

The *Gukanshō*:  
A Religious View of Japanese History

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This study constitutes a brief venture into the interface between religion and history in the Japanese context. Anyone even slightly acquainted with the development of *Geisteswissenschaft* in the west will agree that some profoundly stimulating and controversial insights emerged from the intellectual struggles involving religion and history. The very concepts of history, religion, and their interrelationship evoke a host of questions, modern western questions such as: to what extent is a given religion or religious phenomenon historical (a question often accompanied by the tacit conviction that truth and historicity are to be equated)? what is the relationship between myth and history? is transcendence necessary for a religious view of history? And perhaps the most basic question: can there be a religious view of history at all, or are religion and history mutually exclusive?

*Religion and history in the west.* This problem of the relation between religion and history has largely been a western concern. From the so-called *Heilsgeschichte* of the biblical tradition through Augustine's *City of God* and Bossuet's *Universal history*, the search for the religious meaning of history in the west has been set in a Christian framework. Since the time of Hegel, however, there has been a veritable flood of works classifiable as philosophies of history. Some are secular, and some continue (*mutatis mutandis*) the Augustinean-type theology of history. Such works are characterized by their authors' refusal to become mere collectors of data or chroniclers of affairs and by their attempt to find what they believe to be a pattern or meaning in the universal flow of historical events. Against those moderns who feel that philosophy of history is a contradiction in terms and

that it cannot exist, Frank Manuel writes, "To assure yourself of its reality, simply stub your toe with a Johnsonian gesture on the twelve volumes of Arnold Toynbee, the two of Oswald Spengler, the four of Pitirim Sorokin, Eric Voegelin's hexology, the repetitive corpus of Nicholas Berdyaev and of Reinhold Niebuhr, even the more modest works of Father D'Arcy, Christopher Dawson, Alfred Weber, and Karl Jaspers, not to speak of the English theorists of evolution and of Teilhard de Chardin, of the latter-day representatives of the idea of material and scientific progress, and of a variety of contemporary Marxists" (1965, p. 136).

Within the discipline of history of religions, from which perspective this paper is written, some creative work has been done on the religious significance of time and history. Mircea Eliade's *Cosmos and history: The myth of the eternal return* (1959), one of the most seminal works on this question, is essentially an "introduction to a philosophy of history" in which he develops his notions of cosmic and historic time. More comprehensive in its typology but less creative is S. G. F. Brandon's *History, time and deity* (1965). One of the most provocative books in this area is the collection of papers from the Eranos meeting of 1951 entitled *Man and time* (Campbell 1957). Its twelve contributions, including papers by Eliade, Jung, and Erich Neumann, conclude with an essay by G. van der Leeuw on "Primordial time and final time." These few references to contemporary writings will suffice to underline the claim that the problem of religion, time, and history is one uppermost in the minds of many scholars.

*History writing in Japan.* Japanese historiography has its own unique development. Japan derived both her first impulse toward historical writing and the medium of its expression from the Chinese. Histories no longer extant are reputed to date from the time of Prince Shōtoku. The oldest extant histories are the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon shoki* (720), the latter being the first of a series of six official histories known as *rikkokushi*.

This type of official court-appointed and committee-executed history came to an end in 901. Subsequently there arose a new type of history writing called *rekishi monogatari* ("historical tales"). Works of this type were written by individuals rather than by official committees, the scope of their interests moved beyond the imperial court, and they reflected a more sophisticated literary style than the older histories. This genre includes such works as the *Eiga monogatari*, *Ōkagami*, *Imakagami*, and *Mizukagami*. Another closely related type of history writing was the *senki monogatari* or war tale. This class includes such works as the *Heike monogatari*, *Hōgen monogatari*, and *Heiji monogatari*.

The *Gukanshō*, the primary focus of this study, represents a new departure in Japanese historiography. It is the first of several major *shiron* or interpretive histories, works written from a self-conscious religious perspective. Written by Fujiwara Jien (1155-1225), Japan's first great historian, the *Gukanshō* is Buddhist in outlook. As such it can be classified with the *Jinnō shōtōki* by Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293-1354), which reflects a Shinto world view, and the *Tokushi yoron* by Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), which is Confucian in orientation. What characterizes these *shiron*, whatever their sectarian viewpoint, is the desire to express a religious concern and message through the medium of history.

