

Japan-An Interpretation: A General Study of Japanese Cultural Structure

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Preface

We have valuable studies of many aspects of Japanese culture without which this thesis could not have been written. We rarely have, however, any study in English of what the whole of Japanese culture means in the lives of the Japanese people. One of the purposes of this study is to fill this vacancy, even though superficially.

The difference in the way of thinking between the agricultural people and nomads may be a focal point to discuss culture in general. In Japanese culture the populace is defined as "Tamigusa"(literally, falk grass), while the nomadic people are interpreted as the astray sheep. This interpretation stems from the difference based on the fact that the former places an emphasis on agricultural life and the latter on hunting and stock-farming life. This symbolic difference gives birth to the Japanese people's way of thinking which is peculiar to the Western people. It is quite natural that the way of thinking should be different between those who have freedom to leave the land and those who hold on fast to the land. Japanese people think that "they should not put off until tomorrow what they can do today," while the nomadic people think that they may leave the land if the land is no more fit for stock-farming, as it is proverbially said that "you must not do anything today that you can do tomorrow." Nomads never cling to the land when they find it unproductive. But Japanese people fasten themselves on the land which has been handed down from generation to generation. If the land loses its value as agriculture, they feel responsibility for the sterilized land. Being deeply concerned about the unfavorable result, they try to evade responsibility for the land and shift

responsibility on to another, judging that they can share responsibility with each other.

But the consideration of mass philosophy "Giri" (a sense of duty based on human relations), which seems to be very peculiar to Japanese society, complicates the matter concerned. A sense of duty may be founded on the fulfilment of promise or contract in Western society, although historians are of the opinion that there also existed a sense of "Giri" in European society before the 17th century. But in Japan the people had faithfully applied "Giri" to their daily life before the Meiji Restoration (1867) and "Giri" is still practiced in the present-day society as a kind of social moral. "Giri," a peculiar frame of mind, may be defined as confirmation of "self," which is different from contract in character.

Attention should be also paid to another frame of mind, "Ninjo" (a sense of sympathy and sacrifice), which is considered not to be in parallel with "Giri." "Ninjo" is a kind of "soft feeling" expressed toward the inner world, while "Giri," being aimed at maintaining social order, is directed toward the external world.

I wonder where Japanese culture, based on these kinds of social concept, will finally reach or how it will develop in the future. To understand Japanese culture, thus, it is preferable to start with the analysis of the mentality of Japanese people. In order to further grasp the characteristics of present-day Japanese culture, it is interesting to make a comparative study of various types of cultural phenomena of Japan and West.

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1. The World View of Japanese

Nobody can deny that the global way of thinking is being much required today than ever. A drastic change took place in the historical view of the world after the Second World War. Today we must make a full review of old historical views advocated by leading historians including Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), a German historian. It is needless to say that must make incessant effort to fully and correctly comprehend the changeable aspects of the world history and have a keen interest in the future of the world.

The mankind must double his effort to pave the way for the future of his history, as he has been exploring the unknown and mysterious fields of the history step by step. Today we face a new historical crisis in which we are struggling with the problematic question of how we will be able to make the historical image that the present-day world calls upon us to share with each other as a common subject of the mankind. The time has reached the state in which we must reconsider the world history and rewrite it, as it was focussed on Europe.

A key must be found to open the new world history by understanding historical trends which are seen through today's Eurasia, not being influenced by a biased view on the civilization of tomorrow. Mesopotamia, India and China had nurtured basic factors in forming today's civilization. These historical factors are the characteristic of Eurasian civilization. It is not Europe that played a decisive role in forming the character of the world history. In light of the fact that materialism centered on the development of science and technology has downgraded European civilization, it is an urgent matter for us to correctly understand the stream of the world history in Eurasia. Islamic morality, Indian philosophy and the Chinese way of thinking may help us to have an insight into the new world history. Today at the turning point of material civilization we must reconsider the meaning of life and what is really meant by the progress of history.

Although we had learned a lot from Europe, I wonder whether we had made a critical mistake in interpreting Europe. But nobody can deny that the Japanese have succeeded in absorbing Western civilization. As Robert N. Bellah stated in

his book "Tokugawa Religion" : "Japan alone of the non-Western nations was able to take over very rapidly what it needed of Western culture in order to transform itself into a modern industrial nation. Students of Japan have come increasingly to feel that this success is not to be some mythical faculty of imitation which the Japanese are supposed to possess, but to certain factors in the pre-modern period which prepared the ground for later developments," in those days there already existed the "cradle" of civilization in the inner aspect of Japan which might finally lead to the formation of modern Japan in which the people tried to strengthen her national power with dispatch under the slogan : "Let's strengthen our country and foster our national industry!" In other words various elements of a modern industrial nation were already germinating.

But it was only after we opened our country to foreigners that our modernization was built on the foundation of Occidental culture. Modern Japan had made a miraculous advance since Japan enjoyed many benefits from European civilization. The civilization of science and technology was one of things which were imported to Japan from Europe. There must have been some factor to make the development of science and technology possible in Europe. In contrast, the need of science and technology was not felt so keenly in Japan. Because it was thought the civilization of science and technology was not always expected to take the same role in Japan as was it in Europe, and the Japanese and the European were considered to be a little different in the practical application of civilization to their daily life. We realize that quite a few social problems that we have today are attributed to this difference in thinking. In association with ancient China, Korea and Southern countries in general and Europe in particular, by which Japan had been drastically modernized, since we renounced a door-closed policy, Japan had brought up her own culture, while absorbing different factors of each culture so rapidly as not to be seen in other countries.

