Japan and I: A Personal View of Japanese Studies

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Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to deliver this lecture here today. I am thankful to the Japan Foundation and to its president Professor Ogoura Kazuo for bestowing on me this prestigious award, which I highly appreciate. The Japan Foundation is doing an excellent work in promoting Japanese studies all over the world, and every one of us in this field appreciates its help. I am thankful to Professor Josef Kreiner, a leading authority on Japanese society and culture, former president of the European Association for Japanese Studies, and a former recipient of this award, for chairing this lecture. I am delighted that this event takes place at the International House of Japan, an institution which I joined 30 years ago and which I highly esteem.

Why Japan?

There is a question that we, foreigners in Japanese studies, are always asked, which is: Why did you choose Japan as your field of specialization? I don't think that people in medicine or English literature are asked such a question. Interest in Japan seems to be something which is not self evident and which needs explanation. We have our standard answers, but many of us would admit that it was by sheer chance. We happened to be granted a Japanese scholarship, happened to visit Japan, or happened to read a book about it at a young age. Yet, while the first contact might have been accidental, once we entered this field we found it stimulating, meaningful and rewarding. It provided us with new sights and new insights. Most of us happen to enjoy it. Liking the subject of one's study is not necessary for understanding it, but it makes the study more pleasant. In my own case, I admit that I like visiting Japan, meeting its people, enjoying its arts, viewing the changing seasons, listening to the music, tasting the food, and immersing myself in a *rotenburo*. I like the Japanese language because it is difficult and poses a constant challenge, and because it makes my Japanese interlocutors happy when they encounter a foreigner who speaks their

language. I would have been bored to study an easy-to-learn European language. That is why we, foreign scholars of Japan, oppose the idea that the Japanese should switch to a phonetic alphabet and abandon the beautiful kanji, which took us so long to master.

Researching the history of Japan and teaching it has opened new windows for me. Some of my friends claim that they love research, but hate teaching. I admit that I love both. Facing the wide open eyes of first-year students, seeing the expressions of curiosity and discovery on their faces, and getting them laugh when expected to do so has been a rewarding experience for me. Discussing my research with graduate students has obliged me to think harder. What were the topics of ny research?

The Atomic Bombs

My interest in Japan started 45 years ago, when I wrote my master thesis in history, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I chose that subject because it was a dramatic event and because it raised moral questions. History has always appeared to me as a great drama, in which we are both the spectators and the players. In this drama, people are required to make decisions, and this is how moral questions enter the picture. The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a great tragedy; it caused the instant death of about 150,000 people. It put an end to the Pacific War, but it also introduced the Cold War into East Asia. One can therefore question its necessity.

President Truman justified the dropping of the atomic bombs, on the grounds that they saved the lives of half a million American soldiers and millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians who would have died in a land invasion. But in August 1945 Japan lay in ruins; its fleet was at the bottom of the ocean, American airplanes bombarded its cities unopposed, and Japan was fervently asking the Soviet Union to mediate an honorable surrender. At that time Japan did not pose a threat to any country, and the American land invasion was due to take place only in November. The atomic bombs had been built as a weapon of last resort, to stop Hitler from dominating the world. They had not been built to hasten the death of a dying enemy.

To my surprise, I found out that the senior American commanders thought that the atomic bombs were not necessary. General Douglas MacArthur told a reporter after the war that he saw no justification in using them[1]. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz told the National Geographic Society in 1946 that Japan would have surrendered without them.[2] General Dwight Eisenhower told Secretary of War Henry Stimson that the atomic bombs were "completely unnecessary". [3] The U.S. official Strategic Bombing Survey, in its 1946 report, concluded that Japan would have surrendered by the end of 1945 without the atomic bombs.[4] That was perhaps the reason that President Truman did not consult the military commanders before dropping the bombs.

So, why did he do it? The conclusion of my thesis was that the dropping of the atomic bombs should be analyzed not in the context of the Second World War, but in the context of the Cold War, which had started then in Europe. President Truman wanted Japan to surrender quickly to prevent the Soviet Union from entering the war in Asia and gaining huge territorial spoils there, as it had done in Europe. Ironically, the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima hastened the entry of the Soviet Union into the war on the following day. This act enabled the Soviets to do what Truman was afraid that they might do, that is to seize large areas in China, Korea and the Northern Pacific, with ramifications that are still with us. So, even from the Cold War perspective, the dropping of the atomic bombs was counter-productive.

