

COMPARATIVE STUDY  
OF THE NOTION OF HISTORY  
IN CHINA, INDIA AND JAPAN

I

The East has not been a cultural unit as a whole. In the East there have been several cultural areas, the most important of which must have been those centering in India and in China. Japan has a peculiar and unique significance of her own in comparison with these two.

The notion of history differs greatly according to these cultural areas. We shall discuss them one by one.

II

Generally speaking the Indians overwhelmingly tend, in terms of logic, to lay stress on universals and disregard the individual and the particular. This way of thinking must have influenced the Indian notion of history.

All Indian books of history, which are on the whole very few in number, are tinged with a fantastic and legendary color. They are not products of historical science but rather works of art. Usually they are written in verse. The Indians are not satisfied with the simple and naïve description of facts, the language of daily use. From the artistic viewpoint, the Indians beautify the past and try to idealize it. They ignore precise figures, the sequences of events and other prosaic details relating to the time and place where the events took place. Furthermore, to give full play to the imagination, they exaggerate the figures astronomically and stretch the truth with their magnificent and brilliant style of hyperbole. Like their sculptures, their historical works are far from the reality of things but are the products of their fantasy.

The *Mahāvamsa* is the most elaborate and reliable work of history ever accomplished in Ceylon. And even this book is covered with a mysterious and legendary atmosphere. For instance, though Mahānāman, the author of this book, lived in the fifth century—in an age not too distant from the time of King Dutthāgamani's reign—his descriptions of this greatest ruler in the history of the island are full of mythical and legendary elements, and therefore, a careful distinction must be made between myth and that which is historically true. We know that the histories of the monks (Monschchronik) in Medieval Europe and the biographies of eminent Buddhist monks in China and Japan have a similar element. But, to a degree incomparable with these cases, the *Mahāvamsa* goes far beyond the bounds of historical truth.

Kalhana's *Rājataranginī* is the chronicle of a Kashmirian dynasty. This is one of the best historical works ever written by the Indians. In it, Kalhana details the social situation of his time and the activities of the various characters with the accuracy that no other Indian book of history has attained. But, still, the poetic and emotional atmosphere pervades the whole of this historical work. To quote Oldenberg: "If one removes all the poetic elements from Kalhana's story, and compares it with things of the time, he will find that the story is in essence on no higher a level than that of a more or less accurate newspaper article or a cartoon in a political comic paper. The process of

formation that this story has undergone is not that of historical thinking but of poetry—poetry in the Indian sense with its brilliant quality and also with its weakness. And Kalhana himself has a very distinct idea on this point; he considers himself a poet and he is a poet.”<sup>1</sup> And Kalhana scarcely pays heed to historical or causal sequence when considering historical events. His dates are inaccurate and sometimes they are the products of pure imagination.

In all Indian documents of the past, little significance has been attached to books of history. The Indians were much more interested in religion and in poetry than in historical documentation. For the Indians, a minor error in the recitation of the Vedas was a serious matter. But, they were thoroughly indifferent to the erroneous recording of dates or of facts in their books of history.<sup>2</sup> And this unhistorical character of the Indian way of thinking is distinctly observed in the Buddhist attitude to the rules of their order. The Buddhists in the period after the death of the Buddha had to establish new precepts for their body in order to meet changing social conditions. As some of the rules newly established by them were not compatible with the older ones, they hesitated to include their new rules in the old and traditional books of ordination (*patimokha*), and managed to attach them to the *patimokhas* as supplements.<sup>3</sup> However, they dared to claim the authority of the Buddha’s own teaching even to these supplementary precepts of their own creation, completely ignoring historical evidence. *Their concern for the proper observance of the precepts and of the rites preceded and was stronger than their regard for historical accuracy.* And here the historical facts were completely ignored.