It was before the 3rd century when the ancient nation was first established in Japan that the relations of Japan with China began. It was generally believed that Japanese culture, referred to as a "sapling," had grown up as a big tree by being applied the "manure" of Chinese civilization to the land of Japan. On the contrary, Konan Naito (1866-1934), a famous Japanese scholar of Oriental history, refuted

the statement and pointed out that the relationship between the two countries is compared to that of juice squeezed from soya-bean in making Tofu bean-curd and the bitter. The “mushy” (flexible) factor of Japanese culture took on a definite form in association with Chinese culture. The Han dynasty of North China established Rokuro or Lolang in Korea in 108 B.C. and through the route, highly advanced Chinese culture briskly flowed into Japan. Namely, the civilization of Japan came into existence 2,000 years later than that of China. In China agriculture began to be conducted in 4000 B.C. and the first ancient regime was established in 1500 B.C., while in Japan the birth of an agricultural society dated back to 300 B.C. and the force of national unification of Japan first raised its head in Northern Kyushu in the 3rd century. Such a speedy introduction of foreign culture to Japan, considered as a fundamental factor of Japanese culture, is even now being watched with keen interest by the world.

When the Han dynasty ruled all over Asia, it was Japan alone that did not come under its influence and regarded its rule not as “reality”(power), but as “ideology”(dignity). Southern and Central China and Korea, which were located on the same damp land of East Asia as Japan, had been subjected to the rule by the Han dynasty of North China which was established on the dry land, and could not establish feudalism, probably because they regarded the rule as “reality”(power). But only in Japan that accepted the rule as ideology was born feudal system.

2. The Japanese Psychology

It is frequently pointed out that “fish in the water does not know what water is.” As the proverb says: We Japanese, who were born and brought up only on the land of Japan, are very hard to grasp what type of people the Japanese are. Research has been carried out in and out of the country to study Japanese national traits and consciousness.

Among books on Japan written in peace time by the Japanese themselves are some which are marked by a highly personal and distorted judgement of the Japanese people's good character. In contrast, in the times when they were defeated in the war, they often emphasized how deeply they were suffering from

inferior complex. Neither of them properly dealt with the Japanese people's characteristics. In order to avoid a biased view on Japan in general and Japanese society in particular attention should be drawn to the fact that there should be some reason to become the cause of action and then the reason should be pointed out and analyzed. For example, the reason may be found in the way of expression and comprehension of the Japanese language, which is quite unique among all the tongues of the world, in that it does not have a single kinfolk. The way of reasoning should not be particular to the Japanese, but applicable to all nations, when the reason is defined as universal truth obtained after careful comprehension and sensitive reading of the language. This attitude that we take in analyzing Japan, as it is, through the comprehension of the language, contributes a lot to estimating impartially the Japanese people's character.

Then I will write about the way how to take up the language as the comprehension of reality of Japan in another chapter. The Japanese are said to have a good balance in the society and to give a specious appearance to save their reputation. This attitude still remains in Japanese conversations in which when a mother says to her child, "If you do such a thing, you'll be laughed at by others," or when one is asked, "How are you?" the answer is "I am fine, thanks to you (okagesamade)." In Japanese society, those who push others aside and put themselves forward are regarded as having committed a vice. But in Europe and America the people think that they take little account of public reputation, but they feel guilty when they did something wrong.

Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887-1948), an American anthropologist, pointed out in her book "The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Pattern of Japanese Culture" (1946) that "Japan is the nation of "shame." "Shame" does not include the consciousness of "crime," but is a painful feeling of having lost the respect of others because of misconduct in the society. Shame is defined to be some feeling expressed toward the society, not the measurement of one's conduct in the society. When Japanese says, "I am sorry, but I have troubled the world," he is conscious of the phenomena of "having troubled others," but takes no responsibility for his conduct which caused him to "have troubled others."

On the contrary, in West, the people are responsible for a mistake that they

committed. The Western people are not always mindful of the fact that they conducted indecently and troubled others.

It is not law but a kind of dynamism being predominant in the community life to regulate the act of people in Japanese society where the part of law is very weak to play in the control of people. The Japanese society, which can easily change in response to the change of the world and adjust itself to the change, is referred to as a "mollusc." Since there exists no authentic power in Japan, the leader of a group has no prerogative to determine the future of the group. The reason why it is so is found in this particular structure of society. Individuals try to follow the rule of their community in order to keep balance with the whole in the spirit of cooperation and to preserve the maintenance of public peace. The way the Japanese people do not assume a rigid and strict attitude towards subjects gives rise to a general phenomenon in Japanese society in which an "official policy" is often synchronized with "reality." Thus, the people who have been brought up in this society, are not accustomed to the life based on the strict observance of law, because they know that the best way to live in this society is to live is collaboration with others. Needless to say, the Japanese are always feeling the existence of regulations in their daily life. It may be said that the social order or moral is taking the place of legal regulations. But there may be some possibility that, accustomed to this way of life, we are apt to forget the strictness of law and never pay attention to the observance of law.

