

## Umesao Tadao's Civilization-Theory, Viewed in the Historical Context of Japanese Anthropological Science

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## Umesao Tadao's Civilization-Theory, Viewed in the Historical Context of Japanese Anthropological Science

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日本における民族学と梅棹忠夫氏の文明論の位置づけ

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In 1957, Umesao Tadao's later famous paper "Prolegomena of an ecological view of the history of civilization" was first published in the journal *Chûô-Kôron*. The theory put forward in this article and evolved in several papers, monographs and symposia through the years implies Umesao's conviction that Japanese civilization as a concrete existing system of people and institutions (and as such different from the intellectual abstract of this system, i. e. culture) resembles in many aspects that of Western Europe while at the same time is entirely different from the systems underlying East Asiatic cultures similar to Japan. Umesao's scientific work brought about a deep and ongoing change of paradigm in Japanese ethnology, dominated since the times of Henry von Siebold and Edward S. Morse by questions of Japanese ethnogenesis, prehistory and the foundation of the early Japanese state, as can be seen for instance in the studies of scholars like Oka Masao, Egami Namio or Yanagita Kunio. It also meant that with the growing influence of Umesao's thinking, the centre of gravity of Japanese ethnology moved gradually from Tokyo to Kyoto and finally to the National Museum of Ethnology founded by Umesao in the 1970s.

梅棹忠夫氏は、昭和32年にその論文「文明の生態史観序説」を雑誌『中央公論』に発表、後に幾つかの研究論文やシンポジウムの席上でそれを発展させ、学界の注目を集めた。梅棹氏の説によると、「文明」は人間と制度からなる体系で、人間によるその体系の抽象にすぎない「文化」と基本的に違って

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る。だから日本文明は、同じ生態系で生まれた西欧文明と著しく似ている。これに対して、文化的な面で似通っている東アジアの諸文明とは全く異なっている。日本民族学がヘンリー・フォン・シーボルトとエドワード・S・モース以来、日本民族文化の源流と日本国家の起源の問題に支配されていたことは、岡正雄や江上波夫、柳田国男等の研究にも示されているとおりだが、梅棹氏の研究はそこに大きなパラタイム転換をもたらしたといえる。また、彼の説が近年隣接諸科学にも影響を及ぼしてくるにつれて、日本民族学の中心は少しずつ東京から京都や梅棹の設立した大阪の国立民族学博物館に遷り、外国における日本研究にもようやく注目が集まるようになった。

The 1950s, when Umesao Tadao partook in the Karakorum Hindukush Expedition of Kyôto University, and in its aftermath travelled from Afghanistan through Pakistan and India eastwards towards Calcutta, experiencing what he later recollected in his paper “Prologomena of an ecological view of the history of civilization” (published first in the February 1957 issue of the journal *Chûô-Kôron*; Umesao 1957), were a period of immense growth for the field of ethnological studies in Japan.

After the ideological restrictions had disappeared, a broad spectrum of new developments surfaced, profiting from many wartime field-experiences. Already in 1948, the later famous round-table discussion on the “Origin of the Japanese People and Culture and Formation of the Japanese State” had brought together ethnologist Oka Masao, prehistorian Yahata Ichirô and orientalist Egami Namio, with Ishida Eiichirô as chair-person (published in vol. 13, No. 3 of *Minzokugaku-Kenkyû*, Oka, Yahata and Egami 1948), paving the ground for a far-reaching series of theories on Japanese ethnogenesis, on the origin of the Japanese language (the first of significance being Ôno 1957) and on the early history of the Japanese state (for example Inoue 1960), but above all for the grand theory of Egami Namio, which is known as the ‘Horse-rider-theory’ (*kiba-minzoku-setsu*), which sees the main building force of the Yamato state and the rule of the Tennô-Clan as the result of a migration of Mongolian-Manchurian horseback nomads from the Korean Peninsula into Japan (Egami 1965, 1975).

In these same years, the discipline of ethnology firmly established itself within the Japanese university system. Quite unlike folklore studies, where Yanagita Kunio closed down his private institute in 1957, discouraged with regard to the future development of his field of study since his round table discussion with Orikuchi Shinobu and Ishida Eiichirô on the topic ‘From Folklore Studies to Ethnology’ (Yanagita and Orikuchi 1950), Ishida was successful in establishing, in 1951, the first institute of ethnological teaching and research at university level, the Institute of Cultural Anthropology (*Bunka-jinruigaku Kenkyûshitsu*) at the University of Tôkyô. Oka followed with his Institute of Social Anthropology (*Shakai-jinruigaku Kenkyûshitsu*) at Tôkyô Metropolitan University in 1953, and in 1960 moved to

Meiji University's Institute of Social Anthropology. Each of these three early centres of ethnological learning assembled an extremely able staff: Izumi Seiichi, formerly at Keijō (Seoul) Imperial University, active at the University of Tōkyō, later joined by Terada Kazuo, Ōbayashi Taryō and Nakane Chie; Mabuchi Tōichi, formerly at Taihoku (Taipei) Imperial University and Muratake Seiichi, Takemura Takuji as well as Sumiya Kazuhiko, later also Yamaguchi Masao and Ayabe Tsuneo as assistant-professors at Metropolitan University; finally Gamō Masao, Emori Itsuo and Sofue Takao at Meiji University. These scholars were to form Japanese ethnology over the next decades.

