

grass cutters and firewood gatherers, still may not be rejected; while anything that is said that is wrong, even if it comes from princes or marquises, great ministers or chancellors, may certainly not be tolerated. Counsel that is worthy of attention [should be looked at] without criticizing [its authors] over their precise details; policies that are fit for use should be adopted without demanding eloquence of style from their authors. . . .

For this reason, the loyal will express what is in their hearts to the last drop, and the wise will present their policies in their entirety. Ministers will not block off the true situation from [the ruler] above; and the prince will be able to spread his light everywhere over [his subjects] below. . . .

*Note: The sections deleted here deal with Flatterers, Guarding against Excess, Frugality, Rewards and Punishments, Agriculture, and War.*⁶⁵

Section Twelve: Honoring Learning

"After victory has been obtained, music should be performed: when government has been established, the rites should be set up.⁶⁶ The rise of the rites and music takes learning as its basis. To broaden customs and to guide common practices, nothing excels written literature (*wen*). To propagate instruction and teach the people, nothing is better than study.⁶⁷ By following written culture one makes the Way resplendent; by making use of study one can make oneself glorious. Unless you have looked down into a deep ravine you cannot know the thickness of the earth.⁶⁸ If you have not roamed around in literature, you will not recognize the well-springs of wisdom." . . .

[Postface]

These twelve matters provide the grand outline for an emperor or king. His safety and peril, success or destruction, all depend on these things! The ancients had a saying, "It is not that knowing is difficult, only that putting it into practice is not easy."⁶⁹ Putting it into practice can be achieved with hard effort, but it is only bringing it to a conclusion that is truly difficult. For this reason, even violent and misgoverning rulers do not have a clear understanding of only the paths of evil. Can saintly and wise lords only be seen following the path of

65. For a complete, annotated translation, see Twitchett, "How to Be an Emperor."

66. *Liji* 17, "Yueji," Legge, vol. 2, pp. 101–102.

67. *Liji* 16, "Xueji," Legge, vol. 2, p. 82.

68. *Xunzi* 1:2, Quansue; Knoblock, trans., *Xunzi* 1, pp. 135–136.

69. Legge, "Yueji," *The Chinese Classics* 2, D. 208.

goodness? This is truly because the great Way is distant and hard to follow, while the path of evil is close at hand and easy to tread upon. Inferior men all submissively follow the easy option, and are unable to make the effort to follow the difficult path. As a result misfortune and disaster come upon them. The true gentleman makes great exertions to keep himself on the difficult path, and is unable to run away [from the trouble this involves] and take up the easy option. As a result good fortune and felicities flow to him. Hence we know that "misfortune and good fortune have no particular gate by which they must enter. Each man calls in the one or the other for himself."⁷⁰ If you wish to show regret for wrongs you have committed in the past, simply be careful about faults you may commit in the future. . . .

You yourself have not yet the slightest positive achievement; you are only following on the foundation (laid by your grandfather and father) and inheriting their felicities. If you venerate the good so as to broaden your virtue, then your reign will be a great one, and you yourself will enjoy peace. But if you give rein to your feelings so as to indulge in wrong-doing, then your reign will end in collapse and you yourself will perish.

Moreover, that success comes slowly whereas defeat can come rapidly is at the very foundation of the state. That loss is easy, and gain difficult, is part of the position of Son of Heaven. How can you not regret this! How can you not take great care!

[Adapted from Twitchett, "How to Be an Emperor," pp. 50–92; DT]

THE COMMENTARY ON THE LEGAL CODE (RYŌ NO GIGE)

One of the principal Chinese influences on the thought of early Japan was the legal codes of Tang China. As early as the reign of Emperor Tenchi (668–671), a Japanese code appears to have been compiled, but almost nothing of it remains. The Taihō Code of 701–702, however, continued to be the basic law of Japan until after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. This code directly adopted many Chinese institutions in spite of their unsuitability for the far less developed society of Japan, and an elaborate bureaucracy was organized based on the merit system. But the Taihō Code was not a mere copy of Tang precedents, as new provisions were made for the Shinto priesthood and other peculiarly Japanese institutions.

The laws themselves came to assume an even greater importance for the Japanese than they did for the Chinese and occupied a central place in Japanese thinking for many centuries. The commentary on the legal code of 834 was a successful attempt to interpret the laws and show their significance for Japanese society.