No less affecting the Japanese people's frame of mind is Japan's topographical condition. As Japan is surrounded with the sea, we have been imbued with the insular spirit. In case the Japanese come in contact with a different culture, we are hard to adjust ourselves to it and suffer from so-called "culture shock." I think that the human relation, based on the "vertical" frame of reference" (or a social system based on seniority) and the philosophy to orientate the direction from the inside to the outside, urges the Japanese to feel more culture-shocked than do other nations. If the adjustment of the Japanese to the external world, such as Europe, America, Southeast Asian countries, and the frame of mind, namely the "inner" consciousness" to be reflected upon the outer world, are analyzed, it is pointed out that there are two kinds of outstanding tendency; "being enforced" and "evading."

What does it mean that we know by experience that the dent on the surface of "self" changes in proportion to the strength of the pressure from the outside? It means that if there is no pressure from the outside, self-consciousness should be kept in a flexible and complete form. This way of thinking may constitute the basis of the art of considering how Japanese idealism will be born. Such a feeling as "if there is no pressure..." is always inherent in the mind of the Japanese people. If the pressure is removed, the situation is instantly improved and goes well in every aspect. Thus, such an ideal society is set up in the small islands of Japan. Then how is the ideal society realized from the topographical point of view? This is a line of thought which there exists a peculiar society called a "trained society" in which they are trained to come to terms with others, although each member of the society has different opinions. The Japanese people think that the trained society is far better than the society in which people insist upon their opinion. Underlying such a concept to a large extent is the attitude to avoid what is extreme or complex to let relations with others go smoothly. The societies, which consist of many different factors, are found not only in Europe, but also on other continents. The topographical conditions of the continent may be the cause of nourishing individualistic philosophy. But insularity may exclude the individualistic factor and lead to the universalistic way of thinking. The Japanese, who are brought up in the trained society, are very polite, but at the same time they behave haughtily and arrogantly. The Japanese are extremely stubborn, but are willing to accept any kind of novelty. The Japanese are docile, but they do not follow the order given by the senior. The Japanese are faithful and generous, but they are selfish. The Japanese are brave, but they are sometimes coward. The Japanese are nervous about others, but they are very conscientious. You can not talk about the Japanese people's character without using "but or although" in your speech.

3. The Traditional Consciousness of Japanese

After living in Japan for a long time you will feel that a strange atmosphere (something invisible that is very difficult to explain what it is), which the Japanese often call "Kuki" (air or anima), is prevalent in the society. Is that a kind of social

custom or tradition? I think it is part of strange and mysterious aura (atmosphere).

For instance, on the New Year's Day and during the days of Bon festival in mid-summer an increasing number of the Japanese people go back to their home town, although they know how tired they will be on the way and back home because of traffic congestion. The reason why the people are so eager to go back home is because the traditional custom of eating at the same mess is still persisting in Japan. In those days when a great majority of masses were peasants, there was the custom that families should eat together at a certain place and at a certain time. If a man happened to eat alone, he was said to be a cunning fellow and despised by the public. This was called "Kogama-date" in Japanese which literally means: "Cooking rice in a small pot." Since the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese were permitted to choose their own occupation and left their native land to look for it and began to live separately from their family. Thus they were losing the chance of living under the same roof and of breaking bread with the family. Today the Japanese people, who return to their home town on the New Year's Day in order to make up for the lost chance and share food with the family, are increasing in number.

It is quite natural that the custom of "eating at the same mess" or "eating rice cooked in the same pot" is inevitably linked with the act of eating. Eating, like excretion or sex, is a very individualistic act. This kind of act should be done only among the persons concerned. During the performance of such an act, people must concentrate themselves on the act without regard to others. People are afraid to perform the act in public. If people can overcome such a fear, although it is deeply rooted in the human mind, they can deepen relations with others by eating the same food on the same table. If the persons concerned happen to be other than their family members and relatives, they feel the more fearful, but the significance of eating together gets deeper in proportion to the intimacy of relationship with the persons concerned. The Japanese make it a rule to share food with each other which was offered to a guardian god after a religious ceremony. Needless to say, the Japanese people's concern for this custom is closely connected with their religious belief. It is significant to note that this custom also stems from the idea

to strengthen the unification of a village.

It was Kunio Yanagida (1875-1962), an expert on folk-lore that taught us that manners and customs, which are practiced in our present daily life, take root deeply as part of race's cultural character. Through Yanagida's analysis of the old Japanese manners and customs I came to know that we must understand how people established their community life and how they communicated with each other. Therefore, the existence of a multiform cultural structure that we can not define as uniformity should be put into account. In the past the Japanese imaged the existence of the "land of mother" beyond the horizon or the existence of god deep in the mountain. Thus various types of religion were born when the people prayed for such an invisible power.

