

*Yushi Nakatsuka, Danji Furukawa*

*Saitama University*

### **JAPANESE EMPEROR TENNO AND YUKIO MISHIMA'S PERSPECTIVE: RECOVERING JAPANESE SENSE OF UNITY AGAIN**

The Japanese royal family is the oldest dynasty in the modern world and the present emperor Naruhito (becoming the 126th emperor of Japan in 2019) is the only emperor in the world today. The royal family lives in the imperial palace in Tokyo and the Japanese emperor is widely supported by Japanese people. It is said that the unbroken line of the royal family from the great Sun Goddess Amaterasu continues to the present emperor from a thousand years ago. However, this idea comes from mythology. In fact, it is not clear when the real first emperor was born in Japan. In historical research, the 13th emperor Nintoku (Circa A.D. 313–399) has been believed to have existed in reality. In actual fact, it could be more reasonably argued that the existence of the first emperor Jinmu (Circa B.C. 711–585), who is regarded a grandson of a god and other mythological gods is more likely than not to be a fictional character. Japanese mythology is not the same as actual history, but it is true that the origin of Japanese royal family is considered to come in large part from such mythology.

In terms of the function of the emperor, they participate in religious services, pray for the happiness of the Japanese people and for the continued peace of the nation. In this respect, the Japanese Emperor is been regarded as being synonymous with the existence of the Japanese public. For example, the Emperor Showa (124th, 1926–1989) asked a close advisor, “It continues to rain. How about the rice plant?” just before his death. The quality of rice plant means people’s life. He was worried about quality of rice plants being grown by farmers in the years than himself. This episode means that even before his death, the emperor Showa had a public presence.

#### **The Characteristics of Japanese Emperors**

A lot of European kings, queens and Chinese emperors in history were willing to kill and sacrifice their people for their own benefit and wealth. Eventually, those kings’ and emperors’ political influence tended to collapse and they were in some cases killed by their family or advisors to be replaced by a new king or emperor. Of course, in Japanese history, the rulers and the political system changed many times, but the imperial system was never abolished.

#### **Why Has the System of the Emperor Escaped Abolition?**

Since the 13th century, the emperors had not been involved in politics due to the rise and assumption of power of samurai clans and Daimyos. During this period, the Shogun

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was the political leader of all samurai clans. The shogun with the greatest military power at times became the real ruler through a series of civil wars known as the *senkoku jidai* in the 15th and 16th centuries. By recognizing that shogun, the emperor justified his rule of Japan. At this time, the emperor had no political independence so they represented no political threat to the Shogunate.

After the 13th century, emperors only conducted religious festivals for happiness and peace and studied Japanese traditional culture, arts, and classical literature. The relationship between the emperor and academic studies has a long history. The retired emperor Akihito has been admired in various countries for his achievements in the field of ichthyology. The current emperor Naruhito is a master in transportation history.

### **The Image of Japanese Emperors in Modern Times**

From the second half of the 19th century, Japan needed to modernize to avoid invasion by European countries; so it imported legal, academic and political systems, as well as aspects of culture, military structures and literature from European countries such as Germany, Britain, France and United States.

To make Japan a modern nation-state, the 1889 constitution of the empire of Japan regarded the Japanese Tenno similar to a monarch, like in modern Europe. For example, during the Meiji's period (1867–1912), the traditional Japanese kimono changed to the military uniform. As an example, historical images of the Meiji Emperor was inspired by modern images of western monarchs.

From the late 19th century, the image of the emperor changed from the symbol of culture to the military leader of Japan. However, just like with the British royal family, the Japanese emperor didn't have any political influence or power. He could only give royal assent to decisions and laws of the government at the time. From the Manchurian Incident in 1931, when the Japanese army abused the emperor's authority to justify their military actions and invasion of Manchuria and China. Eventually, Japan had to surrender to allied forces in the defeat of World War II in 1945. After the war the emperor became the symbol of Japan under the new Japanese constitution which the occupation forces of the United Nations led and created. There is no agreement of whether the Emperor Showa was responsible for the war. However, even after suffering a serious defeat in the war, the Showa emperor was not tried as a war criminal and allowed to continue as the Japanese head of state which was intended to help pacify Japan's war-time militarism. Because of this, many Japanese people have continued to respect the emperor and the imperial system which has continued to remain intact.

