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Keynote Address : Tradition of Culturedness in Modern Japan

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Keynote Address: Tradition of Culturedness in Modern Japan

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1. JAPAN AS AN ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Japanese have established one of the most advanced technological societies in the world. Not only is it equipped with state-of-the-art technologies such as electronics, bio-technology, and nuclear engineering, but also it loses no time in integrating and making full use of the fruits of these technologies at the level of the general masses. Computers are deeply rooted in daily life, and transportation and information systems are highly developed both in quality and in quantity.

Japan is located in one part of the East Asian civilization zone. With these historical and geographical factors in mind, how has Japan managed to succeed in becoming modernized and establishing the advanced technological society we are currently experiencing? And how is "culturedness," the theme of this symposium, associated with this progress? I would like to extend my observations by a comparative study of civilizations. Let me begin my story with the present and work backward in time.

There is no question that Japan established an advanced technological society in the 1960's, during which it experienced dramatic economic growth supported by rapid development of science and technology. This development seems to owe a great deal to Japanese "pragmatism." Here, I define pragmatism as the attitude that gives priority to the practical application of knowledge or to the acquisition of practical knowledge. The extreme opposite position to this is "culturalism." I define "culturalism" as the attitude which values culture and knowledge not directly applicable to daily life. "Ideology," for example, may be considered as one form of "culturalism."

Pragmatism is overwhelmingly predominant in almost every area of Japanese society, from the judiciary, bureaucracy, and economy to science and research in innovative technology. The Japanese foster pragmatism at school. It is not an exag-

geration to say that schools set as their ultimate goal helping students find jobs. In 1872, the government introduced a modern educational system and announced its philosophy of education as the pursuit of success in the life of the individual. Nowadays Japanese society guarantees equal educational opportunity and bustles with highly educated citizens. Nevertheless, the past educational philosophy still remains influential and continues to aggravate the severity of examination competition.

Now, if education meant pragmatism, neither farmer nor fisherman would need an education in reading and writing. No merchant would need to be taught more than reading, writing and how to use an abacus. Why, then, are educational facilities in Japan so abundant and diverse, ranging from kindergartens to universities, "juku" (preparatory school) to vocational schools? What do they offer to the students?

"The more education expands, the more devastated the culture becomes." I have embraced this opinion for many years. As I mentioned earlier, culturalism is the extreme opposite of pragmatism. The Japanese concepts *kyōyō* and *bunka* (cultivation and culture) are close to the English concept of being "cultured." Despite the accepted recognition that culture does not materially improve our lives, culturalism has developed and penetrated Japanese society.

The prevalence of culture accounts for the flourishing of "culture centers," at their zenith in recent years. A "culture center" is a kind of school providing ordinary citizens, mostly housewives, with a cultural education. This school does not help its students obtain good jobs when they have finished its curriculum.

Traveling abroad is also in fashion, especially among young women, though they know it does not bring any substantial advantage to their careers. Intellectual curiosity and a search for amusement account for these phenomena. It can be said that people cultivate themselves and enrich their lives through "culture centers" and overseas travels.

In Japan, pragmatism and "culturalism" thus stand side-by-side. A glance at them may give the illusion that males assume pragmatism and females "culturalism," but this is easily disproved. For example, mothers often become too earnest about ensuring that their children receive a good education. These females embody pragmatism itself. To give another example, an increasing number of office workers, mostly male, quit their jobs and choose others from a wide variety of available choices. They value enjoyment or satisfaction rather than success in life. This attitude absolutely belongs to "culturalism."

The age of advanced technology cannot be realized without the existence of highly intellectual masses, whether they are pragmatic or cultural. Only highly intellectual masses can create and enjoy sophisticated technology. Japan, as well as Western Europe and North America, have succeeded in the establishment of intellectual mass societies, and therefore can step forward into the age of advanced technology.