70. Legge, *Zaozhuàn, The Chinese Classics*, Hwang 23, p. 502.

MEMORIAL ON THE SUBMISSION OF THE COMMENTARY
ON THE LEGAL CODE

Your subjects, Natsuno⁷¹ and others, report: the study of the successive rulers of old and the perusal of early writings show that whenever a sovereign assuming the succession mounted the throne, took his position facing south,⁷² and declared himself emperor, decrees were invariably announced and the law proclaimed as the warp and woof of the government of the country. Rites and punishments were also established to serve as a bulwark in the protection of the dynasty. Although, just as dragons and phoenixes differ in their appearance, some rulers favored literary pursuits and others the simple virtues, they all arrived by different roads at the same end of instructing the common people and protecting them.

Your subjects prostrate themselves and state as their considered opinion: Your Majesty, whose way shines to the four quarters and whose virtue surpasses that of all kings, sits impassively in marble halls, a model to the world. Wherever in your domains human society exists, rites and music are in honor; and as far as your powerful influence extends, all men, civilized and barbarian alike, show joyful appreciation. Now Your Majesty, who rises so early he dresses in darkness, lest the conduct of government go amiss, and who neglects eating until it is late because of his concern for the people's happiness, has issued an edict decreeing that experts in law be found. It was your consideration that the interpretations of earlier scholars were at times contradictory; the shallow observations tended to get mixed with the profound; and their merits were difficult to judge.

Your subjects cannot approach Zhang Cang in scholarship or Chen Chong in achievements.⁷³ Mediocre of talent as we are, how great was our honor in accepting your appointment! We have attempted to revise and correct the legal writings, now adding and now deleting. Whenever there were problems which we could not solve, or ambiguities which could not be cleared up, we always looked up to Your Majesty's august rulings for our authority. New times require new laws, which are in the spirit of those of ancient times, but suited to the present. Indeed, these laws will change the ways of thought of the people, and will also serve as a guide for all rulers. The compilation is in ten volumes and is entitled the *Commentary on the Legal Code*. Five years elapsed before the fair copy could be completed and respectfully submitted.

71. Kiyohara no Natsuno (782-837).

72. In the yin-yang cosmology, the ruler's place was in the north, facing south. He was likened to the North Star, to which all the other stars "bow."

73. Zhang Cang (d. 161 B.C.E.) and Chen Chong (d. 107 C.E.) were noted statesmen and lawgivers of the Han dynasty.

Your subjects, Natsuno and others, bow their heads and, with awe and trepidation, offer these words. [January 28, 834].

[From the *Kokushi taiki*, XXII, pp. 348-350]

REGULATIONS FOR FITNESS REPORTS

A merit system of recruitment and promotion was the heart of the imperial bureaucracy in China, and in the following, the Japanese attempt to duplicate it. Eventually, their inability to overcome by these means the strong native tradition of hereditary rank and officeholding completely vitiated the civil service system and, with it, the whole bureaucratic structure.

Fitness reports must be submitted annually by the chief of every department for all civil and military officers under his command in the court or in the provinces. The merits, demerits, conduct, and abilities of all persons for whom reports are made should be recorded in detail so that they may be consulted in classifying the officers into nine grades of merit. The reports must be completed by the thirtieth day of the eighth moon. Reports on officers stationed in the capital or the provinces of the Inner Circuit should be submitted to the Great Council of State by the first day of the tenth moon; reports for officers in other provinces should be submitted not later than the first day of the eleventh moon through the imperial inspectors. Acts of merit or demerit performed after the submission of reports should be entered in the records of the following year. In case a department is without a chief, the fitness reports should be made by a vice chief. . . .

Chiefs of department submitting fitness reports must state only the facts with no interpolations of either favorable or unfavorable material. If a false report results in an unwarranted promotion or demotion or if an officer's actual fitness is concealed so that his rank will be raised or lowered, the reporting officer responsible shall be demoted in accordance with the seriousness of his error. An imperial inspector who promotes or demotes an officer in disregard of his record shall similarly be held responsible.

Merits:

1. When an officer has a reputation for virtue and a sense of duty, it is to be counted as a merit.
2. When an officer's honesty and conscientiousness are evident, they are to be counted as merits.
3. When an officer's devotion to public good and justice arouses praise, it is to be counted as a merit.