When the culture of Japan came into contact with that of a foreign country, a device used to be employed. When a new culture was brought into Japan, Japanese culture was banded together with the different one to further the creation of a new type of culture. The following is an example showing the combination of the two cultures. A Japanese bun (a kind of pastry stuffed with bean-jam), whose origin is found in China in which the Chinese would throw a bun into the river to appease the soul of a river god, was reformed into a special kind of bread stuffed with bean-jam called "Anpan" (the combination of "An"(bean-jam) and "pan" (bread)). But this reformation was possible only after the technical know-how of baking bread was introduced to Japan from West. This phenomenon is also seen in our religion. Shintoism had been prevalent in Japan since long before the introduction of Buddhism. But not a single of the Japanese people doubted that a Shinto god (our indigenous deity) became the object of worship as the reincarnation of a Buddha or a bodhisattva. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism which combined with Buddhism and Confucianism, and "Kokugaku" Japanese classic were called our traditional philosophy and were in conflict with European thought which was imported to Japan after the Meiji Restoration. We may be able to divide these different types of philosophy into two categories. But we may commit a mistake if we divide them in such a form as tradition or non-tradition. The European thought was incorporated in our daily life and our consciousness and was indelibly printed on our cultural life. The influence was so strong to set off a

momentum to wipe off the traditional concepts of the Japanese from our very bottom, thus exerting an extremely violent influence on the philosophy and modes of life of the pre-industry Japan, although some say that European thought based on individuality is a mere mantle for the Japanese.

4. The Japanese Sentiment

While a Japanese calls his attention to him, he puts his forefinger toward the nose, while a Western pushes his thumb finger over the breast. This is one example showing how different a Japanese and a Western are in the way of thinking. It is also pointed out that the Japanese prefer a proverb which states: "Proof is better than argument," while the Western like the philosophical attitude of "argument for argument."

The Western people are bent on the way how to develop argument than the way how to accumulate knowledge. They know the way how to enjoy conversations. It is construed that their merit system is so strict that they often push others aside and put themselves forward. Meanwhile, the habit of being prudent in speech and action has been commonly practiced among the Japanese people.

Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), a Japanese classical scholar, who said that "argumentative persons are pert (saucy)," regarded a sympathetic and sensitive attitude toward man and nature ("Monono-aware") as the true spirit of the Japanese people. In his commentary ("Tamano-Kogushi") on "The Tale of Genji" he said that " 'Monono-aware' is the pathos, the pain of sensibility of beauty, namely the 'Ah-ness of things'." We have the same feeling when we were moved with a sense of pathos, when we saw cherry-blossoms falling down. When such an attitude, however, goes too far, this concept takes on the meaning of powerlessness and the principal of non-resistance.

In this respect, "Monono-aware" is one of the difficult Japanese words to be translated into English, but is a key word to appreciate the Japanese people's beauty consciousness and the sublime sentiment of individual Japanese. William George Aston (1841-1911), an English diplomat and Japonologist, came to Japan in the Meiji Era and came across the word "Monono-aware" and took many troubles

to translate it into English. He realized that if he could translate "Monono-aware" into English, he could understand the quintessence of the Japanese spirit. His English translation of "Monono-aware" was finally "Ah-ness," the noun form of an interjection, "ah!"

In contrast, European thought or philosophy is being maintained through the manifestation of "self." The Japanese are different in opinion, but they refuse to put into words what they think. Even if they have a lot of things to be unsatisfied with, they will be satisfied if they can find themselves in conformity with the whole.

The Japanese are taught to read between the lines and to attach importance to something to be felt between the figure of a Chinese character (Kanji) and the sound of the Kana-letters of the Japanese phonetic syllabary written at the side of the ideograph.

Another thing I have to mention in the peculiar expression of the Japanese people is that even a single word serves as the function of a full sentence in a certain situation. For example, in the train a woman holds out her cigarette case to a man and says to him, "Want?" The single verb "want" is extended to the meaning of "Do you want to smoke a cigarette?" There is another case in which a man takes off his coat and puts it on the rack. She cries out, "Fall!" This case in which the verb "fall" means that the coat is almost falling off the rack" may be understood not only among the two people concerned, but also among the people in the vicinity. Thus, people can communicate with each other only through the use of the verb, because the two verbs are able to take the place of a simple composition in response to the situation in which people are placed. This is one of examples indicating that the Japanese people are sensible and good at mind-reading.

5. The Beauty Consciousness of Japanese

The art, which is common to the mankind as a creative activity, is the manifestation of human life and culture. The Japanese nurtured aesthetic sense appreciating the artistic works as represented by ceramist Koetsu (1558-1637) and priest Enku (?-1689), who carved 120 thousand statues of the Buddha in wood.

The Japanese not only appreciate the beautiful shape and painting of a pottery, but also think much of the feeling they have when they touch on it. Then the cluster and quality of clay are being put into consideration. But in case of Western pottery the painting occupies an important position and the material is considered to be only the canvas on which pictures are drawn.

There is also a sharply contrasting school marked by ceramists such as Kanzan, Jinsai, and Mokubei in Japan whose paintings are considered to be of much importance than the pot itself. But attention should be paid to the fact that their highly artistic paintings look much pleasing on the pottery than on other material.

In 1573, Nobunaga Oda (1534-82), coming from Nagoya, entered Kyoto, achieving the unification of the country. With it, the Muromachi government formally terminated, and the curtain fell on the Age of Civil Wars which had lasted for 11 years. The development of agriculture resulted in increased productivity. At the same time regular commodity markets and traders' organization called "Za" were established in various parts of the country. Also introduced was an exchange system to facilitate transactions between traders living in distant places. Various elements of a modern capitalist economy began to germinate. These agricultural and economic activities brought about surplus profit to the people and constituted a basis for opening the way for the Genroku (17th century) in which Japanese culture flourished at its best. In those days the people recognized trust and generosity were the most important factors in commercial activities and kept a keen watch over the maintenance of order in markets. Thus, the Japanese people's realization of fair-trade spirit played an important role in forming such a frame of mind as to think the worldly affairs with latitude. Their active spiritual life manifested itself in the form of "Ukiyoe," a genre picture, and Japanese flute and string music through which the Japanese refined their sentiment and built their character. They also brushed up on the sensibility of their expression by appreciating Haiku poems composed by great Haiku master Basho (1644-94).