The Chinese derive their rules of social conduct from the examples of their ancestors as described in their books of history.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Oldenberg, *Aus dem alten Indien*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> In India, there is no uniform system of marking historical eras. Their methods of determining historical periods differ according to time and place. According to a historian, there are more than twenty ways of computing eras in India. This fact presents a great contrast to the uniform adoption in the West of the Christian era. Cf. V. A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> H. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p. 385.

The Indians, on the other hand, gain their principles of behavior from their religious books and, at the same time, the fables and the parables such as the *Pancatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* contribute toward the diffusion of practical morals into the daily life of the Indian people.<sup>4</sup> To quote Oldenberg again, on the unhistorical character of the Indians: "...but, should we blame the Indians for no other reason than that they are Indians? The Indian folk-spirit would not have been what it was without its unhistorical character. For the formation of their spirit of the people, factors other than historical values played a decisive role."<sup>5</sup>

### III

Chinese ways of thinking are occasionally quite different from those of the Indians. The attitude of emphasis on the particular, on the one hand, and lack of consciousness of the universal has been traditionally conspicuous among the Chinese.

The tendency to value and to pay attention to the particular rather than to the universal has been observed in various aspects of Chinese culture.

The Chinese lay stress especially on particular facts in the historical and social spheres, as the result of their emphasis on particulars; that is, they give attention to an irreplaceable phenomenon which is perfectly unique either in time and in space.

A people stressing particulars and concrete perception is inclined to find a basis of law in past events, i.e., in previous examples. In other words, a precedent, i.e., something experienced by people of an earlier age, arouses a sense of validity in the Chinese mind. It is only natural, then, that the Chinese would feel a certain uneasiness regarding any method which attempts to fix laws governing human life, which have been derived from some individual's abstract thinking faculty. Laws which are determined by abstract thinking teach what should be in the future, but they arouse a sense of uneasiness in the Chinese, who

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Pancatantra*, *Hitopadeśa* and Buddhist *Jātaka* tales. Jains also have what they call *Jātakas*.

<sup>5</sup> H. Oldenberg, *Aus dem alten Indien*, p. 107.

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do not trust abstract thinking. For this reason, a conclusion reached by abstract thinking is not relied upon to the same extent as a life experience of the past. It is quite understandable, then, that with such an outlook, the Chinese try to discover in precedents the laws governing life. Thus, for the Chinese, learning implies full knowledge of past precedents, and is therefore referred to as *Chi-Ku*, i.e., "searching out the ancient ways."

In the historical sphere, this trend may be observed in the objective and minute compilation of historical works. It is said that the ideal of the compilers of the *Erb Shib Ssu Shib* (Twenty-four Dynastic Histories up to the Manchu Dynasty) was the exhaustive entry, as far as possible, of the incidents occurring in each dynasty. Moreover, it is recognized that Chinese historians continuously tried to enlarge and perfect their historical annals, and were always at work on supplements which would include materials omitted from standard histories. Therefore, they think that the more complex the description is, the more superior the historical work is. Such a method of describing history is just the opposite of the method which aims at simple and concise description. Of course, we can also recognize the trend of summarization and simplification, but it was more usual to take the method of making the historical records more complex through the compilation of histories.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, some Westerners criticize such history books and say that they are elaborate, encyclopedic and almost impossible to read through.<sup>7</sup> But even the Western scholar who believes in the superiority of Greek culture cannot help acknowledging that Chinese history books are not only minute but also accurate and objective.

"A l'autre bout de notre continent eurasiatique, la Chine offre à notre désir d'information de prestigieuses annales, d'une objectivité hors pair, que pourrait lui jalouser notre propre culture."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Kojiro Yoshikawa, *Shinajin no Koten to sono Seikatsu* (The Classics of the Chinese and their Way of Life), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Tanaka, Watsuji, Jugaku (translators), *Girisha Seishin-no Yōtō* (Characteristics of Greek Spirits), Iwanami Bunko ed., Tokyo Iwanami, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Masson Oursel, *La philosophie comparée*, p. 19.

