

Two Interpretations of Japanese Culture

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I. Introduction

I am supposed to summarize my paper to read it in fifteen minutes, but since my paper is already somewhat condensed, I would rather avoid recapitulating it. Here I would like to mention the aim of my paper and the proposition of my argument.

My research is on the so-called "theory on Japanese culture" (*Nihon bunka ron*). The first difficulty that I faced in preparing for this presentation was how to translate the name of this particular category. The terminology in English that I employed in my paper is, in most cases, "theory on Japanese culture." I still wonder, however, if I should have chosen the term, "discourse" instead of "theory." It might be attributed to my specialty which is more acquainted with French than English, so that I have reserved the final decision on it. If there is already an established term in English, I welcome your advice.

The substance of the so-called "theory on Japanese culture", as well as the "theory on the Japanese" (*Nihonjin ron*), has been regarded as what indicates a sort of distortion of modern Japanese society. There are, in fact, considerable numbers of theories on Japanese culture which represent the inferiority complex of the Japanese towards advanced nations in Europe and the United States and, as its reactionary manifestation, narcissistic conceit and a sense of superiority. Confirming facts like the above, I would like to emphasize in this lecture that such a phenomenon should not be considered just as a peculiarity but should be examined from a more universal point of view. That will make it possible to illuminate what is peculiar to the Japanese from

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another angle.

Not only Japan but each country has its own theory on culture. In France, for example, "French spirit" (*l'esprit français*) has been repeatedly argued since the 18th century. On the other hand, in Germany there is "Geist" set against "l'esprit" in France, which has as its background the antagonism between civilization and culture. I do not know yet if there is a "theory on Australian culture." But recently I came across an article in a newspaper which said that "the awareness as a nation" is required in shifting over to the republican system of government (statement by Malcom Turnbull, chairman of the Advisory Committee for the Republican Sytem—The Asahi Newspaper, Aug. 12, 1993).

In my opinion, a national culture is required as a national ideology in order to integrate a nation, so long as nation-states (*Etat-Nation*) exist. Then such an ideology, without fail, lays emphasis on the originality and the superiority of its own culture and the difference from other cultures. This will be elucidated if one analyzes the arguments on culture of each country, and is also clearly exhibited in the historical process of establishing the concept of culture. Although the "theory on culture" varies in its form, more or less, according to the historical condition of each country, its essential nature, being an ideology to maintain nation-states remains all the same. If "the awareness as a nation" (nationality) is considered as the primary and direct national ideology, culture (civilization) is the second and more deceptive national ideology. Therefore, my principal proposition is that "theory on Japanese culture" can be defined as one of the national ideologies.

The fact that culture is an ideology to integrate a nation is also confirmed by observing the relations of the two key concepts, culture (*Kultur*) and nation (*Volk*). Culture and nation are, needless to say, new concepts (since the latter half of the 18th century) that originated in Europe. If it is possible to presume that there are two types of nation, French type and German type, in the history of establishing modern nation-states, the concept, "culture-nation" (*Kultur-Volk*) was evidently formed in German type nation-states. On the contrary, the key concept of French type nation-states is "civilization-nation." In Japan, both *bunmei* (civilization) and *bunka* (culture) are translated terms in modern times. Until the 20's, in the Meiji era, the term, civilization was much more influential (*Bunmei kaika*), and later, along with the introduction of German

thought into Japan, the term, culture gradually became predominant. I still cannot specify the period when the translated term, *minzoku* (Nation-Volk) came into general use, but it is at least certain that the period should be in accordance with that of the diffusion of the concept of culture. Incidentally, the term, *minzoku* (nation) was reimported into China at the end of the Meiji era and seems to have played an important role in their "national revolution."

Here it may be necessary to refer to the concept of culture in anthropology which has a great influence upon our concept of culture today. Anthropology has probably generated hundreds of definitions of culture since Tylor's definition of culture (and civilization): "Culture, or civilization, . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (E.B.Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1871). Their struggle in defining culture might be considered as the attempts to emancipate the concept of culture from a national ideology. Yet I doubt if such attempts have been successful. Let me single out one of the best things that anthropology has brought in. What is called cultural relativism performed its role as the conscience of anthropologists and intellectuals by affirming the original and absolute value in every culture (that is every nation), against ethnocentrism which regarded its own culture as the supreme in the period of colonialism and Nazism. Nevertheless, cultural relativism is also based on a static cultural model which is exclusive and self-contented, and it eventually functioned as something to produce a cultural frontier. Cultural relativism which insists on the independence and original value of every culture is equivalent to an ideology of a sovereign state (nationality) in the cultural domain.

If this kind of argument is too abstract, let me take the case of Ruth Benedict as an example of a great anthropologist. Benedict, who conducted research on American Indians from the standpoint of cultural relativism, has a vestige of an activist against racial discrimination in her publication, *Race: Science and Politics* (1940). In another book of hers, however, *The Chrysanthemum and Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946), which was written at the request of the Intelligence Agency during World War II, we find another aspect of Benedict as a "racist", in the phrase of Douglas Lummis (*The Foreign Country Within: Review of The Chrysanthemum and Sword*). In *The Chrysanthemum and Sword* local diversity and historical transition in Japan are disregarded,

which results in depicting a country where a homogeneous and invariable culture continue to exist. Moreover, the myth of "nationality", which anthropology was supposed to have abolished, is resumed in this book as the "form of Japanese culture." It can be called the recurrence of the German concept of culture in anthropology. Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and Sword* might be considered as the post-war version of Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*.