The 2.26 Incident

After submitting my master thesis, which was written in Hebrew and never published, I was fortunate to receive a scholarship from the Japanese Ministry of Education (then called Mombushō). I went to Japan in the fall of 1965 and studied Japanese language for two years at ICU (International Christian University). That university had excellent language teachers, one of whom is in this room today. In 1967, after a short stay in Israel, I went to Princeton University in the United States to study for the Ph.D. degree under Professor Marius Jansen. Jansen was an expert on the *bakumatsu* period and wrote a book on the idealist young samurai (*shishi*) Sakamoto Ryōma, who died before witnessing the Meiji Restoration. I chose as the subject of my doctoral dissertation the young officers, who wished to imitate the *bakumatsu shishi*, by

stagimg the doomed February 26th 1936 rebellion, known as the 2.26 Incident. This theme, like the previous one, attracted me, because it was dramatic, tragic and posed moral questions.

In order to research that topic, I returned to Japan in 1969 to collect materials and to interview relatives and friends of the executed rebels. The picture which unfolded before me was different from the one I had encountered in the textbooks. The rebel young officers were terrorists because they killed several prominent figures, but unlike the terrorists of today, they did not harm uninvolved people. They were militarists in the sense that they wished to set up a military government, but their main concern was social, to help the impoverished peasants and to curb the power of the financial magnates (*zaibatsu*). They wished to overthrow the existing regime, which they regarded as corrupt and traitorous, but they did not intend to become the new leaders. They were impressed by the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, but rejected both fascism and communism as evil western creeds. Following their ideological leader Kita Ikki, they wanted Japan to liberate Asia from British and Soviet colonialism, but regarded China and the United States as Japan's natural allies.

After the war, the relatives and friends of the executed young officers claimed that had the rebellion succeeded Japan would not have attacked China and the United States. This claim cannot be proved or disproved. There were also some mysteries surrounding the rebellion, such as the clandestine connections of the rebels with the Mitsui concern, their links to the emperor's younger brother Prince Chichibu, and their subsequent indignation at the Shōwa emperor, who opposed the rebellion, which was meant to liberate him from his "evil advisers". My book on that subject was published in 1973 and translated into Japanese by Kōno Tsukasa, the elder brother of Captain Kōno Hisashi, one of the rebel officers who committed seppuku in hospital when the rebellion failed. [5]

Wartime Japan

From the dramatic four days of the 1936 rebellion my interest switched to the dramatic four years of the Pacific War. The Pacific War, or as the Japanese called it "The Great East Asia War" (*daitōa sensō*), was a culmination of what historians call

"the 15-years war", although it lasted less than 14 years from the Manchurian Incident in September 1931 to Japan's defeat in August 1945. Japanese historians rightly refer to those years as a dark valley (*kurai tanima*). As Japan was fighting on the side of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, they labelled the regime that existed at that time "Japanese fascism", or "military fascism" or "fascism from above." There are many definitions of fascism and some people apply that term to any regime that is authoritarian and aggressive, although they do not apply that term to communist states which were authoritarian and aggressive. When I compared wartime Japan with the regimes in Germany and Italy at that time, I found enormous differences. The Japanese committed many atrocities in China and Korea, but they did not manifest an anti-Chinese or anti-Korean ideology. Chinese and Koreans who collaborated with Japan were well treated, something which cannot be said about the Jews in Nazi Europe, who were hunted and killed regardless of their loyalty or disloyalty to Germany.

Wartime Japan was authoritarian and oppressive, but it was not totalitarian. There was no ruling party, which controlled all aspects of society, and there was no charismatic dictator who incited the masses and made all the decisions. General Tōjō Hideki wielded considerable power, but he was much weaker than Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin or Chiang Kai-shek. He was even weaker than Roosevelt and Churchill, who led their democratic countries in war. Tōjō could not dictate to the navy or to the civilian bureaucracy, both of which guarded their independence. When Saipan Island fell in 1944 he had to assume responsibility and resign. His successor General Koiso Kuniaki had even less powers and had to resign when the American forces landed on Okinawa. No other country in that war changed its leadership twice and both times in an orderly way.