“At the other end of our Eurasiatic continent, China offers prodigious annals to our thirst for information, annals of an unequalled objectivity, which our own culture might well envy.”

The Chinese made an effort to preserve historical materials which are apt to be destroyed. They collected many kinds of epitaphs and produced such works as the *Chin Shih T'sui Pien* and the *Pa Ch'iung Shih Chin Shih Pu Chêng* which is a bulky work of 130 volumes. In India, we cannot find such materials as these.

Moreover, they made every effort to record climatic features and peculiarities, and produced many kinds of book catalogues like the *Ssu K'u Ch'üan Shu Tsung Mu* in 200 volumes. So many catalogues of books have been made that we even find “catalogues of catalogues.”<sup>9</sup>

Such phenomena are just the opposite of what holds true with India. As mentioned above, there are few historical books, and even these have contents which are largely legendary. The Indians have seldom produced topographies, much less catalogues of books. The Indian paid attention only to the universals, neglecting the historical and climatic particularities while the Chinese, on the contrary, attached great importance to these. For this reason the descriptive science of particulars reached a high level of development in China. According to the philosophy of Rickert, the designation “*Idiographische Wissenschaft*” is applied to that kind of descriptive science which treats non-recurring historical phenomena. If we allow this term to include peculiarities of space and climate, then it is most applicable to the studies by the Chinese.

Such a way of thinking of the descriptive studies of particulars limited the forms of the acceptance of Indian Buddhism, which is contrary to Chinese attitudes. When accepting Buddhism, the Chinese did not neglect historical reflection and self-examination, and highly valued historical works on Buddhism and biographies of Buddhists, translating them into Chinese. In India also, history books and biographies were written, though their contents were not historically accurate,

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kikuya Nagasawa, *Shinagaku Nyūmon-sho Ryakukai* (Brief Explanation of Introduction to Sinology), p. 43 f.

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but these were lost because the Indians cared little for them. The *I Pu Tsung Lun Lun*, for instance, which describes the process of the formation of sects of Hīnayāna Buddhism in India was translated into Chinese three times. Besides, biographies of King Aśoka, the Buddhist philosophers, Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Vasubandhu and others, all of which are legendary, were translated into Chinese. The originals of these works have all been lost, and their translations also for the most part do not survive.<sup>10</sup>

As Indian historical works and biographies were few in number, the Chinese themselves tried to write a history of Indian Buddhism. The result of these efforts is the *Fu Fa Tsang Yin Yüan Chuan* in three volumes. This is a description of the transmission of the True Teaching from the first Patriarch Mahākāśyapa to Buddhasimha, the twenty-third Patriarch. It is presumed that this work was completed by T'an-yao, and is based on the accounts transmitted by Kimkara, a monk from Central Asia, with occasional reference to the Indian "Biographies." Thus, many were produced describing the order of the transmission of the teaching from masters to disciples ranging over India and China.

The Indians, when compiling short treatises into a larger work, were apt to omit their titles and names of their authors. Such works as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* are examples of this. In China, however, each title, the authors' names and careers, etc., of the short treatises contained in the larger books were carefully preserved. Books like *Hung Ming Chi*, *Kuang Hung Ming Chi*, *Yao Pang Wên Lei* are good examples.

In this way, the Chinese, trying to understand matters historically on the basis of particular individuals, would accept even the founder Śākyamuni as a historical person. That explains the fact that Sêng-yu, a Buddhist monk of the Sung dynasty, compiled and arranged many records of biographies of the Buddha under the title *Shih Chia Shih P'u* in 5 or 6 volumes, and Tao-hsüan, a Buddhist monk of the T'ang dynasty, edited the *Shih Chia Shih P'u* in one volume. It was a matter of great

<sup>10</sup> Only *Aśokāvadāna* (in the *Divyāvadāna*) is remaining at present.

importance when, where and to whom Śākyamuni taught the sūtras which were translated into Chinese. Therefore, they tried to relate each sūtra to a period in Śākyamuni's lifetime. The *Wu Shib Chiao P'an*, devised by the Chinese scholar T'ien-t'ai, is a typical example of this. According to modern textual criticism, we know that sūtras were all produced in a later period, so such efforts are meaningless. Yet, Chinese Buddhist scholars at that time believed that these theories were correct. We can say that the dominant object of their faith was Śākyamuni, which probably was the result of their emphasis on historical matters.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV

According to my personal observation made during my trips abroad, it seems that, compared with other peoples, the Japanese are particularly fond of history or historiography. Books of history are published very often. Common people at large like to read histories.

