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THOUGHT**

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demands a price, and is mystical, cannot be thought to be the Way of Truthfulness.

NAOBI NO MITAMA

[The Spirit of Renovation]¹
Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801)

(1771)

Translated by H. D. Harootunian

Sumera Ōmikuni (Japan) is the birthplace of the exalted sacred ancestral goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami.

This is the first reason why Japan is so manifestly superior to all other countries. Surely there is no country that has not received the virtue and blessings of this sacred goddess.

When Amaterasu took the heavenly signs into her hands - which are the three divine regalia which are transmitted as sacred symbols from generation to generation - and presented them to her descendant, she uttered the words: a thousand times ten thousand long autumns will the realm endure that my successors are to rule.

Thus the fact was immediately determined here that the throne of the successor of the heavenly sun should stand unchanged like heaven and earth.

The land was destined to be [the domain] of the exalted imperial descendant for as far [away] as the clouds of heaven extended and for as far [away] as the little frog made its way to the outer reaches: there was no seditious [lit. *rough*] *Kami* in this empire nor were there unruly men.

Who shall oppose the great rule which passes through countless generations? All the same, sometimes unruly and vile scoundrels rose up over the reigns, and then the great ruler would let his power rise resplendent as during the ancient affairs of the age of the gods, and soon the scoundrels would be destroyed.

Until the final generation after the thousand times ten thousand generations, the Emperor remains the son of the sacred goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami.

The emperors of all times, therefore, will be sons of Amaterasu Ōmikami. For that reason they are also called "sons of the goddess of heaven" or "sons of the sun."

The ruler makes the will of the goddess of heaven his own; in nothing does he give preference to his own judgement; rather, he behaves and rules only as has been customary since the

¹ In: *Nihon kokusui zensho*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Soengaku Insatsu, 1917), pp. 1-35.

ancient days of the Kami age. If doubt besets him, then he avails himself of August divination and thus inquires into the heart of the goddess of heaven.

The Kami age and the present age are not distant from one another.

One attended to one's own ranks and family: not only with respect to the successors to heaven, but also with respect to princes and nobles, right down to one's subjects. The duties and deeds (*waza*) of the family were transmitted to the children through many generations. Just as the divine descendants were regarded in the age of the gods, so they served the Emperor like a single family.

The land of the gods is a happy and peacefully ruled realm.

Hence one must not take notice of what is written in the *Nihonshoki* [Chronicles of Japan] in the illustrious section about Naniwa no Nagara no Mikado: "The phrase *Kannagara* [which] means to follow the Way of the Gods [Kami], or again to possess in oneself the way of the Gods"² is equivalent to saying to rule the realm just as it has come down since the days of the gods without adding [anything]. The expression "also to enact the Way of the Kami" is supposed to mean the following: if the realm is well governed as in the age of the Kami, the Way of the Kami by itself is effective without the need of something else. Thus if one says that an *Akitsu Kami* (visible god, emperor) ruled over the great realm of the eight islands, it likewise only means that the dominion of the ruling Emperor at any given time is simultaneously the dominion of the sun goddess. Expressions like *kannagara* and so on, in the songs of the *Manyōshū* and elsewhere, are to be understood in this manner. Even the Koreans hit upon the correct idea when they spoke of Japan as the "land of the gods."

In the age of high antiquity the concept of the "Way" was not known.

Thus even the "land of the abundant ears of the reed field" has long been said to mean the "divine, inconceivable land."

There was only the Way which leads to things.

Michi (Way) or, as it is called in the *Kojiki* [Record of Antiquity], *Umashi Michi* means nothing more than "Way which leads to one thing." The little word *mi* (a polite prefix), was simply placed before the *Ji* (Way) of *yama-ji* (Way of the Hill) or *No-ji* (Way

of the Field, etc.). Outside of this meaning no Way was known in antiquity.

That things must have a deeper meaning and furthermore the question of the Way to which all teaching belong are problems only in foreign lands (probably China).