The three centres mentioned also began to develop their own specific fields of study quite early. the University of Tōkyō started with an emphasis on Latin-American studies: Ishida in Mexico, Izumi and others in Brazil (Japanese immigrant society) and Peru (excavations at Kotosh in the Andes), while a project on the regional structure of Japanese folk culture and society under the leadership of Izumi apart from a short paper on preliminary findings (Izumi et al 1963), took more than 20 years to publish a detailed analysis (Nagashima and Tomoeda 1984). At Tōkyō Metropolitan University, Mabuchi took up his own interests in Okinawan studies very early, stimulating a joint field project later on in 1962 (Tōkyō Toritsu Daigaku 1965), but more and more isolating himself from the mainstream of Japanese ethnologists integrated in the Japanese Society of Ethnology (*Nihon Minzokugaku Kyōkai*). Oka and his group, on the other hand, started with fieldwork on the west coast of the Izu Peninsula in 1953 (Suzuki 1956) and worked with the Tōkyō Metropolitan Government's Board of Education on a series of field surveys on the Izu Islands (Tōkyō-to Kyōiku Iinkai 1959, 1960) from 1957 onwards. Meiji University began its field-studies in 1960, with an expedition to the Inland Eskimos of Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska, thereby making use of the increasing possibilities of fieldwork overseas, made available by the growing economic strength of Japan. A joint research group had already done fieldwork on rice-growing cultures in Southeast Asia in 1957, and, of course, the Kyōto University expedition to Afghanistan mentioned above was also part of this development.

Apart from these manifold developments within some universities—most of them in Tōkyō—there were also some important moves towards interdisciplinary, or at least multidisciplinary studies. Early in 1947, Shibuzawa Keizō encouraged the establishment of an association of six academic disciplines, the so-called *Rokugakkai Rengō*, that later grew into the well-known *Kyūgakkai Rengō* (Association of Nine Disciplines, i.e. Ethnology, Folklore, Physical Anthropology, Linguistics, Psychology, Prehistory, History of Religions and Oriental Musicology), which in 1950/51 undertook its first joint interdisciplinary fieldwork on the island of Tsushima (*Kyūgakkai Rengō* 1954). Despite the weaknesses recognized even then (Nakane 1970, Kreiner 1990b), the *Kyūgakkai Rengō* continued to be an important platform for interdisciplinary discussion. The same holds true for the annual Joint Meetings of the

Anthropological Society of Nippon and the Japanese Society of Ethnology (*Nihon Jinrui Gakkai Nihon Minzokugaku Kyôkai Rengô-Taikai*). Both of these enterprises were finally discontinued for lack of interest, mostly on the side of ethnology, in the early 1990s.

As a final, important development of the 1950s, I would like to mention the various young ethnologists studying abroad. One of the earliest was Ôbayashi Taryô, later in the chair of the Department of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Tôkyô, who attended Harvard, Frankfurt/Main and Vienna, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1958. For many years, Ôbayashi was the doyen of Historical Ethnology in Japan. In Vienna, he was succeeded by Sumiya Kazuhiko and Shiratori Yoshiro. Ayabe Tsuneo went from the University of Tôkyô to the University of California, and Nakane Chie to London, both of them followed by a vast number of Japanese ethnologists trained in the United States and Great Britain. Paris, especially its leading school of Structuralism, attracted Kawada Junzô and others some years later.

Much of what was discussed in these formative years of post-war Japanese ethnology impressed the public and created something like a boom in ethnographic and anthropological writing, both scholarly and for the educated general public. The same can be said for Umesao's article of 1957, but it seems to me that this needed more time before it was recognized within the scholarly community as the decisive change of paradigm that it was, more time than say for Egami's theory of equestrian nomads as founders of the Japanese state (*kiba-minzoku-setsu*) or other discussions, in which Umesao also participated in a leading position, and which I will take up later on.

To explain this, it seems necessary to outline briefly the earlier development of ethnology and its neighbouring disciplines in Japan, to show that all what has been mentioned as important during the 1950s was merely a continuation of what had already begun late in the 19th century, and what continues to a large extent to determine anthropological thinking in Japan to a great part until this day.

In Japan, anthropological reasoning on the level of a modern science began in the autumn of 1877, when excavations of the Ômori shell mound, conducted simultaneously by Edward Sylvester Morse and Heinrich (Henry) von Siebold, led to the question of the people who had created this obviously 'primitive' culture. After heated discussions in the pages of an English-language newspaper in Tôkyô, and field trips to the Ainu of Hokkaidô undertaken separately by both von Siebold and Morse in 1878, the two rivals published their conclusions both in 1879: the established scholar Morse in the first volume of the *Memoirs of the Department of Science, Imperial University of Tôkyô* (Morse 1879), the amateur Siebold in a privately printed volume *Notes on Japanese Archaeology* (Siebold 1879). They agreed only in one point, namely that the remains unearthed in Ômori (now ascribed to the Angyô Phase of the Late Jômon Period) could not be seen as 'Japanese'. Morse argued for a pre-Ainu culture, but Siebold opposed this and developed a compre-

hensive theory of early Japanese history, proposing at least three different strata or cultures reaching the Japanese Archipelago at different times from the North (Ainu), from the Korean Peninsula at around the time of Christ (Kofun) and from the South (Japanese language; Jinmu).