One of my findings was the enthusiastic support of the war in its initial stages by intellectuals, writers and artists. These were not narrow minded militarists. They had a western education and some of them were leftists. They supported the war not because they thought that Japan should rule the world, but because they believed that Japan was waging a war to liberate Asia from western domination. We know now that they were wrong and that Japan replaced western imperialism in Asia by its own imperialism, but at the time this was not clear and many people believed the official

proclamations. Those who had reservations could remain silent. Communists were arrested, put on trial and jailed, and some of them died of maltreatment in prison, but they were not put to death. Most of the communist leadership survived the war and reappeared on the political stage when it was over. [6]

The Russo-Japanese War

Following my research of Japan during the Second World War, my interest was drawn to the Russo-Japanese War of forty years earlier. Japan's victory in that war provided inspiration for the Pacific War. Many people thought that they saw the similarities. In both cases Japan attacked a stronger western power which threatened its security. In both cases Japan acted as an ally of a leading European power. In both cases, Japan tried to make up for its inferiority in materiel by its superiority in fighting spirit. It was therefore believed that Japan would again come out victorious. But history does not repeat itself. Japan took a great risk in attacking Tsarist Russia in 1904 and won, it took a great risk in attacking the United States in 1941 and lost.

The Russo-Japanese War was the first international conflagration of the 20th century, setting the stage for many future developments. It paved the way to the First World War, led to the Russian revolution, accelerated Japanese expansion in Asia, and boosted anti-colonial movements in the world. It introduced new weapons and opened an era of gigantic ground and sea battles. Fierce as it was, it was also the last gentlemanly combat, with both sides observing the rules of war and treating well prisoners of war.

Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War was hailed in the non-western world as the first victory of an Asian power over a European power since the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. But that was not how the Japanese saw it at that time. Japan's aim in 1904-1905 was not to liberate Asia, but to join the western powers which dominated it. Japan regarded itself at that war as a civilized country fighting a less civilized one. That was not mere wishful thinking. At the beginning of the 20th century Japan was indeed more modern than Russia. It had a constitution, an elected Diet, political parties and some freedom of speech, while Russia lacked all these elements. The literacy rate in Japan at that time was higher than that in Russia and its

soldiers understood better what they were fighting for. If this was a war between east and west, then Russia was the east and Japan was the west.[7]

It was a colonial war, but many western countries at that time looked favorably on Japanese colonialism, which seemed to spread modernity in Asia. The most blatant expression of that colonialism was the annexation of Korea in 1910, exactly one hundred years ago. This seems today, and quite justly, as a flagrant act of aggression which robbed the Koreans of their independence and their dignity. But one hundred years ago the world was different. Advanced industrial countries dominated under developed countries in Asia and Africa, on the assumptions that colonies were essential for industrial development and colonialism advanced the colonized people. Therefore the annexation of Korea received the blessing of the western countries, most of which possessed their own colonies. Japan's seizure of Korea was not different from the British seizure of India or the French seizure of Indo-China.

The Jews and the Japanese

My research of the Russo-Japanese War led me to investigate the relations between the Jews and the Japanese. Although thousands of Jewish soldiers fought and died on the Russian side of the war and no Jew fought on the Japanese side, the Jewish world supported Japan and hailed its victories. The main reason for that were the persecutions of the Jews in Tsarist Russia at that time. Another reason was the admiration, shared by many Jews, of Japan's surprising progress. Thus that the leading Jewish banker in New York, Jacob Schiff, underwrote the Japanese loans in the United States and Britain, which enabled Japan to win the war.

Despite some obvious differences, I found the Jews and the Japanese sharing various traits. Both have maintained an amazing historical continuity, absorbing foreign influences but keeping their core values. Both developed a strong self-awareness, a dedication to learning, an ambition to excel, and an intellectual curiosity. When the walls of the closed Jewish communities in East Europe and of self-secluded Japan in East Asia crumbled in the 19th century, both peoples burst into the western world with energy and talents that catapulted them, within two generations, to the front lines of western science, power and wealth.