Behind such a spiritual life of the Japanese was always felt the concept that "this world is 'Ukiyo' (a transitory world)." "Uki" (transitory) has also the meaning of "lamentable," but the two are phonetically the same. "Ukiyo" (a transitory

world) has the concept that the people regard this world, in which all conditional things are impermanent or ephemeral, as the world in which the people are assured of freedom from all human bondages. "Uki" also means "lightness" to be used in such a sentence as "traveling light." But "freedom" in the transitory world not only means that "people are making merry" or "disporting themselves," but also means that "people are living a life of transience like a drifting cloud."

In this aspect, "Ukiyo" (transitory world) is relevant to another "Ukiyo" (a lamentable world). Thus, this world is referred to as the world of a "dream" in which the people pray for the rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida (Elysian fields) which is regarded as the land of eternity. Even if this religious frame of mind may deteriorate into a secularized form, the Japanese may preserve the religious consciousness of "Ukiyo" at the bottom of our heart.

The frame of this religious consciousness of the Japanese leads to the formation of beauty consciousness which is peculiar to the Japanese and finds its most popular expression in the artistic forms such as snow, moon, flower which symbolize the traditional beauty of Japan.

One of the most salient points in interpreting the beauty of Japan is that "white is richest in color" and "emptiness is indefinite in space." Triggered by this concept, the meaning of "Sansui" (which usually refers to the Japanese school of paintings in India ink and a monochrome landscape) ranges from "hills and waters," "a landscape," "a scenic beauty," "a garden" to the state of being desolate, lonely, or shabby. "Wabi," which refers to the taste for the simple and the quiet; "Sabi" to elegant simplicity, the beautiful patina of age, the most important words used in the performance of "Chaji" (the tea ceremony), intensify the spiritual richness. The small and simple tea-room provides us with the boundless space and beauty. It is said in this connection that the Japanese accept this theory on life in its entirety and specially enjoy the tea ceremony through which we believe we could attain enlightenment. Because the Japanese think that the sentiment of "Wabi" or tranquility is a sort of naivety regarding gorgeousness as being detrimental to enlightenment.

Great tea master Rikyu (1522-91) thought that the conception of the unification of nature and man should be seen through the expression of "Wabi" (tranquility)

and "Sabi" (subtlety). His tea-room was only one and a half mat and his tea utensils were all made of material with the beauty of nature. In this environment the master and his guests, being engaged in the proceedings of the tea ceremony, created a silent communication in the small room. The art of the tea ceremony may be pointed out to be a "beautification of imperfectness," or "artistic sense of poverty." "Imperfectness" is understood to be imperfect in the state of being perfect and "poverty" to be insufficient in the state of being extravagant. But these two phenomena are not contradictory. The ultimate perfectness and extravagance are pursued in the state of being imperfect and insufficient. This way of thinking is relevant not only to the tea ceremony, but also to the Japanese garden in which the arrangement of rocks and sand is deemed a spacious sea or an epitom of the universe. Particularly the Rock-Garden of Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto is not appreciated for its garden beauty alone but is also interpreted as a symbol of the universe. This indicates the Japanese people's regard for simplicity and beauty is closely connected with their strong idealism.

6. The Religious View of Japanese

Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism were all introduced to Japan from abroad. The foreign religion that exerted the strongest influence, however, was Buddhism which was born in India and spread all over Asia. Buddhism then took a vital role in forming the spiritual life of the Japanese. Buddhism, after it was planted on foreign lands, was transformed both in practical and theoretical aspects.

There were several cases in which Buddhism was changed into a different type of religion because of the traditional way of thinking of each country. Buddhism of the Continents (Southern Buddhism or Theravada Buddhism) put an emphasis on neumenon (which often signifies the tathatā (thusness)) and Japanese Buddhism (Northern Buddhism or Mahayana Buddhism) on phenomenon.

The fundamental teaching of Buddhism is based on the real state of all-elements (Shohō-jissō) in which the variety of phenomenal things expresses the real state of the universal and eternal truth. Buddhism has a fundamental purpose

of pursuing truth in everything. Shohō indicates every act we experience in our life. All that we experience in this world is controlled by Dharma (the law of the Buddha). Therefore, Shohō-jissō indicates everything that is controlled by Dharma. This is the interpretation of "Shohō-jissō" before Buddhism was introduced to Japan. Since the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, "Shohō-jissō" was misinterpreted as follows: Everything in this phenomenal world is true in appearance. Thus, everything in this world is exposed to our eye and nothing exists to evade our eye in this world. This way of thinking was first accepted on the practice of Zen Buddhism.