Let's go back to the subject of culture and nation. By what has a nation been defined? Race, physical similarity, religion, language, cultural tradition, etc . . . in short, it has been defined by cultural characteristics. It is probably possible to define culture as "the actual state of the nation." On the contrary, the definition of nation would be "the supporters of culture." These definitions appear too simple but I think they penetrate something essential in the relations of culture and nation. Now, there is no nation in reality that fulfills all the objective indexes—the cultural characteristics as mentioned above. It has been gradually becoming clear, through observing ethnic problems occurring in almost every region on the earth today, that "nation" is a fiction established in the period of nation-states. When the concept of nation begins to waver, the concept of culture as a national ideology ought to be questioned as well, yet actually it does not follow like that. This fact is proved by numerous publications of theories on Japanese culture today.

There seems to be three stages towards emancipation from the ideology of nation-states. The first stage is emancipation from "state." This was advanced pretty far in post-war Japan. The second stage is emancipation from "nation." In post-war Japan the term, "hikokumin" (unpatriotic person) seems to have disappeared. "Nation", however, in relation to the problem of the independence of several countries in the third world—the establishment of nation-states, has become a sacred word. I remember being attracted by the words, national independence, and sympathizing with Yoshimi Takeuchi in his "theory on national literature" or in his critical viewpoint towards modernism which "has no idea of nation in the process of thinking." According to Yoshimi Takeuchi, there are two types of nationalism, a bad nationalism (Europe-Japan) and a good nationalism (China, Asia, the third world). Nevertheless, the history of half a century after World War II has proved that there is no point in drawing a distinction between good nationalism and bad nationalism, just as it is nonsense to distinguish

a good atomic bomb from a bad atomic bomb. In any circumstances, state is state, nation is nation, nationalism is nothing but nationalism, and there is no exception to it.

The concept of "nation" has been damaged and begun to waver. On the other hand, the concept of "culture", which is supposed to be united with "nation" in one body, is still unwounded and as thriving as ever. "Culture" is essentially "national culture." Post-war Japan rebuilt its "nation" in the name of "culture." Japanese intellectuals, right or left wing, cooperated with each other in rebuilding the "nation" by means of discussing "culture." Only rogues who made an attempt to destroy culture like Ango Sakaguchi could be aware of the deception in it. Ango was right to choose Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* as a target of his criticism. For Taut's book is a perfect model of the theory on Japanese culture. Ango's proposition that culture interacts and transforms is what topples the old nationalistic theory on culture which asserts its purity and originality. His proposition also foresees the fundamental principle of the global age that one has to change himself so as to accept and understand the other (a foreign culture).

Finally, I would like to introduce an experiment that I actually made, in order to present how strong the ideological power of the term, "culture" can be. It was around the time the death of the Emperor Showa and the new Emperor's accession to the throne were the topics of the town. I gave a questionnaire about Tennoism to five hundred students who were attending my lectures. Almost 80 percent of the students said they were against Tennoism. Then two weeks later, I asked them to write a report on "Japanese culture and Tennoism." Most of the students were earnest protectors of Japanese culture and recognized the important role of the Emperor in Japanese culture. In other words, once they started to argue about the Emperor from a viewpoint of Japanese culture, they turned into supporters of Tennoism.

The term, "culture" clouds our eyes and precludes us from seeing reality clearly. Accordingly, in discussing Japanese culture, we have to be alert to discern an ideological character in the term itself which was bestowed in the period of nation-states.

My lecture is based on a certain understanding of "nation-states", but I do not have enough time to refer to that point this time. In order to illustrate my image of nation-states, I have included a table for your reference that I once used when I argued on similarities and differences between the French Revolution and the Meiji Revolution.

Prerequisites and Factors for National Integration

(1) Traffic (communication) network, land system, taxation, currency—standardization of weights and measures, market . . . colony	← Economical Integration
(2) Constitution, national assembly, (centralized) government—local government (prefecture), courts, police—prison, army (national army, draft system)	← State Integration
(3) Census registration—family, school—church (temples, shrines), museums, theater, political parties, newspapers (journalism)	← National Integration
(4) Various national symbols, motto, pledge, national flag, state, calendar, national language, literature, art, architecture, history, compilation of topography	← Cultural Integration
(5) Citizen's (national) religion—festival (creation of a new religion—Michelet, invention of tradition—Hobsbawm)	

II. The Two "Personal Views on Japanese Culture"

— Bruno TAUT and Ango SAKAGUCHI —

Preface

The title of this lecture is exactly the same one that I employed for chapter 9 (the final chapter) of my book, *A Way to Cross over the Frontier—An Introduction to Comparative Study on Culture*, published in 1992 by Chikuma Publishing Company. The reason why I, rather intentionally, chose the same title is that I wish to take this opportunity to reorganize the ideas I had at the time of writing the above book and examine them more closely so that I can present them as subjects of discussion on culture this time, in more theoretical terms, and I would also like to ask your advice.