The amazing rise of these two non-Christian peoples in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, produced suspicion and fear in the western, Christian world. Anti-Semitism and anti-Japanism derived from similar sources and were often voiced by the same people. The German Kaiser Wilhelm II warned against "the yellow peril" at the time that the Dreyfus Affair, in which a Jewish officer was wrongly accused of treason, took place in France. The Russian Tsar Nicholas II, who encouraged the attacks on the Jews in Russia, pressed for war against Japan. Even the humanist writer Leo Tolstoy regarded both the Jews and the Japanese as enemies of western Christendom.[8]

There were few Jews in Japan before the war, but anti-Semitic literature reached Japan together with other western trends. The Japanese were impressed by the western warnings against the Jews, but they admired the Jewish achievements. Albert Einstein, who visited Japan in 1922, and the Jewish musicians who performed and taught there in the 1920s and 1930s, were enthusiastically welcomed. To us the positive and negative stereotypes of the Jews appear to be contradictory, but the Japanese saw no contradiction there. Like Shinto angry spirits, the Jews were believed to be beneficial if treated well and harmful if treated badly. Thus, many of the anti-Semitic writers of Japan were also great admirers of the Jews. In 1940, militaristic Japan saved more Jewish refugees, fleeing from Nazi Europe, than did the United States and Great Britain.[9]

The Imperial Institution

My interest in historical continuities, as apparent in the histories of the Japanese and the Jews, led me to the subject of the Japanese emperors. The imperial family of Japan is the longest reigning dynasty on earth, stretching from the beginnings of the Japanese state in the first half of the first millennium until today. It is the only dynasty that the Japanese are aware of, so that it does not even have a name. This dynasty has been preserved not by the power or shrewdness of the emperors, but by the support and respect of the Japanese society. Unlike in other countries, where kings and emperors ruled, Japanese emperors did not rule. They did not manage the state, did not lead troops, did not fight wars, did not initiate policies, did not pass judgment, and

did not decree on matters of faith. The only time when they wielded some influence was when they retired and became ex-emperors.

As individuals, the Japanese emperors were weak. They could be deposed, banished and sometimes even killed. But as a family they were extremely strong, as no one could replace the dynasty, even not by marrying into it. This combination of weak emperors and a strong dynasty poses a riddle. How did it happen? Why couldn't powerful figures like Taira Kiyomori, Minamoto Yoritomo, Hideyoshi Toyotomi or Tokugawa Ieyasu grab the throne and declare themselves emperors, as strongmen in China and other countries usually did? What made these mighty figures submit to the unarmed, unassertive and sometimes child monarchs?

It is often claimed that the Japanese emperors could not be overthrown because they were considered to be gods. Could one depose a god? Actually, one could. Despite their divine status, Japanese emperors were often forced to abdicate. Nearly half of the emperors resigned the throne before they died, a phenomenon which was not found in other countries. Moreover, in a country of eight million gods it was not such a big deal to be a god. Any person, after death, could become a *kami* or a Buddha. Japanese emperors were "living gods in human form" (*arahito-gami*), but there were other "living gods" (*ikigami*) who performed miracles. Japanese emperors possessed a lesser degree of divinity than Egyptian pharaohs or Roman emperors. No shrines were dedicated to them when they were alive, no sacrifices were offered to them, no prayers were recited to them, and they were not expected to perform miracles, cure the sick or predict the future, as divine kings in other countries did.

Another explanation of the perpetuity of the imperial dynasty is that it was more expedient to use the emperors than to replace them. That is true, but why did that truth prevail only in Japan? In other countries, those who wielded power also coveted the throne. Were the Japanese aristocrats and warlords, who contolled the country, less ambitious and less assertive than their counterparts in China or Europe? I doubt it. It seems to me that they did not grab the throne because they knew that the society in which they lived would not tolerate that. The imperial family kept the throne because it enjoyed the respect and the support of society. But, where did those respect and support derive from?

