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SECLUSION, JAPAN'S TRAGEDY

By Koichiro Muramatsu
Professor of Economic History

I

As a result of the tragic end of World War II, there inevitably has taken place serious self-examination among us Japanese people. We feel within ourselves the development of a new mental attitude, a new outlook on man and the universe—an reflection of the current social renovation born of a series of reformatory legislation including the new Constitution. An important aspect of this spiritual transition is that we have in our minds a new and acute consciousness of the difference in character between the Japanese and European mentalities, and that the adoption of things European has become to us the problem of the time. We do not mean by this such superficial issue as the aping of Western, especially American, customs and manners which are swaying society in general. The reception of the culture and spirit of the West began about a hundred years ago. Since then Japan has been marvelled at by other countries, because as a new nation of the Western type culture in East Asia, she has made such rapid progress. And yet, the Japanese are finding themselves once again engrossed in the adoption of things Western, with more vigor and seriousness than ever. What are the reasons? One of them is that the Japanese people, in response to the changes in the social structure and the shifting of balance of social influences that has resulted from the latest renovation, have begun to take interest in things Western from a different angle and a new mental outlook. But the more important is that today those who fathomed the depths of the Japanese spirit in its realities during the wartime tension and who consequently felt the vital need for serious reflection on it are facing the opportunity to review both the Japanese and the Western spirit with more profundity than the people of former did. It has often been pointed out that there exists a basic difference between the spirit of Europe and the spirit of Japan or the Orient—a basic difference in mental attitude and view of the world. One Chinese scholar \(^1\) has written a book entitled *Why China Has No Science?* This

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\(^1\) Yu Lan-Fung
question echoes the recognition of this difference and a sort of yearning regret resulting from such recognition. It is quite natural that the Japanese engaged in serious self-reflection since the war’s end should turn their eyes again to this matter with a new meaning and greater profundity than ever.

Mr. Tetsuro Watsuji, noted scholar of ethics and the history of the Japanese spirit, published a work in the spring of 1950, in which he made a scientific study of this subject from an interesting angle. His work was entitled _Seclusion, Japan’s Tragedy_. Historical studies of Japan in seclusion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are not scarce, nor studies that enumerate the various effects, advantages and disadvantages, of seclusion on Japan manifested in various social and cultural phenomena are lacking either. But the latest work by Mr. Watsuji differs pretty largely from all these in the treatment of the subject. It is born out of the self-reflection that the Japanese people were driven to during and after the World War II. He holds that the spiritual deficiencies of the Japanese people that were bared during the late war have their root in the lack of scientific attitude and a propensity to value intuition more than reasoning. And he finds this deficient trait of the national spirit can be traced back to three and a half centuries ago, when the leaders of Japan shut their country to the rest of the world. To the time when Europe, awakened to the spirit of discovery and of scientific enquiry into man and Nature, had just begun to extend its hand to Japan through missionary work; when the Japanese people, unsatisfied with continuing their traditionally lethargic life, were striving to get to a deeper layer of spiritual life, and therefore, were ready to welcome and absorb the spirit of Europe; when virtually the same social conditions as today existed in this country and the people were forced to do self-reflection. According to him, the spiritual shortcomings of the Japanese people today should not be regarded, as often they are, as the after-effects of her seclusion or as the effects arising from the conditions of this country after she was secluded. Rather, they should be regarded to originate in her very action of excluding herself. The action was tragic; having been brought into contact with the positive, scientific spirit and the spirit of self-expansion of Europe and having begun to absorb them, Japan had the opportunity to advance in the same direction with Europe, but she finally relinquished it of herself through seclusion. That is why Mr. Watsuji subtiles his work _Japan’s Tragedy._

According to Mr. Watsuji, he knows no one among Japanese historians who treats the historical issue of “seclusion” in the same manner as he

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2 e.g., Zennosuke Tsuji, _Relative Advantages of Seculusion, History of Japan in International Communication_, revised ed. (in Japanese, Tokyo, 1930).
does. This view may be objected to, for other historians have made the same kind of studies as his, so long as the facts and process of seclusion in Japan are concerned. Basically, however, Mr. Watsuji is right in his contention. For in Seclusion he not only makes use of historical sources in new combinations and from an entirely new angle, and presents unique ideas and interpretations alien to other historical works, but also, with the spiritual crisis experienced by present-day Japan on his back, penetrates through the surface strata of historical data into their dark spiritual basis. Herein is found the uniqueness that places Seclusion above a mere historical work; it is a book that shows what problems the Japanese people are facing today. In this article, this writer seeks to give a brief sketch of Seclusion, Japan’s Tragedy and some of his own views in regard to this subject.