#### GUKANSHŌ

*Technical considerations.* The *Gukanshō* [Some modest views]<sup>1</sup> is an anonymous work consisting of seven chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 are simply a chronological record of the imperial line from

1. *Gu* means "foolish" or "humble," *kan* "drunken talk" or "ramblings," and *shō* "compend" or "written account." Literally, then, and in accordance with a contemporary convention calling for demonstrative humility in titular form, *Gukanshō* would mean "a written account of foolish random comments"—or as Rahder once put it, "Miscellany of personal views of an ignorant fool" (1936). But in order to avoid tortuous literalism that makes for an impression of flowery quaintness and in order to suggest something close to the author's intention, the title has here been rendered "some modest views."

the first emperor, Jinmu, to the eighty-sixth, Gohorikawa, who reigned from 1221 to 1232. Chapters 3 through 6, the body of the text, present a narrative account of Japanese history from the first emperor through the eighty-fourth, that is, from the seventh century B.C. to the year 1219. Chapter 7 is an appendix containing some of the author's theoretical presuppositions for his history and more personal comments on the meaning of Japanese history.

The *Gukanshō* has been the object of much research and some controversy in the modern period. Focal issues include textual criticism, authorship, and dating, not to mention the occasion and purpose of the work.

Problems of textual criticism need not detain us here. For our purpose it is sufficient to indicate that the text used in this study is the one published by Okami and Akamatsu in 1967 in the series entitled *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* [Library of Japanese classics].

Soon after its appearance, Fujiwara Jien (of whom more below) was generally recognized as the author, but toward the end of the Tokugawa period, the question of authorship was raised anew. Not until 1921, in an article by Miura Hiroyuki entitled "Gukanshō no kenkyū" [*Gukanshō* studies], was it conclusively established that Jien was the author.

Modern scholars have put forward numerous suggestions concerning the date of composition, but no consensus has been reached and perhaps the question can never be finally settled. It is agreed by all that the *Gukanshō* was written between 1219 and 1224, but opinions vary as to whether it was written before or after the Jōkyū insurrection of 1221. Most scholars opt for a pre-insurrection date,<sup>2</sup> and this is the view adopted in this paper for reasons that will become clear later. The writing of the *Gukanshō* probably began, then, in 1219, the bulk of it ap-

2. The clearest and most recent statement of this view is to be found in Ishida (1966).

*Gukanshō* thought has been most extensively and creatively discussed by

parently having been completed by 1220. A few additions were made between 1221 and the author's death in 1225.

*The author.* Fujiwara Jien (1155-1225),<sup>3</sup> posthumously known as Jichin Kashō or Abbot Jichin, served as chief abbot of the Tendai Enryakuji temple for an unprecedented four terms. He was a prominent member of the leading branch of the Fujiwara family and counted nine relatives among the regents<sup>4</sup> who served during his lifetime. The fact that the last two centuries of the Heian period are known as the Fujiwara period symbolizes the influence exercised by this family at that juncture. Jien not only carried Fujiwara blood in his veins and lived amidst the power and glory of the Fujiwaras but also, as a historian, viewed the role of the Fujiwara family as integral to the true movement of Japanese history.

Jien's Tendai Buddhist background instilled in him two beliefs that strongly influenced his writing of the *Gukanshō*. The first was his conviction that one of the main purposes of Buddhism was to serve as protector of the state. Since the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, it was a generally recognized ideal that the monastic community would work and pray for the throne and state and that the throne would aid and assist the monastic community, neither party usurping the prerogatives of the other. Though this relationship was often perverted for personal, political, or military gain, Jien still believed strongly in this ideal

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Muraoka Tsunetsugu in several articles and essays including his *Nihon shisōshi kenkyū* [Studies in the history of Japanese thought] (1935) and *Nihon shisōshijō no shomondai* [Problems in the history of Japanese thought] (1957). Muraoka has done more than any other single scholar to emphasize the importance of the *Gukanshō* and highlight the philosophical issues it raises.

3. Two biographies of Jien have appeared: one by Tsukudo (1942) and a more recent and superior one by Taga (1968).
4. The word "regent" is the English translation used in place of two Japanese words, *sesshō* and *kanpaku*. *Sesshō* designated a regent for an emperor who had not yet reached his majority, and *kanpaku* specified the regent for an adult emperor. These offices were the exclusive prerogative of the Fujiwara family from the time Yoshifusa became the first *sesshō* (858) until the time of Jien.

and labored hard to restore the proper relationship between Buddhism and the state.