Some of you might wonder why it should be two personal views on Japanese culture and why Bruno Taut and Ango Sakaguchi? As you know, Bruno TAUT (1880-1938) is a world-wide famous German architect who is well known for his design of the "Glass house" and the "Housing complexes" (Siedlung), and he died while in Ankara in 1938. In 1980, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, a commemorative exhibition was

held in West Berlin, which indicates a growing tendency to reevaluate his work.⁽¹⁾

Ango SAKAGUCHI (1906-1955) is, so to speak, a rogue author who is known for his novels such as *The Fall*, *The Idiot* and his criticisms. If Taut had not come to Japan after fleeing from Berlin which was then under the control of Nazism, if he had not published his *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* during his stay of nearly three and a half years in Japan, and if Ango had not written a book by the same title, incited by Taut's book, those two lives would have remained totally unrelated. Ango criticized Taut's discourse on Japanese culture severely in his own *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*; nevertheless, there were very few who regarded Ango's views as something significant enough to topple the established theory on Japanese culture, or tried seriously to reexamine those two different views or compare them closely. It is probably due to Ango's radical phraseology observed here and there in the book: "I don't care if Horyu-ji temple or Byodo-in temple burnt down. If necessary, it would be better to tear down Horyu-ji to build a station", for it certainly drew the readers' attention to his rhetorical skill, which, as a result, made them fail to see an unprecedented originality lying in his concept of culture. In addition, one was a world-wide famous architect and the other a still obscure literary youth.

Rereading Bruno Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* today, I realise clearly that it is not only a perfect model of all the essays on Japanese culture written by foreigners, but also the most typical example of the so-called "theory on Japanese culture" and the general "theory on culture." In the light of that, most of the arguments on Japanese culture issued hence could be considered a mere variation based on Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*. On the other hand, Ango's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* is apparently a wild proposition, one which is isolated from any other arguments on Japanese culture. Yet it presents the most essential critique of the established theory on Japanese culture; at the same time, it offers some useful ideas for an innovative theory on culture which is required in the present age: the age which can be called, as is often mentioned recently, the global age or the age of post-racialism or post-nationalism.

The above is the reason why I treat two different *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* by Taut and by Ango. I would like to make it clear here that the primary aim of this lecture is not to comment on literary writings of Ango Sakaguchi, the architectural

style of Bruno Taut, nor general aesthetics, but to single out two types of views on culture. I am aware of taking a risk of inviting reproach, especially, by the admirers of Ango and Taut, that partial references to his writings can cause a distortion in grasping the whole image of the author. I am certain, however, as one of those who love Taut and Ango, that it will be a high tribute to those two thinkers to treat them in this way.

1. Bruno TAUT's views on Japanese culture

It was on the 3rd of May in 1933 that Bruno Taut arrived at Tsuruga from Vladivostok by way of France, Greece, and Turkey, after leaving Switzerland where he started his life as a refugee. Taut was invited to Japan by the members of "Japan International Architectural Society" established by a group of architects who lived in the Kansai (western) area. After Taut and his wife were met by Isaburo Ueno and the other architects, they directly headed for Kyoto to be the guests of Shotaro Shimomura, the president of Daimaru department store. On May 4, the day after his arrival, Taut visited Katsura-rikyu (imperial villa) for the first time. That was on his fifty-third birthday.

Until he was invited to Turkey to teach as the head professor of the Architecture Department at the National University of Arts in Istanbul, in the autumn of 1936, although he did not have so many opportunities to show his ability as an architect during his stay in Japan, he had considerable influence upon Japanese architects and intellectuals by direct association with them, his theory on architecture, and his books and lectures on Japanese culture. Above all, his high appraisal and enthusiastic admiration for Katsura-rikyu made him a sort of legendary hero as a discoverer of Katsura-rikyu. There are several publications of his on Japan as follows: *Nippon* (1934), *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* (1936), *Japanese Houses and Life* (1936), *Nippon, Taut's Journal 1933*, *Nippon, Taut's Journal 1934*, *Nippon, Taut's Journal 1945-46*, *A Sketchbook-Katsura-rikyu* (1981), etc. In my lecture I am going to treat, principally, *Nippon* and its sequel in a sense, *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*. It is probably worth mentioning that the titles for both of the books have an additional phrase, "from a European point of view."

Surveying Taut's publications on Japanese culture, what amazes me first is how quickly he learned the essentials of Japanese tradition. His experience of visiting

Katsura-rikyu on his second day in Japan crucially etched an archetypal image of Japanese culture. It might be, however, that his preconceived vision of Japan made it possible for him to grasp Japanese culture so immediately. Also the Japanese around him must have affected him a great deal. It seems that his Japanese friends played an important role of inspiring him since Taut could not understand Japanese, and particularly in publishing his books, the work must have been done in collaboration with his translators. Accordingly, Taut's discourse on Japanese culture, which is certainly an image of Japan reflected in a European eye, is greatly influenced by the idea widely spread among Japanese intellectuals in the 1930's. As a result, we sometimes detect in his views something that is more Japanese than the Japanese themselves. It is easy to picture his idea if you have a look at the contents of his first publication, *Nippon*:

Introduction—Why do I write this book?

Tsuruga

Ise

Katsura-rikyu

The Emperor and the *Shogun* (General)

Living tradition

Directly to New York?