II

Compared with the same category of work, Seclusion is noted for its novelty of arrangements in the first place. The conditions that led Japan to seclusion, including Christian missionary work by foreigners, constitute Mr. Watsuji’s main discussions, but he precedes them with a big Part I in which he gives colorful descriptions of the discovery of new sea routes and new continents by Portuguese and Spaniards, and this Part I itself has a long introductory chapter reviewing the spiritual conditions of Europe that gave rise to these explorations. This shows that his historical eyes, instead of being led by mere factual links of phenomena in Japan, are glued on discriminating between the spirits of two cultural spheres of Japan and Europe through the investigation of their spiritual contact and conflicts. For this reason, the author in Part I concerns himself primarily with discussions, going beyond the scope of factual links to the seclusion of Japan, on the conditions leading to the formation of the European cultural sphere and the peculiarly European spiritual movements arising therefrom, with the widening of the mental horizon of Europe symbolized in the movement for exploration as the main theme. Even in dealing with the circumstances that led to the formation of the European cultural sphere, the author likewise lays emphasis not only on the spiritual and social conditions of the Germanic cultural sphere but also on other cultural areas of a conflicting nature; he attaches great importance to the effects resulting from the contact between the Germanic and Islamic cultures.

After the Roman Empire collapsed, the Germanic world came into being in the West. While the latter had been going slowly through its first stage of development over the long period of the fourth and fifth centuries to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, under the leadership of the
quasi-ancient Christian church rather than on its own, the cultural spheres of Byzantine and Islam developed in the East, and the rapidly-attained mellow ripeness of the latter culture and the rapid expansion of its sphere of influence in particular brought a tremendous effect on the growing medieval culture of a Christian and Germanic world. The West had a great deal to learn from the East concerning the formation of a feudalistic society centering on the knight, the establishment of the teachings of the medieval church based on the adoption of Aristotelian philosophy and the advance to the Mediterranean commerce of the Germanic people led by the Italian city-states. The consciousness of the unified West, on the other hand, was born as a strong consciousness of resistance against the penetration of the pagan influence from the East.

This Eastern influence was especially marked in Iberian states neighboring on and invaded by the Islams. For instance, the adventurous and fervently religious spirit of the Islamic knight first found its way into the martial spirit of the Germanic people that lived in the Iberian peninsula. On the other hand, there inevitably sprang up in this region a strong spirit bent on conquering the Pagans and restoring the lost territory. The infused spirit of the Islamic knight, spreading to various countries in Europe, later flowered in the knighthood of the Middle Ages, while the original Germanic spirit that resisted against the Pagans developed into the Crusade on an all European scale. As a matter of fact, it was during the Crusade that the West's consciousness of resistance to the East finally crystallized into the consciousness that Europe existed as a unified cultural sphere.