The intellectual mass society can be seen as quite limited. Predominant in the

world are societies in which a fraction of people, the elite, exclusively possess intellect and culture. We see typical examples in the Brahmans of India and in the society of old-time China where the classical examination for government service was held. Further, in some societies, a certain religious group excludes others from culture and knowledge. One example is seen in older Tibetan society. I have seen many scripture houses of Tibetan Buddhism. The scripture house reveals an amazing concentration of intellect. Monks study and memorize scriptures one after another. After learning the complete contents of the scriptures by heart, they take a catechetical examination given by higher monks. Through this process they acquire supreme intellect. In contrast, the masses remain uneducated or even illiterate.

In Japan, a group of Buddhists have embraced a similar restrictive way of passing on intellect, but they are an exception. Many people, regardless of sex or social class, are competing with each other for the same goal: success in an examination. The reality is not that the supreme priests give the examination to only a limited number of people, but that various examinations are open to an unlimited number of people. In this sense, Japan is an intellectual mass society.

2. NATIONAL EDUCATION

The social function of the school and education system in the modern world takes on much importance in the comparative study of civilizations. Of particularly vital importance is the establishment of mass public education, which in recent years is becoming a worldwide reality. This means that the whole world is moving in the same direction toward the establishment of a modern intellectual mass society; or, at least, national ideologies call for this movement.

In this limited sense, the modern body politic is a means for realizing a highly intellectual mass society. People establish the body politic so that they may use it to form an intellectual mass society. They regard Western societies or Japanese society as the ideal model. In Japan, a non-hierarchical mass society has grown out of the hierarchical national society established through the Meiji and Taisho periods.

The establishment of a national society owed much to national education, which introduced the education of the samurai warrior class as it was before the Meiji Restoration, rather than that of the modern West. National education set general norms for the nation, through the Imperial Rescript on Education, which incorporated many of the rules that had governed the lord-vassal relationship of samurai warriors. For example, among them are the typical norms of the samurai warrior class, "chu" (loyalty to one's sovereign) and "ko" (filial piety). These concepts were taken up in the Imperial Rescript on Education mentioned above, and were expressed as "The people of Japan should endeavor to fulfill the norm of 'Chu' and 'Ko'." The ethics and norms of the samurai warrior class thus penetrated Meiji society including the governing system, politics and the economy.

This was one of the major factors that propelled successful modernization, promoted by the Meiji government under the motto "Increase production and promote industry" and "A rich country with a strong army."

National education, however, spoiled traditional cultural education. Cultural education was totally replaced by pragmatic education in the Meiji era. In contrast, public education in Europe, which originated during the Industrial Revolution, aimed at the cultivation of the provincial youth to make them good cultured citizens. The European attitude toward education is the fostering of culturalism, and therefore shows, some say, an absolute difference from that of Japan.

African governments are earnest in the education of their peoples. They have an illusion that education guarantees a higher living standard. Or, in their view, a higher living standard includes school attendance. In either case, education is regarded as a means to success, a role that is pragmatic, as in Japan. Establishment of a modern body politic may require pragmatic education, in order to provide the masses with a higher living standard. Culturalism, which once flourished in Japan during the Edo period, was overshadowed in the process of establishing national education.

3. "HANKŌ" AND "TERAKOYA"—PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE EDO PERIOD

In the hierarchical national culture of the Meiji period, we can see some influence of Western European culture, but basically the Meiji national culture inherited the culture of the Edo period. This culture gradually began to flourish during the Bunka Bunsei era in the early nineteenth century. Education flourished also.

The prosperity of education is seen in the rapid proliferation of "hankō," the feudal clan schools established by the local feudal governments, from the latter half of the eighteenth century on. It was only a transition period when the Tokugawa Shogunate gradually secured control over the feudal clans and these feudal clans were integrated into a sort of confederation with a weak consciousness of solidarity under the Tokugawa Shogunate hegemony. In this transition period, feudal clan states found it vital to set up schools to educate their vassals and foster efficient personnel to increase production and promote industry in their fiefs. These feudal clan schools, therefore, mainly offered pragmatic education.

There had already been "hankō," the feudal clan's governmental schools, though sporadically, since the mid-seventeenth century. They placed much emphasis on cultural education based on Confucianism, and were devoted to study of the Nine Chinese Classics. Culturalism was predominant in the "hankō" until the early eighteenth century. Pragmatism gradually replaced culturalism and became the mainstream.

