

Kimono And Bowler Hat

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biology can gravely assign divine origins to their race. The more practical Chinese, for their part, snicker at students praying for examination passes ("like peasants") before the Sacred Horse at Nara or some similar fetish. But these things are not Shinto. They are only indications of how deeply conditioned the people are in the Shinto outlook. Shinto itself is indefinable. We may call it perhaps "Love of the Living Land"—not in the sense of a farmer's affection for the useful Good Earth, but as an artist's mystic enthrallment with "God in Nature." But the worshipper does not think of the Beautiful Land as in any way distinct from its human institutions or of himself as apart from them either. For the individual Japanese

indentured for a period so that her earnings may eke out what income remains when her family's three-acre farm has paid its rents and dues—all Japanese "expansion" has been financed out of the silent peasant—or else he is an artisan born in the factory village, schooled, apprenticed, and married there, and destined at the end of a serf-like but secure and probably not unhappy life, to die there after passing to simpler jobs in his old age. The smaller concern also, which may be a "Kabushiki Kaisha" (a Company Ltd.) without, is similarly a family or feudal territory within. Its business "executive" leads a double life. Spinning down several stories by lift from his swivel-chaired, concrete office, he boards a Detroit bus (whose uniformed girl conductor calls



Japanese officer and soldiers, 1867. From what was little more than a feudal rabble, still using bows and arrows, swords and halberds, the highly-trained army of to-day has developed in less than 100 years

is not in our sense an individual at all. "But for Buddhism, and more latterly some Christian influence, personality, as we know it, would not exist in Japan," said one observer to me. From this child-of-nature worship-attitude in daily life spring most of the things that are so delightful in Japan—simplicities, beauties, courtesies, and cleanliness. But from it, too, come their childish immaturity, their dependent loyalty to priest-kings and leader, and their unswerving obedience, misnamed "fanaticism."

Tied into this is feudalism. Sitting in a cinema among factory hands transported by the "Samurai Serial" into the magic Middle Ages of knight-errantry (Japanese style), I felt my host, the young Professor of Economics with whom I had outside argued "bloc economy" and "exchange control," lean over and remark, "My grandfather was a Samurai." Think out the implication of that casual statement. It means, transferred to British milieu, that your own father whose thought and way of life you know so well, was brought up by Owain Tudor, or Glyndwr, or Robin Hood! It means that Errol Flynn's film might have happened to your mother's mother! It means that all that world—so fantastic to us—of "honour," mortal combat, and derring-do, is still the thought-atmosphere of Japanese who sweat in steel-yards or fire torpedoes.

Factory Feudalism

It means, too, that hidden under the outward clang and smoke of factories, Japanese economic organisation remains basically feudal still. The Houses of Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Yasuda are lordships, fiefs, principalities of industry and investment. Their factory worker is either a peasant girl

"okay" or "a'right"—i.e., "proceed" or "keep backing"—to the Technical-School-taught driver) but, arrived at his home door, he sheds Westernism with the department store suit that he drops on the mat floor for his kneeling wife to fold away until next morning's siren.

The New Factor

But poverty, isolation, Shinto, and Feudalism are all age-old factors in the Japanese life-pattern. The new factor is Humiliation. It arrived with Commander Perry and the U.S.M.C. in 1853. (Yes, the Marines have taken Tokyo already). For then Japan's superior civilisation (as she deemed it), had to bow to the strength of outer "barbarians." Outraged to an extent that we, accustomed to the world's rough-and-tumble, cannot imagine, the Japanese leaders set themselves to humiliate their humiliators by proving that the Divine and Cultured Race could walk away from opposition even in those worthless (but power-giving) pursuits that the outsiders valued. Did the barbarians value sport? Very well, Japanese athletes should lead the world. Was science important? Japanese discoverers should become household names. And especially, since wealth and power were valued above all else, Japan should gain trade and empire above them all. Result: in one long lifetime a shut-in peasant state has been turned into a literate, technologically skilled, industrial, mercantile, and—at the present moment—enormously wealthy and extensive world Imperialism.

However, its authors had not foreseen everything. They had not suspected, for example, that industrialisation would double their population, leaving the new

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