

MEIJI JAPAN THROUGH CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

E. Imperial Rescript on Education, October 30, 1890.

KNOW ye, Our subjects:

Our imperial ancestors have founded Our empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the state; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our imperial throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our imperial ancestors, to be observed alike by their descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that We may all thus attain to the same virtue.

The 30th day of the 10th month of the 23rd year of Meiji.
Official translation.

V

TREATY REVISION

A. On De-Asianization by Fukuzawa Yukichi, March 16, 1885.

THE world-wide facility of communication has allowed the wind of Western civilization to blow into the East, where not a single grass or tree has been left unswayed by it. This is not because the Western man has greatly changed from what he was in olden times; yet that his movements, which were once sluggish, are now active is simply because he is taking advantage of the faster means of communication to overwhelm the others. Under the circumstances, if I may judge the situation of those nations that live in the East, they may be all right if they are resolved to defend themselves to the end in resistance to the force of the eastward advance of that civilization; still, to anyone who has seen with his eyes the present state of world affairs and knows its actual impossibility there can be no other policy than to move on with the rest of the world and join them in clipping into the sea of civilization, joining them in creating the waves of civilization, and joining them in the pains and joys of civilization. Civilization is like an epidemic of measles. The current measles in Tokyo, which has advanced eastward from Nagasaki in Western Japan, seems to have begun to claim more victims with the arrival of springtime. Will we be able now to find a means of checking this epide-

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mic, even if we dislike its harmfulness strongly enough? It is obvious that we have no way to do so. We cannot put up effective resistance even against an epidemic that carries with it only harm; much less against civilization, which is always accompanied by both harm and good, but by more good than harm. It may be the task of a wise man, not only to be against resisting civilization, but even to help its spread with all his might so that his fellow countrymen will be immersed in its ways as soon as possible. Introduction of modern Western civilization into Japan began at the time of the opening of our country in the Kaei years [1848-54]. Since then our countrymen have come to recognize the feasibility of its adoption and their ways gradually turned more active. Still, our road to progress was blocked by an aged and outmoded government, about which we could do nothing. If we were to keep the government, civilization could by no means be introduced. For modern civilization was incompatible with the old customs of Japan, and if we were to reject the old customs the government too would be abolished at the same time. However, if we were to resist civilization and prevent its introduction, Japan would not remain an independent state. For the squabbings and bustlings of world civilization would not allow the isolated islands of the East to enjoy an undisturbed sleep. Thereupon the gentlemen of our Japan, on the great principle of putting the country ahead of the government, and fortunately with the help of the sanctity and majesty of the Imperial House, resolutely overthrew the old government and established a new one, and adopted the modern Western civilization for everything within our borders, with no distinction between the government and the people. Thus we have not only gotten rid of the old customs of

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Japan, but also created a new trend in Asia as a whole. Our principle is expressed in just one word: de-Asianization.

Though our land of Japan is situated on the Eastern edge of Asia, the spirit of its people has already shaken off the backwardness of Asia to accept the civilization of the West. Unfortunately, however, we have two neighbouring countries, one being called China, the other called Korea. The people of these two countries are no different from us Japanese people in having been brought up since olden times in the Asian culture and customs, and yet, whether because they are of another racial origin, or because, while similar in culture and customs, differ from us in the main lines of their traditional education, a comparison of the three countries, Japan, China, and Korea, reveals that the latter two resemble each other more closely than they do Japan. The people of those two countries do not know how to go about reforming and making progress, whether individually or as a country. It is not that they have not seen or heard of civilized things in the present world of facile communication; yet what their eyes and ears perceive have failed to stimulate their minds, and their emotional attachment to ancient manners and customs has changed little for the past hundreds and thousands of years. In this lively theatre of civilization, where things change daily, they still speak of education in terms of Confucianism, cite humanity (*jen*), justice (*i*), civility (*li*), and wisdom (*chih*) as their principles of school education, are completely obsessed only with outward appearance, are in reality not only ignorant of truths and principles but so extreme in their cruelty and shamelessness that for them morality is completely non-existent, and yet are as arrogant as if they never gave a thought to self-examination. In our view, these two countries have

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no likelihood of maintaining their independence in the current tide of civilization's eastward advance. Let there not be the slightest doubt that, unless they are fortunate enough to have motivated men appear in their lands who, as a first step to improve the condition of their countries, will plan such a great enterprise of overall reform of their governments as our Restoration was, and succeed in altering their peoples' minds through political reforms, those countries will meet their doom in but a few years, with their territories divided among the civilized countries of the world. The reason is that China and Korea, confronted by an epidemic of civilization comparable to measles, are impossibly attempting to ward it off, despite its inevitability, by shutting themselves up in a room, with the result being that they are cutting off their supply of fresh air and asphyxiating themselves. Though mutual help between neighbouring countries has been likened to the relationship between the lips **and** the teeth, China and Korea of to-day cannot be of any assistance at all to our country of Japan. Moreover, civilized Western man is not without a tendency to regard all three countries as identical because of their geographical proximity and to apply his evaluation of China and Korea to Japan also. For example, when he finds that the governments of China and Korea are old-fashioned autocracies without abiding laws, the Western man will suppose Japan too to be a lawless country. When he finds that the gentlemen of China and Korea are too deeply infatuated to know what science is, the Western scholar will think that Japan too is a land of the Yin-Yang and the Five Elements. When the Chinese display their servility and shamelessness, they obscure the chivalrous spirit of the Japanese. When the Koreans employ cruel means of physical punishment, the

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Japanese too are surmised to be just as inhuman. Such examples are too numerous to count. This may be compared to the case in which most of those in a string of houses within a village or town are foolish, lawless, cruel, and inhuman; an occasional family that heeds what is just and right will be eclipsed by the others' evil and its virtue will never be noticed. It is indeed not infrequent that something similar happens in our foreign relations and indirectly interferes with them. This should be regarded a great misfortune for our country of Japan. To plan our course now, therefore, our country cannot afford to wait for the enlightenment of our neighbours and to co-operate in building Asia up. Rather, we should leave their ranks to join the camp of the civilized countries of the West. Even when dealing with China and Korea, we need not have special scruples simply because they are our neighbours, but should behave towards them as the Westerners do. One who befriends an evil person cannot avoid being involved in his notoriety. In spirit, then, we break with our evil friends of Eastern Asia.

Translated by Hidehiro Okada.

B. Draft Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, April 2, 1887.

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan and ,
equally desirous of maintaining the relations of good understanding which happily exist between them, by extending and increasing the intercourse between their respective States; and being convinced that this object cannot better be accomplished than by revising the Treaties hitherto