Dogen (1200-53), the founder of the Soto Zen Sect, said that "the changeable character of the ephemeral world is of absolute significance. Everything in this world is transient and changeable. The followers of Buddhism are seeking for something unchangeable and eternal. But they should not be so. The impermanence of land and scenery is a form of Buddhahood. The true nature of Buddhahood must not be sought through the pursuit of impermanence. Death and life are the very form of Buddhahood or mountains, rivers and earth are all the forms of Buddhahood."

This is the reason why death and life are called "samsara" (transmigration or reincarnation) in Indian tradition. So we Japanese interpret the phenomenal world as absolute in the philosophy of transmigration.

When Buddhism was imported to Japan through Korea from India, nothing existed to hamper the introduction. But in case of China, in the Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties of the 4th century when Buddhism was brought into the country, China was being ravaged by the successive invasion from the Huns. It was in such a turmoil and in the times when the ancient regime of China and the indigenous philosophical system were already established that Buddhism was introduced from India as a foreign religion.

Comparing with such a conflicting situation in which Buddhism was introduced to China, Japan had almost nothing to trouble herself with the acceptance of Buddhism except the skirmish over the introduction of Buddhism as a foreign religion between the two most powerful Soga and Mononobe Clans at the beginning of the 6th century. This matter is described in "Nihonshoki" (Chronicles

of Japan, published in 720), but it is open to doubt if the mythology carried in it was presented in its original form, with no alternation. Anyway there had been almost nothing to fall into conflict with Buddhism and to surpass the foreign religion. But it is not so clear that the fact that Buddhism was successfully accepted by the Japanese people was due to Japan's young history, unmatured cultural level and social conditions.

How greatly Buddhism influenced the spiritual life of the Japanese? Buddhism taught the people to love with each other and help with each other and to revere all sentient beings in the world. All these Buddhist ideas were incorporated into the Japanese people's spiritual life. As a result, the people practiced Buddhism to be awakened to the true teaching of the Buddha through which we spread compassion and benevolence among others. For example, priest Gyoki (668-749), who disseminated Buddhism and built bridges and constructed embankments, was one of the greatest social workers in Japan.

Other noteworthy historical figures were Saicho (767-822), and Kukai (774-835). The two great geniuses went to study in China under the T'ang dynasty in 804 and, following their return, propagated Tendai and Shingon Buddhism, respectively. Kukai built a training college, whose name was Shugeishuchi-In, in which he conducted a daily school feeding system for professors and students for the first time in Japan. Priest Ninsho (1217-1303) built a leper house to cure leprosy patients and a clinic to take care of sick horses. Also known for the religious-social welfare activities is priest Tetsugen (1630-82) who provided daily food to 10 thousand refugees. There are many other social workers in the religious field.

It was Buddhism that taught us the value of life and abolished the habit of eating meat and negated capital punishment system. The people also learned human relations and the unification of man with nature through the daily practice of Buddhism. It is significant to note that the Japanese people's way of thinking and the characteristics of Japanese culture are generally based on Buddhism. My opinion is that today's Japanese humanism was born from the "flexible" interpretation of Buddhism.

7. The Favorite Food of Japanese

One of the most important purposes for man was to contrive the art to produce food as much as possible from a limited area. The quick solution of this problem may decide the future of each country. The main grain food of the Japanese is rice and the rice cultivation economy of South Asia constituted the historical source of Japan's agricultural culture. The land of Japan, suitable for the production of plants, developed the most efficient system of waterfield rice growing. The question often rises which it is more profitable to raise live stock or to make rice in the same area. The former can support five people and the latter more than ten. The best way for many people to live in the small islands of Japan was to cultivate rice and to live on it.

Another main foodstuff for the Japanese is fish. As the waters surrounding the Japanese islands are rich in nourishment and harbor a lot of fish. Therefore, fishing became a vital industry for Japan, which must turn to the sea for a large part of her protein requirement. Rice, fish and vegetables combined to form the Japanese people's eating habits. The cuisine of them has been improved and perfected in taste and quality. In addition to fish, the main source of pretein requirement, Miso (bean paste) soup and Tofu bean curd, which are main vegetable protein sources, were imported from China in the Middle Ages, but they secured a solid position in Japanese soil to fill a lack of animal protein. Distinctive of the Japanese cuisine is the attitude that the Japanese prefer freshness. It is understood from the fact most of delicacies are usually served raw. The Japanese people's eating culture, symbolized by Hōcho (a kitchen knife), finds its artistic expression in "Ikizukuri" (literally, carving of live fish in order to eat it raw). But in Europe and America the principal cooking utensil is a cook-pot shaped like a cauldron. Their kitchen knife, which usually doesn't cut well, is the size of our fruit knife.

Today the Japanese people's food life, highly influenced by the introduction of fast-food system and the combination of the Japanese and Western diet, raised such a problem as unbalanced diet life because the pronounced shift to Western food among the Japanese people boosted demand for animal protein. The shift to

European food was first seen at the beginning of the Meiji Era in which the people were infatuated with Occidental civilization. Before the Meiji Era the Japanese people's traditional food life had been well balanced in nutrition. Now the Japanese feel the need to return to Japan's traditional eating culture. But today in Japan mass-production by major foodstuff industry and mass media combine to worsen the situation in which the Japanese are catering for European foodstuff.