The second influential Buddhist belief was the pessimistic view of time and history known as *mappō* thought.<sup>5</sup> From the eleventh century and even earlier, this world view was practically all-pervasive among historians, religious leaders, politicians, and the general population. Jien himself accepted *mappō* thought as a true and self-evident description of the times. Its main meaning for him was that the overall movement of history was downward and that the degenerate present was a decline from a past golden age.

In addition to his identity as a Fujiwara and a Buddhist, Jien self-consciously saw himself as a Japanese. He drank deeply of the age-old belief in the sacred and inviolate nature of the Japanese land, people, state, and throne. For Jien the sacred place was Japan, the sacred people were the Japanese, the sacred ruler was the emperor, and the sacred community was the nation. In connection with the sacrality of the nation, Kitagawa suggests that the Japanese "always accepted, implicitly at any rate, the notion that the meaning of their human existence was integrally related to the well-being of the divine land and the sacred national community" (1968, p. 309). He also speaks of the Japanese nation state as a "communal manifestation of the sacred, i.e., a hierophany" (1968, p. 309). It was this under-

5. *Mappō* thought is based on the Buddhist idea that the world cycle following the nirvana of Sakyamuni involved three ages. The first, *shōbō* or "true dharma," was a "golden age" in which the dharma was known and followed to perfection. The second, *zōhō* or "imitation dharma," was a "silver age" when the dharma was adhered to in externals only, its inner spirit and meaning having been lost. The third, *mappō* or "last-days dharma," was an "iron age" in which the dharma was completely lost in both its outward forms and inner meaning.

There were various chronological schemes for the three ages, but the most common one in Japan was: (1) *shōbō*, 1,000 years, (2) *zōhō*, 1,000 years, and (3) *mappō*, 10,000 years. It was generally accepted in Japan that *mappō* began in A.D. 1052 or 2,000 years after the Buddha's nirvana (which took place, according to Chinese calculations, in 949 B.C.).

standing of the sacrality of Japan as a religious community that moved Jien to make the subject of his religious history the Japanese nation rather than Buddhism or the Tendai sect.

Like the great Kamakura reformers such as Hōnen, Shinran, Eisai, Dōgen, and Nichiren, Jien had a religious message to proclaim in that revolutionary period of Japanese history, but the vehicle of his message assumed a form different from theirs. His was a history of Japan or, more precisely, an interpretation of that history. He chose this medium because he believed that history was the most adequate and clearcut mode of the appearance of the absolute and of man's apprehension of and conformity to the movement of that absolute. For him the real events of history constituted the most unambiguous sphere in which life's problems, meaning, purpose, and direction could be seen. In order to recommend a certain policy to Japan's political leaders, Jien supported and elucidated this view with a history of Japan from the first emperor to his own day. Writing this long history was not undertaken as an academic exercise or simply as record for posterity. It was written for the purpose of resolving a contemporary crisis Jien felt as critical to the very existence of the nation.

#### DŌRI

*General sense of the term.* Jien believed that he saw a thread running through Japanese history, a thread that gave continuity, direction, purpose, and meaning to the whole. This thread he calls *dōri*.

*Dōri* is a Japanese word constituted by the two Chinese characters *tao* (道) and *li* (理). Central concepts in early Chinese thought, both were later adopted by Buddhism and finally attained their highest expression in the Sung revival of Confucianism. *Tao* means "way" and *li* "reason" or "principle." In combination they are usually translated "reason."

Basically the term *dōri* has two meanings. One is metaphysical, in which context it refers to the reason, principle, or law that

constitutes all reality. The other is ethical, signifying the true or proper way a person should act.

*Dōri* can refer, then, to what *is* as well as to what *ought to be*. Both uses appear in the *Gukanshō*, but the key to Jien's understanding of *dōri* is a third usage unique to the *Gukanshō*, namely, its application to the interpretation of history.

*Dōri as an interpretive category.* Jien historicized *dōri* in that its primary meaning for him lay not in its metaphysical or ethical implications but in the historical dimension. *Dōri* is to be seen most clearly, he affirms, in its movement and change throughout the course of Japanese history. Consequently, Jien never refers to *dōri* in the *Gukanshō* except in some particular historical context.

History, moreover, he took with great seriousness because he saw change as the essence of *dōri*, *dōri* as the essence of change. Concerning this historical understanding of *dōri*, Nakamura writes:

The *Gukanshō*...often uses the word "reason," which by no means signifies the universal reason that applies to any country of the world, but which means each of the historical manifestations of reason peculiar to Japan. The historical manifestations, where political and religious factors are closely entangled, are not analyzed from a universal standpoint, but are classified according to the particular periods of development (1964, p. 396).