The unified culture of the Middle Ages supported by the universal rule of the Catholic church and the doctrines developed out of the teachings of the church was broken up under the new forces rising toward the end of the Middle and at the beginning of the Modern Ages. The martial spirit of the knight, tamed by the teachings of the church, gave a foundation of the spirit of adventure and the spirit of pursuit of the limitless in the movements of an age which, turning its eyes from the truths of Heaven to the realities of the earth, sought to discover therein a new world and new life. The revival of the ancient culture and the resultant re-emergence of a scientific and rational spirit jointly shook the foundation of the old view of life and the world woven into the doctrines of the church. The resistance of the national state against the Papacy and the revolt of the rising citizenry against the nobility and knighthood that had become degraded and disorderly — all such revolutions against the rein of tradition provided necessary social basis for the movement for rationalization of the spirit. The rise of these new forces full of vigor and the resultant confusion in society brought about a new age — the Renaissance, the age of discovery of Nature and humanity by talented individuals with superb insight and original power of expression and execution.
A new spirit of Europe thus came into being. As an expression of this spirit, the world was explored geographically at the outset of the Modern Times and the mental horizon of Europe was widened to cover the whole world. The author is primarily interested in these facts in relation to Japan of the same period. He expounds that, viewed from a spiritual angle, there exists close connection between these events and those that had led to the formation of the European cultural sphere and the peculiar spirit of Europe arising therefrom. The old spirit of the Crusade, the spirit of conquest over the East and of resistance against the Pagans, combined with the newly aroused interests in the Far East, as introduced by Marco Polo and others, and its commercial lures, in setting the European people on the road of exploration to the East. To flank on both sides the pagan influences of the Arabians and the Turks, attempts were to be made, taking advantage of the Christian world considered to exist in the East and also extending missionary work to create there new Christian worlds. In these attempts, the vanguard was assumed, in place of the Italians, by the Iberians, who had been brought up in resistance against Islam. In Portugal, we see the spirit of navigator Henry, who staked everything on the expansion of mental horizons in the scientific and experimental spirit of the Renaissance, guiding the people in all their attempts at discovering the sea route to India, making all the energies expended on the opening of navigation routes for spices trade, on the acquisition of overseas territory as well as on the counter-reformation missionary movements, flow with it in the same direction. The Spanish were stirred by a more knightly spirit of conquest and acquisition. Even at the time when they made the accidental discovery of the American continent by the adventure of Columbus, their object was to discover a western route through which to reach the countries in the East which they still regarded as a world counter to theirs. As a matter of fact, they mistook the newly discovered land as a part of the old Eastern world, and at once took to conquering, acquiring and colonizing it. At about the same time, King Manoel I of Portugal was having South America which had been known to the Portuguese since Cabral's discovery, explored and investigated, having commissioned Amerigo Vespucci to go on the expedition. Here we see at work the spirit guiding the Portuguese in their expeditions, different from that guiding the Spanish, or the spirit of Henry, the navigator. Herein lies the reason why the honor of discovery and naming of the New Continent was reserved for Vespucci, despite the fact that Columbus was the first to discover it. However, both these Iberian countries contributed alike to the widening of the mental horizons of Europe. The fact is best symbolized in the first round-the-world navigation achieved by the Spanish fleet under the command of Magellan, the veteran Portuguese navigator who once joined the Indian expedition.
Written from the basic point of view stated above, Part I of *Seclusion* entitled "Formation of a World-wide Horizon" tells of the difficulties the Portuguese encountered in their attempts to discover a navigation route to the East, of the establishment of their colony in India and the state of the missionary work going on in the Eastern countries in parallel with it, at the hand of the rising Jesuits, and thus traces the gradual expansion of the mental horizon of Europe toward the Far East. It also tells the history of the establishment of colonies in America by the Spaniards, and describes with vividness the processes by which the westward expansion of the same geographical horizon, getting based on the new Continent, finally came to meet with its eastward expansion advanced by the Portuguese and together placed the whole world under one mental horizon encircling it. Japan too came within the pale of the eastward advance of the European influences, through Portuguese traders, the first of whom was drifted on her shore in 1542, and through Francisco Xavier, one of the Jesuit church founders and other missionary workers who followed in his steps. To speak more basically, the new human spirit born in Europe after the Renaissance knocked at the door of the Japanese spirit, in the form of scientific spirit and the spirit of pursuit of the limitless.

Part II of *Seclusion* entitled "Japan at the Outset of the Modern Age, its Situation in the World-wide Horizon" first deals with missionary activities by Xavier and his Portuguese successors, which were centered on Kyushu and the Kyoto-Osaka area, together with the movements of Portuguese traders who followed in their wake. It describes the activities of the Spanish missionary group who sought contact with Japan in competition with the Portuguese and also the activities of Spanish, Dutch and English merchants in Japan. And leading from this train of events, it tells very concretely how Japan responded to them, solving vigorously the problem of contact with the rest of the world at that time, and yet why Japan finally chose to isolate herself from the European movements for the expansion of mental horizon by adopting a retarding policy of seclusion.

It is worthy of note that missionaries including Xavier at once pinned hopes and expectations on Japan as a country with a greatly promising future when they first arrived in this country to spread the teachings of Christianity. These foreign missionary workers were able to get permission and aid with comparative ease from the local feudal lords in Western Japan who eagerly sought to invite foreign traders to their territory because of commercial profits involved. In that age of wars between lords, of wars of survival — arms, armmunitions, aid, both direct and indirect, that were available in time of war from missionaries and foreign traders that followed them, were big enough lures to these feudal lords. The Jesuit missionaries, on the other hand, deliberately followed their customany policy with success which brought ill-fame upon them in Europe in later
days, the policy of protecting their own positions through a close tie-up with those in power in whatever country they might be. But the primary reason why they considered Japan as a country full of hopes was more profoundly human. After a long itinerary along the coasts of the Orient, they arrived in Japan and found that her people were superior to others. To the Jesuits it seemed that the Japanese people respected honor, hated falsehood, had an open heart to accept a new religion and wisdom to judge its teachings. Furthermore, once converted to Christianity, the Japanese demonstrated their spirit of self-sacrifice and of faithfulness to their teachers. All these national traits of the Japanese convinced the Jesuits that they had arrived in a country full of hopes. Their conviction was justified by their subsequent success in missionary work and the devotion of the converts they witnessed in the course of the work. Under the protection of feudal lords in the Kyushu district at the beginning, and later of Nobunaga Oda, who was gradually gripping the political power of the country, the Jesuit missionaries steadily expanded their sphere of influence. As a result, their followers rapidly increased in number, in all strata of society, ranging from influential lords and distinguished warriors down to peasants, fishermen and urban people in general, not only in Kyushu but in Central Japan as well. Churches, seminarios and collegios designed to educate converts and ministers were established in important centers of the country.