I do not pretend to have found a full answer to that question, but I tried to look at the gender factor. Most Japanese emperors were males, but their sanctity derived from a female ancestress, the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. The emperors' passivity, detachment from politics and administration, engagement in ceremonies and art, and being surrounded by female attendants, turned them more into mother figures than father figures. After the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government tried hard to masculinize the emperor. Like kings in other countries, the Meiji, Taishō and early Shōwa emperors were designated as supreme rulers and commanders of the armed forces. They wore military uniforms, rode horses and inspected troops. But that was a façade. In reality, the modern emperors neither led nor ruled. After the Second World War, the façade was torn down and the emperors returned to their traditional passive role.[10]

To better understand the riddle of the Japanese emperors, I looked at two little-known aspects, the links between the modern emperors and Christianity and the conservative criticism of the emperors.. As descendants of the sun goddess and high priests of Shinto, the emperors were not supposed to have any contacts with Christianity. But, as I have found out, all the emperors of modern Japan showed interest in the religion of the west. Moreover, Japanese Christians before 1945, having proven their loyalty to the emperor, served in senior positions at the imperial palace. During the allied occupation, General Douglas MacArthur attempted to convert the imperial family to Christianity, as a first step toward the conversion of the Japanese people. I was surprised to find out that for a while, the imperial family seemed to favor the idea, but ultimately the plan did not work out. From a Japanese point of view, the emperor could combine Christianity with Shinto, as former emperors had combined Buddhism with Shinto, but from a Christian point of view, such a combination was impossible.[11]

As the emperor has been the core of Japanese nationalism, it seemed improbable that Japanese nationalists would disapprove of him. But, as I was surprised to discover, since the beginning of the Shōwa era, there has been growing conservative disenchantment with the emperors. The nationalists hailed the institution of the emperor, but were critical of the persons on the throne. The Shōwa emperor was accused of being too liberal and too supportive of what seemed to them a corrupt

establishment. The young officers of the 1936 rebellion blamed Hirohito for the failure of their uprising. After the war, the writer Mishima Yukio, while praising the emperor and wishing to die for him, chided the Shōwa emperor for letting down the idealist rebels who wished to liberate him from his evil advisers, and for betraying the *kamikaze* pilots who sacrificed themselves for him as a god. The present emperor and crown prince are criticized in the right-wing publications as not dedicating themselves enough to the state. In one case, this criticism even produced a call for detaching Japanese nationalism from the emperor.[12]

As the institution of the emperor is criticized by the left-wing, and individual emperors are criticized by the right-wing, while the general public remains apathetic, there is a danger that this institution may some time come to an end. In my opinion, that would be a great loss, because the imperial institution, which has accompanied all of Japanese history, has contributed to Japan's unity and ability to change and absorb foreign influences without disintegrating.

Returning the Story to History

After four decades of studying these topics and teaching about Japan, what do I recommend to young historians entering this field? My first advice is: Return the story to history. Once, writing history was a branch of literature, telling the past in an entertaining way. Then it became a science, analyzing the past and theorizing about it. This was a plausible development, as historians were obliged to apply scientific methods in their research and writing. They had to prove what they were saying, to base themselves on verified documents, to quantify their hypotheses, to check their sources, to substantiate their conclusions, and to question conventional wisdom. Then came the social scientists, who turned history into a storehouse of case studies. Theory became the most important goal and events became building blocks for constructing it. Finally, came the postmodernists who pointed out the relativity of language and shattered the validity of historical truth.

These developments, while clearing the field of historical writing, choked the narrative. The beauty of the story disappeared from history. History books today devote much more space to processes, causes and results, than to persons and events.

When I worked on the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, I was surprised to see how little the history books tell us about the decisive battles of that war, as if they were not important. But battles decide who wins and who loses. The historians who explain why Japan won the war could have also explained, quite eloquently, why Japan lost it. The outcome of that war, as of most wars, was not self evident. Actually, most observers predicted a Russian victory. Students and readers should share the excitement, the fears, and the agonies of that time when nothing was certain and much depended on effort and ingenuity. An eloquent description of the battles is more interesting and not less important than the dwelling on causes and effects.

This also applies to the treatment of the Pacific War. The causes of that war are important, but this should not lead us to think, as some historians claim, that there was a straight and causal line from the Manchurian Incident of 1931 to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and to the Pacific War four years later. At each stage there existed many options and decisions had to be made, without knowing which was right and which was wrong. Overlooking the drama and anguish on both sides of the Pacific Ocean before and during the war misses the real picture. The combination of heroism with cruelty on the battlefields, the mixture of idealism and chauvinism at home, the hopes and disillusionment of the occupied peoples, the military clashes on the remote islands, and the orderly way in which Japan surrendered, provide a dramatic story that should be presented to students and readers.