Parallel with the "hankō" school for the samurai warrior class stood private schools for the masses. Generally, the shogunate and feudal governments were not

eager to educate commoners such as merchants and farmers. Accordingly, the non-warrior class on its own initiative set up educational facilities and these schools spread across the nation.

Among them, "terakoya," private elementary schools, grew rapidly from the early nineteenth century to number more than an estimated ten thousand before the Meiji Restoration. They were located within walking distance for children, and were distributed in about the same density as police boxes in present-day Japan.

One picture shows one of these private elementary schools situated upstairs from a bookstore. This picture interests me because it reminds me of "gakushujuku," today's preparatory schools. I believe that the bookstore sold the textbooks for the school upstairs. In those days, a great variety of rudimentary textbooks, called "ōraimono" were published, and their contents were quite similar. This phenomenon indicates that, in a sense, the culture of the masses had already been substantially standardized.

School education in the Edo period greatly contributed to national standardization of educational level. And the Meiji era took over this heritage. Among the many "hankō," (feudal clans' governmental schools) and "terakoya," (private elementary schools), there also existed another type of school, called "gogaku," the clans' official educational institutions. Feudal lords or private volunteers were the founders of this type of school. It offered rudimentary pragmatic education to feudal vassals and the general public, and rapidly increased from the end of the eighteenth century.

"Gogaku" for the general public began to increase in number in the early nineteenth century and proliferated in the closing days of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Some "hankō" accepted not only feudal vassals but also affluent merchants. We can see that educational egalitarianism thus has roots as far back as the Edo period.

In conducting a comparative study of civilizations, counterparts of Japanese "hankō" may be found in other civilizations. One is the "Ritterakademie" of Germany. The "hankō" was an educational institution for feudal vassals of a small hierarchical feudal state, and the "Ritterakademie" a school for aristocrats of a small sovereign state in Germany. Both schools were established for the descendants of medieval warriors, with the aim of securing efficient personnel to manage small monarchies.

They were similar in offering literary subjects and martial arts. In the Japanese "hankō," students studied Chinese classics and the Dutch language. The counterparts of these subjects at the "Ritterakademie" were Latin and French. Fencing, taught at the German school, corresponds to kendo, Japanese-style fencing taught at the Japanese "hankō." It is completely natural that the two societies, in similar historical phases and with similar decentralized feudal systems, produced similar educational systems.

4. CULTURED WARRIORS

Japanese society in the Edo period was governed by warriors. Before this period, from the fifteenth through sixteenth century, Japan was in complete turmoil with provincial warrior leaders fighting with each other to expand their territories.

Following this period came the era of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the seventeenth century. Under the Tokugawa hegemony, Japan enjoyed peace for more than 250 years. (I call this "Pax Tokugawana.") In this peaceful society, feudal samurai vassals who had served as warriors in the regular army became bureaucrats in the feudal hierarchy, governing the fiefs. They began to form the intellectual class. Consequently, warriors had to be cultured. This trend led to the establishment of the "hankō."

Japanese samurai warriors were not mere gangsters. Even Nobunaga Oda, though regarded as the incarnation of violence, was equipped with transcendent administrative ability, at the same time standing at the top of a structure of violence. In Japan it was impossible to maintain political power without superb administrative ability. After the warrior administrations established political power, they kept it by merging intellect and political power.

For example, at the early stage of the Kamakura Shogunate, Hiromoto Oe, representing the intellectual class of Kyoto, assumed an important position in the government. While bureaucrats, mainly from the Hojo clan, secured political power, the third Shogun Sanetomo virtually abandoned power and lived as a man of culture.

The Mongolian Empire, at its foundation, committed massive destruction and slaughter across the Eurasian Continent. In apparent contrast, however, the first emperor, Chinggis Khan, employed cultured people such as Chang-chun Chen-ren, a Taoist, and Yelu Chucai from Khara-Kitai as his consultants. They controlled the violence and helped the Empire transform itself from a violent society to a civilized one. The third emperor, Kubilai Khan, invited Hphags-pa, a high monk of Tibetan Buddhism, to serve as his consultant. Had it not been for these people, the Mongolians might not have established a great empire. It would be very interesting to compare the Kamakura Shogunate and the Mongolian Empire. In such a comparison, we could focus on examples showing the role of intellect as a check on violence.

