

A TENTATIVE TRANSLATION OF THE KŌDŌKWAN KI

By

GENCHI KATŌ, D. Litt.

This English version of the Mito Kōdō Kwan Ki is offered by the translator in full consciousness of its imperfection, yet he submits it in the expectation that readers will try their hands to improve upon it.

What is Kōdō or Widening the Way?* It is man himself that can widen the Way.

* The Kōdō-Kwan Record is a monumental inscription in stone, embodying the spirit of the Mito school of thought. It has been composed by Tokugawa-Nariaki, the Feudal Lord of Mito, promotor of the study of Japanese literature and history, on completion of an Institute, the Kōdō-Kwan, in the year Tempō 9 (A.D. 1833). A text in the Rongo (Lun Yü) or Confucian Analects (XV, 28) 子曰人能弘道非道弘人 has provided inspiration for the name of this institute. A brief elucidation may not be out of place. In the days of the legendary Emperors of China, Gyō (Yao) and Shun (Shun), the world was perfect and order reigned absolute; the relations between father and son, superior and inferior, husband and wife, friend and friend, were as they ought to be. In subsequent ages, however, deterioration set in, and it became the task of the wise and the enlightened to restore and to repair the former order. A favourite example is that of the mirror which becomes dull and needs polishing. Mankind is able to polish the mirror; the mirror remains inactive and does not polish Man. This idea underlies the above Confucian saying. "To widen the Way" means to polish the mirror, to make the relations between man and man more and more perfect, to make human society more and more orderly and well regulated. This end is achieved by persistent and diligent study, by ceremonious and moral conduct.

Fujita-Tōko, who is one of the spiritual fathers of the Kōdō-kwan

Recórd, has the following to say in his comment on the opening sentences:

"In antiquity the world was primitive, mankind sober. There were not yet written documents. The name Way was not yet heard of. Does therefore the Way not originate in antiquity? Not at all. Only the name did not exist. The truth is that the Way originated in the Heavenly Gods. . . . Father and son, lord and vassal, man and wife, these are the principal relations. In antiquity the parts of father and son, lord and vassal, man and wife were strictly kept. Heaven is above, the Earth below: the spheres do not change; father comes first and child follows, lords command and vassals obey, husbands give the law and wives yield. Heaven acts and the Earth produces, all living things are according to their nature. The Age of the Gods is far distant, but the old documents are explicit and clear and do not admit doubt. It is evident that this Way originates in the Heavenly Gods.

"The Way is like a broad Road. Mankind moves along this Road. If it had not existed, Whoever would have known about it? There is only one Road, there are no branches. Therefore it is unnamable. Since Heaven and Earth existed there has been no other Way. Lord and vassal, high and low, joyfully follow it. No false doctrines are intermingled with it. Therefore is it not right that it has no name? Kudara (Pèkché) supplied Kishi and that was the beginning of Confucianism. And Confucianism lays particular stress on five points, the relations between parent and child are regulated by love, those between lord and vassal by right, between man and wife by division of functions, between elder and younger by precedence, between friend and friend by trust, and we have clung to those principles since the earliest time. We have adapted Chinese names and applied them to our fathers, sons, lords and vassals, applied them to our husbands, wives, elders and youngers, friends and friends. This pure and unique Way has always been in being.

"Since Buddhism came in it has been different. In the first place it has worshipped the Three Treasures, the Buddha, the Law and the Order; these are all barbarisms and do not belong to the country of the Gods. Therefore it became necessary to adopt different names and so the names Shintō, or Kodō, or Sei-Ō-no-Ato came into being, all this was done to distinguish from the imported doctrines. Later scholars have not known to differentiate and vainly asked for names.

What is the Way? It is the Great Law of Heaven and Earth, of which Mankind cannot detach itself even for one single moment. Why has the Kōdō-Kwan been established? Reverently I express the humble opinion that in antiquity the Heavenly Deity established Why the Heavenly Being illumined the "Six Quarters" and ruled over the universe, thanks to it, Emperors have rules without interruption, the State has achieved its sublime Dignity, subjects have enjoyed tranquillity, whereas the surrounding barbarians are completely quiet.