No—by way of Katsura-rikyu

In the initial chapter, Taut expresses his expectations towards Japan where the form of "artistic culture", which has already declined in Europe because of "modern mechanical civilization", still remains in unspoiled condition. For him, Japan is "the country which gives one a new courage in the respect that the pure and innocent form has been fostered for thousands of years" (p.15). His expectations were half satisfied and half betrayed on the day he arrived at "Tsuruga." In Taut's opinion, "Ise" is "the source of all that Japan has offered the world, the key to the completely original culture, and the cradle of Japan, absolutely perfect in its form, at which the whole world stares in admiration" (p.29). "Katsura-rikyu" is the perfect example of Japanese traditional form. He writes, "I was so happy to find the intelligent people approve repeatedly that Katsura-rikyu is no doubt the archetype of all Japaneseness in its classical grandeur" (p.35). What is represented by Ise-jingu and Katsura-rikyu is Shintoism—the Emperor,

something purely Japanese. The *Shogun*, on the contrary, is the one who had a destructive impact on culture, which is plainly exhibited in the vulgar taste of Nikko-toshogu. Thus "the Emperor and the *Shogun*" demonstrate a good tradition and a bad tradition, or the proper way and the improper way. "Living tradition" is, needless to say, the manifestation of the good tradition which is still vividly alive in the contemporary arts, architecture, and life style. He observes that another factor accelerating the destruction of the good tradition is the Europeanization/Americanization of Japan, which is represented by the name of a big city, "New York." "Not directly to New York" but go "by way of Katsura-rikyu" is Taut's advice that the Japanese should return to their good tradition.

In *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* (the original title was "Japanese Art—from a European Point of View"), published two years later than *Nippon*, as is shown in its original title, his consideration ranges over almost all categories of art, painting, sculpture, craft, architecture, etc., yet Taut's point of view on Japanese culture hardly changes. Let me cite a case in point which is characteristic of his views. Taut criticizes the discourse of Emil Lederer who regards European culture as "dynamic culture" which is active and open to other influences, whereas he regards Japanese culture as "static culture" which is fixed and immovable. Taut makes an objection to it as follows:

Japanese culture is not merely one of the various cultures on the earth, but it is a harmony filled with vitality. Therefore, I must say it is a misled conclusion to give epithets appropriate to the dead, which is a stark and stiff state, to a phenomenon which is an animated existence. It is far more required to point out the false culture in Europe and America and to emphasize that the essential function of culture rests on integrating diverse aspects of human life into a harmonious whole. If Japanese culture has a constant preference for simplicity in art and life, that is nothing other than what properly educated people call "modern" in a positive sense. In the light of that, the concept of vital culture held by wise Westerners, though there are only a few, is in perfect accord with the principle lying in the good Japanese tradition.

In order to elucidate it, one has to retrace the origin and the core of Japanese culture. One can say that Japanese culture originated in Shintoism. Because the origin of Shintoism, which can be traced back to ancient times, nearly two thousands years ago, is a pure Japanese heritage fostered with no foreign influences. The basic idea of Shintoism is so simple: people are united in the name of the Emperor, and their ancestor worship promotes the

uniting of people to people and the nation to the land. Lederer, however, considers that the simplicity in this idea causes a stark and stiff state (pp.73-75)

The ultimate goal Taut reached through seeking for the original Japanese tradition, from which pure Japanese culture stems, was Shintoism and Tennoism (Emperor worship). The key concepts in grasping Taut's discourse on Japanese culture are purity, tradition, nationality, national character, Japanese spirit, the spirit of Tennoism (↔ the spirit of the shogunate), etc., and characteristics of Japanese culture are represented by such terms as simplicity, plainness, purity, clarity, chasteness, classicality, etc. What Taut valued most is a series of arts belonging to the category of the good Japanese tradition such as Katsura-rikyu, Ise-jingu, Japanese artists from Sesshu to Tessai, *noh* play, *bunraku*, tea ceremony, Japanese cuisine, *sumo*, *judo*, *kendo*, *kyudo*, *kemari*, etc.

In Taut's discourse on Japanese culture, we notice that his point of view is always operated by comparing Japan with Europe. Katsura-rikyu, for example, is compared to the Acropolis or the Parthenon in Athens (*Nippon*, p.33). Sesshu and Grünewald, Eitoku Kano and Rubens, Chikuden and Friedrich, Gyokudo and van Gogh, Tessai and Cézanne, etc. (*Personal Views on Japanese Culture*, "Paintings"). Furthermore, he insists that Korin Ogata is the originator of the Jugend school (Jugend stil) and "expressionism has also its ancestry in Japan" (p.122), and Gyokudo is, in a sense, "the pioneer of European impressionism" (p.132). He even employs the expressions like "Grünewald, a German Sesshu" (p.102) and "Cézanne is a French Tessai" (p.156), instead of saying "Tessai is a Japanese Cézanne." It is easy to imagine that his praiseful remarks appealed to the national pride of the Japanese who had been suffering from an inferiority complex towards the Great Powers of Europe and the United States. Soon after, Japanese began to talk about their own culture in the same manner as Taut's, which is not only seen in the case of the Japanese but can also happen, more or less, to any nation preoccupied with the idea of "national pride" or "national glory."

But what are the grounds of this sort of comparative view? Cultural interaction or "influence", perhaps, is one of the possible grounds of the argument. Actually, as Taut indicates, the influence of Japanese arts in Europe was remarkable from the latter half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. We can concede that Japonism

was an important medium to accelerate an artistic revolution in Europe. Nevertheless, as is evident in the above explanation, the gist of Taut's discourse on Japanese culture is to reject or exclude the influence of foreign culture to the utmost, to seek the cultural tradition purely inherent in the nation, and to endeavor to maintain it.

Taut, then, brings up the concept, the universal "world sentiment (Weltgefühl)." "All the creation named art gives us what is called the universal world sentiment, just as every shape of a wave, every softness of a breeze, and serenity of a lull gives us the united image of that great nature of the ocean" (p.106). It means that any style of art in any country, if it has an excellent quality, can be endowed with universality. If it is true, what is the significance of nationality or originality that Taut insists on passionately. What is the specific role of Japanese culture?