As Japan is situated near the continent of China, the Chinese conception of history has been very influential in its past, and the Buddhist conception of history was also introduced into Japan in its Chinese version. However, the Japanese have kept their traditional ways of thinking which modified the notions of history introduced from abroad.

One of the main factors of such modifications must have been the tendency to accept actuality in the phenomenal world as the Absolute.

The Japanese have tended to lay greater emphasis upon the intuitive sensible concrete rather than universals and to stress the fluid, incipient character of events. This way of thinking may come to regard the phenomenal world itself as the Absolute and to reject the recognition of the Absolute existing over and above the phenomenal world. What is widely known among post-Meiji philosophers as the "Theory that the phenomenal is actually the real" is deeply rooted in Japanese tradition.

<sup>11</sup> Daijō Tokiwa, *Shina Bukkiō no Kenkyū* (A Study on Chinese Buddhism), vol. III, p. 76 and p. 81 f.

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It was characteristic of the religious views of the ancient Japanese that they believed spirits to reside in all kinds of things. They personified all kinds of spirits other than those of human beings, dealt with all of them as ancestral gods, and tended to view every spirit as the noumenon of a god. It is such a turn of thought that gave birth to the Shinto shrines, for in order to perform religious ceremonies the gods and spirits were fixed in certain specified places.

This way of thinking is what runs through the subsequent history of Shintoism down to this day. "Nowhere is a shadow in which a god does not reside. Peaks, ridges, pines, cryptomerias, mountains, rivers, seas, villages, plains, and fields, everywhere there is a god. We can receive the constant and intimate help of these spirits in our tasks; many courtiers are passing."<sup>12</sup> Senge-Takasumi, the priest of the Shintoism of the Great Shrine of Izumo, expressed his praise, from just such a pantheistic point of view: "There is not a direction in which a god does not reside, even in the wild waves' eight hundred folds or in the wild mountain's bosom."<sup>13</sup>

Buddhist philosophy likewise was received and assimilated on the basis of this way of thinking. To begin with, the Tendai sect in Japan is not the same as in China. The Tendai scholars in medieval Japan, using the same nomenclature as that used in continental Buddhism, arrived at a system of thought that is distinctly original. This is what is called Honkaku-Hōmon, which asserts that the aspects of the phenomenal world are the Buddha. The word Honkaku or Enlightenment appears in the Chinese translation of the *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpādā-śāstra* (Daijyō-kishinron) which was originally composed in India. In the continent, this word meant the ultimate comprehension of what is beyond the phenomenal world, whereas in Japan the same word was brought down to refer to what is within the phenomenal world. In this way, the characteristic feature of Tendai Buddhism in Japan consists in their laying an emphasis upon things rather than principles. The Japanese

<sup>12</sup> *Yōkyoku, Taisha.*

<sup>13</sup> *Fūkyō Hyakushū Kōsetsu* (Genchi Katō, *Shinto no Shūkyō Hattatsushiteki Kenkyū*, p. 935).