To these periods we must turn shortly, but first it is important to take note of how *dōri* relates to Jien's motivation in writing the *Gukanshō*.

*Dōri understanding.* Jien's basic motive in writing the *Gukanshō* was, as he writes in several places, "to make *dōri* known." In accordance with Buddhist tradition he accepts the presupposition that man's fundamental problem is ignorance and that the solution consists of gaining knowledge or enlightenment. His unique contribution in the *Gukanshō*, however, is to characterize that

knowledge as historical.

Neither speculative nor metaphysical, neither an intuitive awakening nor a paradoxical *satori* experience, this knowledge is very practically rooted in Japanese man's historical existence. The knowledge Jien was concerned to communicate was to be seen most clearly, if not exclusively, in the history of the Japanese nation. He wrote the *Gukanshō* to help people, especially the nation's leaders, understand the movement of *dōri* through Japanese history and thus to shape a desirable future. To understand history implied an understanding of the pattern and direction of the changes, contingencies, and movements in the sweep of events.

#### DŌRI IN JAPANESE HISTORY

In chapters 3 through 6 of the *Gukanshō*, Jien divides Japanese history into seven periods according to the particular character of *dōri* in each. In chapter 7 he characterizes each period in a précis. These characterizations may serve to introduce the seven periods as Jien saw them.

*Period one.* "This marks the beginning of the time when *dōri*, clearly understood as *dōri*, was dominant and when the noumenal and phenomenal worlds were in complete agreement. This period embraced, did it not, the first thirteen reigns beginning with Emperor Jinmu" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 325).<sup>6</sup>

One of the most important reigns of this period was that of the second emperor, Suizei (r. 581-49 B.C.). It illustrates the *dōri* of a younger son who kills his elder brother and assumes the throne in his place because of the evil nature of the first son. Another exemplification of this *dōri* is the action of two brothers, each deferring to the other and insisting in humility that the other assume the throne. Jien admits that the murder of an heir to the throne would normally be considered an evil deed,

6. The reign dates traditionally ascribed to Jinmu are 660-585 B.C., those to Seimu, the thirteenth emperor, A.D. 131-90.

but he holds that it would have been a greater evil to allow a wicked person to sit on the throne when a more virtuous member of the imperial family was available.

The first element of *dōri* in Japanese history is for the imperial lineage to remain unbroken. Where there is a choice, however, between two members of the imperial family, one evil and one virtuous, Jien affirms that even murder is permissible to prevent the throne from falling into the hands of an evil emperor.

*Period two.* Jien's characterization of the second period is more critical. In this period "the people of the phenomenal world, unable to understand the movement of the *dōri* [either] of the noumenal [or] of the phenomenal world, could not tell front from back or heads from tails. They could neither recognize good as good nor clearly identify evil as evil. This period ran, did it not, from Emperor Chūai to Emperor Kinmei" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 325).<sup>7</sup>

The decline of *dōri* in the second period is most clearly marked by the fact that the thirteenth emperor had no son. The fourteenth emperor, Chūai, was the grandson of the twelfth emperor. Following Chūai's death, his empress and a fifth generation descendant of the ninth emperor assumed the throne. Jien notes, therefore, that the second period introduces a kind of *dōri* in which the throne is occupied by relatives other than sons and by females as well as males. The second period decline may be summarized as consisting of the loss of exclusive imperial succession from father to son, the appearance of female rulers, gradually shortened reigns of emperors, the use of ministers to aid the emperors, the difficulty of locating imperial descendants to assume the throne, and a general increase in wickedness both in government and among the common people.

*Period three.* "Even though all people in the phenomenal world

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7. The reign dates ascribed to Chūai are A.D. 192-200, to Kinmei 539-71.

thought that their actions were according to *dōri*, it was a *dōri* that was not in keeping with the mind of the various kami and buddhas of the noumenal world. This was a situation in which people thought that their acts were good, but without fail they finally had to admit that they had been wrong and repent. At that time people who thought they had been living by *dōri* later reconsidered and came to realize that this was not the case. This period runs, does it not, from Emperor Bidatsu to Regent Michinaga at the time of Emperor Goichijō" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 325).<sup>8</sup>

Two paradigmatic events of considerable importance occurred toward the end of the second period, events that provide a key to understanding the third. One was the introduction of Buddhism, the other the life of Prince Shōtoku. Jien devotes much attention to Shōtoku and Soga Umako, portraying them as models for later rulers and ministers, leaders who by protecting Buddhism actually assured the preservation of the state. Umako's murders of Mononobe Moriya, an opponent of Buddhism, and of Emperor Sushun, a wicked ruler (r. 587-92), are justified by Jien as being according to *dōri*, that is, the *dōri* by which Buddhism protects the state.