Returning the story to history should bring back literary and artistic standards. History is not only a science, it is also an art. It should therefore be presented in an attractive way. When we mention the stories of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon-shoki*, it is not enough that we dismiss them as myths. We should also dwell on their literary and cultural merits. Myths, whether Greek or Japanese, should not be ridiculed. They are treasures of human memory and imagination. We should treat the *Kojiki* and *Nihon-shoki* with the same respect that we treat European mythologies. Returning the story to history also means returning it to human actors. Japanese history is full of fascinating individuals who are not acknowledged enough in the history books. In the same way that we mention the contributions of Jesus Christ, Martin Luther, and Napoleon, we should mention the contributions of Hōnen, Shinran, Hideyoshi, Ieyasu and Itō Hirobumi.

Avoiding Stereotypes and Wrong Comparisons

My second advice is: Beware of stereotypes. The western image of Japan is replete with stereotypes that make Japan look strange, inhuman and incomprehensible. We should be suspicious of stereotypes and generalizations. As a Jew confronting similar stereotypes about Jews, I know how wrong they can be. After all we have learnt about Japan, we should ask ourselves: Are the Japanese really such a collectivistic society, always preferring the group over the individual? Is their society really so hierarchical, with vertical relations always more important than horizontal ones? Are they really so insular, unable to communicate with other societies? Are they really less creative than other societies? These widespread stereotypes and generalization need a closer scrunity.

Mistaken stereotypes are often the result of wrong comparisons. Many writers compare Japan with other countries in a way that makes Japan look bizarre and exotic. But what do they compare Japan with? The usual comparison is between Japan and the "west", with the United States representing the west. But American society, politics and culture are different from those of the European countries. In a way, it is the United States rather than Japan which is strange and unique. When we compare Japan with European countries with similar feudal and nationalistic backgrounds, Japan does not seem so strange. Many so-called "unique" Japanese traits, such as love of decorum, deference to authority, aesthetic sensitivity, male supremacy, and glorified death have also existed in European countries.

Another mistake is to compare the ideals of one country with the realities of the other. Many westerners regard Japan as a harmonious society, devoted to work and duty, because that is how the Japanese describe themselves and want to be seen. Then they contrast Japan with their own societies, which are full of conflicts, selfishness and corruption. In the same way, many Japanese, fed on books and movies about the west, think that western society is moral and rational, unlike their own society, which is illogical and strife-ridden. Such comparisons are wrong. If we compare the ideals of Japan with the ideals of western countries, we see that they are not that different from each other. Likewise, if we compare the realities of Japan with those of other countries, we see again that the differences are smaller than assumed.

The Danger of Over Specialization

My third advice is: Avoid excessive specialization. Science requires specialization, but art needs a comprehensive approach. There was a time when a historian wrote the history of the world. Nowadays historians stick to one country in one era, paying little attention to what happened in other countries or in other times. If someone wrote a combined history of, let us say, Japan and Korea, one might acquire insights that the writing of the history of one country does not provide. Japan and Korea found themselves in many similar situations, but reacted in different ways. Both absorbed Chinese culture, preserving their ethnic and cultural identity; both developed a phonetic script which co-existed with the Chinese characters; both confronted colonialism, both were destroyed in the mid-20th century, and both recovered miraculously to become industrial powers, under thr tutelage of the United States. Yet, the ways that they followed were different.

Today you cannot be just a historian. You are expected to be a political historian, a military historian, an economic historian, a diplomatic historian, an intellectual historian, a religion historian, an art historian, a literary historian or a historian of any other discipline that encloses you in its special cubicle. But history did not evolve in parallel tunnels. The past is one and all the various disciplines should merge to explain it. Presently, when a survey or text book has to be written, scholars from different disciplines and specializations are assembled and asked to contribute their particular views. The assumption is that the reader will combine these different stories into one coherent narration. This does not always work. Quite often readers and students are left with a fragmented tale made up of different stories hanging loosely together.