Tendai scholars were not very faithful to the original texts of the Chinese Tendai. They sometimes interpreted the original texts in a rather unnatural way, their interpretation being based upon the standpoint of the Phenomenal Absolute.<sup>14</sup>

It is natural that the Nichiren sect, which is an outgrowth of the Japanese Tendai, also stresses such a turn of thought. Nichiren asserts that the crux of Buddha's thought is revealed in the *Jyuryōbon* chapter (Duration of Life of the Tathāgata) of the Lotus Sūtra, saying, "In the earlier half of the whole sūtra, the ten directions are called the pure land, and this place the soiled land, while in the other half (*Jyuryōbon*), on the contrary, this place is called the main land..."<sup>15</sup> The Nichiren Sect states that, while the Tendai Sect from China onward takes the standpoint of "Action according to principles," Nichiren emphasized "Action according to things."

The method of thinking that seeks for the Absolute in the Phenomenal World plays an effective role in the assimilation of the Zen sect as well. Zen Buddhism in Master Dōgen seems to have been influenced by the Japanese Tendai Buddhism. This fact has often been alluded to by specialists but has not been fully explored. Here I shall point out a few examples which reveal the above-mentioned way of thinking. The Chinese translated "dharmatā"<sup>16</sup> in Sanskrit as "the real aspect of all things." This concept refers to the real aspect of all kinds of phenomena in our experience, and, therefore, is composed of two distinct, contradictory elements, "All things" and "the real aspect." But, Tendai Buddhism gave this phrase an interpretation of "All things are the real aspect" and took the viewpoint that the phenomena are the reality. Dōgen gave a different twist to this interpretation and emphasized that "the real aspect are all things." He means to say that the truth which people search for is, in reality, nothing but the real world of our

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Taisho*, Vol. 46, p. 1c. *Eun maeda: Tetsugakukan Kōgiroku (Shigaku Zasshi*, 1923, pp. 373-374).

<sup>15</sup> *Kaimokushō*, pt. 2.

<sup>16</sup> See: *Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra* (ed. by Unrai Ogiwara), p. 251, l. 25; *Astāvasrikā* (ed. by Unrai Ogiwara), p. 51, l. 15; p. 572, ll. 2-3; p. 666, l. 7; etc.

daily experience. Thus he says, "The real aspect are all things. All things are this aspect, this character, this body, this mind, this world, this wind and this rain, this sequence of daily going, living, sitting, and lying down, this series of melancholy, joy, action, and inaction, this stick and wand, this Buddha's smile, this transmission and reception of the doctrine, this study and practice, this evergreen pine and ever unbreakable bamboo."<sup>17</sup>

When one asserts "all things are the real aspect," the predicate being of a larger denotation, the real aspect seems to contain something other than all things. But in the expression "the real aspect are all things," the meaning is that there is nothing that is not exposed to us.<sup>18</sup> For Dōgen, therefore, the fluid aspect of impermanence is in itself the absolute state. The changeable character of the phenomenal world is of absolute significance for Dōgen. "Impermanence is the Buddhahood..."<sup>19</sup> The impermanence of grass, trees, and forests is verily the Buddhahood... The impermanence of the country and scenery is verily the Buddhahood."<sup>20</sup> In other places, Dōgen says, "Death and life are the very life of the Buddha," and "These mountains, rivers, and earth are all the sea of the Buddhahood." In the Lotus Sūtra also Dōgen finds the same vein of thought. "Of the Hokke Sūtra.—The cry of a monkey is drowned in the sound of the rapid river. These are preaching this sūtra, this above all." He who attains the purport of this sūtra will discern the preaching of the doctrine even in voices at an auction sale in the mundane world.

Starting from such a view-point, Dōgen gives some phrases of the Buddhist scriptural interpretations that are distinctly different from the original meaning. There is a phrase in the *Mahāparinirvāna*<sup>21</sup> that should be interpreted as "He who desires to know the meaning of the Buddhahood should survey the opportunity (time) and conditions and wait for the opportunity to come. If the opportunity comes, the Buddhahood will be

<sup>17</sup> *Shōbōgenzō*, *Shōbō jissō*.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Taishō*, Vol. 33, p. 783 b.

<sup>19</sup> *Shōbōgenzō*, *Shōji*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, *Bussō*.

