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Takei Katsuhiko and his Manchurian Imprint

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Abstract

Takei Katsuhiko 笥克彦 was well-known for his advocacy of a unique Shinto philosophy and had a considerable influence on colonial government officials and agricultural emigration leaders. In spite of his substantial influence, there have been no specific researches on the effect he had on Japanese colonies. The present study aims to review and analyze Takei's activities in Japanese colonies with special focus on those in Manchuria.

He served the Kenkoku Daigaku 建国大学 (National Foundation University) in Manchuria as a founding committee member. And He also delivered lectures to Puyi 溥儀 who was the Emperor of Manchukuo 満洲国. He believed emigrants from the Japanese mainland should play an important role in conveying Japanese spirit to Manchuria.

Takei's chief contribution to the colonies appears to have been the establishment of an intellectual framework for elites from the Japanese mainland. However, he failed to produce the results expected of him in Manchukuo. Although he was a founding member of the Kenkoku Daigaku, his ideas were ultimately rejected by Japanese government officials in Manchukuo. Also, his lectures in the presence of Puyi were totally unacceptable to the Manchurians as Takei outspokenly defined Manchukuo as a subordinate country under the rule of the Japanese Emperor.

1. About Kakei Katsuhiko

Here I focus on the legal scholar Kakei Katsuhiko 寛克彦 (1872-1961), who had a profound impact on prewar Japanese society, and his activities in Manchuria. Kakei was a professor specializing in jurisprudence, administrative law, and constitutional law at the Faculty of Law of Tokyo Imperial University. He is known today for advocating unique theories like “Ancient Shintō” 古神道 (*Ko Shintō*) and the “Way of the Gods” 神ながらの道 (*Kannagara no Michi*), which he developed by combining Shintō ideas with jurisprudence.

Kakei was a colleague of Minobe Tatsukichi 美濃部達吉 and Uesugi Shinkichi 上杉慎吉, both of whom are well known for their roles in envisioning the emperor as an “organ of the state.” However, unlike them, Kakei was not considered a respectable scholar in prewar and postwar Japan.¹ For one thing, his theories were “unorthodox” and for another he sought to popularize his ideas by such bizarre actions as clapping his hands during lectures as if worshipping at a Shintō shrine; he also performed an eccentric kind of gymnastics, which he called *yamatobataraki*.

Nonetheless, Kakei was involved in Japan’s imperial expansion in the prewar period. He believed that, for Japan to continue to grow, it would not do to establish a legal system in imitation of the West as had been the case before, but it must practice law rooted in the native spirit of Japan. Kakei maintained that the Japanese state needed an ideological policy which it could assert internationally. His concepts of “Ancient Shintō” and the “Way of the Gods” were the results of this thinking.

These concepts were ignored by academia, but they earned him the support of the political elite: the imperial family, the aristocracy, high-ranking government officials, and leaders promoting agricultural fundamentalism. Particularly, Empress Teimei 貞明皇后, who was the consort of Emperor Taishō 大正天皇 and mother of the Shōwa Emperor 昭和天皇, was a great admirer of Kakei. It was due to the empress’s efforts that the court lectures which Kakei delivered to her were published by the Bureau of Shrine Affairs of the Home Ministry under the title *Way of the Gods* (*Kannagara no Michi*).² Kakei also exerted influence on the prewar Japanese colonies through Katō Kanji 加藤完治 and other leaders of the farm education movement.³

It is thus evident that in prewar Japan many people admired Kakei. This of course is why I set out here to explore his thoughts and activities, without succumbing to the earlier trap of labeling him as a fanatic.

2. Kakei and his relationship with Empress Teimei

First of all, Kakei owed such influence as he had over Japanese society to the support of Empress Teimei. In 1924, the Empress invited him to give court lectures on the “Way of the Gods.” He earned the empress’s trust, becoming acquainted with her through these lectures. Kakei’s lectures

¹ Watanabe Hachirō. (1962) “Kakei Sensei to Watashi”. *Watanabe Hachirō Sensei Ihō Roku*. Watanabe Hachirō Sensei Ihō Roku Kankō Kai, 1975, p.490.

² Kakei Katsuhiko, *Kaminagara no Michi*. Naimushō Jinja Kyoku, 1926.

