



The History of the Empire of Japan

Frank Brinkley

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This book looks at the history of the Japanese empire up through the late 19th century. From the preface: "In the following pages the administrative and political events from the founding of the empire will be divided into three great series, or periods.

The First Period, commencing with the birth of imperialism, covers the ages during which the Sovereign and the Administration were one. Speaking accurately, however, this period includes not only eras when administrative orders actually emanated from the Emperor, but also eras during which powerful families, like those of Oomi and Omuraji, controlled administrative affairs ; eras when the reins of state were restored to the Sovereign, and eras when they passed into the hands of regents and prime ministers ; eras when the administrative authority was exercised by the Throne, and eras when it was exercised by military nobles. But these minor distinctions are merged in the fact that throughout the period the power of Imperialism was paramount and the mandates of the Sovereign were effective in all parts of the realm.

The Second Period is that during which the administrative power was wielded by military nobles ; in other words, the period of military autocracy. This period commences with the time when the Minamoto chieftain, Yoritomo, established a Shogunate at Kamakura, and concludes with the time when, Tokugawa having restored the administration to the Sovereign, the Edo Shogunate came to an end. During this period, the families controlling administrative affairs underwent many vicissitudes and the possession of the Shogunate often changed, but the general character of the national polity was feudal, and the repositories of administrative power were all military nobles. Hence the whole series of events is here included in one period.

The Third Period is the modern era of Meiji. It is the period when administrative power has reverted to the Emperor ; when the Constitution has been promulgated ; when the Diet has been opened ; when representative institutions have wholly replaced autocratic ; when the ancient aspect of all things has been metamorphosed. Therefore it is here regarded as the Third Period.

In the Occident, it is customary to divide the period of a nation's history into ancient, mediaeval, and modern. This method has of late begun to come into vogue in Japan also. It is doubtless a suitable method in the case of other countries. But in Japan the salient incidents of history do not lend themselves to the adoption of such a system of division. Therefore it is not followed in the compilation of these annals."

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