Unfettered violence, however, has been ubiquitous in the world. For example, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Chu Yuan-chang, who headed a peasant riot, was nothing better than a leader of rascals. The same was true for Li Tzu-cheng, who tore down the Ming Dynasty before the invasion of the Manchurians.

Another example is seen in Viet Nam, called the riot of Tay Son, where a furious conflict between the north and the south led to a massive riot triggered by rascals. After this came the advent of the Nguyen Dynasty. In Afghanistan as well, we see a riot triggered by rascals, who sold water stored in animal skins. It is called the riot of Bacha Sakao, as "bacha sakao" means the boy who sells water in a

leather skin. In both cases the violent groups subverted the then dynasty and came to power.

On the other hand, in Japan, absolutely destructive violence was rare. Indeed, we know of the massive riots of Johei and Tengyo headed by Masakado Taira and Sumitomo Fujiwara respectively in the tenth century, but they were totally different from those mentioned earlier. They were the expression of complaints of provincial aristocrats against the central government.

Often given as the example of collective violence is "ikki," a peasants' riot in the Edo period. Though we may often regard it as a kind of riot, it was more like a strike, or a labor movement. People conducted themselves within a set framework of rules. Most of the time, these strikes ended with the people's requests accepted and the punishment placed only on the leaders. Sometimes people adopted a strategy of suddenly and collectively running away, called "chōsan." They did not persist in violence.

It was during World War II that Japan became probably the most violent. The Japanese military became a national military with the incorporation of the general public. Officer positions, previously occupied exclusively by aristocrats, came open to the general public. As a result, the Japanese military became crueler than ever. In the days of the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese Wars, many officers belonged to the warrior class, namely the descendants of cultured samurai warriors, and therefore were capable of controlling the violence.

The battle for the capture of Edo Castle during the Meiji Restoration was the last battle among samurai warriors. It might have become a cruel massacre, but it ended in the bloodless surrender of the Edo Castle. This is because both sides consisted of samurai warriors who could restrain themselves from violence, due to a certain kind of controlling function that existed on both sides.

Intellect thus controls man's cruelty. It functions as a check on extreme violence. Pax Tokugawana enabled warriors to be equipped with intellect and culture and to lead lives in the highly sophisticated manner of Bushido, the code of chivalry. Intellect and culture, however, were of little help to them in climbing the social ladder. In this regard the samurai warriors were completely different from the "Shih-ta-fu" of China and "Yangban" of the Korean Peninsula, both of which constituted the intellectual class.

They represented the reading class, the same as the Japanese samurai warriors. However, "Yangban," the military and literary bureaucrats in Korea, came mainly from the basin of the River (R)Nakton-gang, unlike Japanese warriors who were spread evenly across the nation. In China and Korea the examination system was firmly established for the selection of government officials. Members of the reading class aimed at success in that examination because only those who passed could serve the central government. Consequently, the system brought about an intellect-intensive society in China and Korea.

The concept of an examination system such as that conducted in China and Korea was introduced to Japan in the Nara era in the eighth century, but interesting-

ly the system never came into practice. I think this offers a very interesting theme in the comparative study of the Far Eastern civilizations. In Japan, no matter how educated a person was, he had no chance of becoming an official in the central government. This prompted the formation of an intellect-diffusive society, which underlaid the feudal system of the Edo period.

These phenomena explain why an intellectual mass society was established in Japan. In short, as a person's intellect was of no help to him in climbing the social ladder, bright as he was, he had no choice but to satisfy himself just by developing his intelligence through acquiring useless knowledge, or culture.