Political unity attained by Nobunaga by force was inherited and completed by Hideyoshi Toyotomi. But after 1587, Hideyoshi placed a ban on the propagation of Christianity in the country and started the persecution of the Christians. For all this, however, a large number of people maintained their faith under the leadership of the missionaries who had gone underground; also they were constantly joined by new converts. Ukon Takayama, a trusted lord of Hideyoshi, gave up his territory at once without any regret, when called upon to choose between it and his faith. The wife of another lord (Gracia Hosokawa), in defiance of the ban, which did not allow her to attend the church herself, made her lady in waiting, who had joined the faith already, learn the rites of baptism and was baptised at her hand.

Ieyasu Tokugawa who laid the foundation of the Shogunate that lasted 265 years also officially prohibited Christianity in the country. But until the beginning of the seventeenth century, Christian influences prevailed in the country, chiefly because the control was tolerant, as seen from the fact that the converts numbered 750,000 in 1605. The spread of the Christian faith, however, gave Ieyasu considerable misgivings and led him to resort to the persecution of its followers in his later years. In the days of his successors, the control grew increasingly rigid and persecution severe but the zeal of the followers over their faith grew correspondingly great. In 1637,
when the Christians in a corner of Kyushu rose in revolt against the lord of the district who was notorious for his cruel administration and relentless enforcement of the ban on Christianity, the rebels gathered an army of 65,000 soldiers, and the first commander in chief of the Shogunate forces had to die in action. Though we have to take it into consideration that the Christians were aided by warriors who became lordliness in the newly unified government of the Shogunate and hated it, yet the whole thing is enough to show how strongly rooted was this new religion among the masses despite the long years of persecution.

Herein apparently lies the reason why the author of *Seclusion* is especially interested in the events of the so-called Christian movement in the olden days. He objects to treating this important historical fact as an episode added to Japanese history from outside, as has been customarily done by Japanese historians. He also rejects the view of this movement held by Japanese people in general, in whom the interest in this movement is linked to the exoticism they feel for the things brought from abroad to this island country at that particular time by accident. Instead, he holds, no doubt most rightly, that the propagation of Christianity in the early days by the Portuguese was in fact a voluntary movement on the side of the Japanese, especially the masses, who sought to be awakened to the new human spirit, and that the movement was symbolic of the Japanese spirit that reached out a hand of welcome to the spirit of Europe that extended its feeler as far as Japan seeking to expand its own mental horizon.

The author explains why there were such primary mental conditions of receptiveness among the leaders and masses, but more especially the masses, of Japan, and yet what was still lacking in these conditions, through a brief review of Japanese history. About the same time, when in the west the Germanic world began to shape itself under the influence of the Roman culture and civilization, Japan too began to benefit by the ancient culture of China, and, by absorbing especially the culture of the Tang Dynasty through the seventh to the nineth century, had accomplished a semi-ancient culture of her own, at least in the court and the Buddhist circle. When the Crusade was in progress in Europe, then also, there was an analogous spiritual movement going on in the East; that is, the imported alien culture gradually saturated and was assimilated by the Japanese race. Out of this spiritual movement was born the culture of the Kamakura period, centered on the *samurai* or knight-circle who had remained until then outside the court culture. In the sphere of religious awakening, for instance, there sprang up in Japan, parallel and contemporaneous with that in Europe, a movement for reformation of religious life, based on the inwardness of the personal belief. In the case of Japan, however, she lacked the stimulus of contacts and conflicts with military and aggressive alien races and with aggressive alien culture spheres, which aided Europe in
acquiring her self-consciousness and led to the birth of the spirit of self-expansion and conquest of the East. The result is the closedness of the Japanese spirit; it lacks impulse to expand outward. Toward the end of the Kamakura period, Japan was attacked by the Mongolian Empire and had her first experience of a fight against military alien race. But this produced no more result than the restoration of the Imperial regime at home, lasting only a short time.

However, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, just at the time when Europe was witnessing the liberation of the human spirit at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Age, and the active social shake-ups that followed it, Japan too saw, almost parallel with those events, the collapse of the unified regime of the Ashikaga Shogunate, independence of feudal lords from the central government, and the beginning of the so-called "age of wars", the age of *bellum contra omnium* between lords and grandies. Such wars culminated in the rise of new territorial powers and of some communal cities, all of them new formation of an age unfettered by tradition and social status. Popular communal riots, of farmers and large religious sects, that recurred in Japan in those days were similar in nature to those that cropped up in Europe. Sometimes, a whole province rebelled against its military ruler through a popular conjuration (*kuni-ikki*). In those days, on the other hand, there were Japanese adventurers and pirates called by the Chinese "wa-ko" or Japanese invaders who were engaged in plundering along the coast of Korea and China and as far as the South Seas area. To stop ruthless activities of the nation's overseas advancing spirit, that was scarcely regulated by the policy of the Government, the government went into treaty with China, under which the latter issued and regulated licenses to the ships engaged in trade with China (*Kango trade*). All these show that there were being born at that time a new spirit among the Japanese, and that they were seeking a new world for themselves. They opened their eyes for the first time to foreign countries, and went out daringly as far as the China Sea and the Indian Ocean, with a positive spirit of adventure. Francisco Xavier met with a loafing Japanese named Yajiro in Malacca, and learning about Japan from him for the first time, resolved to propagate Christianity in Japan. Thus the spirit of Europe that had been bearing down upon the East found the Japanese nation who were in mental conditions of respectiveness.

But, in this case too, there was something lacking in their receptiveness. Although the same popular movement for autonomy as in Europe was carried on in Japan for a time very vigorously, it failed to accomplish anything lasting. Unlike in Europe, it did not give birth to any city-states or autonomous towns, and even those autonomous organizations that had survived were later turned into sub-agencies of the police administration.
by the government. The advance abroad of the Japanese was a spontaneous out-flowing of the energy of the nation, and was entirely private in character; it had nothing of a public enterprise conducted under a state plan; it had not a vestige of the scientific spirit of exploration. Consequently, the activities of the Japanese abroad contributed but little towards widening the mental horizons of the people at home. For all that, the minds of the Japanese in general at that time could be said to have been sufficiently receptive to the spirit of Europe exemplified in Christianity, for the reason that, having passed through a critical age, the age of wars, they were now seeking to grasp a new human spirit freed from traditions and conventions, as well as a new view of the world.

Nobunaga Oda, the most powerful and influential of the lords in those days, had been pushing forward step by step the work of unifying the country by force of arms. Ruthless destroyer of tradition, he possessed a mental capacity to see beyond the mental horizons of the ordinary Japanese lords. He was a leader in whom the sense of the crisis of the times, or the sense that the times were standing at a turning point, was the best realized. To him Christianity was no concern as a religious issue, yet he took interest in it as a window to let in fresh air from the wider world outside, and promised the missionaries propagating this new religion friendliness and protection. Under his protection the missionary work secured a foothold in the center of the country, and also achieved a steady success in the southwestern provinces. This situation continued until the early days of the period of Hideyoshi Toyotomi, Nobunaga's successor, when, the influence of the new religion steadily gaining ground, an increasingly large number of powerful lords joined the faith. But as political unity was finally accomplished by Hideyoshi, the age of social revolution, the age of disrespect for tradition, free competition among abilities and subversion of precedence i.e. ousting of the superior ranks by the inferior, was put an end to; and now, to maintain their established positions, the newly-risen potentates and ruling classes sought to keep order in society by making traditions and conventions once again rule the life of the people. As for Hideyoshi, he did not much bother about the new religion as such, nor about its spiritual possibilities. He rather wanted to get through the hands of the missionaries arms and warships with which to augment his power. So it was no wonder that, alarmed at the wide spread of the new religion among all classes of people, or at the spirit of Japan rising to meet and welcome the spirit of Europe, and, more particularly, out of anger with those missionaries who were reluctant in assisting him in getting warships, he should have suddenly issued a ban on Christianity, and that, later when the rumour reached him that missionaries were all agencies of invasion sent out by their governments, he should have started persecuting them. Ieyasu Tokugawa held a similar view regarding traffic with Europe;
he too saw in it a means of enriching and strengthening the country. So, although both banned open propagation of Christianity, neither prohibited coming to Japan of foreign traders. As for Ieyasu, he even tried to do everything in his power to promote trade with the outside world. However, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate that was to last two and a half centuries, was essentially a conservative; his first and foremost concern was to keep order in society. So, Ieyasu designated the study of Confucianism as the official study, and by reorienting the samurai class to the conservative ethics of this age-old Oriental philosophy, instituted a spirit that would confront and combat the spirit of Europe and the new spirit of Japan that, bent upon the destruction of tradition, had welcomed it. Out of the confrontation of this conservative spirit with the tenacious underground activities of the Portuguese ministers and their Japanese followers and the ill-conceived machinations of the Spanish monks who had sneaked into this country, arose a tension, which, added by the impatience the difficulty of persecuting a religious faith always causes in the persecutors, caused the ban on Christianity to be made more and more severe. The situation continued until the orders issued in 1635 and 1639 that placed a ban on the Japanese going and coming back from abroad as well as on trade with all European powers, except through one narrow channel left open or through the hands of Chinese and Dutch merchants at Nagasaki, completed the national structure of seclusion. Thus Japan voluntarily gave up her first chance of participating in the widening of the mental horizons of the world and going ahead in steps with the European nations in the development of the modern spirit. Herein lies the tragedy of Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and herein also lies the origin of the Japan's tragedy today . . . These are a summing up of Mr. Watsuji's contentions.