As writing history is also an art, there is sometimes a need that one artist, rather than a group, paints the canvas. That historian should be helped by the various disciplines, but the presentation should be his. It is his job to grasp the big picture and communicate it to the readers. It is not easy, and one should perhaps wait until one is a full professor, so that his or her career would not be damaged by the derision of one's colleagues. I myself dared to do it. When I realized that there was no basic book

in Hebrew on Japanese history and culture, I sat down and wrote it in two volumes. I tried to include in these two volumes everything, from religion and art to economics, warfare, literature and society. Not being an expert in all these fields, I might have made mistakes and might have presented a shallow picture, but the canvas was mine. I enjoyed writing these books, and I guess people enjoyed reading them.

Respecting the Past

My fourth advice is: Respect the past and the people who lived before you. We tend to look down on our predecessors, because we have more information than they had and because we know the outcome of their decisions which they could not know. Yet, our feeling of superiority is mistaken. The Jōmon and Yayoi people did not have cars, computers, or even a written system, but they developed a human culture that fulfilled their needs. In later generations the Japanese, although living on islands far from the cultural centers of China, succeeded in acquiring and absorbing the sophisticated Chinese civilization and surpassing it in many fields. Already in the 13th century the Japanese produced better swords and lacquer ware and exported then to China. Japan's drive for refinement produced great accomplishments. Present-day Japanese should be proud of their ancestors for their cultural and technological achievements. Japan had no Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci or Shakespeare, but it had Murasaki Shikibu and Zeami, Saigyō and Bashō, Hakuin and Hokusai, who did not fall from their western counterparts.

During the Pacific War, the militarists used Japanese history to inflame patriotism. In reaction to that, the American occupation and the Japanese teachers after the war became highly critical of Japan's past. History was hardly taught in school and whatever was taught was presented in dark colors. As a result, most Japanese today know little of their history and are ashamed of it. They are not aware of the fact that throughout most of its history Japan was a peaceful country, not threatening its neighbors and directing its efforts to internal accomplishment. Praising the achievements of Japan's forefathers does not mean despising the achievements of other nations. A more balanced approach to Japan's past may produce a healthier attitude to its present and a more optimistic view of its future.

Arigatou gozaimashita.

Notes

[1] Norman Cousins, *The Pathology of Power* (New York: Norton, 1987), p. 7.

[2] Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (London: Fontana Press, 1995), p. 351.

[3] Dwight Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948), p. 380.

[4] John Ehrman, *Grand Strategy* (History of the Second World War, U.K. Military Series. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), vol. VI, p. 283.

[5] Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Young Officers and the February 26, 1936 Incident* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1973. Translated into Japanese: *Nihon no hanran*, Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1975).

[6] Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (Clarendon Press, 1981. Paperback edition Oxford University Press, 1991. Translated into Japanese: *Uotaimu japan*, Gogatsu Shobō, 1991).

[7] Ben-Ami Shillony and Rotem Kowner, "The Memory and Significance of the Russo-Japanese War from a Centennial Perspective", in Rotem Kowner, ed., *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5,* Vol. 1: *Centennial Perspectives* (Folkestone, England: Global Oriental, 2007), pp.1-9.

[8] Henry Troyat, *Tolstoy* (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 711.

[9] Ben-Ami Shillony, *The Jews and the Japanese*: *The Successful Outsiders* (Charles E. Tuttle, 1992. Translated into Japanese: *Yudayajin to nihonjin no fushigina kankei*, Seikō Shobō, 2004); "The Jewish Response to the War," in Rotem Kowner, ed., *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5,* Vol. 1 *Centennial Perspectives* (Folkestone, England: Global Oriental, 2007), pp. 393-400.

[10] Ben-Ami Shillony, *Enigma of the Emperors: Sacred Subservience in Japanese History* (Global Oriental, 2005. Translated into Japanese: ***Haha naru tennō*** , Kōdansha, 2003).

[11] Ben-Ami Shillony, "Conservative Dissatisfaction with the Modern Emperors", in Ben-Ami Shillony, ed., ***The Emperors of Modern Japan*** (Brill, 2008), pp. 137-162.

[12] Ben-Ami Shillony, "Emperors and Christianity", in Ben-Ami Shillony, ed., ***The Emperors of Modern Japan*** (Brill, 2008), pp. 163-183.