In contrast, in China, a person's intellect was of great help to him in gaining social status. He could make a fortune soon after becoming a bureaucrat. It was said in China that even an official of integrity, or one who was at least indifferent to corruption, could build up enough fortune to maintain the prosperity of his family for at least three generations. They climbed up the ladder of intellect, finally to find themselves in administrative positions, or at the top of bureaucratic hierarchy. The society thus had a monistic structure.

To the contrary, in Japan, the effort to gain knowledge had nothing to do with success in life nor with fortune building. There were two parallel ladders. One was for the warrior class leading to social success, and the other was for the intellectual class leading to useless cultural achievements. The society, thus, had a dual structure. In present-day Japan, business society represents the warriors' society of the past. We scholars belong to another society, climbing up the ladder of intellect. Scholars can associate with businessmen on the equal terms, though they are stuffed with useless knowledge and, therefore, are by no means businessmen's social equals. Then, why can they be on an equal level? There has been an underlying traditional way of association between these two kinds of people since the Edo period. At that time, those who belonged to the intellectual and unworldly society such as Buddhist or Shinto priests could associate equally with warriors, because they had an independent society from that of warriors who were governing their own fiefs and vassals.

Today, scholars never climb the same ladder that politicians and businessmen do, and remain impoverished. Nevertheless, they are cordially treated with the same respect accorded to those successful in the society. This is a quality of Japanese society. In this sense, European society may appear to resemble Japanese society to a certain extent. However, American society seems to be rather monistic and different from that of Europe and Japan. In the United States, a man of power, whether in social or intellectual terms, is a man of fortune. Even a scholar can accumulate a fortune as he accumulates knowledge and climbs the ladder. Power (both intellectual and social) and fortune seem to correlate.

5. CULTURED MASSES

As I mentioned earlier, "terakoya" and "gogaku" in the Edo period prospered

as educational institutions for the general public under the administration of warriors. These private educational institutions prevailed across the nation much earlier than their government counterparts, and cultivated the masses, who otherwise would have remained ignorant and illiterate.

Let's examine the society in a certain year, say in 1700. Schools, similar to the present preparatory schools called "juku," had formed throughout the nation and drew many students. The teacher was usually a "ronin," a lordless warrior; his family had been lordless for a couple of generations. This means that there had already been hereditary educators.

In contrast to the prevalence of education among the masses, warriors were left in poor educational condition. There was no governmental body ruling the education system, such as the Ministry of Education in Japan today. An episode of a government official who went down to Hiroshima to collect taxes would serve as a good example. It turned out that the peasants were literate while the samurai officials were not. Literacy among Japanese resulted from the need for documents for leasing or ownership. From the medieval era, the Japanese have attributed a right or a duty to an individual, and written it down in documents as evidence. Therefore, every individual needed to know how to read and write. Even a peasant was not an exception.

Japan, ranked with the United Kingdom, holds one of the largest reservoirs of so-called local documents, namely, private documents, in the world. Even one of the feudal prefectures, Ohmi, stores numerous medieval documents. My ancestors lived in a small village called Sugaura at the north shore of Lake Biwa. That small village also possessed old documents called "Sugaura Monjo," dating from the eleventh century. It was the residents of the village who wrote the documents. They may have learned how to write from lordless warriors. In medieval Japan such intellectual societies were spread throughout the nation.

Many seminaries for the Buddhist priesthood, mainly of the "Ikko" sect, were established in small villages at the end of the medieval period. This phenomenon seems to be not a cause of the prevalence of the intellectual cultured society but a result. It was on the foundation of the previously established intellectual cultured society that these seminaries could take root.

Most local documents, in the medieval and modern times, including the "Sugaura Monjo," deal with disputes, whether private quarrels or public lawsuits. People everywhere fought hard to protect their individual interests. The Japanese language has a specific expression for a border dispute. This indicates how frequently people quarreled over the demarcation of the land between village communities, which may be distinctive of Japanese society. In Japanese agricultural society, documents, not violence, guaranteed rights. In other words, a person could not claim his right without written endorsement. Some say that while the European society is based on contracts, the Japanese is not. Actually, however, contracts were given top priority over anything else and had to be written down. Therefore, the identification of documents as counterfeit or authentic was one of

the most important tasks of successive governments.