One happy note for the Japanese people's food life is that the local food products are favored as the traditional food articles of Japan by the Japanese. In terms of local products, ancestors, who lived in northern Japan, had made every effort to maintain their local life by cultivating millet, protesting against rice-producing policy which was carried out by the government. It were the local people of the Tosa and Satsuma Clans that contrived an art of making "Nuta" (fish-vegetable salad dressed with vinegar and bean paste) without using soya-bean sauce whose sale was placed under the government's protection. The local people of the Ohmi Province (presently, Shiga Prefecture) also invented an art of preparing a peculiar type of Sushi, called "Funa-Zushi," without resorting to vinegar as its flavor. Thus, the local food industry had been expanding and improved on diverse tastes of local consumers.

A trend to simplify human culture under the name of modernization is seen in the 20th century when the world is shrinking in distance and time by the development of transportation and mass-communication system. If we have cuisine to satisfy the diverse tastes of consumers, we may be able to have a bright future for the survival of the mankind on the earth.

It is proverbially said that "food makes man." What kind of food do the Japanese prefer? How have the Japanese formed our character by eating our favorite food? It is generally said that food is closely connected with the formation of the cultural trait of each country. Then I'd like to analyze the character of the Japanese through the interpretation of their favorite taste, comparing with that of the European who live on meat. Along with the above-mentioned concept of the eating culture there is an interesting episode. When a European can not afford to keep a pet dog, he will kill it instantly. But a Japanese thinks that it is cruel to kill it and leave it astray, expecting that someone may take it home and

keep it again. As a result, astray dogs are increasing in number. The European people complain that this Japanese people's way of thinking is beyond comprehension and there is not so cruel a thing as to leave a pet dog astray. It might be said in this connection that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals usually employ a veterinary surgeon to put animals to euthanasia (a gentle and easy death).

So is the case of domestic animals to be killed for food. They think that even if the animal is bound to be killed, they should be properly kept before being eaten for food. We Japanese are sometime astonished to see a domestic animal being cooked and served, remaining its original form, on the table. I think that they understand that the love of animals is not the very opposite of the slaughter of animals. Underlying such a concept to a large extent is the realization of "philosophy of co-existence of love with slaughter of animals." I think this way of thinking is deeply rooted in their food life which is mainly based on meat. It seems to be prejudice to think that the attitude toward animals can form the fundamental part of philosophy. But if we think that this is our biased view, it may be because of our daily life in which we have very few occasions to associate with animals and because of our lack of the knowledge that we are living in an entirely different world from the Western people.

Meanwhile, the Japanese have formed diet habits of eating foodstuff flavored by soya-bean sauce. We like the light seasoning. The Western style heavy sauce has not been popularized in the Japanese cuisine. Such a peculiar Japanese habit of enjoying the flavor, which we formed in childhood, is bound to remain for long. Being strained, when we grew up, we feel easy if we taste some cuisine seasoned with soya-bean sauce. This is to say that seasoning worked as a spiritual stabilizer. Most of cuisine arranged in the Japanese household have such a seasoning as to lessen the feeling of tension. This seasoning is frequently referred to as the "taste of mother," which is actually the flavor of soya-bean sauce which contains amino acid. The Japanese green tea also contains amino acid which helps to attain mental composure. There is a strong opinion that one reason the Japanese people are far less positive in our mental attitude toward worldly affairs than the Europeans is a lack of animal protein in the Japanese people's eating habits. But

I think the intake of much amino acid also helps to form the Japanese people's eating culture.

8. The Japanese-Style Wooden House

A mountainous country, Japan has 25 million hectares of forests, constituting 68 percent of the total land. Japan has also the highest and most extensive mountain ranges second only to those of New Guinea, while Japan's plain area accounts for only less than 20 percent of its total land area, most of the population live in the plains because of the sharpness of mountain lands.

Because of this topographical feature the Japanese agriculture is small and limited in scale. Most of peasants are engaged in agriculture, while raising live stock and doing the works of sericulture and forestry as a sideline. This fact, coupled with climatical versatility and topographical complexity, added variety to the architecture of the Japanese wooden houses.

No less affecting the Japanese architectural culture are Japan's natural conditions. Almost every year, western Japan suffers from floods and other disasters caused by typhoons. That the traditional Japanese house is made of wood, clay and paper is partly due to the fact that Japan is an earthquake country but is more ascribable to the people's wisdom, taking into account the summer climate with its high humidity. Thus there has lived a highly liberal philosophy that "houses can always be rebuilt if they are felled by natural disasters." Wooden structures occupy a very important position in Japanese culture. It is not clear whether the fact that Japan has few houses made of stones or bricks is due to different technical or social conditions. But it can be construed that a society living in stone structure has a more fundamental and thoroughgoing posture in its way of thinking than a society of wooden structure.

We Japanese, who are so sensitive as to give such a names as "Ai," "Yamase," or "Hae" even to the wind according to the direction from which way it blows, feel the delicate change of four seasons and express their delicate feeling to the traditional architecture. For example, the Japanese wooden house is designed to resist the seasonal wind blowing from northwest in winter and to admit the

seasonal breeze from southeast in summer. In the summer some of fittings in the house are removed and furniture are arranged in a certain place so that the house may be well ventilated. The summer breeze, called "Inase," is said to bring in fortune. It is said that, if it is not blowing at the root of a tree, the tree will die. Fittings and furniture in the house are put in good order to admit the summer breeze, the "harbinger" heralding the arrival of fortune. This is the reason why the space of the Japanese house is contrived to be blessed with the wind of fortune. In this respect, the architectural culture is inevitably linked with the Japanese people's spiritual "frame" of mind.