He seems to make an attempt to answer the above question in the final chapter of *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*. "the third Nippon." "The first Nippon" is, according to Taut's argument, the "Yamato" era, when Japan assimilated prehistoric culture in a unique way, and even today we can trace its reminiscence in Ise-jingu shrine. "The second Nippon" is the time when Japan absorbed Korean and Chinese culture. At this time, as is exemplified in Katsura-rikyu, Enshu Kobori as well as other great poets and painters in the 17th century accomplished the restoration of Japanese culture. What is "the third Nippon" then? Taut writes, "It is a state of chaos that is to emerge after assimilating the culture of European world, the world which is located on the other side of the earth" (p.320). According to Taut, however, the incipient sign of such a state had not been detected yet in Japan (Taut, here again, treats Japanese culture as something "purer" than European culture).

Taut's discourse on culture is based on an explicit distinction between the Orient and the Occident. Both are open to each other but they are quite different in their natures, which are complements of each other. In Taut's opinion, the essential difference between the Orient and the Occident is that the former is a "static state" for the Westerner, that is a milieu of silence appropriate for meditations from a cosmic view, while the latter is a "dynamic state" for the Easterner, that is a milieu of individual positiveness appropriate for systematic analysis and synthesis, methodological process of thinking and activity.

It is the greatest achievement of the universal Logos to have created both of the elements antagonistic and complementary in the nature of human being. Nevertheless, those two elements are only part of the sole Logos, and therefore, it is most absurd to discuss one's superiority to the other, or to consider that one is so useless that the other can dominate it. (p.324)

Here, we can see the logical ground of his internationalism and relativism in arguing on culture. We might be able to denominate it a sort of pacifistic doctrine of *harmonie préétablie* (preestablished harmony). Taut employs the term "Logos" at this point in order to signify that the domain of culture is different from that of politics or economics (for, the former is a question of spirit), as well as a domain that cannot be destroyed by force or money. Logos is, however, "the Word of God" and Taut eventually had to bring up divine Providence, this is where I see his logical deadlock revealed.

2. Counterviews by Ango SAKAGUCHI

Ango's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* was collected in a literary magazine, *Contemporary Literature* (Gendai Bungaku) published in March of 1942. Nearly six years had passed since Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* was issued. But the various experiences that Ango describes in his *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* actually occurred in 1938 while he was in Kyoto. He was then having a hard time of constant wandering and confusion, so it seems natural that six years was required to publish his writing in a proper way. On the other hand, the political situations in Japan and abroad were rapidly changing. The Japanese spirit and the Japanese tradition that Taut highly praised began to function as an ideology of the times suitable for a militaristic nation. In the same way, Ise-jingu and Katsura-rikyu that Taut admired became symbols of a divine country, Nippon, and they were endowed with more nationalistic significance than at the time Taut was in Japan. This fact will be of much help to elucidate why it was necessary for Ango to criticise Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*. Ango did not merely attempt to make ideological arguments, but what is more important is that he presented essential questions which were to be decisive later to his opinion on how to live and what literature should be like.

Ango's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* consists of the following four chapters. 1.

On "Japaneseness", 2. On vulgarity (human for human), 3. On houses, 4. On beauty. The initial part of *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* begins with the passage as follows:

I have very little knowledge of ancient Japanese culture. I have neither visited Katsurikyu which Bruno Taut admired, nor know of Gyokusen, Taigado, Chikuden, and Tessai. Needless to say, I haven't even heard of the names such as Zoroku Hata nor Saishi Chikugen. Besides, since I seldom take a trip, I don't even know the towns, the villages, the manners and customs, or the mountains and rivers in my own country. I was born in Niigata city, which is the most vulgar town in Japan according to Taut's opinion, and I love the downtown area from Ueno to Ginza and its neon signs which Taut despised and detested. I don't know the manners of the tea ceremony in the least but I know the manners of getting intoxicated lavishly. Living in a solitary abode, I have taken no heed of an alcove or something.

But I have no reason to consider my life as such a poor one just because it has lost the tradition of the glorious ancient culture (though I'm suffering from my poverty out of another reason . . .).¹³⁾

All the painters that Ango denominates here are those whom Taut mentioned in his book. Ango somewhat exaggerates his ignorance about culture. It should be regarded as rhetoric in order to criticise Taut, from an actual inhabitant's point of view, by taking up the position of what Taut called the bad Japanese tradition. Fortunately or unfortunately, Ango comes from Niigata which Taut abhorred as the most vulgar city in Japan. (Incidentally, Niigata is the hometown of ex-Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka.) Ango mentions an alcove on purpose because that is the title for the first chapter of Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*. Ango, however, instead of examining the various interpretations and discoveries on Japanese culture that Taut presented, rather abruptly raises fundamental questions: "What is tradition? What is nationality? Is there an inevitable character in the Japanese or is there a fatal factor that leads us to invent Japanese clothes and wear them no matter what?"

