emperor is to be linked with a specific faith.

The function of a symbol cannot be symbolized without having anything to do with what it means. In this case, there are two different types of symbols. One case is the following example. It is a picture of “Kirin” when it is recognized as “beer” by looking at the picture of the giraffe on the bottle. You can recognize this as a beer by looking at this picture only if you have learned that the picture of a Kirin means a beer. If you did not know this, you could not guess the beer from the Kirin. Another example is the following: When you look at a human-shaped design, you may be able to analogize it as “human.” In this case, even if it is made of paper, if you know the human form, you can see the form and understand the human meaning without having to learn about it. In each

case, the symbol has a meaning, but the mechanism for connecting the symbol and the meaning is different. In the case of the Emperor, it is an example of the former. The “meaning” that the emperor is a symbol of Japan is not generated by analogy but must be “learned.” Moreover, the “meaning” cannot be understood only from the text of the Constitutional National Act. This is an important issue of the symbolic emperor system. The meaning of the “symbol” of the Emperor is clearly limited on the Constitution, and it should be forbidden to have any meaning other than the text of the Constitution. If the symbolic role of the Emperor is only defined in the Constitution, it does not matter who takes it. However, there is a provision in the Constitution that the selection of the Emperor must be according to the will of the people. The provision that the emperor must be hereditary is not in line with the provision of the people's consensus. This is because there is a possibility that the successor of the emperor cannot win the consensus of the people. Moreover, as a priest of national Shinto, the emperor of modernity has been fused with religiosity.

Suppose that a person is called “the emperor” when he plays a role as a Shinto priest and is called “the president” when it carries out the state affairs of a nation defined by the Constitution. It is possible to distinguish among multiple roles by different names (symbols), which creates a difference in meaning beyond the difference in names. It is common for politicians and anyone to take multiple identities in multiple roles. Naming each role has the effect of clarifying the boundaries of certain categories and clarifying rules. However, when it comes to the Emperor, the setting of such boundaries was deliberately denied, and the name of the role as a Shinto priest was taken as the name of the “symbol of national unity of the Constitution.” The constitution incorporated in its original design the idea that the semantic action of the symbol of the word becomes a structure in which the meaning as a Shinto priest and the meaning as a state actor are mutually weighted. The basis of this design is common to both new and old constitutions.

In the first place, the ten clauses of Article 7 of the Constitution are not things that can only be carried out by those who are regarded as national symbols. It is not inevitable that a person called the emperor has to do all of these things. In fact, there is only such “light” meaning in national affairs, and the significance of his existence as a symbol of the national unification that forms the core of the emperor system and nationalism is given in advance outside the text of the Constitution. The postwar emperor system has preserved the sanctity of the emperor as a Shinto priest outside the sphere of constitutional national affairs. On that basis, we have adopted a strategy that infiltrates, *inter alia*, the area of culture. In this respect, we have reproduced the myth of the sacredness on the background of the Shinto tradition that leads to the customs, and on the other hand, laid the foundation of an extinct nationalism as a reproduction device for the ideology of “Japanese culture.” Although this is different from the meaning of religion in Buddhism and Christianity, we have tried to build faith in the emperor through culture (see *inter alia*, Ooms, 1985; Kasulis 2004; Eliade, 2011).

Nationalist Stripping of the Fangs - The Emperor as a Missionary

Most mass media responses to Akihito's "words" were positive. With a little bit of thought, one should be able to determine how his remarks are embroiled within the questionable, exclusivist feelings, but the mass media reports are rather written by pacifists who defend the constitution.

And these stances are pervading the peace movement and the anti-constitutional movement. Compared with Abe's militant propaganda of war-like reform, voices have come to be heard that support Akihito's stance of advocacy for a peaceful constitution as if it won their hearts. This expectation of the Emperor has been heard even in Okinawa.

Most of the country's "people" seem to be widely present, including liberals who expect peace in such Akihito's discourse, in what I imagine as a "fangs-off nationalism" This not only refers to the right wing nature of a city declaration. Rather, it refers to the voters of the country who are the majority and who have supported the postwar regime; it can also include those who do not go to the polls but are unaware of the ethnic biases. Their "fangs" cannot be found on the street or in public places. New media such as SNS have become circuits that convey their feelings, but that is not the only expression of them. Implied prejudice also is a kind of "fangs." They are invisible to "we" Japanese who do not feel the pain from them, but there are people who can see their "fangs" and feel pain.