This discussion, i.e. the question from where the Japanese people and culture had come, where its 'roots' can be located, and whether this was a unique process or a repeated one, dominated the history of anthropological and ethnological thinking from that time almost exclusively, thereby displacing the equally, or in my eyes even more important question about the nature or character of Japanese culture to only a secondary, subsidiary significance.

What may be called the 'Ainu-discussion', that is the discussion of the question whether the Ainu played a significant role in the ethnogenesis of the Japanese people or not, and if so, to what extent, influenced the first decades of the Anthropological Society of Nippon (*Nihon Jinrui Gakkai*) founded in 1884, its journal (from 1887 the *Tôkyô Jinruigaku Zasshi*, from 1911 the *Jinruigaku Zasshi*) as well as the Chair of Anthropology established by Tsuboi Shôgorô at Tôkyô Imperial University in 1892. Ultimately, the advocates claiming an important role for the Ainu gained ground against Tsuboi's 'Pre-Ainu (or Koropukur)-theory', and Koganei Yoshikiyo, a student of Erwin Baelz at the Medical Faculty, Tokyo Imperial University, would close the case with the words "the Japanese Empire was once an Ainu empire" (Koganei 1903: 329). Again some twenty or more years later this was somewhat modified by scholars like Torii Ryûzô, Hasebe Kotonodo, Hamada Kôsaku or Kiyono Kenji speaking of a common sublayer in Japan and in Hokkaidô (Ainu) sometimes called 'Pan-Ainu', 'stone age-race' or 'Ainuids'.

Basil Hall Chamberlain, the first professor in the chair of linguistics at Tôkyô Imperial University (1886), contributed to this discussion with his study on Ainu elements in place names of Central Japan (Chamberlain 1887), simultaneously directing interest to the south, Okinawa, with his monograph on the Ryûkyûan language (Chamberlain 1895). The importance of this region for Japanese ethnogenesis was put forward by none other than the founder of Japanese folklore studies, Yanagita Kunio. It is more than coincidence that Yanagita starts the introduction to his groundbreaking book *Kainan Shoki* "Short Reports from South of the Sea" (Yanagita 1926) with remarks on the winter scene in Geneva, the domicile of the aged Chamberlain.

Yanagita had been in favour of a theory of the heterogeneous origin of the Japanese people in his early writings. He proposed an earlier population driven back by later immigrants he calls the *tenson* "grandson of heaven" [referring to Ninigi no mikoto, the legendary ancestor of the Tennô-line]-race to the mountainous inland-regions (for instance Yanagita 1917). At the same time Yanagita was also convinced of the homogeneous character of 'Japanese culture' as a rice-growing culture. During his field-trip to southern Kyûshû and the Ryûkyû Islands in 1920/21, Yanagita visited Cape Sata on Ôsumi Peninsula. There, an insight he had gained in 1897 on Cape



Irago of the Atsumi Peninsula, when together with his class mate Shimazaki Tôson they watched a coconut being driven ashore by the Kuroshio Current, revisited him. From that day forth, he was convinced of a Southern Chinese origin of the Japanese culture and pursued this theory in a sometimes romantic manner throughout his life, until his last work *Kaijô no michi* “The Way across the Sea” (Yanagita 1962).

It is by no means astonishing that the ethnological theories that evolved at the turn of the century and during the first decades of the 20th century influenced and were counter-influenced by political thinking and the ideology of the emerging Japanese nation first, and later on also of the Japanese Empire. Claiming a common descent and origin for Japanese and Koreans, Japanese and Ainu (or not, in that case), Japanese and Ryûkyûans or even the tribal population of Taiwan made sense of the expansion of Japanese rule over these territories (compare for instance, Nitobe Inazô in 1910 and later, Miwa 1995: 168).

In a certain way, this was also the reversal of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s slogan *Datsu-A nyû-Ô* “Out of Asia and into Europe” as Japan’s mission for the modernization period. Discouraged and disappointed by the Treaty of Versailles, the refusal to include a paragraph prohibiting racial discrimination in the constitution of the League of Nations, and the consequent immigration laws of California, Japan felt forced to turn back to Asia. It is no mere coincidence that Nitobe, as well as Yanagita, was attached to the League of Nations in Geneva during the 1920s.