Since foreign lands are not Amaterasu Ōmikami's land, they have no definite ruling house. They have become a wrestling-arena for the wicked gods who plague them like flies in the summer. Their troubling effect is to be attributed to the fact that people's hearts have become corrupt and their customs have become depraved. The result of that is rebellion. Thus it happens that even people of lowly origin become rulers without much ado. Hence those who are above make provisions so that they are not destroyed by the people who are below; while the people who are below plot how they can destroy those (who are above). They have no regard for one another. So they harm each other reciprocally which makes the rule of the realm of olden times very difficult.

Under these conditions a powerful and clever man who won the affection of the people, wrested dominion (and took good care that it not be snatched away again), and ruled for a long time thus becoming a model for posterity was called a Sage (*seijin*) as in China. Just as, for example, good generals come forth quite automatically from a rebellious period through their acclimatization to combat, so too wise men were produced in times in which the most varying measures were devised and realized in order to [make it possible for one to] forcefully become sovereign of a land morally depraved and difficult to rule. But it is false to believe that the Sages, like the Kami, were exceptional and were automatically endowed with miraculous virtue. Now what these sages did devise and decide is the so-called "Way." Thus the Way in China, in the last analysis, only has but two goals, namely to snatch away dominion from others, and to take care that it not be snatched away from oneself.

As for the Sages, if they had conceived the plot to seize dominion from others, feared no physical pain, performed only good deeds and so won the affection of the people, they had, to be sure, all the appearances of good men. Also the manner of the Way which they had devised was satisfactory and praiseworthy in every way. But the Sages themselves first transgressed their Way when they destroyed their previous lords and seized dominion for themselves. So their teaching was falsehood and deceit, and they themselves were not truly good men, but rather the worst of all. Their Way was devised from impure intentions and was intended

² Translation from W. G. Aston, *Nihongi*, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1972), p. 226.

to deceive people. In later times, too, people only acted externally: *as if* they respected the Way. But in reality there was not one who observed it. Hence the Way offered the government no support; only its name was widely known, but in point of fact it was nowhere transplanted. At all times the Way remained nothing but a fruitless rumor of the adherents of Confucius (*Ju*) who made their object the criticism of the people. It is a great deception, though the adherents of Confucius presumptuously claim, only on the basis of the Six Classics, that China is the land which possesses the upright Way. To assert such an upright Way, nevertheless, has its cause in the fact that formerly the Way was not upright. To represent such a deed as noble is silly; - and in any case, if the people of later ages had acted in accordance with this Way there is not a single such person in that country's history who can be perceived quite clearly as doing so.

Now what is the substance of this Way? Goodwill and integrity, propriety and modesty, love of parents and respect for older kin, loyalty toward the ruler of the land and faith in fellow men, and many other pretty names were then contrived and undertaken to instruct the people in a severe custom. The adherents of Confucianism complained that the laws of later times contradicted the Way of the kings of antiquity. But is the Way of the kings of antiquity anything more than the law of that age? Moreover, they believe they have grasped the meaning of the universe through the creation of the *Book of Changes* and very profound words. But all that is only deception to win people over and be master of them. The meaning of the universe is wholly the work of the gods. This is a very remarkable, wonderful, amazing work that no man can judge with his limited human understanding. How could one penetrate deeply therein and be able to understand it? It is exceedingly foolish, therefore, to view everything that the sages have uttered as the highest wisdom. It is a bad Chinese custom that men of later times take the activity of the sages to be a model and then want to investigate all things with their own wisdom. Those who want to concern themselves with Japan may take notice of that and in no case allow themselves to be deceived by the doctrine of the Chinese. Since everything in China was pursued down to the smallest detail, quarrelled about and defined, people grew cunning and evil. Under such conditions they aggravated the situation even more and the end result was that the realm was even more difficult to rule. Hence while the way of the sages was created in order to be able to rule the land it became the grain of seed for inner unrest. It is

