The eve of the investiture of Jian-wen-di of the Liang as crown prince: A study of the historical position of crown princes in the Southern Dynasties

by OKABE Takeshi

In the fourth month of Zhongdatong 中大通 3 (531), about thirty years after the Qi 斛 dynasty of the Southern Dynasties had been replaced by the Liang 梁 and at a time when the realm was at peace, the emperor Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (Wudi 武帝) was confronted with the question of choosing a successor. His eldest son Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Zhaoming Taizi 昭明太子), the crown prince, had died suddenly at the early age of thirty one. At the time, the major contender for the position of successor to the throne was considered to be Xiao Tong's eldest son Xiao Huan 蕭歓. But after the position of crown prince had been left vacant for about three months, it was to much surprise Wudi's third son Xiao Gang 蕭綱 - Xiao Tong's uterine brother and the subsequent emperor Jian-wen-di 简文帝 who was designated crown prince by Wudi. This deviated from the principles of the contemporary inheritance system, and it has generally been considered that this investiture of Xiao Gang as crown prince, which caused popular disquiet, had its origin in antagonism between Wudi and Xiao Tong and became one of the causes of the political upheavals towards the end of the Liang. But it can hardly be said that there has until now been adequate discussion of Wudi's intentions in reaching what was an extremely important political decision, namely, the nomination of crown prince. In this article, I undertake an analysis of the background to this incident and examine the reasons for Xiao Gang's investiture as crown prince. In doing so, I ascertain the nature of the institution of crown prince from the Qin 秦 and Han 漢 through to the Northern and Southern Dynasties and touch on the characteristics of the institution of crown prince.
prince during the Southern Dynasties. I do this because it is to be supposed that, through an examination of the background to and characteristics of this political question, some light may be shed on the distinctive nature of the crown prince during the Six Dynasties and also on the historical position in which crown princes found themselves in ancient China.

The five grains and the annual observances in Nara and Heian Japan

by Charlotte von Verschuer

This article analyses the meaning and role of the 'five grains' at the imperial courts of Nara and Heian Japan. In the written sources of classical Japan, the 'five grains' appear as a general term meaning various cereals and beans, comprising not only rice but also wheat, millet, Barnyard Grass, soy bean, azuki bean etc. But beyond this materialistic meaning, the 'five grains' also show symbolic implications as an agricultural product of a 'civilized country'. This article features the concept of the five grains in the aristocratic society. Taken as granted the evidence that rice was the main accounting device in public economy, this paper takes a different approach by placing rice within the various cereals in court life. First this article analyses the five grains as an agricultural product and its place in nutrition, secondly it features its meaning in prayers and religious rites as well as in the yearly observances (ceremonies and rituals) of the imperial court. As a result, it shows that the five grains have a wider importance in court life than previously assumed. The 'five grains', not limited to rice, formed the staple food for the emperor and the court society. The 'five grains' furthermore show a significance in the imperialistic ideology through the official prayers: indeed prayers for good harvest did not only feature rice but 'all grains grown by the people'. The 'five grains' were also associated with
prayers for the protection of the State by the gods. All grains (not limited to rice) were served at the ritual feasts to the emperor and they played a major role at all eight primary court ceremonies celebrated throughout the year. This article is meant to challenge the traditional views which focus on the beliefs about rice and to show that, rather than rice alone, the cereals as a whole entity played a major role in the political ideology of ancient Japan.

The Greek Parliament in the 1900s and the Team of the Japanese: The Currant Scandal in 1907-1908

by MURATA Nanako

This essay aims to explore the vision for state regeneration advanced by a Greek political party known as the Team of the Japanese by analyzing the party's arguments against Theotokis' government in the Greek parliament in the wake of the Currant Scandal of 1907. This political party was established by seven deputies in 1906 in a period when the Greek parliament suffered from stagnation in terms of both domestic and international politics.

The Currant Scandal was disclosed by Dimitrios Gounaris, a member of the Team of the Japanese, in December 1907 in the parliament. He found out that the agreement between the government and the Privileged Company to Foster the Production and Trade of Currants included terms that would illegally benefit the company at the expense of currant growers. The attacks of the Team of the Japanese against the government pushed the government to the verge of collapse.

The criticism of the Team of the Japanese against the government reveals that the Team of the Japanese intended to realize political reform by rebuilding parliamentarianism, which had been considered moribund in Greece. The party attempted to achieve
parliamentarianism in order to revive the state. We can summarize the parliamentarian ideals of the Team of the Japanese with three dimensions. First, the Team claimed that every issue related to the national interest should be confirmed by the parliament. Second, it argued that the cabinet should take ethical responsibility for the parliament. Third, it emphasized that a prime minister should cultivate “sensitivity” to the parliamentary system and engage in state affairs with a mind toward the collective responsibility of the cabinet.

Indeed, the Team of the Japanese distinguished itself as a reform-oriented and viable political force in the first decade of the twentieth century, a period that previous scholars have characterized simply as chaotic and apathetic. Further research will offer a more complete picture of this party and fill in a missing piece of the process of reform and modernization from the Trikoupis’ period to the Venizelos’ era.