If we turn to the second half of the 20th century, we can detect a similar development in the ethnological discussion in Japan. Oka’s concept of a heterogeneous origin of Japanese culture was basically conceived in his discussions with Egami and Yahata in the APE (archaeology, prehistory, ethnology)-group, during his activity as a *shosei* assistant of Yanagita’s *Mokuyô-kai* in 1925–1929. It was finally formulated in Oka’s dissertation *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan* “Culture strata in Ancient Japan” written at the University of Vienna in 1933. This concept fostered far-reaching research in the fields of physical anthropology, ethnology, linguistics and archaeology after the 1948 symposium mentioned above. Not even Ishida’s warning (1966) to be cautious in view of the “limitations of historical ethnology” (coinciding with the downfall of the so-called Vienna school in the early 1960s), nor the admonition by the physical anthropologist Suzuki Hisashi, that changes in the skeleton and the physical appearance might be explained by changes in the ecology and nutrition (Suzuki 1963), could bring about a change of mind. On the whole, the idea of a multitude of people and cultures contributing to the heterogeneous origin of the Japanese was and is widely accepted. Yet, more or less dominant strains developed within this theoretical framework, depending on the definition of Japanese culture, which varied from time to time. Egami stressed, as already explained, the importance of a migration of continental horseback-nomads for the founding of the early Japanese (Yamato) state during the second half of the Kofun period (Egami 1965, 1967). He was reminded by Ishida of the possibilities of stimulus-diffusion

(Ishida 1966)—but it is important to notice here that Egami as an orientalist was only capable of thinking of the origin of high civilization (and obviously he conceives Japan as an independent such civilization, even before the Chinese influences around 500 A.D.!) in terms of the conquest of an agrarian society by horse riding nomads, while Ishida, concentrating on Meso-American studies (see above) was prepared to denounce this theory.

In a continuation of pre-war studies, the wet-rice-growing culture of prehistoric Yayoi was and is intensively studied as the main-stream of Japanese culture. In combination with Aruga Kizaemon's definition of Japanese village society (Aruga 1943) as an association of *ie*—families (“houses”), this led to a string of important contributions from social anthropology, such as Fukutake Tadashi's concept of patriarchal, hierarchical structured *dôzoku*—clans as basic elements of Japanese society (Fukutake 1949), or Nakane Chie's concept of the ‘vertical society’ of Japan (Nakane 1967). On the other hand, Harada Toshiaki (Harada 1975, see also his many contributions in the journal *Shakai to Denshō* “Society and Tradition”, Kumamoto 1956 to 1977; for a concise evaluation see Sumiya 1994: 207–240) stressed the fundamentally democratic and egalitarian character of Japanese rural society, convinced he could prove this with his studies on the *miyaza*—organization of village cult groups. This argument needs to receive due attention when discussing the character of ideologies like Japanism, imperialism and/or fascism in pre-war Japan, whether these developments have to be seen as inevitable results of the inherent structure of Japanese culture and society, or merely a ‘failure’ in the development of an essentially democratically orientated society due to historical circumstances.

During the 1970s, two scholars began to draw attention to even earlier cultural strata proposed by Oka's scheme: Tsuboi Hirobumi published his groundbreaking volume on *Imo to Nihonjin* “Taro and the Japanese” in 1979, in which he points out the important traditions for a non- (or pre-) wet-rice-growing culture with its roots in the late Jōmon period. The same problem is approached from a different angle by Sasaki Kōmei in his *Inasaku izen* “Before Rice-growing” (Sasaki 1971). Sasaki stresses the historical importance of a slash-and-burn millet growing tradition (something Yanagita had already encountered during his earliest field-trip to Shiba-mura, Miyazaki prefecture in 1908). Sasaki continues to follow this line of analysis, while at the same time participating in the discussion of an “evergreen forest culture” *Shōyō-jūrin-bunka* together with Umesao Tadao, Ueyama Shunpei, Nakao Sasuke and other scholars from the Kyōto School (Ueyama 1969, Ueyama, Sasaki and Nakao 1976, Sasaki 1971). This culture is thought to have originated in an ‘East Asian Fertile Crescent’ stretching from Yunnan through Laos to Myanmar, Assam and Bhutan, and was the origin of rice and other crops like tea and a number of culture elements essential for the definition of what is ‘Japan’. Especially in its implications for ecology and the study of Japanese food (Ishige Naomichi being a key representative), this line of thinking has gained much attention in Japan.



These hypotheses gradually began to draw interest to the long period of pre-historic Jōmon culture and its meaning for Japanese ethnogenesis. On the one hand, Umehara Takeshi in a more ingenious than scientific way postulated a basic layer of Japanese culture which had been later—perhaps at the beginning of the rice-growing Yayoi-period—interrupted by an immigration from the Korean Peninsula, dividing an earlier population and driving it apart to the north as well as to the south, thereby creating the historic (and present) distribution pattern with the very similar Ainu and Okinawa/Ryūkyū on the outer circles and ‘Japanese’ culture in the centre. This picture resembles in many points much earlier attempts of interpretation like Siebold’s, Yanagita’s, Oka’s and others, and again tries to gain support from allied sciences such as linguistics and physical anthropology, this time including DNA-analysis and others.