better to undertake all [governmental] matters only in general terms: [Japan has always done so and it is] because of this [that] there were no rebels in ancient Japan despite the fact that not a single such doctrine was expounded. The realm was at peace and the successors of the heavenly sun ruled the entire time. Expressed in the words of China, this refers to the incomparable distinguished Great Way. Since Japan really possessed the better Way, the word for "Way" did not exist. So although the word the "Way" did not exist a Way *did* exist. Noteworthy is the difference that China especially emphasized the Way while Japan did not. That there was no dispute over the word for Way in Japan suggests that Japan does not fabricate useless words as China does. For example, just as a man who is distinguished in talent and everything else lets nothing become known about it, while an uncouth and uneducated fellow expresses himself far and wide about the most trivial things and thinks he is doing [something] great thereby, so China speaks only about the Way and nothing more since it is itself impoverished in the "Way." However, the adherents of Confucius are not aware of this and thus presumptuously maintain that Japan possesses no Way. That the adherents of Confucius are not aware of this may have its cause in the fact that they want to extol China above all others. Yet even in Japan scholars have not recognized this and envy China its so-called Way, and battle with each other because some claim that in Japan there is also a Way, while others argue in turn that there is no Way. It is exactly like a man who decided to feel shame if he were derided by an ape because he had no hair, and then who would show forth his short hairs and exhibit them to the ape with the words: "I am also a hirsute creature!" This man would just not know that it is something valuable to have no hair. It would be the act of a fool.

In later times, after books had come to Japan, and people began to read and study these, one learned so as to get to know the customs of China, and soon the time came when people entirely accepted them. The special name "Kami-Way" was given to the venerable pattern of customs of the ancient sacred land: "Kami," in order not to mistake it for [any] of the different Chinese ways, and "Way," because this conception had been borrowed from China. Why people said "Kami Way" will be pursued further on. As the taking possession of Chinese customs increasingly spread, the government of the land also assumed a Chinese form.

By the time of Naniwa no Nagara and Omi no Otsu political institutions all became Chinese. Ever since, the ancient

Japanese customs and usages have been used only in the festival of the Kami. Hence the Pattern of Japanese customs has, for the most part, been preserved down to later times only by means of the Kami festivals.

Even the hearts (*kokoro*) of the people have changed over to this Chinese spirit. By the taking over of Chinese thought, things have gone so far that no one any longer makes the will of the emperor his own, but each follows his own perverted will.

Where peace and tranquility had existed in Japan, unrest and rebellion developed; in time, events gradually came to resemble those that had occurred in China.

The extremely glorious Way of Japan was ignored. And when the subtly reasoned, wearisome precepts and codes of conduct of the Chinese were considered to be good and were imitated, the minds and the actions of people who had been good and pure until then completely deteriorated. Finally things went so far that the land could no longer be ruled without the severe Way of China. The reason why one arrives at the judgement in the observation of these later conditions [that] without the Way of the Sages the land could not be ruled, lies in the fact that such a Way of the sages is the reason why the land is so difficult to rule. For it must be noticed that in the "sacred age," before the penetration of the Way of the Sages, the land had been extremely well-governed.

All things between heaven and earth exist according to the will of the Kami.

All things in this world, like the alternation of spring and autumn, rain and wind, and all good and evil that befalls the land and the people are, without exception, the work of the Kami. Now since there is good and evil among the Kami, and accordingly [in] their works too, they cannot be judged nor understood in general with the usual human intellect (*Yono tsune no kotowari*).

But why is it that all men of this world, the wise as well as the foolish, deceived by the Chinese teaching about the Way, do not recognize this truth? Indeed, even for those men who study Japan it is surely a matter which they must absolutely know by viewing the ancient texts. Yet, why have they not grasped it? Abroad all good and evil events are considered according to the Buddhistic Way as karma (*inga*), and, according to the Chinese Way, as heavenly mandate and as arrangements of heaven. That is all false! Since the Buddhistic teaching has been dissected well by scholars of many ages, we do not need to speak of it here. But the Chinese teaching of the heavenly mandate has deceived all clever men, and up till now no one has yet arrived at the

understanding that it is false. Hence, this [matter] is to be treated here in order to show its falsity!