<sup>21</sup> *Taishō*, Vol. 12, p. 532 a; p. 533 b.

revealed of itself." Thus Buddhahood is here regarded as something possible and potential. To this concept, Dōgen gives a twist, and reads the phrase "survey the seasons and conditions" as "Makes a survey in terms of seasons and conditions" and the phrase "If the opportunity comes" as "the opportunity (time) has already come." His interpretation of the original passage becomes, in this way, something like the following. "Buddhahood is time. He who wants to know Buddhahood may know it by knowing time as it is revealed to us. And as time is something that has already arrived to us, Buddhahood also is not something that is to be sought in the future but is something that is realized where we are."<sup>22</sup>

In the words of a Chinese Zen Buddhist, Yaoshan (751-834) there appears the phrase "at a certain time." Dōgen interprets this phrase unjustifiably as "Being time" and comments as follows: "So-called Being Time means that time already is being and all being is time."<sup>23</sup> Taking this opportunity, Dōgen goes on to his unique philosophy of time. According to his philosophy, the ever-changing, incessant flow of time is the ultimate Being.

Again and again Dōgen emphasizes that true reality is not something static but something dynamic. "It is a heretical doctrine," Dogen says, "to think mind mobile and essence sedate. It is a heretical doctrine to think that essence is crystal clear and appearance changeable."<sup>24</sup> Or again "It is a heretical doctrine to think that in essence water does not run, and the tree does not pass through vicissitudes. The Buddha's way consists in the form as it is and the state as it is. The bloom of flowers and the fall of leaves are the state as it is. And yet unwise people think that in the world of essence there should be no blooming of flowers and no falling of leaves."<sup>25</sup>

Dōgen criticizes the Chinese Zen Buddhist Daie who taught that both mind and essence are over and above birth. According to him, Daie wrongly taught that "mind is solely perception

<sup>22</sup> *Shōbōgenzō*, *Bussbō*.

<sup>23</sup> *Shōbōgenzō*, *Uji*.

<sup>24</sup> *Shōbōgenzō*, *Setsushin Setsushō*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, *Hossō*.

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and conceptualization, and essence is pure and tranquil."<sup>26</sup> Here is revealed the contrast between the static way of thinking in the Chinese and the dynamic way of thinking in the Japanese.

Japanese Confucianists, such as Ogiu Sorai and Itō Jinsai, criticized and transformed Chinese Confucianism of the Sung period just in the same way as Dōgen criticized the Chinese Zen sect, saying that the way of heaven and earth is one with life which is the evolvment of a great activity, and completely denying what is called death. For them reality is nothing but action, and action is in itself good.

The way of thinking which esteems action and change in the phenomenal world, gave rise to the tendency of regarding the history of mankind itself as the absolute. But the concept of development as found in the West was rather lacking in Japan prior to the introduction of Western civilization. That is, the thought that what comes later is superior to what existed before cannot be observed so clearly in old Japan.

Being influenced by the above-mentioned way of thinking, the Japanese came to produce peculiarly Japanese-style books of history. The Japanese produced a lot of classical works of history. Among them the *Gukan-shō* by St. Jichin seems to be foremost among Japanese Buddhists in this respect, namely, the idea that a concept of reality is most clearly reflected in the concept of history. Among Buddhist leaders of the past, St. Nichiren (1222-1282 A.D.) seems to have been keenest in his awareness of crisis, and accordingly of history. His works are those which most frequently refer to historical events and criticize the deeds of others in both the past and the author's own period.

Man is an existence in history. History is brought into shape when a state of society is established. The state or society of Japan has been featured by the Imperial Household of long continuation. A feature of Japanese historiography is as follows:—Japan has been a unified country located in narrow islands under the rule of the Imperial Household whose origin cannot be traced. Many Japanese historiographies of the past centered on extolling the prestige of the Imperial Household.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, *Setsushin Setsushō*.