More serious is the turn of interest towards special traits of Japanese (folk-) religion. In the 1950s it was Kubo Noritada who took up studies in Taoism (Kubo 1960) against strong opposition from Yanagita and his school. The number of studies relating to Taoism—and somewhat later, also on *feng-shui* (*fūsui*)—grew in the following decades by leaps and bounds (Kreiner 200: 178). Between 1951 and 1960 there were only three studies, from 1971 to 1980 there increased to 21 (plus four on *feng-shui*), and from 1991 to 2000 a further 83 (plus 93 on *feng-shui*). In addition to these studies with the term Taoism (or *feng-shui*) in their titles, there were many other important contributions (like Fukunaga 1996) with not such easily discernible relevance. This research, of course, linked Japan to an old (south-) Chinese tradition, and it goes without saying that it was also tightly linked to the growing importance of Okinawan studies. The same holds true for the interest in shamanism. It was certainly Yanagita, who, under the pseudonym Kawamura, mentioned this trait in Japanese folk-religion at a very early point in his scholarly work (Yanagita 1913), but afterwards studies in shamanism were entirely disregarded by Japanese folklore studies (with the one exception of Nakayama 1930). It did not seem to fit into the clear cut definition of Yanagita’s rice-growing culture, its group-orientated, patriarchal society and the religious concepts of Orikuchi’s ‘visiting deities’ (*marebito*) or Yanagita’s *ta-no-kami* = *yama-no-kami* (guardian gods of rice-fields/mountains) concept.

However, starting once more from research in Okinawan religion, Sakurai Tokutarō (1973, 1974–77) now suddenly began to stress the role of shamanism, notwithstanding that there had already been earlier attempts at interpretation from the outside world such as Lebra (1966) and Blaker (1975). It was interesting to note that for the educated public, this seemed to provide a means to discover an important strain of individualism in the group-oriented Japanese society, responsible for the otherwise unintelligible economic successes during the period of high growth. This went so far as to an economic journal speaking of leaders like Ibuka (*Sony*) or Matsushita (*National Panasonic*) as “shamans”. There were already 26 publications bearing this term in their titles from 1971 to 1980 and 51 between 1991 and 2000.

'Oracles', fortune-telling etc. and studies about them rose from 10 between 1971 and 1980 to 73 in 1981 to 1990, and in the years between 1991 and 2000, following the collapse of the 'bubble economy', they reached the immense number of 134 volumes.

Besides Taoism and shamanism, there was also a rising tide of studies in ghost-stories and occultism (some 108 on Taoism and 31 on shamanism between 1991 and 2000, as opposed to only five and none respectively in the decade between 1961 and 1970) within this post-modern line of research interests. Accompanying this, a growing interest in an old 'Jōmon' (or at least 'pre-rice-growing') culture thought to be at the core of Japanese culture, an Asian tradition linking Japan to the people of its neighbourhood can be recognized. This reminds one of the immense shock, which the publication of Yanagita's *Tōno monogatari* "Legends of Tōno" in 1910 gave to Meiji-Japan, proud of its modernization and making assiduous efforts to keep up with the "enlightened" modern Western nations. Again this new wave was watched first with astonishment, but in the 1990s paved the way to another turn towards Asia in ideology, politics and economics.

These remarks may suffice to show that ever since the discussion between Morse and Siebold in the late 19th century, an important and large part of Japanese ethnology concerned with the exploration of Japan, its culture and society, was—and is—preoccupied with sifting and resifting a vast and growing amount of material provided by a great number of sciences ranging from physical anthropology to linguistics, but that notwithstanding these efforts, not much new knowledge was gained. More important is that there never occurred a far reaching change of paradigm, and the decisive question pertaining to modern Japan has never been taken up by ethnology, namely, what is the character of Japan's modernization? Of course, there are hints to facilitate an understanding, for instance Oka's theory of heterogeneous multi-cultural roots, Egami's hypothesis of an early high-culture of its own originating in Japan, Harada's concept of a fundamentally democratic village-society and so on, but in no case were these things explicitly and intentionally connected to the question of Japan's modernization and modern Japan.

The one scholar who grasped the importance of this problem is Umesao Tadao. And while at first glance it seems astonishing that he formulated his theory before he had the chance to visit Europe, the model for Japan since Meiji-times, it becomes intelligible when one considers his scholarly background in natural sciences (ecology) and his field-experiences in Outer Mongolia in the mid 1940s, Central-Asia and India in 1955, and Southeast Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos) in 1957/58. This background gave him the opportunity to take the most important regions and cultures of Asia into account when speaking of the relation between Asia and Japan—and his conclusion was, that they are essentially different: Japan does not belong to what is understood as 'Asia' in terms of Montesquieu, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and others. From the Japanese side I would like to add the names of Ōtsuka

Hisao and Maruyama Masao, thinkers in the line of Weber and/or Marx (and it was, by the way, the Marxist line of historical thinking that informed the most distinctive critics of Umesao, such as Hiromatsu 1978, 1986).

To use Umesao's own metaphor (1991; here Umesao speaks of Japanese civilization as an animistic one despite its overall appearance as Buddhist and Shintoist), Japanese culture may be seen as a whale: appearing like a fish, the whale's organs are those of a mammal; so is Japan: eating rice with chopsticks from bowls, writing characters with a brush, it resembles the Far Eastern cultures, but its organs and structures are the same as those of Western-Europe. This is so because ecological conditions are similar on both the western and eastern fringes of the Eurasian continent: dry regions and deserts in the centre, stretching from the northeast to southwest due to prevailing winds; on its outskirts vast plains where nomadic people hold power, and then the 'empires' China, India, the Ottoman Turks and Russia. The Mediterranean Sea may be compared to the China Sea, and then at the outer fringes there are the European societies and Japan with many parallel developments, not much to the astonishment of Umesao, who after a third field-study to Thailand, India and Nepal in 1961 found his theory proved. In 1967, he published his theory as a book, including among other items the first paper of 1957 and a continuation he had written after his visit to Southeast Asia (Umesao 1958).