4. When an officer performs faithful and diligent service, it is to be counted as a merit.

Articles of Excellence:

- To carry out the festivals and ceremonies of the deities of Heaven and Earth in exact compliance with established procedure is to be counted the excellence of a Shinto official.
- To address memorials in favor of that which is advantageous to the state and against that which is harmful and to discuss government business in accordance with reason are to be counted the excellence of a major counselor.
- To act in strict accord with instructions received and to be clear and fluent of speech are to be counted the excellence of a minor counselor.
- To handle general state business and to dispose of it without delay are to be counted the excellence of a controller.
- To wait in attendance on the emperor and transmit memorials to him and to be prompt in the execution of his duties are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of Central Affairs.
- To evaluate men and to select all those of ability and talent are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of Rites.
- To hold monks and nuns to the teachings of Buddha and to keep registered subjects under control are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of Civil Administration.
- To maintain order among the population and to ensure abundant supplies in the storehouses are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of the Interior.
- To select military officers and to prepare munitions of war are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of Military Affairs.
- To pass judgments without delay and to give rewards or exact punishments justly are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of Justice.
- To be scrupulous in the care of deposits and to be well informed of expenditures and receipts are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of the Treasury.
- To be competent in furnishing provisions and to expedite the management of the various departments of the palace are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Ministry of the Imperial Household.
- To be energetic in investigations and competent in the arraignment of suspects is to be counted the excellence of a censor.
- To promote good manners and morals and to suppress robbery and banditry are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the capital.
- To prepare the imperial meals and to observe faultless cleanliness are to be counted the excellence of a commissioner of food.

- To ensure that music is well harmonized and does not fall into discord is to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Bureau of Music.
- To keep order among monks and nuns and to see to it that aliens are lodged in suitable quarters are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Bureau of Buddhism and Aliens.
- To budget court expenditures and to be accurate in accounting are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Bureau of Statistics.
- To be scrupulous in the care of storehouses and to be well informed about incoming and outgoing shipments are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Bureau of Tax Collection.
- To feed, train, and stable horses and to have grooms available are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Bureau of Horses.
- To dry in the sun or air stores with care and to be well informed about incoming and outgoing shipments are to be counted the excellence of an officer of the Bureau of Military Storehouses.
- To serve in constant attendance at court and to repair omissions and supplement deficiencies are to be counted the excellence of a chamberlain.
- To engage in unremitting supervision and to be accurately informed about all incoming and outgoing property are to be counted the excellence of an inspector official.
- To perform night watch in the palace and to behave in perfect conformity to etiquette are to be counted the excellence of a lord-in-waiting.
- To regulate official business and to see to it that office hours are properly observed are to be counted the excellence of all officers of the secondary rank and above.
- To promote the pure and to remove evildoers and to ensure that praise or censure is properly given are to be counted the excellence of a commissioner of personnel.
- To carry out examinations in a thorough and detailed manner and to be familiar with all types of affairs are to be counted the excellence of a judge.
- To engage unremittingly in public service and to perform one's work without oversights are to be counted the excellence of all officers.
- To be assiduous in keeping records and to examine into failings without glossing over them are to be counted the excellence of a clerk.
- To keep detailed records in model order and to excel both in language and in reasoning are to be counted the excellence of a historian.
- To be clear in the recording of facts and to communicate successfully imperial orders are to be counted the excellence of a palace scribe.
- To be methodical in instruction and to fit students for their work are to be counted the excellence of a learned scholar.
- To be effective in yin-yang divination, astronomy, medicine, and fortune-telling

ulation of their movements are accounted the excellence of a scholar of the calendar.

To supervise markets and shops and to prevent cheating and other forms of deception are accounted the excellence of a markets officer.

To investigate the facts of a case and to reveal their circumstances are accounted the excellence of a constable.

To perform state ceremonies and to maintain suitable military preparation are accounted the excellence of the governor-general of Kyūshū.

To be strict in the administration of all business and to insist on the honesty of his subordinates are accounted the excellence of a provincial governor.

To be impartial in his dealings with local people and accomplished in his official duties are accounted the excellence of an assistant governor.

To keep the coast guard in fighting trim and to have munitions ready for an emergency are accounted the excellence of the coast guards officer.

To be brief in his questions and not to delay travelers unnecessarily is accounted the excellence of a barrier keeper.

An officer who possesses four merits in addition to the excellence suited to his post is to be classified superior, first class.

An officer who possesses three merits in addition to his excellence or who possesses four merits without his excellence, is to be classified superior, second class.

An officer who possesses two merits in addition to his excellence or who possesses three merits without his excellence, is to be classified superior, third class.

An officer who possesses one merit in addition to his excellence or who possesses two merits without his excellence, is to be classified medium, first class.