The so-called "heavenly Mandate" was contrived only as a pretext by the Sages who destroyed the rulers in early Chinese ages and seized the government; this they did in order to escape accusation (*tsumi*). But since heaven and earth truly have no heart then it is also not to be assumed that they issue mandates. If heaven really had a heart and were endowed with reason, and if it were, moreover, to entrust the realm to good people who would govern well, then a Sage should have appeared at the termination of the Chou dynasty. But for whatever reason none then came forth! It is also a false interpretation if it is said [that] no more sages came forth in later times, because the Way had already been perfected through the Duke of Chou and Confucius. Perhaps this could have been said if, after the death of Confucius, his Way had circulated in the world and had granted good government to the realm. But soon his Way was abandoned in such a manner that his doctrine became empty and the land fell into increasing confusion. What kind of a perverse heart did heaven have if it nevertheless called forth no Sage at a time when it should have; if it did not pay attention to the unhappiness of the realm and finally entrusted it to so cruel a man (*araburuhito*) as Shih Huang-ti from the Ch'in dynasty and thus inflicted much suffering upon his subjects? That is really extremely suspicious! Even if the matter is turned round and someone says that rulers like Shih Huang-ti could not hold up long since heaven did not transmit dominion to them, a rationale is still not at hand [to explain how] dominion is transmitted to so evil a man if only for a short while. If there were a heavenly mandate, it would also be reasonable [to suppose] that it would reveal good and evil signs about the subjects as well as about the ruler [and] grant enduring happiness to the good, but quickly annihilate the evil. Nevertheless, by and large, it is not so. For otherwise how does it happen that among good men many are unhappy and among the evil many are happy - now as before? If the rule of heaven really existed then would things really be so perverted? To be sure, it can be granted that it was also bad when in later times many made it possible for the dominion of the realm to be at least transmitted from outside and when people gradually grew wise and no longer acquiesced in someone seizing control and claiming that it was the mandate of heaven. But did the Sages of antiquity proceed somewhat differently? And what kind of deception is it to believe the kings of later times received no heavenly mandate as truth! It is laughable

to claim there had been a heavenly mandate in antiquity and none in later times.

The claim which has been advanced that Shun seized control from Yao, and that Yü, in his turn, seized it from Shun, is probably true. Indeed, when it is considered that kings of later times like Wang Mang and Ts'ao Ts'ao claimed to be bequeathed the throne, but in reality violently seized it, then a parallel can be seen with Shun and Yü. Only in olden times the subjects were still naive enough to be deceived, and they considered it pure truth if someone told them it was a matter of accession of an heir. At the time of Wang Mang and Ts'ao Ts'ao, however, men had become wiser, and were no longer deceived. For that reason probably their evil deeds came to light. If such people had lived in olden times, undoubtedly they would have been respected like the sages.

The devastations which were caused by the will (*mikikoro*) of the Kami which bring about disaster (*magatsubi no kami*) are exceedingly sad.

The frequency of failures in this world, indeed all that which does not correspond to the correct principle of things and all that that is wrong, is completely the work of these Kami. Since even Amaterasu Ōmikami can offer no support through the spirit of Takaki no Okami, when the evil gods carry on their wild conduct, then human effort is turned on its head, and evil befalls good men and good befalls evil men - all that is the work of these Kami. But since China possesses no direct traditions from the age of the Kami and hence does not know this cause, the teaching of the heavenly mandate is laid down and then the attempt is made to explain all things by natural reason which is quite hopeless.

Amaterasu Ōmikami is enthroned in Takamanohara and her sacred light shines forth over this world and it is never darkened by clouds. Also the heavenly signs (*amatsumi shirushi*) have been handed down intact, and her descendant of heaven rules as it has been charged to him. Abroad, however, there is no appointed ruler traced back to the beginning; a common man can become king, and a king, in turn, can become a common man, and thus the destruction of the realm has been a custom since antiquity. Whoever conceived the plot to seize control but had no success was contemptuously called a rebel. But he who was successful and seized control, was called a Sage and venerated. Thus the so-called Sages were nothing more than successful rebels. The illustrious majesty of our Tenno (*sumera mikoto*) does not stand on the same plane with the kings of such a lowly land.

It sits on the throne of heaven which was entrusted to him by the divine ancestors who created the empire. Hence the land was appointed as his realm since the beginning of heaven and earth, and the subjects cannot jealously judge whether the Tenno is good or bad. Even in the decrees of Amaterasu Ōmikami, nothing is said about one not having to obey, though a Tenno be bad. So far as heaven and earth extend, so long as sun and moon dispense their light, and however many tens of thousands of generations have passed, our great ruler remains immutable. In the ancient language, therefore, the Tenno was called "kami," and since he really is a kami, all quarrelling about whether he is good or bad was put aside, and people, filled with respect, obeyed him with all their power. The true Way consisted in that.