The fact that Umesao's theory did not immediately spark the imagination and interest it rightly deserved, is not only due to the fact that it presented an entirely new approach to a hitherto unacknowledged problem, but also demanded an entire re-thinking of (world-)history. Furthermore, the lack of response may partly be attributed to some uncertainty of definition, especially in the use of the term *bunmei* 'civilization'. In common English (or German, for that matter), 'civilization' is more or less seen as the opposite of 'culture', meaning the more materialistic side of human life, but sometimes is also understood as 'cultured-ness' (in German terminology '*Bildung*' would closely resemble this), which distinguishes the 'civilized' from primitive, barbarous and vulgar people to be found at each level of culture. It was in this latter meaning that the famous educator of the Japanese enlightenment, Fukuzawa Yukichi coined the Japanese term *bunmei* in his *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* "An Outline of a Theory of Civilization" in 1875. Yet Umesao used the term in quite a different meaning—perhaps under the influence of the scheme of civilizations by Arnold Toynbee, who visited Japan in the mid-50s, although Umesao himself denies this except for his usage of certain terms (Umesao 2001: 6). How different Umesao's concept is, becomes clear when he stresses that culture (and cultural traits and elements) may be 'exported' or 'imported', but not so civilization, quite contrary to anything that had previously been said in studies on culture and civilization. But none of this was yet so clearly articulated in his first paper of 1957, where he spoke of *bunmei* as defined by high living standards, a highly developed administrative organization, an education system, transport and communication systems and the like

(compare for instance Sugita 1989: 553). This sounds more like well-known definitions of high culture, or of industrialized countries of the first world, for that, than like a groundbreaking new theory, and it was this uncertainty in terminology, which gave rise to for accusations of Marxism or attempts to absorb Umesao's theory into Marxist historiography.

To clarify not only terminology but also to broaden this theory into a global attempt at an explanation of human history, Umesao needed time. But before he could focus on this study, preferably at Kyôto University's Institute for Humanistic Studies (*Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyûjo*) where he succeeded Imanishi Kinji, Umesao felt the necessity to gain field experiences in Europe, first. He had visited Eastern Europe (Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus) in connection with the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Moscow in 1964, but the big project of a 'Study of the basic culture of Europe' was launched only in 1965. With financial aid from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Umesao and his group from Kyôto conducted fieldwork in France, Spain and Italy in the years from 1967 to 1969. This was in itself a revolutionary development, to my knowledge the first time scholars of an "ethnological culture", i.e. a culture seen as the object of ethnological studies by Westerners, suddenly changed sides, so that the West itself became the object of their studies.

In Japanese ethnology many other such studies in European ethnology followed: in 1970 Oka, accompanied by Sumiya, Gamô, Emori, Sofue and Ôgo Kin'ichi went to villages in Austria, and many younger anthropologists have published since then on their fieldwork in Europe. For Umesao his stay in southern Europe strengthened his confirmation and belief in his theory. But again another important—and necessary—development within the Japanese scholarly world took up his time: the planning, establishing and steering of the National Museum of Ethnology (*Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan*, shortened to *Minpaku*) in Ôsaka through its formative years.

The founding of an Ethnological Museum had been one of the most urgently felt necessities of Japanese ethnology since the 1930s. The great patron of studies in Material Culture, Shibuzawa Keizô, had once established a small private collection in 1921 as the *Attic Museum*. Sponsored and encouraged by Shibuzawa, the Japanese Society of Ethnology began to collect material culture in its headquarters at Hôya/Tôkyô. After the war, Oka, Izumi and other leading scholars from the Tôkyô area made an enormous effort to bring about the founding of a museum on a national level, but failed due to lack of funds and, more importantly, of interest on the side of the government. Umesao, who had cooperated with the organizing committee for the Osaka World Exhibition of 1970 in bringing together art and craft objects from cultures all over the world, seized this chance and, with the help of the leading individuals in the cultural scene of the Kansai area, succeeded in 1973, when a bureau for the preparation of the founding of such a museum was established within

the Ministry with Umesao as its head. *Minpaku* was founded in 1974, and opened its doors in 1977. Within a short time it developed into the centre of ethnological studies in Japan, according to Umesao's ideas, with an academic staff of more than 60 scholars, gaining a worldwide reputation.

The following years brought many new and important duties for Umesao. First of all he had to further strengthen the museum and coordinate the study projects of the staff—giving him the chance to write on the management of science (Umesao 1989) and on the information society, a pioneering concept he was the first to use in Japan (Umesao 1990). From 1977 the museum started a series of annual symposia on ethnological themes under his guidance, and in 1981 a second one on “Tradition and Change in Modern Japanese Culture” envisaged as a comprehensive, in-depth study of Japanese Culture of the second half of the 20th century, comparable and even surpassing what Yanagita had done in former years on the “History of the Meiji- and Taishô-eras” (Sugita 1989: 552).