One significant change in the *dōri* of the third period is the extensive use of ministers and regents—of the Fujiwara family—to support and assist the emperors in ruling. Kamatari (614-69), founding ancestor of the Fujiwara family, aided Empress Kōgyoku (r. 642-45), killed Soga Iruka who attempted to set his family on the throne, and cooperated with the future emperor Tenchi (r. 668-71) in the Taika Reforms of 645. This marks the beginning of a long history of Fujiwara assistance to the throne through various political leaders, regents, and imperial wives and mothers.

Jien emphasizes the following elements as central to the *dōri* of the third period: only imperial family members (even though

8. Bidatsu is said to have reigned from 572-75, Goichijō from 1016-36. Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027) was de facto regent from 995 to 1017.

infants) occupy the throne; members of the Fujiwara family serve as regents, especially to preserve the throne when titular emperors were infants or again weak or evil; regents help choose the most capable candidates for the throne; the necessity of regents because of the short reigns and rapid turnover of emperors; and the mythical and moral sanction for the Fujiwara regency.<sup>9</sup>

*Period four.* Jien continues: "At that time when one thought that proper steps were being taken in the government and that he and other people were living by good *dōri*, wise sages came forward and told the people that their actions were not in accord with *dōri*. When this was done, the people revised their ideas, saying, 'Yes, truly that is the way.' This was the basic and fundamental *dōri* of those people in the last days of this age. This period ran, did it not, from Regent Yorimichi to Emperor Toba" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 325).<sup>10</sup>

Though this period witnessed the apex of Fujiwara power and glory in the persons of Michinaga and Yorimichi, two events occurred that presaged the decline of Fujiwara supremacy and the beginning of a sea change in Japanese history. These two events were the initiation of the system of rule by a retired em-

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9. For the most part Jien makes little use of stories of the kami age as found in the *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki*. The *Gukanshō* is properly a history of human rather than divine events. He does utilize, however, the kami age stories in which Ameno Koyane, the kami age ancestor of the Fujiwara family, is appointed protector and aide to Amaterasu Ōmikami, the imperial ancestress (see Philippi 1968, pp. 82-83, 85, 139-40). This is the mythical model legitimating the Fujiwara family's service as regents to the throne.

The moral sanction for this arrangement was based on what Jien saw as three noble deeds by which the Fujiwara family did in fact preserve the imperial line, namely: (1) Kamatari's punishment of Soga Iruka, (2) Nagata and Momokawa's setting Kōnin on the throne, and (3) Motosune's setting Kōkō on the throne (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 329).

10. Yorimichi's service as regent extended from 1017 to 1068. Toba reigned as titular emperor from 1107 to 1123.

peror (the *insei* system)<sup>11</sup> and the rise of the provincial warriors. Both weakened the *dōri* model found in the second and third periods, namely, imperial rule with the assistance of Fujiwara regents. Relationships among titular emperor, retired but ruling emperor, regent, and warriors, once harmonious and cooperative, now gave way to dissension, hatred, and strife. The fourth period ended in 1156 with the Hōgen rebellion in which this enmity broke out into open warfare.

*Periods five and six.* Since the fifth and sixth periods overlap chronologically, Jien's characterizations can conveniently be treated together. Of period five he says, "From the beginning of this period, two factions were in dispute. The two sides argued vigorously, and opinions oscillated between the two. Since there is only one *dōri*, it was the *dōri* executed by the winning side that was the real one. Even though people lacked any basic understanding of *dōri*, when a fine and virtuous ruler appeared, it was according to *dōri* to adopt him. This period ran, did it not, to the 'warrior age' of Yoritomo" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, pp. 325-26).<sup>12</sup>

He continues with a summary statement about period six: "Thus it was difficult to differentiate between right and wrong according to *dōri*. As the two sides disputed or simply remained in an unresolved state, one side finally prevailed, and actions were taken in accordance with the decisions of that side. But