In the disorder of the Middle Ages, however, some opposed this Way. There were coarse men who did not even esteem the power of Amaterasu Ōmikami, men like Hojo Yoshitoki and Hojo Yasutoki and Ashikaga Takauji, who turned against the imperial court and caused the Emperor much injury. Given the unfathomable will of evil kami, the men of the age submitted to filthy rebels and flourished a long time to the last of their descendants.

Moreover, there are people who know indeed that the Amatsubi no Kami who illuminates the world must be unconditionally venerated but [do not know] that the Tenno too must be respectfully obeyed. Hence it happens that, led into error by the spirit of the Chinese writings, they consider wise the unbridled customs of that country while they have no understanding of the upright Way of Japan. They do not believe that the god of the heavenly sun who now illuminates the world is Amaterasu Ōmikami; moreover, they have forgotten that the current Emperor (*Sumera Mikoto*) is Amaterasu Ōmikami's descendant.

Only the significance of the name should be made self-evident: "the majestic throne of the successor of the heavenly sun" (*Amatsu hitsugi no Takamikura*).

"Successor of the heavenly sun" means the rank of the Tenno because the Tenno makes the August heart of the sun-goddess his own and continues her work. And that the illustrious throne is called "majestic throne" (*Takamikura*) should not only signify that it is elevated, but also [that] it is so-called because it is the throne of the sun-goddess. Here one should think of the ancient words which referred to the sun, words such as majestic

light, majestic sun, or even majesty of the sun. Since the throne of the sun-goddess is inherited and transmitted from generation to generation and the Tenno occupies it no doubt exists that he possesses it in the same way as the sun-goddess does. Thus among men who come to know the goodness of the goddess of the heavenly sun, who will not show respect for the emperor and obey him?

Constant as heaven and earth, unchangeable and unmovable is this world! Therein lies the true, exalted and noble sign for the wondrous, magnificent excellence of the Way superior to all the Ways of China.

In China there was disorder from the very beginning - even though they speak about the Way although there is no Way - and in the course of time the country became topsy-turvy until it fell entirely into the hands of its neighbors. These had been contemptuously called barbarians meaning that they could not at any time be considered human beings; but then when they seized the empire with great violence they were called sons of heaven because nothing could be done about it, and homage was paid to them. What shameful conditions these are! After all this perhaps the adherents of Confucianism still wish to consider China a good country.

Not only is there no appointed ruling house in China, but there are also no distinctions pertaining to noble and common families. It is claimed [that] up until the time of the Chou dynasty the feudal system was in operation, and it seems that the distinction did not endure in practice. And ever since the Ch'in dynasty the Way increasingly deteriorated: thus it was not viewed as a disgrace if even women of lowly origins soared to the rank of queen by favor of the prince, or if princesses joined with men who were not of noble extraction. If, for example, one who was until yesterday still a lowly woodcutter, could rise effortlessly today to a noble position to manage the government of the realm, then there can be no determination according to which there is a noble or a common station. These are conditions no different from those [extant] among the animals.

Now if someone asks what kind of Way it is, [he is to be told] it is not the Way which is inherent in heaven and earth.

One must be well aware of this. Otherwise one perhaps will suppose it is the same thing that Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu have taught. The way has also not been devised by men but rather was created by the spirit of the exalted Takamimusubi no Kami.

All things of this world, without exception, have also come forth from the spirit of this Kami.

The kami descendants, Izanagi no Okami and Izanami no Okami, initiated this Way. All things of this world have also had their beginning from this pair of kami (*futahashira-kami*).

It is the Way which Amaterasu Ōmikami conceived, which she preserves and passes on.

That and nothing else is the reason why one says "Kami-Way."