Taut did not particularly examine the key concepts such as "tradition" and "nationality" while employing them without a premise. The reason Ango refers to "Japanese clothes" is that Taut regarded them as part of the Japanese beauty. Further, Ango recalls that when French poet, Cocteau came to Japan he deplored that Japanese were eager to Europeanize themselves and forget their own tradition, wondering why the

Japanese did not wear *kimono* any more. Edward W. Saïd would pick up this episode as unmistakable evidence of Orientalism, but Ango leads us to essential questions from there, what "tradition" is and what "nationality" is. And his answers take us all by surprise. In Japanese historical novels, for example, or story-telling, there are a great number of tales of vengeance. He wonders if it shows the revengeful nationality of the Japanese, and then he ascribes it to the tradition and the nationality imposed upon us against our nature:

Sometimes such a deception lies behind what is called tradition or nationality. We have to shoulder the customs and the tradition against our nature as if they were inborn desire. Therefore, it does not stand to reason that what was practiced in Japan in ancient times should be something inherent in the Japanese just because it was practiced in ancient times. It is possible that the customs which were not practiced in Japan, but in foreign countries prove to be suitable for the Japanese, or on the contrary, it is also possible that the customs which were not practiced in foreign countries but in Japan prove to be suitable for foreigners. It is not imitation but discovery. (p.355)

This is a view to overturn the preconception of "tradition" or "nationality", that the further back one traces, the purer and the more original one can locate. Culture is mobile and transformable. It is possible to apply the same to Japanese clothes:

What is *kimono*? We were just a thousand years late for interchange with European clothes. It is just because we were given no technique to suggest a new invention other than our limited one. It is not the weak-looking body of the Japanese that invented *kimono*. It is not only *kimono* that becomes the Japanese. Foreign men of stout build would certainly look much better in *kimono* than we. (pp.355-56)

I would rather reserve my opinion on the last phrase, but in any case, it is a view which smashes the concept "Japaneseness" to pieces.

One more thing that we should not forget is his view on imitation. In the subsequent passage to the quotation mentioned above, "It is not imitation but discovery", Ango continues, "Even in art, which respects individuality, the progress from imitation to discovery is most often seen, just as Goethe accomplished his masterpieces inspired by the works of Shakespeare. Inspiration begins with a spirit of imitation and ends in dis-

covery" (p.355). The reason why Ango puts an emphasis specifically on the significance of "imitation" is that Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* has the epigraph, "Beauty disappears when imitation appears." I am not going to argue the theory on imitation from Aristotle to Auerbach⁽⁴⁾ but I would like to mention that "originality" is a preoccupation in the times of the modern nationalism, and in discussing culture from an interactive point of view, "imitation" is to play an important part again.

Ango employs the term, "vulgarity" for the title of the second chapter. It is also ascribed to the fact that Taut labeled what is against the good Japanese tradition "vulgarity", "turbidity", "baroque", "*haikara* (the modern)", "*ikamono* (kitsch)", "imitation", etc. In the first half of this chapter, Ango relates what he saw and heard during his sojourn in Kyoto (from the beginning of 1937 to the early summer of 1938): Higashiyama dance hall where he went along with *geisha* girls of Gion in the middle of the night, Kurumazaki shrine in Sagano where tens of thousands of stones with the name and the amount of money wanted written on them were piled high, a small playhouse at the back of the shrine, the seats which stink of urine, travelling performers at Arashiyama theatre, the demolished buildings of the headquarters of Omoto-kyo in the ruins of the castle of Mitsuhide Akechi in Kameoka, a tea shop along the street nearby and the packhorse driver whom he met there, etc. They may be called the scenes of mind inscribed in his memory in the period of his life of struggling and wandering. Also they are the scenes that would never come into Taut's sight, or Taut would clear them from his mind even if he saw them. Contrasting those scenes in his solitary mind and the famous temples and historic spots in Kyoto, Ango points out the "vulgarity" lying in the architecture of temples and Japanese gardens. It sounds contradictory that the very person who supports the idea of "vulgarity" reproaches another "vulgarity"; nevertheless, the "vulgarity" to which Ango refers here originates from the gap between the profound idea which those temples and gardens are supposed to seek and its actual embodiment. Ango thus prefers Basho's pilgrimage to the pettiness of the dry garden at Ryo-anji temple or the transitory outlook of the world in *Hojoki* where one still sticks to a hermitage. In other words, Ango chooses the spirit, "the best is to have nothing" which resulted not from honest poverty or abstinence but from desire and extravagance.

Is Ango eventually to deny any kind of artistic expression then? Ango's logic shifts

at this point. The spirit, "the best is to have nothing" can exist as a criticism but not as a work of art. What kind of artistic work can be accepted by the spirit, "the best is to have nothing"? Ango brings up "vulgarity" here again: "If both the simple and the extravagant are vulgar, it is better to be vulgar lively and freely, by desiring to be vulgar, than to be still vulgar miserably in spite of rejecting to be vulgar. Ango, in this way, comes out on the opposite side of the Japanese beauty highly valued by Taut. Ango names Hideyoshi as an example, on its largest scale, of a spirit being vulgar lively and freely by desiring to be vulgar. Ango devotes a considerable number of pages to talk about Hideyoshi's spirit as a "ruler of the world." That is, however, the statement provoked by Taut's view in which Nishihonganji temple and Momoyama Palace are counted as bad examples of Kyoto culture in contrast of Katsura-rikyu, and Ango's real intention in the argument seems to present the idea, "a vulgar person in his vulgar way, a small-hearted person in his small-hearted way, everyone lives sincerely on his earnest wish." Why did Ango add the enigmatic phrase to the title for this chapter, "human for human"? The answer is found in the passage placed at the end of this chapter:

The temples in Kyoto and Nara, which are much the same, don't remain with my memory, but I can still recall the sensation of the coldness in my hand when I touched the stones of Kurumazaki shrine, and I cannot forget some three miles of tunnel of *torii* in most vulgar taste at Fushimi-Inari shrine. In spite of its plain ugliness, when it is united with one's earnest wish, there is something that directly moves one. It is not "the best is to have nothing" in this case, but there must be something that one cannot live without, even if it is a petty and vulgar being. Although I don't feel like resting myself in the dry garden of Ryo-anji temple, sometimes I want to be lost in thought watching the fake revue at Arashiyama theatre. Human only loves human. There is no art without human. One doesn't wish to rest himself under the tree which evokes no nostalgia.