11. According to Jien, the *insei* system was started by Emperor Gosanjō (r. 1068–72). Under this system, a reigning emperor would retire and set a younger or weaker heir on the throne, but continue, with his advisors, to hold and exercise power. It was employed most successfully by four emperors: Shirakawa (r. 1072–86; *insei* rule, 1086–1129), Toba (r. 1107–23; *insei* rule, 1129–56), Goshirakawa (r. 1155–58; *insei* rule, 1158–92), and Gotoba (r. 1183–98; *insei* rule, 1198–1221). Mainly an attempt to bypass the power of the Fujiwara regents, the *insei* system naturally incurred Jien's disapproval (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, pp. 188–89).
12. Minamoto Yoritomo (b. 1147), though not formally appointed generalissimo (*sei'i tai shōgun*) until 1192, actually held extensive powers from 1180 till the time of his death, caused by a fall from a horse, in 1199.

these actions were based on evil thoughts and intentions arising out of self-interest. Non-*dōri* was wickedly put forth as *dōri*, and this evil *dōri* was considered good *dōri*. All this was the false *dōri* that moves through the various ages of this world and declines in this degenerate age. This period covers, does it not, the time from Emperor Goshirakawa to the present retired but ruling emperor, Gotoba" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 326).<sup>13</sup>

During the fifth and sixth periods, the nation and government were locked in a polarizing struggle. This polarization entailed four sets of tension: (1) between the Taira family and the throne-regency, (2) between the Taira and Minamoto families, (3) between Yoritomo, Yoshinaka, and Yoshitsune within the Minamoto family, and (4) the court struggle in 1196 between the Kujō and Konoe branches of the Fujiwara family. By the end of these periods the Taira family had been completely annihilated by the Minamoto family, Yoritomo had killed both Yoshinaka and Yoshitsune and reigned supreme within the Minamoto family, and the Konoe family exercised the office of regent.

*Period seven.* The final period elicits the following characterization by Jien: "In this period people simply make and carry out plans with no understanding whatever of *dōri*, whether for themselves or for others. They just act in accordance with whatever they encounter, never pausing for reflection. This *dōri* is like a person with worms who, not feeling sick, drinks water to quench his thirst, whereupon he falls ill and dies. That is the *dōri* of the present age. Is it not the case, therefore, that nothing now exists that can be called *dōri*?" (Okami and Akamatsu 1967, p. 326).

In Kamakura a power struggle followed Yoritomo's death, but by 1205 Sanetomo was shogun and power lay in the hands of Yoritomo's widow, Masako, and her brother, Hōjō Yoshitoki. In Kyoto the *insei* emperor Gotoba held power in the court, and the Konoe and Kujō branches of the Fujiwara family shared the

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13. See note 11.

non-imperial political offices.

Jien recognized that the *dōri* of this period was different from that of any other and that one of the new elements was that it had now become essential for warriors to exercise roles in the functioning of government. One evidence of the lack of understanding of *dōri* by the rulers was that Gotoba and his advisors felt that the warriors should be defeated and full power returned to the throne. It was this mistaken notion that led to the Jōkyū insurrection of 1221, resulting in the complete defeat of the throne by the warriors.<sup>14</sup>

Jien devotes much attention to the *dōri* of his own day, for, as already noted, his intention in writing the *Gukanshō* was to make the course of *dōri* known so that the current leaders of the nation would conform to *dōri* in their decisions.

The *dōri* of the present focused, in his view, on two boys, Chūkyō and Yoritsune. With them, Jien believed, lay the only hope for the recovery of the nation. Both were born in 1218. Chūkyō, the fourth son of Emperor Juntoku and Tachiko, Jien's grand-niece, was heir-apparent to the throne. Yoritsune, Jien's great-grandnephew, was the Minamoto heir and presumptive shogun. Both, then, were only about two years old when Jien started the *Gukanshō*. He envisaged these two boys, both of whom had Fujiwara blood in their veins, as growing up to become emperor and shogun respectively, ruling the country cooperatively as emperors and Fujiwara regents had done in the past. Jien envisaged, that is, the development of a pattern for the coming decades that would accommodate what was new in the situation but establish a new order inspired by the model of past emperor-regent cooperation. What made this a new

14. In the Jōkyū insurrection, the *insei* emperor Gotoba, in his desire to regain political control, declared the military government in rebellion and attacked it. The warriors quickly defeated the imperial forces and tightened their grip on the government. Three retired emperors and the reigning emperor were deposed, and a new emperor was chosen by the warriors. Jien feared that Emperor Gotoba's anti-*bakufu* attitude would lead to a catastrophic end of this kind. It was to prevent such an eventuality that he wrote the *Gukanshō*.