The name "Kami-Way" is seen for the first time in the *Nihonshoki*, in the illustrious volume about the reign of Iware no Ikenobe, but there he shows nothing else than proper public worship of the kami (*Kami o itsuki matsuri-tamau*). What is written in the *Nihonshoki*, in the illustrious volume about the reign of Naniwa no Nagara, namely that "The phrase *Kannagara* means to follow the Way of the Gods [Kami], or again to possess in oneself the way of the Gods," correctly expresses for the first time the Way of Japan in the wider sense. The reason for this expression has already been mentioned above. Hence even if a Way is spoken of, in the last analysis it does not consist in extraordinary deeds but in the veneration of the Kami.

It is perverse and shows a want of knowledge of affairs if the authority from Chinese literature is quoted [who says that] "the Sages have established the Way of the gods," and it is claimed [that] afterward the name originated here. For in the first place what the term Kami refers to, right from the beginning, is different in Japan and China. If one understands by this in China the incomprehensible marvelous something of the universe and of the Yin and Yang, then that is only an empty theory; in reality this something does not exist. The gods of Japan, on the other hand, are the descendants of the presently ruling Tenno. Japan, therefore, possesses no such empty theory like China. Is there not, therefore, a great difference in meaning when the Way of the gods is characterized as an incomprehensibly marvelous Way in Chinese literature, while in Japan the Kami-Way characterizes the Way which the ancestral gods of the imperial house have initiated and preserved?

Even today the spirit of this Way can be traced if the *Kojiki* and the other ancient books are understood well. But for generations the hearts of the scholars, bewitched by the Kami who bring about disaster, were completely captivated by Chinese books; what these scholars thought and said is all Buddhistic

and Confucian in intent. But they do not understand the heart of the true Way.

In antiquity, since the conception of the Way did not exist, there are words or meanings to be seen in the ancient writings that could point to a Way. Hence Toneri no Miko and the scholars of later generations did not know the meaning of the Way. At the bottom of their hearts they preserved only the teaching of the Chinese writings which only treated of Ways to the point of wearisomeness. And since they considered these the principles inherent in heaven and earth, they were naturally quite caught up in this teaching and were seen to be moving in this direction even though they had no intention at all to follow it. Since in general the teachings of China, like those of Yin, Yang, Ch'ien, K'un and all the others, were originally devised on suppositions by the Sages on the basis of their own wisdom, they sound very profound upon a mere hearing. However, if one separates oneself from its influence (*kakiuchi*, within the fence) and views them all from without, then they lose their importance and appear as exceedingly superficial doctrines. It is regrettable that at all times, even today, people have entered into such fenced areas and have become perplexed; it is regrettable that they have not been able to find their way out. Without the least human wisdom being added, on the other hand, the teaching of Japan, handed down from the days of the Kami, is still just as it was. Even though it is heard to be superficial, (*asaasa*), it is, in truth, infinitely profound, and possesses a deeper, more wonderful meaning which no human wisdom can fathom. Today, however, that is no longer known, since people are perplexed within the narrow confines of Chinese literature. And so long as they do not find their way out of such confines, such learnings are of no use to the Way [even] if they endeavored and studied hundreds and thousands of years. All effort will be in vain. Since the ancient books are written in Chinese, it is advantageous to be acquainted with Chinese conditions. Also it is not bad, if one has time for it, to occupy oneself with Chinese writings for the acquisition of the script. If the Japanese spirit is properly grasped then the study of Chinese literature will not be harmful.

Different things which are done under the pretext that the teaching of the Way of the Kami should be passed on individually, from one person to another, will also remain unharmed; these are private concerns which were first devised in modern times.

Grandiose esoteric doctrines which were entrusted only to selected people are nothing but false doctrines which were created

in later times. For the further all good things are circulated in the world, the better it is. It shows an extremely sordid disposition if one conceals something good and other men do not know about it, because one wants to make it a thing entirely one's own.

Tenno rules all under Heaven through the Way; how dare the subjects as subjects make it a thing of their own?

For when the underlings follow the will of the ruler in each and every thing, it corresponds to the Way. Even disregarding the Way of the Kami completely, is it not a selfish matter to disobey the ruler and to act differently than in the way one had been taught?

All people belong to beings which - just as they were born through the spirit of the *Musubi no kami* - know and perform well by nature the deeds limited to the body, like all things which these Kami themselves commence.