When one looks at the many legends related in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*, the most ancient annals of Japan, one finds that stories of the gods are not told for the purpose of demonstrating the greatness of the divinities believed in by the ancients; on the contrary, it is only for the purpose of showing the divine character of the institution of the Emperor that accounts are given of the gods which are its basis and of the historical blood relations of these gods.

According to the tales of the gods in the *Kojiki*, after the heavens and the earth were separated, the two divinities, Izanami and Izanagi, descended to the island of Onokoro, and then gave birth to the various islands of Ōyashima (i.e. the territory of Japan). After that they gave birth to various other divinities; the gods of the wind, of trees and mountains were born, and at the end the goddess (Izanami) died from burns, because she gave birth to the god of fire. Thereupon, the god (Izanagi) wanted to meet his spouse, and went to the land of night and saw her. Then, after returning to this world, when he washed the filth (of the land of death from himself), from his eyes and nose were born the three divinities Amaterasu ōmikami, Tsukiyomi no mikoto, and Susanoo no mikoto. It is said that this Amaterasu ōmikami was the ancestor of the Imperial House.<sup>27</sup> *In this way the legend of the ancestors of the royal house is connected with the legend of the creation of the universe.* This is probably something without parallel among other nations. At least among other civilized people of the East, these two types of legends are separated. Thus, the divine authority of the Imperial House is enhanced by the fact that its lineage is connected with the legend of the creation of heaven and earth. The early Buddhists of India held a sort of theory of social contract, according to which the monarch was originally elected from among the people for the welfare of the people. But the Japanese who accepted Buddhism on a large scale refused nevertheless to adopt its concept of the state which to them appears to run counter to the native idea of "state structure" (Kokutai). We thus have a Japanese historian like Kitabatake Chikafusa who was ready on the one hand to

<sup>27</sup> *Kojiki*, chapter 1.

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accept Buddhism in general but was eager on the other to emphasize the importance of the Japanese Imperial Family in the following way: The Buddhist theory (of the state) is merely an Indian theory; Indian monarchs may have been the descendants of a monarch selected for the people's welfare, but "Our Imperial Family is the only continuous and unending line of a family descending from its Heavenly Ancestors."<sup>28</sup> Hirata Atsutane on the other hand discredits the whole Indian theory of the origin of the state as a mere explanation of the origin of "Indian Chieftains."<sup>29</sup>

Kokan Shiren (1278-1346), writer of a history of Japanese Buddhism, said in the introduction to his work:

"Japan is a pure, pure entity."

"The basis of the state is rooted in nature. No Chinese dynasty has ever been like this. This is why we praise our country. This 'nature' is the three sacred treasures. The three treasures are the sacred mirror, the sacred sword, and the sacred jewel. These three are all natural, heaven made products. The fact that our country has one imperial line which reaches far back in time and is unbroken over the ages is surely due to these treasures, which are natural and heaven-made. Therefore, even after countless generations, there is no danger that the throne will be menaced. Surely, these heaven-produced sacred treasures will not become the playthings of another clan or of foreign arms."<sup>30</sup>

The tendency to view the history of Japan only in the light of the prestige of the Imperial Household has completely vanished. This is probably to keep pace with the new development of the world situation. However, viewing history as such in the light of actuality as the absolute is of some significance even in the future. This way of thinking is noticed even in the philosophy of the late Nishida, the founder of a modern trend of Japanese philosophy, and it is even compatible with Hegelianism or Marxism, which is very prevalent among contemporary Japanese philosophers and historians.

<sup>28</sup> *Jinnō-Shōtō-Ki*.

<sup>29</sup> *Shutsujō-shōgo*.

<sup>30</sup> Introduction to *Genkōsbakusho*.

## CONCLUSION

As has been discussed in the above, the notion of history differs among all the peoples of the East and also according to the period. It is quite impossible to sum up in a word the various notions of history held by Eastern peoples. All those simple clichés hitherto so often repeated should be examined more carefully; then man would be able to broaden his historical vision. An attempt along these lines would help bring about that new world philosophy of history which must inevitably include all mankind.