The Emperors of divine descent, however, far from being self-satisfied, rejoiced in doing good, following any wiser example of others. To cite an instance, the ideal government administration and the education of the Western Land of Cathay during the Tō (*T'ang*), the Gu (*Yü*) and the "Three Dynasties" were adopted, to cultivate the Imperial Way. Thus fostered, the Way became more and more broadened and brightened. From the middle ages onwards, however, the alien heretical doctrine of Buddhism deceived our people and enchanted the world, whilst unprincipled literati and men of false learning misled by imported foreign teachings, lost their hold on the truth. In consequence the Imperial way was gradually weakened in practice, and led to frequent outbreaks of natural disasters and civil strifes,

Not seeing names they have said that no such thing as a Way existed. They ignore that this pure and unique Way has no name. In the Chinese Book of Poetry it is said: 'Heaven created Mankind, where things are, there are rules'. Where Heaven and Earth existed, there existed the Way of Heaven and Earth. Where Mankind exists, there exists the Way of Mankind. The Gods are the progenitors of Mankind. Heaven and Earth are the beginning of all living things. Therefore the Way of Mankind roots in Heaven and Earth. It is therefore clear that they originate in the Heavenly Gods. My prince has deeply bathed in classical literature. Without expressing it in words he has grasped the great origin of the Way. Therefore in one word I conclude boldly: the Way is the one great stable principle of Heaven and Earth of which we cannot for one moment detach ourselves."

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In other words, the doctrine of the Mito school is a synthesis of Confucianism and Shintō, as will become clearer on reading carefully through the Kōdō-Kwan Record.

the Grand Way becoming obscured for long ages.

Our Tōshōgū, renowned for virtues both civil and martial, quelled civil strifes, restored peace and order in the Empire, at the same time revering the Emperor and expelling the barbarians. Thus the period of great peace ensued.

Our ancestor Ikō became the first feudal lord of the eastern part of Japan. In his early days, he admired the brave personality of the Imperial warrior Prince Yamatotakeru, held steadfast faith in Shintō, or the Way of the Gods, and exercised himself in military readiness.

Our Gikō, the successor of Ikō, was a great admirer of Hakui (*Poh I*) and Shukusei (*Shuh Ts'i*), and while young, he reverently adhered to Confucianism, so that he not only enunciated Confucian morality with great clarity but also re-adjusted names, according to their true nature. He was a bulwark of the State.

It is more than one hundred and several decades since we had the honour of enjoying our ancestral legacy from Gikō as well as the gracious favour of both the Imperial House and the Shogunate Government. How can we descendants remain inactive without undertaking the propaganda of this Way and without revealing to the world the virtuous merits of our ancestors in the past? It is with this aim in view that this Institute has been founded.

Why then is the God Takemikazuchi reverently enshrined in this Hall? It is because, in ancient times, the God Takemikazuchi participated in the heavenly meritorious work of establishing our Empire, and since then his powerful divine spirit has been hovering over this eastern district. Consequently we consider it most proper to direct the people to recognize and remember well how the Imperial Domain was first founded, and to show grateful appreciation to the initiator, besides leading them to fully recognize the origin and growth of the Way.

What has made us dedicate a temple to Confucius in this compound? The reply is that Confucius is a sage by whom the true essence of the Way of Tō (*T'ang*), Gu (*Yü*) and the "Three Dynasties" has been transmitted to us, and we have been nourished with the teachings of the sage. Therefore we reverence his virtuous personality, and ardently desire to let the people know that it is quite natural for the Way to become greater and greater, and brighter and brighter.

Oh, ye retainers, both samurai and commoners, living in this castle-town, be diligent at your studies in the Hall, from morning till

night, take steadfast hold of the Way which is indigenous to the Divine Kingdom by the help of the teachings of the Western Land of Cathay, know that loyalty and filial piety are one and the same thing; remember that the pen and the sword are bound together, that learning and its practical application are inseparably connected, that paying homage to the Gods with reverence and awe, while at the same time embracing Confucianism, we should be impartial and do justice to both, that listening to every advice of thoughtful people and making the best use of the strength of every one without restraint, we should be grateful to the Imperial State for Its countless favours bestowed upon us in the past.

With all these things successfully carried out, we are sure that not only the ideals and purposes of our ancestors will be realized, but also that the divine Imperial Ancestral Spirits in Heaven will be pleased to descend to help us and favour us here below with their divine presence.

The head of Administration and Education, founder of the Institute, *Gonchūnagon Jusammi Minamoto-no-Ason* Nariaki.

Third Month, the Ninth Year of Tempō, composed and written by Nariaki.

CORRIGENDUM

p. 8, l. 5:

For Why the Heavenly

Read The foundation of the Empire, and founded the dynasty. And thus a happy order has prevailed throughout Heaven and Earth and all things are flourishing. Owing to this Way the Heavenly