In the above remarks we see the manifestation of "humanism" in his original way, or "love for life from a common mortal's stand point", which is antagonistic to Taut's "culturism."

The third chapter titled "On houses" bewilders the readers who expected his direct criticism of Taut who is an expert on houses, for there is no description of Japanese

houses or their system. Instead, Ango relates that he feels guilty and senses a peculiar sadness when he comes home after drinking, playing with girls, or occasionally taking a trip, even without a mother or a wife who are ready to reproach him: "I don't have a mother who reproaches me, nor a wife who gets angry at me, but I am scolded when I come home. One is never free even when he is alone and lives a carefree life. And I think literature is born in this kind of space."

Why is it necessary for him to insert the passage like this in *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*? His essay, "Home of Literature" in *Contemporary Literature*, published a year before *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*, seems to give a hint to resolve this question. Ango begins this essay by referring to the cruel beauty without a moral lesson in "Little Red Riding Hood" by Charles Perrault and proceeds to mention "the absolute isolation originating in human existence itself." Ango signifies a "home" as the place where an individual has to face the human condition, in other words, "the absolute isolation originating in human existence itself." And it is this point of view of which the established theory on culture is devoid. Remaining with "Home of Literature", Ango penetrates deception and equivocation concomitant with the theory on culture which habitually argues a specific group of people and specific customs and characters, instead of choices or decisions made by an individual. Culture, in the first place, is not a matter of tradition or nationality but ultimately a question for each individual: how to live. The established theory on culture has no response to this question raised by Ango.

As to the final chapter, "On beauty", it requires adding almost no explanation in particular. Ango describes three structures observed out of the carriage window: Kosuge prison, a dry ice factory, and a destroyer anchored offshore.

Why are those three so beautiful? There is no artificial beauty to make them look beautiful. There is not a single pillar nor any steel added from an aesthetic point of view, and there is not a single pillar nor any steel removed by reason that they are not beautiful. What is necessary alone is placed in its necessary place. When the unnecessary is removed, the unique form that is only required by necessity is completed. That is a form resembling nothing but itself.

This is the definition of beauty led by Ango's love for life. He seems not to be aware

that he has reached so closely Taut's functionalism which made him admire Katsurikyu. Yet, even if it may be called functionalism, the goals that those two men aim at are exactly opposite. Ango ends his *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* with the passage as follows:

... I don't care if Horyu-ji temple or Byodo-in temple burnt down. If necessary, it would be better to tear down Horyu-ji to build a station. The glorious culture and tradition of our nation would never be destroyed by that. Although the quiet sunset at Musashino has gone, the sun also sets staining hundreds of barrack roofs red; it is clouded by dust even on a sunny day; and there are neon signs in place of a moonlit scene. Still, so long as our life roots its spirit in here, what is beauty if they are not beautiful? ... If necessary, dig up the park and make it a vegetable garden. If it is truly necessary, a true beauty will be generated as well. Because there is a true life there. And so long as you live a true life, you don't need to be ashamed of imitation. So long as it is a true life, imitation has the same superiority as originality.

3. Two cultural models—for a new theory on culture—

Rereading two *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* written half a century ago, it cannot be denied that they have several historical restrictions of the times. As is seen in Taut's remarks on "crafts", for example, what he pictured in his mind when mentioning imitation was the Japanese products for export; at the time the phrase, "the cheaper, the poorer in quality" was often heard. It seems that Taut bore a preoccupation that non-European countries could never attain the level of European civilization. I also wonder if Ango would have dared to say, "If necessary, it would be better to tear down Horyu-ji temple to build a station", in the face of today's terrible environmental destruction. Besides, Ango occasionally makes a careless remark such as "the glorious culture and tradition of our nation", while insisting on his position as a supporter of individuality. Nevertheless, even though we admit the restrictions and the contradictions as above, those two *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* still present subjects of discussion required in the present age.

In the "preface" to this lecture, I mentioned that Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* was a typical example of the "theory on Japanese culture." Now that we have finished examining Taut's discourse, I think we could confirm that point. If there is

any ambiguity in my analysis, I might be able to employ the expression that Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* fulfills the twelve characteristics of the "theory on Japanese culture" pointed out by Harumi Befu. I would like to render it, however, from a somewhat different viewpoint to Befu. Befu's book is entitled *The Theory on Japanese Culture as an Ideology*.⁽⁵⁾ I agree with the argument of the book, yet, here, taking this a step further, I would like to insist that not only the theory on Japanese culture but the theory on American culture, French culture, German culture, Korean culture, in short, all the theories on culture, whatever the name of the country (or even if it has no name), are an ideology, and that a national ideology.⁽⁶⁾

Let me put it in more concrete terms. There is a common form of cognition in the various theories on culture, in the present time (or the past), despite their variety. I denominate it a "classical and static cultural model", though I do not know yet if it is the most appropriate name. Most of the theories on culture, for instance, pick out specific characters of specific groups (a basic unit is a nation or an ethnic group) to emphasize the differences of one from another. Further, in most cases, the character picked out in this way is found in the culture, and there is an implicit premise that the further one can trace back, the purer and more original materials one can obtain. Also it is presumed that the members of the group can acquire a stable sense of happiness and what they live for only when they can identify themselves with such an old tradition.