9. The Futurology of Japanese

The number of Japanese traveling abroad is increasing year by year, and Southeast Asia seems to be especially popular for reasons of closeness and expense. The travel bureau announces frequent tours to Southeast Asian countries, and their counters display many brochures on the charm and beauty of these countries.

While Japanese visitors to various Asian countries acquire knowledge and understanding of this important area of the world, the crucial factor in the advancement of Asia in international affairs is mutual respect and communication on the personal, human level.

The problematic question, however, is the extent of our knowledge to our fellow Asian countries gained through tours, international expositions and the exchange of trade. However, in some parts of the Asian countries Japanese are severely criticized due to Japan's economic advance into these countries, particularly in Thailand, which resulted in campaigns against Japanese goods in the first part of 1973. The criticism against Japan as an "economic animal" still remains unabated in some parts of the world market.

The biased philosophy supporting the growth of the economy at the expense of our fellow Asian peoples should be immediately abandoned. It is, however, good that we expand our awareness of the world and experience the unique cultural traditions of other countries, but is also imperative that we should see Southeast

Asia in the proper historical perspective. Perhaps due to the myth that "Asia is one," many Japanese fail to see the distinctive differences that characterize the diverse Asian countries. Neither historically nor culturally is Asia a single, monolithic entity.

Many of Southeast Asian countries, especially, have unique histories and traditions, woven from a plurality of racial and ethnic groups and consequently precluding the modern concept of nationhood in the Western sense. Compounding the differences was the colonization of Southeast Asia by different European powers which pursued diverse colonial policies. We must see the Asian countries, their background and their aspirations realistically if we are to cooperate with them in creating a peaceful and prosperous Asian community.

The unity of Asia, based on generalization and abstraction, must be abandoned before mutual respect and concern for mutual welfare can become a reality.

But most of Japanese think that the modernization of Japan began by separating from Asia. I consider that Japan must not be satisfied with the mere thought of modernization in the time of creating a new energy for the construction of the next generation. So I must think what will become the new energy for the creation of future Japan.

I don't think that it was a bad thing that modern Japan was deviated from the sphere of religion. I think it was natural and necessary. There exists no religious literature in the world of the Japanese modern literature. But religious belief is inherent in the Japanese people's heart. Something like an indigenous religion, which formed the foundation of the Japanese spiritual life, must be reconsidered and take root in the world of literature.

The other most important thing is the willingness to respect differences and to understand the other's standpoint. The same hold true for relationships between Japan and foreign countries. As I repeated to mention, the Japanese have a peculiar character that is far beyond the comprehension of foreigners. That is to say that the Japanese never take action unless a common objective is set up. Once the target is aimed at, they charge on the objective.

Since the Meiji Restoration, civilization, militarism, disarmament, economic prosperity of the peace-loving nation, anti-pollution campaign, restoration of

humanity have been our common slogan. The slogan, however, changes so quickly that even the Japanese ourselves can not catch up with it and don't know what slogan will come next. This way of thinking seems to be felt fearful and mysteriously strange by foreigners. When the Japanese carry out a short-term project, we can concentrate all our energy on it and dash at goal for a short period of only a month or one year at longest. If the goal is also set so near-at-hand that we can feel behind the back and if the rivalry is seen is within the range of vision, we can make every effort to reach the goal. This is the reason why the Japanese can push a "construction work" on to the finish day and night.

Even at present, long after the war's end, the grandsons of Samurai and children of Kamikaze pilots, while they may wear businessmen's uniforms, launch themselves on order into all-out exploitation of export markets over the world. At these moments, any idea of a 40-hour week or a one-month paid vacation vanishes from their minds. Japan's organized economic expansion" seems in its outlook to be an expression of a highly aggressive philosophy, but when the sublime sentiment of the individual Japanese is analyzed, the opposite is seen to be true. "Unorganized" Japanese are very timid and powerless. It is in groups that the Japanese can give full expression to themselves.

This is because the Japanese people's mentality is directed toward the inner world, while the Western people's frame of mind is based on the concept of extroversion. The Western people's long-range view, in contrast with the Japanese people's short-range view, as I above-mentioned, may come from the fact that their mentality is directed toward the outer world.

It is considered in this connection that there are many other peculiar traits of the Japanese people. The first thing that the Japanese will have to tackle with in the future is not to make things, but to contrive an art of how to make things. The world is calling upon Japan, as an advanced country, to take her role in this field. Another important task for Japan to do in the future is to cultivate an international-minded personality who can play an active role in the world as an "international negotiator" like Henry A. Kissinger, the former State Secretary of the U.S. Government. I am very sorry to say that there are very few who can meet such a demand in Japan of today. I am sure that the time will come soon when we

have to think on a global level. Whether Japan can cultivate such a talented personality in such a peculiar environment as Japanese society is a critical factor to decide the future of Japan and to open the way for the new world. But it seems to me that the Japanese people's way of thinking and the characteristics of Japanese culture, based on these nine cultural genres which I above-mentioned in this thesis, are expected to follow the old traditions for long even if all the Japanese wear Western clothes and discard the Kimono.

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