III

The writer wishes to conclude this article by noting down a few of the impressions he received from reading this book, and also a few of his own views on the subject treated in it. Firstly, Mr. Watsuji's original way of taking up the subject and his sensitive reaction to the realities of the Japanese mind today constitute the great merit of Seclusion. This the writer pointed out at the beginning of this article.

Secondly, the authors view of history and his historiographical method

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1 The orders provided only that all Portuguese should be ordered out of the country and no more of them be allowed to come in. But there had been no Englishman or Spaniard coming to Japan for a long time; there were only Dutchmen competing with Portuguese in trade with Japan.
shown in this book offer us various valuable suggestions. In the preface to this book, the author defines the meaning of the title "Seclusion" and says that it means "the action of excluding a country", not the state of things in a country secluded. This definition which is not necessarily very clear contains, as far as the writer sees, two meanings which are fundamentally different from each other, though they both fit the contents of the book. The one is that what the author treats in this book is not the condition of Japan after she was secluded, but the historical development of the transitional age heading towards seclusion. In this connection, the definition refers only to the boundaries of the subject he treats. But the other is more important; here, the definition refers not to the subject treated but to the attitude towards history of the author himself. The author sees history not in terms of state of things but in terms of action. What this means must be construed from a perusal of the whole of this book.

It is customary among our historians to treat the seclusion of our country simply as a causal chain of facts in the past. Even when they discuss its meaning, for instance its advantages and disadvantages, the sense of value which is the criterion of meaning is assumed to be self-evident, and it is explained simply as what is due to facts as such. The author, on the contrary, first states clearly his own personal view of history with which he sees the seclusion of our country, or the point of view of history all his own from which he regards the action of Japan today and the similar action of Japan in seclusion as tragedies. And from this point of view, he clarifies the meaning of Japan's seclusion and expresses it not as a causal chain of facts but rather as a teleological entity. While other historians regard historical facts as things of the past, dead ashes, so to speak, which lie there simply waiting for their causal relations and the meaning they once had to be explained, the author of this book regards them a something different. He moulds them into a number of historical elements, according to their contribution to the historical development as he sees it. The movement for the expansion of mental horizon of Europe is an instance of such historical elements. The Japanese spirit that reacted to it, either as a force that welcomed it in order to liberate itself and grasp a new world, or as a force that tried to suppress it in order to maintain its own established position, and thus created new history is another. This means he sees historical facts as living forces. To the author, the field in which functions the spirit which is the force that ever creates new history, — that field is history. Seen from this point of view, history is not a mere causal chain of established facts. It is the action of choosing and realizing one single course of history out of all theoretically possible courses, of which there are many. In other words, history is action that realizes history.

Apart from whether the above interpretation is what the author
himself, if called upon, would have made, there is no doubt that such attitude towards history is appropriate to the experience of the people of Japan today, and to the problems of historiology of today. We have lived through an age of confusion and violent changes, and in the midst of the collisions of conflicting forces, we have often seen history choose its course and advance in directions different from those that looked theoretically more rational. We have seen the point of view of history quickly change in a short period of time, and history-books demanded to be rewritten. The days are now gone when historians could assume their point of view of history to be self-evident, and all that they had to do was to seek factual accuracy.

The same problems of historiology as we are now faced with must have been already faced with by people after the end of World War I. At that time, too, there was talk about the crisis of historiology. As a matter of fact, there was noticed among the people distrust of the established view of history, due to the same sudden change and confusion of the sense of historical value as we have experienced, and also loss of interest in historiology arising from the same cause, among the younger generation. Even from such crisis, however, historiology as a specialized science and its objective, critical method did not seem to suffer any effect at all, no doubt because the people at that time were convinced, as we are now, that these are the necessary foundation for right historical perception. But it is one thing to have such conviction; and another to assert that, in order to build up history which is based on factual accuracy and yet captivates the minds of the present generation, it is enough to rely upon established methods and established point of view of history. This book offers various valuable suggestions to those people who are concerned about these problems.