³ Katō Kanji. (1967) “Watashi no Ayunde Kita Michi(Vol.2).” *Gakushi Kaihō*. Vol. 645, p.24.

included themes from the Japanese myths that featured in the *Records of Ancient Matters* 古事記: *Kojiki*, the *Chronicles of Japan* 日本書紀: *Nihonshōki*, and Shintō prayers 祝詞: *norito*. Records preserved in the Imperial Household Library indicates that the empress consulted Kakei about such matters as the emperor's death and her relationship with the four princes, which she could not easily discuss with the Imperial Court retainers given her position at court⁴. Thanks to Kakei's emotional support for the empress, the latter trusted and supported Kakei in later years.

3. *Yamatobataraki* and Katō Kanji.

Kakei's *Yamatobataraki* had as its goal spiritual training. It was a form of gymnastics, which involved thorough reiteration and verbal recitation of inspiring moments from the Japanese myths including the myth of the creation of the land 国産み: *kuni-umi*, the myth of the celestial rock cave 天岩戸: *ama-no-iwato*, and the descent of the grandson of the Sun-Goddess 天孫降臨: *ten-son-kōrin*)⁵. *Yamatobataraki* was a type of exercise intended to nurture the spirit of citizens, which might then be channeled for the development and expansion of Japan. During the Taishō period (1912–1926), *yamatobataraki* 皇国運動/日本体操 was even performed in the imperial palace under Empress Teimei's initiative.

Furthermore, during the 1930s, agrarian leader Katō Kanji, a former student of Kakei, introduced *yamatobataraki* into his farm education programs⁶. It was practiced at agricultural training facilities where the influence of Katō was powerful. They included the Yamagata Kenritsu Jichi Kōshūjo 山形県立自治講習所 (Yamagata Prefecture Municipal Training School), Nihon Kokumin Kotōgakkō 日本国民高等学校 (Japan People's High School), Manmō Kaitaku Giyūgun Uchihara Kunrensho 満蒙青少年開拓義勇軍移民内原訓練所 (Uchihara Training Center for Volunteer Youth Corps for Pioneering Manchuria and Mongolia), and the Aichi Kenritsu Nōrin Gakkō 愛知県立農林学校 (Aichi Prefectural Agricultural School)⁷. Many graduates of these institutes later migrated and lived in the colonies as agricultural settlers⁸. They continued practicing *yamatobataraki* in the colonies far away from its place of origin in Japan. Thus, Kakei's ideology was disseminated among the agricultural settlers in the colonies.

4. Kakei's view of Manchuria

Of all Japan's numerous colonies, Manchuria was particularly impacted by Kakei's ideologies.

⁴ Kakei Katsuhiko, "Gokamon Oboe." *Kannagara no Michi Goshinkō Hiwari*. Empress Teimei Jitsuroku Hensan Shiryō, No. 79961, p.3.

⁵ Kakei Katsuhiko, *Yamatobataraki*. Shunyōdō, 1929.

⁶ Yano Ichiro, "Yamagata-Ken Jichi Kōshūjo Gairan." *Hokuō Denmark Monogatari*. Nihon Seinenkan, 1924, pp.47-48.

⁷ Nakamichi Goichi. (2014) "*Kakei Katsuhiko 'Yamatobataraki' no Riron to Jissen*" Meiji Seitoku Kinen Gakkai Kiyō Vol.51.

⁸ Sagai Takeru, *Manshū no Jinja Kōbōshi*. Huyōdō Shuppan, 1998, p.141.

He served as one of the founding committee members of the National Foundation University 建国大学: Kenkoku University of Manchuria, and delivered lectures to Emperor Puyi 溥儀 of Manchukuo. Here, I will briefly discuss his views of Manchuria, his activities as the founding member of the National Foundation University, and the details of his lectures to Emperor Puyi.

First of all, Kakei himself did not have a good impression of Manchuria⁹. As reflected in the waka poems that he composed during his Manchurian trip, he deplored the fact that Manchuria was a mere imitation of Japan¹⁰. Despite the fact that the second Sino-Japanese War had already begun when Kakei visited, his view was that this was merely an insurrection triggered by some bandits¹¹.

At the same time, Kakei had a good opinion of the Japanese settlers in Manchuria¹². He composed inspiring waka poems and delivered encouraging talks during his visit to settlers' towns. Kakei called upon the settlers to nurture their Japanese spirit and help spread it the better to enlighten the backward people of Manchuria¹³.

Thus, while Kakei exhorted the settlers, he was silent about the expropriation of the native people's lands in the so called Manchurian development project. He also didn't refer to the suffering of the settlers who worked hard in this harsh foreign land. He did no more than simply praise the settlers' success¹⁴.