Besides these time-consuming and immensely successful studies, Umesao had already taken the opportunity in the 1970s, to speak on his ‘civilization-theory’ abroad, for instance in 1974 at the *Japan Society*, New York, later at the *Collège de France*, Paris, but could not at that time fully convince his foreign audiences. In 1983 René Sieffert published a partial translation into French under the title of *Le Japon à l'ère planétaire* (later translated into Italian as *Il Giappone nell'era planetaria*; Milano 1984), and 1988 there appeared also a Chinese translation. A full-length English translation, edited by Harumi Befu, appeared in 2003 (Umesao 2003). But it was only in 1980 on the occasion of Umesao's 60th birthday—*kanreki* in Japan—that a symposium was arranged, which gave him the chance to re-think his theory and work on its definitions. The volume, which includes also his own keynote-remarks, is again a milestone in Japanese ethnography and ethnology (Umesao 1981). As if inspired by new energy, Umesao now moved on to organizing a third series of annual symposia at *Minpaku*, sponsored by the great promoter of international understanding and cooperation in science, Taniguchi Toyosaburô, and dedicated to the question of what place Japan occupies in the modern world (in Umesao's words: “to add the ‘Japanese card’ to Max Weber's scheme”). Under the series-title of *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World* scholars from Japan, the United States of America and Europe assembled over 17 years, sometimes joined by colleagues from Asian countries, to discuss the applicability of Umesao's theory in various fields by comparing Japan with the West (or with certain Asian civilizations). Umesao, who contributed a key-note speech every year (published in one volume as Umesao 2000), took the opportunity even in the first symposium of 1982 to clarify some hitherto ambiguous concepts and terms.

From the outset, Umesao made it clear that his interest lies not in the question of Japanese ethnogenesis, the genealogy of isolated culture traits or complexes of culture elements, nor in the questions of a single or heterogeneous origin of Japanese

culture or from where it reached the archipelago, but in the fact that Japan is one of the highly developed civilizations of the modern world (see Hata 1994: 300). His assignment is the comparison of those two great centres, the West (Europe and its offspring in North America etc.) and Japan. Humans and nature are embraced by one system, ecology, and this system is developing in a parallel process from a more or less complete domination by nature to the evolution of institutions to free people from nature. According to Umesao, *bunmei* 'civilization' is therefore a concrete existing system of human being and institutions, while *bunka* 'culture' is only the intellectual abstract of this system, resulting for instance in the appearance of quite different civilizations as similar cultures in outlook (see the 'whale'-example cited above).

With this clarification of terms there evolves also the basic assumption of a multiple origin and possible parallel evolution of different civilizations, a point that is important to notice, because this distinguishes Umesao's theory from the Marxist assumption of a single origin and a necessary unilinear evolution of history. At that point one also has to remember Umesao's discussion of an 'East Asian Fertile Crescent'—comparable to, but independent from its better known counterpart in the Near East—and his demand for a re-study of world-history. This is not the place to delve deeper into his many inspiring hints for such studies, but suffice it to say that in 1980, at the symposium celebrating his 60th birthday, Umesao had once again proposed the founding of a society of civilization studies, and in 1983 this plea bore fruit when a Society for Comparative Studies of Civilization (*Hikaku Bunmei Gakkai*) at a national level with Itô Shuntarô as president came into existence. Since then this society has made contacts with the International Society of Civilization Studies and staged its World Congress 1998 in Chiba, Japan.

From the second half of the 1990s in Japan—and, by way of the Taniguchi-symposia at *Minpaku* also abroad—Umesao's Civilization studies suddenly began to attract the interest of the scholarly world as well as the general public in Japan. In 1998, the monthly journal *Bungei Shunjû* asked in an opinion poll for the most important publication in Japanese during the 20th century, and Umesao's "Prologomena of an ecological view of the history of civilization" was placed by Japanese intellectuals at number 4, after Shiba Ryûtarô (*Saka-no-ue no kumo*), Nishida Kitarô (*Zen no kenkyû*) and Natsume Sôseki (*Waga hai wa neko dearu*). Ayabe Tsuneo (1994) in a volume on the 50 most important anthropologists worldwide included Umesao among only six Japanese—the others being the already mentioned Oka Masao, Ishida Eiichirô, Nakane Chie and two others, Yamaguchi Masao and Kawakita Jirô. But most impressive is a series of new studies by historians such as Kawakatsu Heita (1991, 1997), Moritani Masanori (1998) and Murakami Yasusuke (1998) making use of Umesao's theory and developing it further. Umesao himself seems most convinced by Kawakatsu's study of the role of the ocean in the process of the history of civilizations (his point being the impact of oceanic Southeast Asia which led to a



response in Japan and Europe and to the development of a new civilization there). They both met for round table discussions, which were edited by Umesao (2001), thereby giving him yet another chance to put finishing touches to his theory. The main point he stresses now is the conviction that Japan is different from Asia, and does not belong to Asia (see above, also a short discussion by Umesao and Kreiner 2001).

This emphasis has important implications for Japanese studies, too, and it is only consistent that Umesao is also asking for a change of paradigm in Japanese studies. It is in this line that the first of the series of Taniguchi symposia was reserved for the topic 'Life and Society' and that the European participants Sepp Linhart (Vienna) and the author (Kreiner) dwelt on the nature, history and future development of Japanology/Japanese studies. This symposium was also the motivation for Harumi Befu and Kreiner to organize another one on a comparison of Japanese studies in ten countries/cultures (Befu and Kreiner 1992).