The discourse surrounding the emperor creates unnecessary categorization and differentiation among people in a way that leads to discrimination. For those living in Japan, it is a test of allegiance whether or not one affirms the symbolic Emperor System. Moreover, there is a trove of practices which constitute a system that consecrates him as a special being: attitudes towards national symbols such as the *hinomaru* (national flag) and the *kimigayo* (national anthem), the use of honorifics from the media, the making of the day derived from the Emperor a "national holiday," the granting of so-called "comforts" and "commemorates" to all over the country, and the exceptional treatment given to religious missions and events. While living in this country, such an allegiance test is compulsory in daily life. Also, quite a few of these activities are linked with the "mythology" of the Emperor. These are also religious ceremonies associated with Shinto in a broad sense.

From this point of view, the acts performed at ceremonial occasions by the postwar emperor, whether they be national acts or any other act, are essentially the same as the preaching and profession of the Roman Catholic pope. Generally, when the emperor says "prayer" in a national affair, it has been interpreted that there is no religious implication. But this interpretation is wrong. I would like to say clearly that the Emperor's "role" is a missionary. Japanese people are not subjectively aware of the "Shinto" worldview in their daily lives. However, the Japanese attitudes towards consecration of the emperor, the use of honorifics when referring to him, and acceptance of his words uncritically are tendencies of his believers. Such Japanese attitudes correspond to the Emperor's "role" as a missionary.

I think Yoshimi Takeuchi's famous definition of the Emperor System as "the widespread system" [*ichi boku issō*] can be interpreted like this. Furthermore, the postwar

emperor system is taking a new position as state Shinto, but this may create an opportunity for Shinto to go into the habits of everyday life and to extend its spirituality. It is not enough to understand the pros and cons of the postwar symbol emperor system within the framework of national Shinto. Rather, in the structure of “Shinto” – a faith with diversity that is extremely difficult to define– that is, in the daily structure of values that have supported what is called “Japanese culture,” the Emperor system needs to be repositioned.

Being Unaware of Faith

The fact that 90% of the Japanese population supports the Emperor System has created an environment in which the “people” are not aware that they are Shinto believers. It is difficult to define Shinto as a religion akin to Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. However, even so, all of these religions share in common exclusivity or ethnocentrism based on the mythical irrational worldview of “religion.”⁵

While many “Japanese people” see themselves as “non-religious,” they are, in substance, unconscious Shinto believers (those who have faith in the emperor). In such a Japanese cultural environment, critiquing the emperor system requires one to be a pagan or an atheist. This may mean discarding the Japanese identity. What does it really mean to give up one’s identity as a Japanese? This question relates to the problem of who is Japanese. Despite the fact that many researchers have refused to ask such a race-oriented question, the two fictions of ethnic identity and national identity have become an integral part of the ideological apparatus of the modern Japanese nation.

Racism Included in the “Japanese” Categorization Itself

Abe, the ruler of modern Japan, is not the only member of a generation who has received a postwar education. There is no argument to explain pre-war militaristic education context for the proposed constitutional change. People who have passed through what is called postwar democratic education are increasingly leading the prewar return. There may be another view that such a conservative or racist tendency may be due to “contagion” of intergenerational values such as family relations, and not education. However, it is wrong to understand that the values of the times of parents and great grandparents have been inherited over the long term. Rather, it is the current environment, where information communication is becoming the mainstream of information distribution, that creates and reproduces nationalism and racism in the communication that people exchange on a daily basis. It has become a structure.

It is true that school education content is increasingly moving to the right. However, it is not necessarily so that the person with the highest grade in school education becomes a nationalist and the one with poor grade becomes an anti-nationalist. Regarding nationalism and racism, the ideological effects of the education system do not appear to play a prominent role. In various social systems such as the family, community, close

human relationships, the school, company, and media, people connect “I” to national identity such as “Japanese” every day. Nationalism starts with the act of categorizing people into two large human groups, Japanese and non-Japanese. The definition of Japanese is not based on the legal system but is vague and depends entirely on the senses. However, this ambiguity is shared by the “Japanese,” and the phrase “Japanese” is repeatedly used to make discrimination against others inherent in daily life. The basis for these categories of “Japanese” and “Non-Japanese” is ambiguous, as if they divided the population into two based groups on whether they like apples or they like oranges. However, because it is not possible to answer the question “what is Japanese,” there is the attempt to emphasize differences from others while referring to various events as being “Japanese.” It is easy to see that the discourse that rice is eaten by Japanese people or that rice farming is a feature of Japanese culture is clearly false when it comes to the question of how the rice culture spread historically. However, even so, it does not stop one from exaggerating that rice is a feature of Japanese food culture as a difference from other people's cultures. The accumulation of adherence to such robust stereotypes gives the category “Japanese” a much more intense meaning and strengthens the boundaries between whether one is “Japanese” or not. In Japan's case, the modern national identity has not been deduced and built from the principles of the nation-state. There is no such thing as the founding principles of the modern nation in Japan. The emphasis on differences based on unfounded categories promotes prejudice. Individuals' individual characteristics such as their abilities and personalities, are often judged in terms of categories of being “Japanese” or not. When there is a Japanese person who is exceptional or “superior” in some way, it is explained as if it is because they are Japanese. On the other hand, if a person who committed a crime by chance is a foreigner, there is a resulting exaggeration that “foreign crime is widespread.” This is not understood to be an exaggeration or prejudice.