People kept the documents not in the archives but under the care of individuals, and had them verified by government officials. When an official identified a document as authentic, he placed his seal on it. Then this document, called "Ando-jo," acquired validity as a guarantee issued by the new government.

In this way a new administration approved rights of an individual that had been approved by the previous administration. People thus kept their ownership regardless of the transfer of the administration. This is a big difference between the feudalism of Japan and that of Europe. Unlike the European feudal lord who regarded the fief as his own land, the Japanese lord owned only the right to collect taxes on land that belonged to the people. The Tokugawa Shogunate was in a sense the successor of feudalism; at its collapse, or more specifically, at the abolishment of feudal clans and establishment of prefectures in the early Meiji era, feudal lords abandoned all that they had kept so far, such as land, castles, and arms. All these things had not actually belonged to them, but had only been in their custody. The Japanese are so tenacious regarding land that land prices are currently skyrocketing. This is because individuals have held the rights on their land since olden times.

Concerning communication or governance with the help of documents, China is an amazing case. Innumerable wooden strip documents used in the Han Dynasty before Christ were excavated from the base of the fire signal towers located at the west border of China. Most of them were concerning rations. For example, one records how much millet was rationed and to whom. These ration documents were written in Chinese characters that are still readable today. Many of the cuneiform documents excavated in the Mediterranean area also dealt with economic activities. In Japan as well, wooden strip documents excavated in Nara account for economic activities, such as tax collection, borrowing, and lending.

Writing, however, cannot remain only in pragmatic use. It always leads to culture eventually. In the history of literature, there must have been a phase when writing began to be associated with a certain kind of culture. In India, for instance, Buddhists collected and edited scriptures on a large scale about one hundred years after the death of the Buddha. This was an incident which elevated writing to a level above economic use. In China as well, disciples of Confucius recorded and compiled what their preceptors said. There were thus non-economic documents as well as those for economic use. It is these non-economic writings that began to have an association with culture.

Let us turn now to the Edo period. A record of a foreigner shows his surprise when he saw Japanese women read and write. Of course, the literacy rate of women was lower than that of men, but a considerable number of women must have been literate. A myriad of publications are evidence of the high literacy rate. Particularly at the end of the seventeenth century, the reading population exploded. Publications in those days ranged from pleasure reading for the general public, guidebooks to big cities, and textbooks for rudimentary education, to por-

nography. Some books were as popular as today's bestsellers. These phenomena signify the maturity of urban culture. Intellect and culture belonged not only to a privileged minority but also to a broad majority in the city.

"Yūgei," a general term representing hobbies, also gained extraordinary popularity from the beginning of the eighteenth century. "Yūgei" originally included such hobbies and accomplishments as tea ceremony, dancing, singing and theater-going. Then it came to signify almost all activities such as mathematics, medical sciences, and even the study of breeding, and became fashionable in urban areas. Excluded from the government system by the warriors and shut out from climbing the social ladder, the intellectual masses vented their energy by devoting themselves to cultural activities, such as publishing and appreciation of printings, pleasure trips, and "yūgei." This urban culture embraced by townspeople was the very origin of today's mass culture, and the germination of the intellectual mass society.

Then, how did the absorption in these hobbies affect the development of science and technology in modern Japan? In the Edo period, cultivation of morning glories came into fashion, which brought about a surprising variety of morning glories through hybridization. This was much earlier than the discoveries of Mendel. Strangely enough, however, such transcendent success in hybridization did not prompt any scientific discovery, or lead to any scientific doctrine, such as Darwin's theory of evolution. As early as those days, mathematics achieved the level of infinitesimal calculus, but ended up remaining in the realm of cultural accomplishments without being put into application.

Cultural accomplishments covered almost every field, but their fruits were not applied. This fact symbolizes the character of the Edo period. It was nothing but "culturalism," and therefore the development of science and technology was postponed until the advent of pragmatism.

I have offered several theories on the tradition of intellect and culture in modern Japan, and I think there still remains a lot of room for discussion.

In closing, I extend my wishes for active and significant discussion in this symposium. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