Among all living creatures of this world, which - down to the birds and insects - [were born] through the spirit of the *Musubi no Kami*, man has come into the world as an especially excellent being [which], by nature, knows about all things and does those which must be suitable to his nature at any given time. For these reasons (and more) since he (according to his prerogatives) knows the things he knows and does the things he must, [man needs no coercion]! If it is claimed that man can neither know nor do anything without instruction, then this is to place him below even the birds and the insects. Things like goodwill and uprightness, decorum and discretion, love of parents and respect before elder kin, loyalty toward the ruler, and faith in fellowmen belong unconditionally to the nature of man. To the extent, therefore, [that] they do belong to him, man, by himself, knows and does them even without being instructed about them. Basically the Way is nothing more than a doctrine which has been devised to subdue a realm difficult to rule. In doing so, when it exceeds the proper measure and purports to lay down absolutely rigid precepts, it does not correspond to the true Way. Thus, while all men paid lip service to it with grandiose speeches, there was in fact not one who would have acted in accordance with it. Nevertheless to believe that this Way completely corresponds to the "Heavenly Principle" (*Tenri*) is a great error. It is also incomprehensible that the heart which opposes this Way is called "human greed." From where and for what reason has this so-called human greed arisen? Since it must have arisen first through a rational law of its own, is not human greed also an expression of Heavenly Principle?

Thus even the rule according to which members of the same family are forbidden to marry among each other, even if hundreds of generations shall have passed, existed not since olden times in China, but rather is a rule from the age of the Chou dynasty. The severity of this system has its cause in the evil customs of this land. Illicit intercourse between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, was frequent and nothing special. Since its people know no limits and are difficult to rule, do not such severe laws reflect the shame of the country? In all other things too the severity of a law has its cause in the frequency of the transgression. So, to be sure, this law was established as law, but it was not the true Way. Since it did not correspond to the natural tendency of man, even the people who conformed to it were seldom seen. There exists no doubt about it for later times but even at the time of the Chou dynasty, even among ranks of lords, transgression against this law often occurred. Nevertheless, the adherents of Confucianism forgot that since antiquity the people of such an age no longer possess the state of mind necessary for the observation of laws. These Confucians grasp ineffectual rules and represent them as something great. Moreover, in order to do violence to Japan, they claim that in ancient times kin had often intermarried in Japan, and that the Japanese had, therefore, led lives like animals. Still, no scholar of Japan proved the contrary, but felt painfully disturbed and even judged that Japan at that time was not yet cultivated. So they [the scholars] attempt to get off by making excuses. But that only happens because they are completely overcome by the notion [that] the wisdom of the Chinese Sages is a reason which is given by nature; and furthermore they have completely given themselves to this teaching. But if one does not subscribe to it, it is also not difficult for one to be of another opinion. In ancient Japan, for example, only marriage to kin of the same mother was opposed, but people did not oppose kin of different mothers wanting to marry. The practice began with the Emperor and it became quite common; from the founding of the present capital until today it has not been abolished. The distinction between high and low, (respected and despised) was observed, and thus no confusion came of itself. That was precisely the true Way as the ancestral gods had determined it. In later times people gradually passed over to the observation of Chinese laws. Hence even half-kin were interpreted as true kin, and they were forbidden to marry among themselves. Ever since, [and] even nowadays, transgression against this law may be considered as something evil. But since the laws of ancient

times were valid in ancient times, one must not take Chinese laws as a constant guide in judging [these matters].

In antiquity everyone, down to the lowest subjects, conformed to the will of the Tenno. All served him just as he wished. Not even a trace of selfishness was present.

The Tenno was venerated in full devotedness; and saved under his sacred protection, all offered their veneration to the ancestral gods.

