

Tour to Kyoto—日本の歴史に言及しながら—

(イントロ)

I think today's trip to Kyoto will give you a good glimpse into Japanese history.

First of all, please look at this paper. This shows the period classification of Japanese history. The characters and figures may be too small for the people sitting on the back, but you can see the red-colored part. These show the periods the samurai governed the country. From the late-12th to the mid-19th centuries, the samurai had a political power to govern the country in Japan. Such periods lasted about 700 years. Before those periods, the emperor had a political power, even though the practical handlings of things were carried out by the noblemen working in the court.

About 160 years ago, to be more exact in 1867, Japan ended its feudal days or the period the samurai was controlling the country. And Japan started its modernization with the emperor at its center. The emperor gained the political power again. The blue colored part shows those periods. Such times lasted for about 80 years until 1945. But as most of you should be aware of it, Japan was defeated in 1945 in the Second World War. As a result, its constitution had to be revised.

And in 1948, the new constitution was established. According to that new constitution, the emperor is stipulated as the symbol of the nation. He had no political power.

Nijo Castle and Kinkakuji you're going to visit today are what were built in the period of Japan's feudal days, in these red-colored periods when the samurai governed the country.

(二条城)

First of all, I'd like to explain about Nijo Castle. In Japan, from the beginning of the 17th century to the mid-19th century, to be more exact, from 1600 to 1867, solid, stable samurai governments lasted for about 250 years. A series of shoguns, the 15 generations of shoguns, came from the Tokugawa Family. Its headquarters was located at Edo, or the present Tokyo. When shoguns came to Kyoto in order to have an audience with the emperor because the emperor were in Kyoto in those days, this castle was used as the place where the shogun stayed. Those kinds of occasions were not so often, some shoguns came to Kyoto.

This castle was built by the first shogun in this period, Ieyasu, in 1603. He came to

this castle after he was given the title of shogun by then emperor, and he announced his taking that position in front of feudal lords who had come there from various areas of the country.

In those days, the whole country was controlled by the shogun. To be more specific, the whole country was divided into a lot of areas, a few hundred areas. And to each area a feudal lord was assigned. The assigned or the appointed feudal lord governed its area as his domain. He formed a fief consisting of his retainer samurais, his domain, and the local people living there. Sometimes these feudal lords were ordered to transfer from one area to another. With that powerful personnel management power, the shogun governed the whole country like that way.

Around that time, Japan had a diplomatic policy of isolation. Except with China and the Netherlands Japan had no relationship with any other country. However, since around the late-18th century, overseas delegation had come to visit Japan. They asked Japan to allow their ships to call at some ports in Japan on their voyage to get fresh water or some food. Some asked Japan to open the country to make a business trade. Finally, the government decided to open the country. But its decision was about the basic policy of Japan. So, then shogun sought to get the approval by the

emperor. But this movement brought about confusion in Japan. There were a lot of people who were against the opening. At the end, the government decided to open the country without getting any agreement from the emperor. The confusion in the country intensified further. Given such conditions, the shogun power declined. And finally, in the mid-19th century, to be more exact, in 1867, then shogun, the 15th generation shogun from the Tokugawa Family, Yoshinobu, decided to return his political power to the emperor. It was at the castle in Kyoto you are going to visit today that Yoshinobu made that decision. Yoshinobu expressed his intension of returning his political power to the emperor in front of about 50 high ranking officials from major fiefs who had been called there. And the shogun's intension was immediately delivered to the emperor. This decision marked the end of Japan's feudal days. From that time on, Japan started its modernization with the emperor at its center again. It was about 160 years ago. That event was the most important one in Japan's modern history.

At the Nijo Castle you will visit today, there is a room where that historically big event is reproduced. A lot of samurai dolls in the room could be seen. You can get some understanding of that past event.

By the way, at the castle, I think you can experience a very unique thing. So, I'd like to refer to it. When you walk on the corridor, you can hear a lot of pretty sounds. As if small birds were chirping under the corridor. That is a phenomenon which is called "A Nightingale Floor."

Please look at this photo. As a matter of fact, floor board and supporting beams are fixed with these metal devices which are called Kasugai in Japanese, or clamps.

There are two holes here. And the nails are hit into the holes. But as time passes, these parts become loose. And the nail and metal hit against each other, which creates an interesting sound. Today please enjoy that intriguing, pretty sound.

By the way, when walking through the corridor of that castle, I have often got the question from my guests. That question is "Which is greater, shogun or emperor?"

My answer is "The emperor is greater than the shogun." I think it's a kind of common sense among Japanese people. But it may be a bit hard for the foreign people to understand it. As I said, the shogun is the title given by the emperor to the top of the samurai. Its original full name is Sei-i-tai-shogun. It was originally a temporary post, but from the late-12th century, it became a permanent post. Even during the period when the shogun controlled the country in politics, if there was

an occasion that a shogun and an emperor met, the shogun would kneel down before the emperor. The emperor had a spiritual authority even though he had no military forces. All right?