An officer who possesses his excellence but no merits or who possesses one merit without his excellence, is to be classified medium, second class.

An officer who has a crude competence in his position but possesses neither a merit nor his excellence is to be classified medium, third class.

An officer who indulges in his own likes and dislikes and who is unreasonable in his judgments is to be classified inferior, first class.

An officer who acts against the public interest for personal reasons and fails in his official duties is to be classified inferior, second class.

An officer who flatters and lies or who appears avaricious and dishonest is to be classified inferior, third class.

Special consideration should be given when an officer's record is being reviewed whether he possesses praiseworthy characteristics not covered under the list of merits or excellences or whether, if he is guilty of some offense, there are not extenuating circumstances or whether, if he is technically guiltless, he should nevertheless be condemned.

From the *Kokushi taikō* XXII, pp. 140–1461.

NEW COMPILATION OF THE REGISTER OF FAMILIES

The importance of genealogy in determining claims to sovereignty was demonstrated by the *Records of Ancient Matters* (712 C.E.). The Japanese, who thus stressed the divine descent of the imperial family, were confirmed in this by the Han view of the Mandate of Heaven as conferred not on individuals but on dynasties, which themselves had been provided with genealogies going back to the sage-kings. However, the genre of genealogy, like most forms of early written literature, came from China, in which during the late Six Dynasties period and into the Tang, membership in well-established aristocratic descent groups was an important determinant of social status, marriage alliances, and eligibility for office. For his part, the founder of the Tang dynasty, trying to curb the power of the old aristocracy and strengthen central control, had ordered the compilation of a comprehensive register of genealogies that would define and limit the powers of the old elite. Now, as a similar state-building effort was mounted in Japan and the ruling house attempted, with difficulty, to assert its dominion over the old clans, it too felt the need to order and control genealogical claims. The contents of the following preface recount successive attempts by different emperors to assert this control—reasserted here in *The New Compilation of the Register of Families* (*Shinsen shōji roku*, 815) of the early Heian period.

In the *Register of Families*, the names are divided into three classes: “All descendants of heavenly and earthly deities are designated as the Divine Group; all branches of the families of Emperors and royal princes are called the Imperial Group; and families from China and Korea are called the Alien Group.” It may seem surprising that the “descendants of heavenly and earthly deities” (who must have included a good part of the Japanese population) should have been mentioned before the imperial family. However, since these deities and their protégés had ruled over much of Japan before the rise of the imperial house, their early pride of place could not be denied.

The influx of Korean and Chinese immigrants during the Nara period and earlier had, in some respects, presented a challenge to the Japanese, for the immigrants were clearly superior to the Japanese in their knowledge of the techniques of civilization. The advantage that the Japanese claimed was their descent from the gods, and to this heritage they jealously clung.

PREFACE IN THE FORM OF A MEMORIAL TO EMPEROR SAGA

They say that the Divine Dynasty had its inception when the Grandson of Heaven descended to the land of So⁷⁴ and extended his influence in the West,⁷⁵

74. An ancient name for the southern part of the island of Kyushu and the location of Mount Takachiho where Ninigi, the Grandson of Heaven, made his descent.

75. That is, in Kyushu.

DE BARY,
KEENE, TANABE
& VARLEY,
EDITORS

SOURCES OF JAPANESE
TRADITION
SECOND EDITION, VOLUME 1



VOLUME ONE SOURCES OF
JAPANESE TRADITION
FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO 1600

2001

COMPILED BY WM. THEODORE DE BARY, DONALD KEENE,
GEORGE TANABE, AND PAUL VARLEY

SOURCES OF JAPANESE TRADITION has long been a staple in classrooms and libraries, a handy and comprehensive resource for scholars and students, and an engaging introduction for general readers. Now in its long-awaited second edition, this classic volume remains unrivaled for its wide selection of source readings on history, society, politics, education, philosophy, and religion in the land of the rising sun.

The editors have restructured Volume 1 to span the period from the early Japanese chronicles to the end of the sixteenth century, revised or retranslated most of the texts included in the original 1958 edition, and added a great many not included or translated before. Additions include:

- new readings on early and medieval Shinto and on the tea ceremony,
- new readings on state Buddhism and Chinese political thought influential in Japan, and
- new sections on women's education, medieval innovations in the uses of history, and laws and precepts of the medieval warrior houses.

Together, the selections shed light on the development of Japanese civilization in its own terms. It will help generations of students and lay readers to understand how leaders in intellectual, religious, and political