5. Kakei's role at the National Foundation University

In 1937, there was a proposal to establish National Foundation University (Kenkoku University). The university would serve as the main education and research center of the Manchukuo state. Kakei was invited to Manchuria as a founding committee member of the university. He was one among the four scholars who joined from Japan. (The others were Nishi Shinichirō 西晋一郎, Hiraizumi Kiyoshi 平泉澄, and Sakuda Shōichi 作田莊一). Kakei argued at the committee meeting that the university should be placed directly under Japanese imperial authority¹⁵. However, leaders of the Kwangtung Army—who represented the Manchukuo state—opposed this proposal, which resulted in its rejection¹⁶.

Moreover, according to the National Foundation University's yearbook, Kakei had no direct

⁹ Kakei Katsuhiko. (1930) "Kokutai Seishin to Taiwan". *Kōgakukai Zasshi Kannagara*. Vol.3, No.4, p.41. In 1937, Kakei went to Manchuria with his son in law, Masaki Yoshihide. Refer Kakei Katsuhiko. (1937) "Manshu Kō". *Kōgakukai Zasshi Kannagara*. Vol.10, No.8, pp.22-23.

¹⁰ Kakei Katsuhiko. (1937) "Manshu Kō". *Kōgakukai Zasshi Kannagara*. Vol.10, No.8.

¹¹ Ibid. p.3.

¹² Kakei Katsuhiko. (1932) "Kokumin Kōtō Gakkō Seito wo Manshu he Okuru no Ji." *Kōgakukai Zasshi Kannagara*. Vol.5, No.9. pp. 78-79.

¹³ Ibid. p.21.

¹⁴ Kakei "Manshū Kō". p.21.

¹⁵ Toji Manzō, ed., Kenkoku Daigaku Nenpyō. Kenkoku Daigaku Dōsokai, 1981, p.43.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp.43-45.

involvement in the university operations after its foundation. Most of the university professors were students of other founding members, while only one of Kakei's students, Aomoto Toshihiko 青本敏彦 served there as professor¹⁷. Even so, Aomoto held an administrative position unrelated to research or education¹⁸. Despite being one of the founding members, Kakei was unable to play a central role in the National Foundation University's operations.

Kakei was on the founding committee of the National Foundation University, but the university authorities wanted nothing more than his title as a conservative Tokyo Imperial University's Professor Emeritus. So he did nothing more than embellish the founding of the university. Also, Kakei's student was merely an employee of the university administration, and was unable to exercise much influence over its education and research activities.

6. Court lectures to Puyi

In 1944, Kakei was asked to give court lectures to Emperor Puyi of Manchukuo. Between 20 June and 25 July, Kakei delivered twenty sessions of lectures at the imperial palace situated at the Manchukuo capital city of Shinkyō.¹⁹ These court lectures, titled *The Great Way of the Gods* 惟神大道: *Kannagara no Daidō* can be thought of as broadly divided into four parts. In the first to the third lectures, Kakei outlined the Way of the Gods, emphasizing the concept of "life."²⁰ Here he argued that the concept of the Way of the Gods transcends the self and expresses the life of the state and the entire world.²¹

In the fourth to the fifteenth lectures, Kakei discussed the superiority of the Japanese myths as recorded in *Records of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan*, and of the gods which appeared in these myths²². In these lectures, he repeatedly stressed that the gods appearing in these myths were endowed with "life which naturally creates itself," and that this displayed a "root-and-branch relationship" order between the gods. The concept of life and the order of gods with the ancestral god Amaterasu at the top repeatedly appeared in Kakei's court lectures.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth lectures, Kakei tackled actual problems and explained how the myths from the *Records of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan* were the very base on which the imperial family and the constitution were established. He asserted for example that Article 1 through 4 of the Meiji Constitution which, for example, specified rule by an unbroken line of emperors, succession to the imperial throne through the male line, divinity of the emperor, sovereignty

¹⁷ Yamane Yukio, *Kenkoku Daigaku no Kenkyū*. Kyūko Shoin, 2003, p.156.

¹⁸ Ibid. p.240.

¹⁹ Kakei Katsuhiko. (1944) *Kannagara no Michi Goshinkō Sokkiroku*. Vol.1, beginning of a book.

²⁰ Kakei Katsuhiko. (2003.11) "Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.1)." *Yaegaki* Vol.7, p.5.

²¹ Ibid. p.6.

²² Kakei Katsuhiko. (2005.11) "Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.9)". *Yaegaki* Vol.15, p.6. Kakei Katsuhiko. (2004.11) "Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.3)." *Yaegaki* Vol.10, pp.6-7.

of the emperor, and obedience to the constitution, could never be altered at any time in the future²³.