(金閣寺)

Next is about Kinkakuji, or Golden Pavilion. From the 14th century to the mid-16th century there were other samurai governments reigning in the country. And the shoguns came from the Ashikaga Family. The third shogun in that period was this person...Yoshimitsu. He was a powerful shogun, exerting a great influence in politics in those days. But at the same time, he had a lot of talents in many fields including art and cultural stages. He retired from the post of shogun at the age of 37. After that, he began constructing the villa in the late-14th century, in 1397. He lived his remaining days in that place. He died at the age of 51. After his death, based on his will, the place was changed to a Buddhist temple.

The buildings had been repaired many times over a long period of time. But the main building Golden Pavilion was burnt down by arson in 1950. Its restoration work to the original style was completed in 1955.

The Golden Pavilion is a three-story structure. And the second and the third floors

are covered with gold leaf both inside and outside. It stands beside a pond and so, it is reflected on the water. It impresses us with its beauty throughout the year.

(平安神宮)

Next destination is Heian Jingu Shrine. So, I'd like to explain about it. Kyoto is the place where the emperors resided more than 1,000 years in the past. In 794, then emperor moved the capital to Kyoto from Nara. Since then, successive emperors had lived in Kyoto. As I said, in 1867 Japan ended its feudal days , and started its modernization with the emperor at its center. And the emperor moved to Tokyo in 1869.

It must have been a kind of shock to the people living in Kyoto. After that, there was a movement among the people to enshrine the emperor who moved the capital to Kyoto from Nara in order to encourage distressed people's spirits. And in 1895, the shrine was established, and the first emperor in Kyoto, Emperor Kanmu was enshrined here. Later the last emperor in Kyoto, Emperor Komei was added to its deity.

(8世紀の公的文書、歴史書 (古事記、日本書紀))

As I said, Japan's emperor system has a long history of about 2,700 years. Next is its

explanation.

In the 8th century the two official documents of Japan's history was compiled and issued by then government. One is Records of Ancient Matters, and the other is Chronicles of Japan. It is said that Records of Matters is mainly for domestic purpose and Chronicles of Japan is for overseas. These two documents have almost the same contents although there are some differences in their expressions.

According to these documents, Japan was created by Gods, and the first emperor was a son of a god. They are said to be official documents, but they are a kind of mythology, I think. I think the purpose of issuing these documents is to prove the authenticity or legitimacy of the line of the emperors. There is no historical evidence on this story, of course.

The first emperor is Jinmu. He is said to have ascended the throne in 711 BC. Since then, about 2,700 years have passed. And the present emperor is the 126th one. I think it is the oldest royal family in the world.

(現在の皇室について (帰り道))

I think there is some time before arriving at the pier, so I'd like to give you some

information about the present Imperial Families of Japan. As I said in the morning along the way to Kyoto, the first emperor ascended the throne in 711 BC, and the present emperor is the 126th one. This is the present emperor. His real name is Naruhito. But strange enough, most Japanese people don't know his real name because he is always called as "His Majesty the Emperor. " Anybody never use his real name like "The Emperor Naruhito." But in case of the Empress, she is usually called as " the Empress Msako-sama." Sama is an honorific word for a person. Masako is her real name. If you have a friend in Japan, please ask them " What is your country's emperor's name?" Probably they don't know of it.

The status of the emperor is stipulated in the Constitution as it is a symbol of Japan, and he has no political power. This is what I explained in the morning. The succession of the throne is stipulated in other special law. And according to that law, new emperor can succeed the throne after an emperor dies. And it should be a male. It is not like the situation in Britain.

This couple has one daughter. She is Princess Aiko. She graduated from a college this spring and joined Red Cross Hospital from this April. She has a lot of fans among Japanese people. But under the present legislation, she could not be able to

an emperor of Japan in the future. This is a photo of the Crown Prince's family.

He is the Crown Prince, a younger brother of the emperor. If the present emperor dies this man will succeed the throne. There is a young boy here. He is still a senior high school boy. But he will get married with a woman and have children in the future. But if his children are all daughters, there will be no person who could succeed the throne. So, the experts have been gathered and started discussing how they should do. I'm not sure about its development, but a female emperor might be one option.

Look at this photo. This is a photo of an ex-emperor and ex-empress. According to my explanation so far, this person, ex-emperor, at least, should be dead now. But, actually, he is alive now. As a matter of fact, he had had a lot of illnesses when he was on the post of the emperor, so he expressed his candid intention of retiring from the post. And many Japanese people understood his feelings and a special temporary law was enacted. Then he retired while he was alive, and his son succeeded the post. It was 6 years ago.

By the way, this photo shows the emperor is planting rice seedlings in the paddy field in his Residence in Tokyo. And this photo shows the empress is taking care of

cocoons. Silk is from this cocoon. These means the rice cultivation and the silk industries have been very important ones in Japan.

Thank you very much for your keen attention. From now on, please continue to pay your attention to Japan's emperor system.