Even before Said (1978) pointed out to the fact that European Oriental studies have played a decisive role in the building of the image of the Orient, it was known that 'Japan' is and has been a fabrication of the West, to a great part accepted by Japan itself, reinforced there and then 're-exported' to the West as an 'indigenous' image thought to be autonomous or at least not eurocentric. It is therefore extremely important for us to look back at the early stages of European-Japanese contacts to assess (or re-assess) our image of Japan, the public one as well as the scholarly one, both being tightly knitted together (see here Befu and Kreiner 1992, Kreiner 1990 and 1999).

The first Europeans to set foot on the Japanese Islands in the second half of the 16th century and well into the first decades of the 17th century, whether Portuguese Jesuits, Spanish Franciscans, Dutch, English, German or Italian traders, all had the impression of a very European-like culture and society, easily understood in its feudal structures and values. The first German report by Christoph Carl Fernberger about 1630 (Wernhart 1972) speaks only very briefly of Japan, in sharp contrast to the detailed accounts of the miracles of India and Southeast Asia, obviously because everything seems more or less like at home.

This European-like appearance of Japan was already used at that early time to create a model for Europe to emulate, a model of an intelligent, proud and fearless people of a high level of morality, for instance in the letters of St. Franciscus Xavierius. The same image was used during the Baroque period, especially in Jesuit dramaturgy, and reproduced well into the first half of the 18th century, especially in the early period of the Enlightenment. Figures like Voltaire, Immanuel Kant in his essay *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Königsberg 1795) and others are representative of this phenomenon. This view also enabled European critics of their own culture to use Japan, just because it was thought to be so similar to Europe, as a place to locate their critique without mentioning Europe at all, so for instance Fernão Mendes Pinto

in his *Peregrinaçam* as early as 1514 (Jorissen 2001), later Jonathan Swift in his *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver* (London 1726) or in 1762 the *Citizen of the World, or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to his Friends in the East* by Oliver Goldsmith. Even as late as 1838, the fictitious *Letters of Lillian Ching, a Native of the Island of Loo Choo, to his brethren upon that island* was published by an anonymous member of the American Peace Movement in Portland to emulate the tiny kingdom as a model of a peaceful society without arms (Teruya 2001).

This all changed abruptly at the peak of the European Enlightenment, when admiration of Japan turned to its contrary. Voltaire was one of the first to point out that while others—the Japanese—once had been far ahead of Europe in the development of intellect and crafts, they now remained backward barbarians or like children. The reason for this decline was explained in the first edition of the *Deutsche Enzyklopädie* of 1791: The Japanese did not proceed with enlightenment because they were forbidden to have contact with foreigners. And in the words of the Prussian King Frederic the Great in a letter to Voltaire in 1776: Political decisions are made in Europe, therefore interest in Japan [and China] is a mere *curiosité*. With this statement, Japanese studies were locked up in an ivory tower, the eurocentric view of history—and society, as well—hindering any deeper reaching argument about things Japanese in the so-called ‘disciplines’, while Japanology became a study preoccupied with exotic culture traits like *haiku*, *inrô* and the tea-ceremony. With one swift move, Umesao’s thinking now brings Japanese studies back to where it belongs: the centre of scientific discussion of modern society.

Turning back to the end of the 17th century, I would like to point out a most important analysis of Japanese culture and society by Engelbert Kaempfer. Kaempfer had been in Japan for merely two years, as a medical doctor of the Dutch East Indian Company’s factory at Dejima, from 1690 to 1692. But he had had a long experience in Asia before this, staying in Persia (Isfahan, Hormuz) for years, visiting India (the Coromandel Coast) and Ceylon, then Batavia, and on his way to Japan, Siam. In this respect he resembles Umesao—looking at Japan not so much from a European angle (whether as favourable to Japan as in the days of the aftermath of the Thirty-Years-War, and of the exotic dramas of the Baroque stage) but from an Asian one. This is the reason why Kaempfer’s description of Japan in his *Amoenitates exoticae*, Lemgo 1712 and its posthumous translation *The History of Japan*, London 1727, surpasses other reports in its insight, placing Japan in world history. Compared with Umesao’s writings, there occurs to me only one great difference: Kaempfer stresses the seclusion politics of the Tokugawa as a benevolent and most positive, wise decision. In fact, Kaempfer is the one who ‘invented’ this concept by writing about “closing the country” (translated later in 1811 by Shizuki Tadao as *sakoku*). Umesao, on the contrary, emphasizes the activities of Japanese traders, sailors, soldiers and others in the whole region of Southeast Asia and beyond during the decades from the mid-

16th century up to about 1640, and was one of the early advocates of a re-thinking of this concept in historiography. To my eyes, this chapter on the “seclusion of the country” is the only one in all of Kaempfer’s writings which bears strong evidence of a European visual angle, and it was, by the way, also the one that influenced the European imagination most up to this day. The fact that it was accepted by the Japanese themselves seems a difficult point to interpret.

Umesao’s theory demands us to bring history (world and Japanese), ethnology and Japanese studies together in order to gain a better and correct understanding of modern Japan and its place in history.

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