Since the Tenno admiringly venerates the ancestral goddess of his house, then it is also natural that the princes, and nobility of the land, [and] the peers down to the peasants (*Omitakara*), each venerates its ancestral gods. Moreover, as the Tenno prays to all kinds of heavenly and earthly gods for his court and for his realm, so too the subjects invoke the good Kami if they want to obtain happiness; or if they want to avert harm, [they invoke] the evil Kami in order to appease them; or they wash themselves clean if they are defiled by stain and offense (*Tsumikegare*). All of these are things which are indispensable to human nature. But the tendency which claims, "if only your heart of hearts follows the truth of the genuine Way..." may, to be sure, be correct according to Buddhist doctrine and according to the Way of the adherents of Confucius, but it is entirely opposed to the Way of the Gods. Furthermore, in other lands, in venerating the gods only reason (*ri*) is placed in the foreground - and disputed about. Even the warning against immoral worship is only a shrewd production. Since the Kami, in contrast to the conception [of the] "Buddha," are not all exclusively good Kami (there are also evil Kami, and their purpose and their deeds accordingly so) then it is understandable, if it is admitted, that people who do evil get along well, and those who do good, get along badly. Thus the Kami also cannot be judged according to whether they correspond to reason or not. Their anger should but be shunned, and respect from the deepest recesses of the heart should be rendered them. Hence, in venerating the Kami, the proper mental attitude must be present.

Also one should unconditionally undertake actions over which the Kami will rejoice; in this, first of all, everything must be pure and unstained by pollution. Then one should offer them many of the most beautiful sacrifices possible or delight them with *Koto* and flute playing, or with songs and dances or other lovely things. Everything that has its traces in the age of the Kami, consists of the Way of the Ancients. That it only depends upon the heart and not upon sacrifices and actions is an erroneous

Chinese teaching. Furthermore, high esteem and maintenance of the purity of fire precedes all other deeds in the veneration of the Kami, as it is current in the chapter about the underworld (Yomi) in the book about the age of the Kami. Not only as a religious deed but even in ordinary life fire must be attended to and in no case be falsely used. If fire is once defiled the Kami which brings about disaster seize the opportunity. Then they begin to rage and all [kinds of] disaster breaks loose upon the world. Thus it is desirable for the realm and the people to forbid the pollution of fire in the realm altogether. Nowadays, however, this prohibition is only observed on religious occasions and is confined, in addition, to the habitations of the Kami; but in general this ceremony no longer exists. The spread of the half-witted Chinese attitude is to blame for the fact that the pollution of the fire is considered nonsense. Is it not deplorable when even the scholars who have occupied themselves at all times with the interpretation of divine writings, adduce only rational arguments influenced by the Chinese to the point of wearisomeness, and completely overlook the doctrine of the prohibition?

What is indispensable to each person is that he pass through this world happy and content while not going beyond his means.

Besides this, what other teaching does he need? Even if children were instructed in antiquity, and they were taught all kind of crafts and skills, the doctrines of the adherents of Confucius, upon a closer view, are by no means of the same sort, even if they do not seem to be different from them upon a superficial observation.

Even if we are speaking here of a Way, there are still special teachings which must be accepted, and deeds which must be fulfilled!

This may seem similar, yet...

When someone once asked whether perhaps the Kami-Way was what Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu meant, I answered. Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu were only weary of the sophistries of the adherents of the Confucian scholars and hence highly esteem that which is "natural." Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu were not children of the sacred Kami land, but they were born rather in an evil land. Hence they learned only the doctrines of the Sages. Thus even their interpretation of the "natural" is entirely dependent upon the opinion of the Sages about what is natural. Likewise, they could not know that all things come forth from the will of the

Kami and are their work. Hence, Kami-Way and the teachings of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu are entirely different.

If you want to penetrate still further (into the spirit of the true Way) then purify yourself of the sordid thinking of Chinese literature and proceed to the study of the ancient texts with the pure spirit of the sacred land. Then you will also naturally realize that there is no Way that Japan should be obligated to accept from China. But to know that means that one takes the Way of the Kami upon oneself.

So actually even this explanation did not belong to the essence of the Way. But at the sight of the work of the Kami which bring disaster about I could not keep still. And so I wanted to attempt to make this harm good again through the power of the "Kami of the divine renovation" and the "Kami of the great renovation."

In this treatise I have not set down my own ideas exclusively, but whoever heeds well will not doubt that everything corresponds to the ancient texts.

*Most humbly signed,
in the eighth year [of] Meiwa (1771),
10th month on the ninth day.*