Finally, from the eighteenth to the twentieth lectures, he insisted that as a religion, the Way of the Gods was superior to all other religions.²⁴ The Way of the Gods was an exemplary religion that prioritized relations with the state. He stressed that the people of Japan were striving to improve actual living conditions, through the force of a creed which sought to contribute to and achieve the ideals of the state.

7. Concept of The Whole World under One Roof 八紘一宇: *Hakkō ichiu* and the Japan–Manchukuo relationship

There were two noteworthy points in *The Great Way of the Gods*. The first was the concept of “The Whole World under One Roof” (*Hakkō ichiu*), and the second was the relationship between Japan and Manchukuo. Kakei cited the former as a justification the Pacific War. Kakei stressed that the concept of “Whole World under One Roof” was a process of natural manifestation of the essence inherent in the Japanese state, and was not the grounds for mutual conflict²⁵. He claimed that the war was caused due the West’s lack of understanding of Japan’s true intentions. According to him, the concept of the “Whole World under One Roof” was, no matter what, merely the process by which the power of the Japanese gods led by Amaterasu would be revealed to the world.

The next point was the relationship between Japan and Manchukuo. Kakei maintained that Manchukuo now followed the Way of the Gods under the guidance of the Japanese emperor and Japan. As a state, although Manchukuo was still immature, it clearly had the potential to become a fully mature state. Kakei concluded that Manchukuo would doubtlessly by revering the emperor and following the Way of the Gods, receive the spirit of the Way of the Gods, and help awaken from delusion the world’s entire population.²⁶ Thus, for Kakei, Manchukuo was established under the spiritual guidance of Japan and still in an immature state. But, in the future, as a state under the guidance of the Way of the Gods, it could become like Japan and spiritually lead the people of the world.

8. Reaction of Puyi and his court

What kind of influence then did Kakei exert on Puyi, the Manchukuo emperor? As discussed earlier, Empress Teimei, for instance, was a staunch supporter of Kakei. But did Kakei have the same effect on Puyi? Put simply, the answer is no. Puyi recalled in his postwar memoirs that, while he was not sure about the Japanese reaction to Kakei’s ideologies, he himself had never for a mo-

²³ Kakei Katsuhiko. (2009.2) “Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.16).” *Yaegaki* Vol.26, p.6.

²⁴ Kakei Katsuhiko. (2003.11) “Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.20. No.4).” *Yaegaki* Vol.41, pp.6-7.

²⁵ Kakei Katsuhiko. (2009.1) “Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.17. No.2).” *Yaegaki* Vol.29, p.6.

²⁶ Kakei Katsuhiko. (2014.8) “Kannagara no Daidō (Vol.20. No.6).” *Yaegaki* Vol.43, p.6.

ment considered Kakei's ideas to be of any value to him or his country²⁷. In other words, Kakei's court lectures explaining the hierarchical order of the empire were simply too difficult for Puyi to accept.

9. An attempt at colonial indoctrination—successes and setbacks

If we except from consideration the Manchukuo emperor Puyi and his top-ranking officials, then the object of Kakei's lectures at the educational organizations or in settlers' villages was mostly people who had migrated from Japan to Manchuria. The popularization of *yamatobataraki* was limited to settlers' villages and did not appeal much to colonial subjects. Moreover, for Puyi and his associates, Kakei's lectures were completely unacceptable because he simply repeated the rhetoric that Manchukuo should beg for Japan's guidance.

Kakei's doctrinaire theory of colonial rule greatly emboldened the bureaucrats and soldiers who were dispatched from Japan to the colony. However, so far as the actual governing of Manchuria was concerned, despite being appointed as a founding committee member of the National Foundation University, Kakei's ideas were mostly rejected by the leaders of Manchukuo because they were considered unsuitable for actual educational requirements. Emperor Puyi did not accept Kakei's ideologies because it placed Manchukuo in a subordinate position to the Japanese emperor. Moreover, hierarchical ranking of citizens within the empire, another idea proposed by Kakei was also not accepted beyond Japan. In short, his ideologies and activities remained attractive only to a select group elites with their roots in Japan.

²⁷ Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi. (1964) *The First Half of My Life; From Emperor to Citizen: The Autobiography of Aisin-Gioro Puyi* Vol.2. trans. Ono Shinobu, Nohara Shirō, Nijima Atsuyoshi and Maruyama Noboru. Chikuma Shobō, 1992, pp.97-98.