

Concrete Universality of the Japanese Way of Thinking

by Chikao Fujisawa

Hokuseido Press, 1958 xvi, 160. ¥250. (\$1.50)

The author of this "new interpretation of Shintoism" is a remarkable linguist and a polished and persuasive speaker. In pre-World War II as a philosopher of the ultra-nationalistic school and "as one of the responsible leaders engaged in the ideological campaign during the Pacific War," (p. 32) he was unquestionably influential and, if there were space, it would be interesting to quote at length from some of his writings. Suffice it to say that in 1934, in *Cultural Nippon* (Vol. II, No. 1; p. 49) he referred to the Emperor as "virtually a God in human shape," and said that Japan under the Emperor "would never surrender itself to the vicious temptation of undertaking an imperialistic exploitation of other lands"!

In a word, Dr. Fujisawa was — and, judging from this book and other postwar writings, is — an arch-exponent of Tenno-ism. Proof that he has not changed is evident

on the first page of the preface where he says "there is no denying the fact that Shintoism was preposterously made the scapegoat for the wrongs *Japan is supposed to have done to other peoples during the war.*" (The italics are the reviewer's.)

If Dr. Fujisawa is seriously interested in preventing Shinto from being misunderstood at home and abroad, as if it were nothing more or less than "an ideological hotbed of militaristic imperialism," (p. 2) he has employed a strange way of doing it. The evidence of this volume is all to the contrary. Fortunately, however, Dr. Fujisawa is not a representative of any group except himself and his followers.

Having said this, one or two references are called for. On page 14, for example, in spite of the May, 1952, riots and the fact that today many violent demonstrations are causing great concern for the police and the government, it seems

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strange to learn that he believes that the Japanese in applying their Shinto political philosophy will be able to carry through any political reform without resorting to the destructive method of violent revolution, as specifically interpreted in the Modern West." (p. 14) Moreover, in this day when the future of the Imperial throne itself is anything but certain, it is surprising to read once again that the "Japanese Dynasty has lasted and will last for all ages eternal." (p. 87)

Furthermore, it is even more surprising to read that for more than 1300 years, the tradition of rebuilding the Grand Shrine of Ise every twenty years "has suffered no interruption." (p. 92) The fact is that on several occasions the tradition was interrupted. One "interruption" about the fifteenth century lasted for 130 years! Finally, no careful Shinto scholar would ever refer to the *Kojiki* ("Record of Ancient Matters"), as the Japanese "Holy Bible." (p. viii) It is a simply one of several classics that are highly valued by Shintoists. As for his remarks about Christianity (pp. 32-33), the Oc-

cupation (p. 98), and the "phony" constitution (p. 98), although there may be many that share his attitude, few would join in his intemperate denunciations.

There is no question about the author's extensive knowledge of Shinto mythology, and the serious student will find a great deal of useful information packed within these pages. However, no informed foreign reader will be fooled by the unique aberrations of the author. This is not where the danger lies. The danger lies in the creation of a mistaken impression that the author is an authority on Shinto and that his attitude is typical of Shintoists in general. This is definitely not the case. This "new interpretation" is strictly "Fujisawa Shinto."

Because of personal considerations based on a friendly relationship extending over some years, it would be pleasanter for the reviewer if this book could be ignored completely, but this is not possible. The book will create misunderstandings that should not be allowed to go uncorrected.

W. P. W.

Tokyo