historical situation was that Yoritsune would be responsible not only for the military government but for civilian affairs as well. As a Fujiwara he would combine the regent and shogun roles within his own person, thus providing both continuity with the past and new possibilities for the future.<sup>15</sup>

#### GUIDING PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

One of the most significant elements in Jien's historical understanding of *dōri* was his refusal to reject, destroy, escape from, or transcend the temporal and historical dimension of life. His view of history steers a course between a rejection of history as ephemeral or ultimately unreal and an absolutization of history that would transform it from outside the phenomenal world. He finds meaning and purpose in history in contrast to those who would deny that the realm of temporality and change can support absolute values and also in contrast to those who see history's meaning as dependent on the act of a transcendent deity. Jien takes history with radical seriousness and attempts to find religious meaning in contingency and change without denying or negating their reality. He refuses to accept as the religious meaning of history any non-, pre-, or post-historical dimension. He goes to the extent of historicizing the metaphysical concept of *dōri*, of claiming that it both participates in history and yet gives history its meaning.

How are we to understand this unique way of interpreting history in thirteenth century Japan? Jien provides a few clues, but never specifically identifies the philosophical framework of

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15. Yoritsune, though proclaimed shogun in 1226 (at age 8), was actually little more than a puppet in the hands of the Hōjō regents. He was deposed in 1244. Chūkyō became titular emperor at the age of three, but was deposed as a result of the Jōkyū insurrection. His reign lasted only from April to July 1221.

The *dōri* pattern projected by Jien was feasible only as long as Chūkyō and Yoritsune remained candidates for or occupants of high office. The fact that this was no longer the case after July 1221 constitutes a strong argument for the pre-insurrection composition of the *Gukanshō*.

his thought. Published results of recent research into Heian and Kamakura Buddhist thought make it possible, however, to offer a few tentative suggestions. The work of Tamura Yoshirō on Tendai *hongaku* thought (1961, 1973) and the related concept of “absolute phenomenism” articulated by Nakamura Hajime (1964) are particularly helpful in this regard.

*Hongaku thought.* Professor Tamura has clearly demonstrated the importance of *hongaku* thought in Buddhist philosophy, especially during the Kamakura period. He has also shown how the two streams of Kegon and Tendai thought were mutually influential in producing this philosophical notion. Though one must be careful not to read too much into the *Gukanshō*, it is possible to perceive strong influences from this type of thought in Jien’s view of history.

*Hongaku* meant, at first, “original enlightenment,” but in time its meaning was extended to refer to an original oneness or absolute monism. This was, however, a monism that recognized the reality not only of the one but also of the many, the concrete phenomenal manifestations of the one in time and space. In the actual appearances of things truth and reality live, and this truth and reality are to be found nowhere else. This way of thinking is totally affirmative of things *as they are* (*ari no mama*). It led to such notions as that evil and falsehood can be viewed as part of the buddha nature and affirmed as they are. It was this thought that led the sixth Tendai patriarch, Tannen, to affirm the buddhahood of plants and even of every speck of dust.

Tamura suggests that after the time of Hōnen (d. 1212), Buddhists took a fresh look at monistic *hongaku* thought, contrasting it with the dualistic thought of Hōnen. In addition, the newly powerful warriors or *bushi*, following their success in the Jōkyū insurrection (1221), emphasized a positive approach to reality more in keeping with the this-worldly concern of the new order. This is seen as a movement from a denial of reality to an affirmation thereof (Tamura 1973, p. 548).

This mode of thought makes understandable the fact that Jien could view Yoritomo in a positive light and urge a policy of co-operation between *bushi* and throne, basing his recommendation on acceptance of the reality of the *bushi* world. It also makes understandable his willingness, distinctive among historians of his age, to write about evil and degenerate events as well as positive and felicitous occurrences. For Jien, history as the dynamic working of the buddha nature included the evil as well as the good.

Though in a rather limited way, Tamura relates *hongaku* thought to the concepts of time and history. He points out that an instant of time is a realization of eternity and that the appearance of reality is the living form of eternal truth and reality (1973, p. 482). Elsewhere he equates the *hongaku* view of time and history with the notion of the "eternal now" (*eien no ima*). Thus he writes (1973, pp. 530-31):

Just as the waves of the sea—yesterday's waves and today's—are one, so the thought of the three ages is one thought. The sun-moon of eternity, today's sun-moon, and the sun-moon of the future are all one sun-moon. There is no distinction as to beginning, duration, or end. One cannot distinguish between eternity and the present. To state it positively, eternity is the present moment.