Such ethnocentrism is common to racist worldviews like the white supremacy ideology. It is the myths and ancient religions that go back to pre-modern times that support the baseless feelings of ethnic dominance. In Japan, the Emperor System is responsible for these beliefs. The Emperor System is an ideological device, a faith to reproduce the identity of “Japanese.” At the same time, it acts as a mechanism to justify discrimination against people who do not belong to this category by giving an excessive meaning to the “Japanese” category. This practice has been consistent before and after the war, and especially after the war, the emperor system has developed its aspect as a function of reproduction of such an identity. As a result, the postwar generation is the generation who became unaware of the inherent racism of the concept of “Japanese.” For them, the Tenno system was not a compulsory ideology, but behind religion and became the center of the “Japanese” identity spontaneously and unintentionally, embedded in some unconscious process. In this sense, the emperor system is not something that is educated and injected externally as the pre-war national Shinto doctrine was, but instead permeates through the family, community, personal relationships, workplaces, schools, etc. of this country as a whole. We have created a structure of faith that reproduces a “Japanese identity” that does not need to shout as “the emperor.”

Notes

1. Conservatives and left-wing intellectuals sometimes forsake a peace movement that clings to Article 9 in the real world. Rather, in a sense of realism, they argue that the SDF should be properly evaluated, and strengthening military security should be said to be a necessary condition for peacebuilding. Such realism is mistaking the relationship between “power” and justice or asserting that power is intentionally justice. There is no relationship between power and justice. It has never been proven that a powerful person wins at justice. It has been repeated in history as well as in daily life that a powerful person punishes justice and forces others to call that justice. According to our experience, rather, power works its width where it does not pass. The realists put up the contradiction of the existing system and society, while denying the future of the book as excessive nationalism, the excellence of “Japanese,” the brilliant historical I draw as an extension from the past, and try to capture people's delight in the fiction of the story of “Beautiful Japan.”

2. “Immigrants from countries whose culture is too different must learn the values and culture of our country. If you want to work in a company with a common language English, you may use only English, but if you want to be part of a Swedish society, you should also study Swedish. It is better to provide assistance to refugees at the refugee camps, not in Sweden.” (Party member Johann Tierlan, Asaki Abumi "Far north of Scandinavia, the indignation of people supporting the Swedish Democratic Party" (in Japanese) <https://news.yahoo.co.jp/byline/abumiasaki/20181120-00104755/>).

3. “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” Preamble of United States Constitution.

4. France’s extreme right-thinker, Alain de Benoist, found that the Western crisis in the early 20th century took place in the time frame from the First World War to the Russian Revolution, but this crisis is due to the absence of these “enemies.” He says he is awake and more serious. Generally, the basis of the extreme right thought is based on crisis awareness. Unlike maintenance based on keeping the current state of the world the way it is, the direction to rescue the collapse of the West from the crisis is not a utopia of the future society like communism, but rather in the pre-modern times, sometimes in the pre-Christian times. It also seeks in the non-Western world the possibilities of Greek mythology, Nordic mythology, or the pre-modern society oblivious to the modern Western. An interest in non-Christian religions, such as certain occults, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist, also seems to be a common tendency among extreme right thinkers.

5. Many Japanese do not understand that the unique worldview that is embedded in everyday practice is religious faith. The Japanese government identifies cultural rituals and practices as created by Shinto in order to separate them from religion. By doing this, they tried to practically make the separation principle of politics and religion (as defined by the Constitution) ineffective. It is not enough that the Shinto rituals of the imperial family, such as Daijyosai (the Great Eternity Festival), are excluded from the national events alone. It is a violation of “political separation” that public power takes part in events that are regarded as customs in our daily lives, such as local festivals and temple funerals. This is because politics is also pervading our private everyday lives.

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