There are many opinions and ideas about Japanese Emperor. This time, our group focuses on the emperor's influence on Japanese culture. Yukio Mishima had a unique idea about the relationship between the emperor and Japanese culture. Therefore, we would like to introduce Mishima's view of the emperor.

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### **The Abstract of Yukio Mishima**

Yukio Mishima (1925–1970) was a highly popular Japanese novelist and a fervent nationalist. Yasunari Kawabata, was Mishima's teacher and rival. Mishima's works have been translated into many other languages and he is known worldwide as a famous Japanese novelist. One of his famous works is "Kinkakuji" (Temple of the Golden Pavilion) which is based on an actual event. This work is known as one of the great works of modern Japanese literature.

From around 1960, he started being interested in political subjects little by little. He published some political novels and essays. He also founded a private political students' organization against new left groups in 1968. Mishima wanted to be a pioneer of the national guard. He believed that the Communist revolution and the influence of Communism in other countries would not have a good effect on Japan. If a communist revolution broke out, he wanted his private organization and army to cooperate with the Japanese army and police to quell any communist uprising. Communist revolutions in countries such as Russia and mainland China, have tended to deny traditional aspects culture and democratic systems of government. Mishima was extremely afraid of losing the Japanese traditional culture and spirit.

In 1970, he barricaded himself in an office in the military base at Ichigaya and urged soldiers to take action for the revision of the Japanese constitution. However, soldiers and officers did not want to listen to him. Eventually, during his plea to the soldiers in the base, he committed suicide by harikari with Masakatsu Morita who decapitated him by Japanese sword. He was 45 years old.

### **Mishima's View of the Emperor from His Literature.**

First, Mishima argued that the Japanese emperor was different from a president or traditional monarch:

Japanese emperor is different from the president. It differs on this point of passing down from father to son. The emperor differs from usually monarchs in one respect of religious service for Japanese people. The emperor is the symbol of Japanese historical continuity, the symbol of worshipping Japanese ancestors. [The complete works of Mishima Yukio V. 36, p. 126]

Mishima argued that in the history of Japan, there were only a few emperors who were geniuses as politicians or military leader but there have been a lot of emperors who were geniuses as scholars, writers, and artists at times. In his book "The Defense of the Culture" in 1967, Mishima argued that the unchanging essence of Japanese culture is the emperor as the old cultural concept. Political systems and social environments have changed dramatically throughout the history of Japan. Japanese culture has changed since ancient times. At the same time, the culture has continued. Mishima thought that only the axis of the emperor has remained unchanged in Japanese culture's history, so he focused on the Japanese emperor as the oldest cultural concept of the nation. Mishima insisted

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on his opinion of Japanese culture and the emperor in the book of “The Defense of the Culture.” In his opinion, Japanese emperor must exist for the development of Japanese culture.

Of course, culture needs the uncontrolled person to create every at times. So, culture needs totality which allows all culture’s expression such as liberal democracy. If the expression’s meaning does not fit the current political thinking or social morality, the freedom of expressions is necessary for developing the culture. Mishima thought that the emperor had maintained this cultural concept of totality to allow these form of expressions.

“The fact that Japan is too free in its culture. That may be the reason that we are not yet aware of capacity for freedom. Each emperor until now has had the capacity to admitting the culture of freedom. That is the nature of the old cultural concept of Japanese emperor.” [The defense of the culture (1968), p. 263]

### **Traditional National Identity and Tenno**

Mishima rejected dictatorial and communist based countries like China and recognized the form of liberal democracy in Japan because he thought that freedom of expression was necessary for developing Japanese culture. In his opinion, Japanese people could not live completely independently from their culture and traditions. The United States has only a 248 year history, but they have a unique historical evolution, tradition, and culture. Mishima thought the emperor was the unchanging axis of Japanese history and the focal point of the birth of Japanese cultural identity. So that if every Japanese individual would share the old cultural concept of Japanese emperor, they would get the sense of being the same nation and overcome the mental decline of mind and morals in Japan.

### **Conclusion**

These are the ideas of Yukio Mishima. I think he was extremely afraid of losing the spirit of Japanese traditional culture in the 20th century. After World War II, many Japanese people thought that American culture, science and social trends were more attractive than those of Japanese traditional culture. He worried about losing important elements of the traditional Japanese cultural spirit. I think Mishima’s awareness of such cultural issues can be applicable to other modern countries, including Japan, China, and Ukraine. They will have to think about the significance of their own identity and traditional culture in the future. That is what Mishima wanted to say.

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