It is also in this context that he refers to the "pulsation of eternity" (*eien no myakudō*) and the "absolute instant of eternity" (*zettai shunkan no eien*) (Tamura 1973, pp. 530-31).

These concepts find further explication in the work of Nakamura Hajime.

*Absolute phenomenalism.* The world view underlying or implied by *hongaku* thought has its philosophical basis in what Nakamura calls "absolute phenomenalism" (1964, p. 351; cf. Chang 1971). This philosophical position rests on the idea of the unity of all reality. On this view the noumenal and phenomenal, absolute and relative, temporal and eternal are all equally real. The one absolute, called buddha nature or thusness, is present in all

things, and both the absolute and the phenomena in and through which it appears are taken as real. The absolute cannot be separated from or known apart from the relative realm of phenomena. This leads to the denial of anything said to exist over and above the phenomenal world. "Enlightenment" refers to the understanding of things within the phenomenal realm, not the ultimate comprehension of what lies beyond.

The historical realm, therefore, is no less real than the non-historical. Historical events are not lacking in the ontological reality that might be posited of some non-historical dimension.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most salient aspects of this absolute phenomenalism is its *dynamic* character. Thus Nakamura can speak of Dōgen's "unique philosophy of time, according to which the ever-changing, incessant temporal flux is identified with ultimate being itself" (1964, p. 353).<sup>17</sup>

Absolute phenomenalism, then, emphasizes not only the indispensability of the phenomenal realm as the sole context for the knowledge of thusness but also the dynamic character of absolute reality.

*Crystallization in dōri.* Absolute phenomenalism in the form of *hongaku* thought shaped, I suggest, the intellectual climate within which Jien developed his idea of *dōri*. The process of change, the realm of temporality, and the movement of history are aspects of this absolute dynamism. Change, time, and history contain within themselves the life-giving and meaning-filled vitalism for the evolving and flowering of the absolute. Every-

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16. Takakusu emphasizes the inseparability of noumenon and phenomenon when he writes, "Through these manifestations of Thusness or phenomena we can see the true state. Nay, these manifestations *are* the true state. There is no noumenon besides phenomenon; phenomenon itself is noumenon" (1956, p. 135, emphasis in original).

17. This dynamic character is also one of Takakusu's themes: "The true state of things cannot be seen directly or immediately. We must see it in the phenomena which are ever changing and becoming. Thus the true state is dynamic" (1956, p. 137).

thing emanates from the absolute buddha nature which is the source of all being. To be more exact, the process of unfolding is itself the absolute. The absolute buddha nature is active, dynamic, and at work to bring everything, all classes of humans as well as animate and inanimate things, to perfection.

Jien's concept of *dōri* as a historical principle is in keeping with this mode of thought. The world of time, history, and the course of historical events are all part of the phenomenal world that is "absolutely real." A concept of *dōri* as reason or truth apart from or above the phenomenal world is inconceivable to Jien. Just as every speck of dust is the buddha nature, so every individual historical event and occurrence is absolute in itself. The dichotomy between absolute and relative, eternal and temporal, static and dynamic, permanent and ephemeral is transcended in Jien's *dōri*, for here the relative is as absolute as the absolute is relative, the temporal as eternal as the eternal is temporal, the static as dynamic as the dynamic is static, and permanence as changeable as change is permanent. The result is that historical events, both in their particularity and in their totality, are taken with radical seriousness, not as mere isolated, individual events but as part of an unfolding pattern of deeper meaning.

It appears, therefore, that it was under the influence of, or at least in congruity with, the principle of absolute phenomenalism of which *hongaku* thought is one formulation that Jien carried out his purpose of making *dōri* known, not as an interesting intellectual exercise, but in order that the sacred national community might be saved.

#### GLOSSARY

ARAI Hakuseki 新井白石  
*bushi* 武士  
*dōri* 道理  
FUJIWARA Jien 藤原慈和円

*hongaku* 本覚  
*insei* 院政  
Jichin Kashō 慈鎮尚  
*Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記

<i>kanpaku</i> 関白	<i>senki monogatari</i> 戦記物語
KITABATAKE Chikafusa 北畠親房	<i>sesshō</i> 摂政
<i>mappō</i> 末法	<i>shiron</i> 史論
<i>rekishi monogatari</i> 歴史物語	<i>shōbō</i> 正法
<i>rikkokushi</i> 六国史	<i>Tokushi yoron</i> 読史余論
<i>sei'i tai shōgun</i> 征夷大將軍	<i>zōhō</i> 像法

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