Thirdly, the writer wishes to make a few comments on the contents of this book. According to the author, the constituent historical elements of the European spirit, which acted as the driving force behind the movement for the world-wide expansion of the European mental horizon, and which acting as such spread itself to all parts of the world, are: the spirit of conquest of the Crusade, the knightly spirit of adventure, the spirit of pursuit of the limitless; the scientific spirit and the spirit of discovery of the Renaissance, and the spirit of liberation from the established view of man and the world that resulted from them. And he takes up the contact and conflict between such spirit of Europe and the spirit of Japan as the main theme of his study. Probably his consciousness of the fact that the same theme is being repeated in the same refrain in the spiritual world of Japan today is what has made this book more than a mere study of historical facts. As the author knows well, however, with the developments in the spirit of Europe over the period of the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the corresponding developments in the spirit of Japan over the same period intervening between them, there is a great deal of difference in tonality between this theme played once before and the same theme now being repeated. It is regrettable, therefore, that while the author dwells on the detail of the initial contact between the Japanese and European spirits, he does not write much about its later developments. If he did and clarified his views in this respect too, this book would have had a great deal more to offer us as a work written at the present time.

To make a brief survey of the later developments of the European spirit, during the Renaissance, individual geniuses freely displayed their abilities, and by their power of expressing their untrammelled soul and self, produced great works of art and achieved great enterprises which were all symbolic of the new human spirit. But after the latter half of the sixteenth century there arose, from the Reformation and the counter-reformation movements, an increasingly strong tendency towards the redogmatization of the spirit. The church, new and old, and the court, that cooperated with them conducted the control of thought; sometimes it was done by force. Out of the life in the previous period marked by both individual freedom and lawlessness, were born such historical, sociological forms and institutions as the modern state, capitalism and modern sciences, which are all fundamentally the same, for with each the intention is the domination over the outer world. These institutions and forms getting gradually but firmly established, they forced from outside the frame of activity and method upon the vigorous but licentious spirit of the Renaissance. Although the vigorous activities of the human spirit liberated in the previous period had not yet petered out, there was clearly noticed a transition from the days of freedom and license to the days of stability and restraint, from the days of the progressiveness to the days of conservatism. The two nations of Iberia, which the author regards as the fore-runners in the movement for the world-wide expansion of the European mental horizon, took the lead in this transition under Phillip II. Especially characteristic of this age were the controlling or regulating activities of the modern state, aimed at utilizing human activities in all spheres for the sole purpose of strengthening and expanding itself. At the same time, we must not overlook the tendency of the modern state at this time placing its own land more or less in a state of seclusion to promote these controlling activities. That, too, was characteristic of the age. For instance, we see various countries in the seventeenth century controlling faith and creed and discriminating against pagans. We also see them controlling foreign trade and trying all sort of means to ban the coming and going of foreign ships and traders. Spain forbidding her young people to go abroad and study at foreign universities with a few exception such as Bologna gives an
interesting instance of this spirit of seclusion. As for the exploration of the world in which the Portuguese and the Spaniards were the forerunners, it is true it was first started from the spontaneous spirit of adventure of individuals or nations who were inspired with the spirit of the new age. But after the seventeenth century, this too was conducted as political activities of the modern state; it took the form of the struggle for the acquisition of colonies or of their exploitation as a means of enriching and strengthening the mother country; and it was generally carried out in a very marked spirit of seclusion. Although in a sense it was an age of suppression of the human spirit liberated in the Renaissance, yet the effects it had on the development of the European spirit were not wholly negative. In their infancy, both the modern state and capitalism, as well as modern science, owed their development to the power of personality liberated within distinguished individuals. But as they reached the stage of stabilization in the sixteenth century, they became independent social forces and as such came to govern and regulate free activities of individual personalities. Those objective social spirits embodied in social institutions became more important than individual originalities. In the seventeenth century, chiefly under the influence of natural science based on the principles of logics and mathematics, men came to be regarded as atoms invested with a psychologically uniform nature, and human society was conceived as a combination of such atoms, its origin and functions being explained rationally and analytically. In this manner was born, in theory at least, the attitude to regard a human being as man in media, and human society as a field of rational actions of individuals. With the turn of eighteenth century, social life became of greater and greater significance. People came to realize themselves as members of society, they felt themselves really as men in media, and to this realization was added the faith that there was in society, which was the field of rational actions of individuals, a natural law of harmony, and that free activities of individuals naturally resulted in the harmony of all. As a consequence, there sprang up once again among the people the spirit that rebelled against the control of thought which suppressed individual freedom, regarding the control and discipline continued by the state since the previous age as unnecessary. The concept of the autonomy of human spirit again cropped up, not as the will that welled up in the minds of distinguished individuals, but rather as the faith of the common people as members of society.