In this way, theories on culture widely spread today, although they have so many different forms and ideologies, are characterized by very limited common terms. Those are "purity" (or "hybrid" as a counter term), "tradition" (that is "oldness"), "deep structure" or "fundamental structure" (that is "past"), "uniqueness" (usually "nationality"), "originality" (that indicates contempt for "imitation"), "harmony", "unity", "identity", etc. Those terms, except for "identity" which has been adopted since the sixties, are all found in Taut's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*, but they are also common to almost all the theories on culture. (In case you need something to illustrate my view, I recommend as the most excellent example of the theory on Japanese culture: Shuichi Kato, Junji Kinoshita, Masao Maruyama, *Invisible Forms of Japanese Culture*, ed. Kiyoko Take-da. Iwanamishoten. Although all the authors of this book are respected thinkers in contemporary Japan, unfortunately they are not free from the same problem of using common cultural models.)

No matter what he is, right wing, left wing, democrat, fascist, socialist or liberal, once one starts to argue on culture, everyone uses the same terms and is pulled in the same direction. This is horrifying but true. Why does it happen? It seems to be basically due to the concept of "culture." Although there are hundreds of definitions of culture, if I choose the most inclusive and essential one, it would be "the actual state of the nation." On the contrary, the definition of "nation" is "the supporters of culture." This will be confirmed by retracing the historical process of establishing the term and the concept of culture after German Romanticism. The concept of culture was formed as a nationalistic assertion of the newly-developing countries (mainly Germany and others), in rivalry with the concept of civilisation representing the progress and the universality of the advanced countries (France, England, etc.) in the period of establishing nation-states in Europe. It is evident that a nation and a culture are one united body, when we observe the nationalism of the third world. This notion is not confined to the theory on Japanese culture, but in arguing about culture, by employing the term "culture" one cannot avoid, more or less, being a nationalist. Culture is an ideology to make an inner frontier.

When Ango's counterstatement in *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* is placed in such a context, the significance of his views, in the middle of World War II, and also in the present time, will be clearly understood. Ango could penetrate the character of the nationalistic ideology intrinsic in the theory on culture itself, as well as the theory on Japanese culture. Post-war Japan rebuilt its nation and its nationalism in the name of culture, while denying nationalism. Ango's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* exhibits its true value in the present time as the basis of nations and countries is wavering in world-wide scale. I think we can see a cultural model suitable for the world of today and of the future in Ango's *Personal Views on Japanese Culture*. Let me enumerate here its essential points.

1. Culture is mobile and interchangeable—therefore, what is called Japanese culture or so-and-so culture divided by the frontier does not exist; demolition of the myth of nationality.
2. Culture constantly interacts and transforms—therefore, there is no point in arguing pure culture or cultural identity. An ideological distinction such as the Orient and the Occident should be abolished as well.

3. Demolition of the myth of originality—the significance of imitation should be examined.
4. Culture is a matter of each individual life and ultimately a question of individual choices and decisions.

A radical theory like this might eventually result in the annihilation of the term, "culture." Because today people are becoming aware of deception in the term "nation",⁽⁷⁾ "culture" is, perhaps, the last glorious ideology of the period of nation-states.

Notes

- (1) See Yoshio Dohi, J. Posener, F. Bollerey, K. Hartmann, *Bruno Taut and the Present Time: from "Construction of Alps" to "Katsura-rikyu"*, trans. by Keizo Ikomatsu and Yoshio Dohi (Iwanamishoten, 1981). In this book the following essays are also collected: Yoshio Dohi, "Bruno Taut and Japan"; Julius Posener, "BRUNO TAUT, Vorträge zur Eröffnung der Ausstellung" in der Berliner Akademie der Künste am 29. Juni, 1980 (Bauwelt, 71, annual set 18, 7, 1980); Franziska Bollerey and Kristiana Hartmann, "BRUNO TAUT, Vom phantastischen Ästheteten zum ästhetischen Sozial (ideal) isten."
- (2) Subsequent references are to the latest editions of Japanese translation by Toshio Mori: Bruno Taut, *Nippon* (Kodansha, 1991); *Personal Views on Japanese Culture* (Kodansha, 1992).
- (3) Subsequent references are to the *The Complete Works of Ango Sakaguchi, 14* (Chikumashobo, 1990).
- (4) Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, trans. by Kazushi Shinoda and Jiro Kawamura, *Mimesis: Description of Reality in European Literature* (Chikumashobo, 1967).
- (5) Harumi Befu, (*Enlarged ed.*) *The Theory on Japanese Culture as an Ideology* (Shisonokagaku, 1987).
- (6) For further observations on this subject, see Nagao Nishikawa, "Civilization and Culture as a National Ideology", *Shiso*, (Jun, 1993).
- (7) As the examples of the present achievement in theories of *ethnos* (problems of nations), see Motomitsu Uchibori, "Memorandum on Theory of *Ethnos*", *Adventure of Anthropological Cognition: Ideology and Practice* (Dobunkan, 1989); Katsuo Nawa, "Toward Theory of *Ethnos*: On Description and Analysis of Nations and Ethnic Groups", *Minzokugaku-kenkyu* (*The Japanese Journal of Ethnology*, Vol. 56-3, Dec. 1992). These two papers lay emphasis on the points that no objective definition of "nation" can exist and that an ideological role of "nation" is in substantializing an imaginary nation.