Now such human spirit and concept of society born of intellectual attitudes can be taught to and enlighten anybody through intellect, and can transform things and improve them in whatever manner desired. Out of this new situation broke out a series of social revolution in the later years of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, and that led to the birth of the rights of the masses as men in media,
and of the democratic state and liberal society set up with the protection of the rights of the masses as their main object. On the other hand, the development of modern techniques, especially revolutions in transportation, shortened the distances of the world, and this, together with the concept of the equality of men and of the universality of intellect, nursed forcefully cosmopolitanism. The world now came to be regarded as a big society composed of individuals with equal rights or of groups of individuals with equal rights, or as one big community under the rule of the rational human spirit, common to all its members, and of justice and order arising from it. If we can call the exploration of the world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the first day of the creation of the world-wide mental horizon, now it was the sixth; its creator, the European spirit, saw the fruits of its labor and was satisfied. Yet, in this case also, as in the case of the birth of Eukumenia towards the end of the ancient times, the effects the creation of a new mental horizon had upon the human spirit were not wholly felicitous —- for instance, the victory of intellectual attitude, but the loss of spiritual energy; the elaboration of the mechanism of living, but the loss of self-confidence of the inner-man. With this difference, however, that while the world in the ancient times was a world under the rule by force of one universal monarchy, the idea of Europe is linked to an international society of which the states are members (the League of Nations or the United Nations). This reflects the special situation of modern Europe.

Of course, the rationalization of the state and society was far from complete in the nineteenth century; they were still manipulated by the will for power of the state or the desire of control of the self-seeking ruling classes. It looked as though the goal of the harmony of all were never to be realized. But it now seems the way to the goal is not utterly blocked. Forced by the horror of the fearful destructive forces released in the last two world wars, and by the oppression of the social forces born of mechanized industrial society, the twentieth century seems to be approaching step by step a new recognition of man and society. Anyhow, there is a vast difference between the spirit of Europe as it was at the time of the first discovery of the world-wide mental horizon made through the power of personality of individual explorers, and the spirit of Europe as it now is.

These are but fragmentary notes; the writer does not mean to say that he has discussed the matter in question as properly as could be desired, viewing it from all possible angles. But he believes he has made it sufficiently clear to the reader that the spirit of Europe is something that develops, something that changes with the development of history, even if it remains the same in its basic character, in its being a scientific spirit, a spirit of pursuit of the limitless, etc.

Accordingly, if Japan had properly absorbed this spirit of Europe in
the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when she was still full of naive energies, its effect on her would have been great; but it is difficult to surmise on this assumption alone, what then would have been the subsequent position of Japan in the mental horizon of Europe or of the world. That it is difficult becomes clear when one looks at the positions in Europe of Spain and Portugal which once spread the spirit of Europe to the East and the New Continent. This fact gives a cloudiness to the view of the author who regards Japan’s seclusion as a tragedy.

Also, one must pay full attention to the fact that in the latter half of the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century, when in Japan there was a growing tendency towards seclusion, nearly the same condition held in Europe —– the predominance of the political interests of the state, the desire for the stabilization of established conditions and a responding tendency towards conservatism, the dogmatization of the spirit, and a similar tendency, though varying in degree, towards seclusion. However, this situation in Europe was no more than a stage of development that culminated in the formation of the new spirit of enlightened man in the eighteenth century. Although the writer is not prepared to pass correct judgements on the history of Japan, he cannot but feel that paying proper attention to this fact provides us with useful suggestions in respect to the meaning of Japan’s seclusion. In other words, he wonders whether he might not regard it also as a stage of development, and explain its meaning accordingly. As a matter of fact, when the spirit of Europe reached its hand to Japan for a second time, towards the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, through the warships of England, Russia, the United States and other countries, Japan made to it a response entirely different from that she had made earlier. The earlier response had been founded on her people’s individualistic desires of being converted to a new religion, but this time it was founded on national interests. To illustrate this point, when the officials of the Shogunate sought the opinions of the feudal lords as to how to deal with the demand presented to it by Commodore Perry for opening Japan to foreign intercourse, excepting a small minority of bigoted protagonists of seclusion and theorist for the opening of the country, the majority whose opinion counted made answers, pro and con, all in the light of national interests. Japan in the Meiji era or under the Emperor’s government that had replaced the Tokugawa Shogunate soon after the coming of Perry, also absorbed the culture, civilization and spirit of Europe from entirely national viewpoints. As for present-day Japan, she is undergoing, for the first time in her history, a metamorphosis from a power state to a democratic country. Consequently, it is expected the contact between the Japanese and European spirits will show entirely new developments in the future. From this point of view, it seems that Mr. Watsuji’s view of Japan’s seclusion as an end of a chapter in the book of
contact between Europe and Japan, or his description of it as a tragedy is a little too sharp. Or it may be his consciousness of the tragedy today is a little too much reflected in his view of the past.