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Remodelling the Japanese Body

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MODERNIZATION OF THE BODY IMAGE

Among the many journals written by Western intellectuals about their stay in Japan during the first years of the Meiji Era (1868–1912), Edward Morse, the American zoologist who is also known as the father of Japanese archeology, left us a most memorable work, *Japan Day by Day* [1917]. In this work he describes in an unpretentious style Japanese customs as he saw them, and illustrates them with his own drawings.

It was 1877 (the 10th year of the Meiji Era) when he first visited Japan to study brachiopods. It was at just this time that Japan was preparing her debut onto the international scene. For that purpose, the new Meiji government was issuing one decree after another in an attempt to change both the way of life and the consciousness of the people into what was deemed appropriate for a modern state. However, the ways by which the common people lived and thought were not to be so easily swept away. Thus, the ways of life that had been known from yesteryear still persisted despite the decrees of the government.

Horses were not gelded in those days, nor were they shod with iron. Active stallions walked the streets of central Tokyo in silent shoes of straw. Despite this danger, pedestrians seemed rather dull and slow in their movements.

It is only within a short time that they have had an omnibus, which is simply an open covered wagon with a man always running ahead, to warn people of its approach. There is no reflex action manifested, and people move slowly aside in a dazed sort of way, when under like circumstances we instantly jump aside. These people are very slow in such matters and wonder at our quick motions.
[MORSE 1917: 137]

In fact, numerous traffic accidents were reported among the Japanese at this time. Apparently people were quite different from the Japanese of today (who are expected to behave in an exact and minutely controlled way), often standing about absent-mindedly and abstractedly in the streets.

Morse's intellectual interest was aroused by all kinds of things and manners Japanese. In particular, he seems to have been strongly impressed by the fact that the Japanese often lived in a semi-naked state. He repeatedly notes the steaming bodies of rickshaw men resting after a ride; a woman in only a loincloth lying down

with a baby to make it go to sleep; fishermen with just their *fundoshi* (loincloths) on mending their nets. Naked bodies appeared to Morse's eyes everywhere on the Japanese landscape. This nakedness¹⁾ was for Morse very conspicuous, not only because he maintained an American sense of decorum and idea of 'civilization', but also because it seemed so incompatible with the Japanese etiquette and sense of propriety that had so impressed him.²⁾ (Here it may be well to recall the great dispute that ensued after the discovery of the New World in relation to the subject of why the natives should go naked.)

As the critical eyes of Westerners were feared, going about the streets in an 'exposed' way was forbidden by law from as early as 1871 (the 4th year of the Meiji Era). However, to people unacquainted with Western customs, there was no reason to feel ashamed of exposing their bodies and, in fact, most peasants, fishermen and artisans lived in such a semi-naked state for more than six months of each year. Even the rickshaw drivers often hired by Westerners in the big cities, dressed, with the exception of winter, only in their loincloths. Upon reaching the borders of such places as Yokohama, where the orders forbidding nakedness were stricter, men immediately stripped to the waist.

Morse got the impression that in the countryside "clothing seems to be used only on state occasions" [MORSE 1917: 89]. Although perhaps to a different degree, even nowadays people still retain a vivid memory of the common sight of semi-naked bodies dotting the countryside. I myself grew up in a small town in western Japan and remember how well accustomed I was to seeing townspeople sitting out in the lane on a bench in their underwear enjoying the cool of the evening. When a guest visited a private home the host would invariably insist that he make himself comfortable by taking his clothes off to sit in his underwear. Even on trains, travellers used to take off their trousers, neatly folding them and then placing them on the overhead rack, immediately after taking their seats. They would then remain quite unperturbed, often sitting in a most dignified manner in only their half-length muslin drawers.

To the best of my recollection, such sights disappeared rapidly from the scene of everyday life in the early sixties. Difficult as it may be to confirm the date, it remains sure that such change has indeed occurred during these last thirty years. Today those quarters of the city where people still walk about semi-clothed are thought of as lagging at the end of the ranks in the march for prosperity. It may seem that the disappearance of naked bodies from public scenes was only one trivial episode in the transformation of mores that occurred at this time. However, in this study, which covers a time span dating from the early Meiji Era to the present, I argue that this practice of going semi-naked was deeply ingrained in the people's

1) The native Japanese word the author has in mind, *hadaka*, comprises in effect rather a wide range of nudity states, from partial to total nakedness.

2) Others, such as the British writer Isabella L. Bird who came to Japan at the same period, have written similar accounts [Bird 1973].

way of life and that once they came to cover up their bodies, a fundamental transformation in the meaning and mode of the body itself took place among the Japanese.

The fact that going around scantily dressed and barefoot was rather the norm in Japanese life can be traced back to at least the middle ages, as far as we can judge from picture scrolls of that periods.³⁾ This custom cannot be imputed only to the hot and damp climate of Japanese summer; in fact, in much hotter countries such as Indonesia, the Japanese, who are quick to take off their shirts, are frowned upon by the Indonesians. The Koreans, under Japanese domination, were also often embarrassed by Japanese men walking around in skimpy loincloths.⁴⁾

Within this context, the *hadaka matsuri* (literally 'naked festivals', in which participants dress only in loincloths⁵⁾) held in various places in Japan are viewed nowadays as bizarre gatherings. But in the traditional cultural context the nudity at such festivals was considered to be normal, and, in fact, a continuation of everyday life. It may seem to us, who now no longer have the ability to distinguish among naked bodies, that a mass of naked bodies might produce an effect of anonymity, such as masks do. But, on the contrary, to the eyes of people accustomed to nudity it might have been that naked bodies had an even more distinct individuality.

3) See Shibusawa [1984]. Accounts written by Western missionaries, who came to Japan at the beginning of early modern period, note that the Japanese people would, before persons of a higher rank, take off their straw sandals and proceed to make their way in a bent over position barefoot. According to the pioneer scholar of Japanese ethnology, Yanagita Kunio, for the entire samurai class, bare feet were a part of formal wear. For those who wished to wear *tabi* (Japanese socks) within the confines of the castle, it was necessary to obtain permission for reason of illness or old age. Needless to say, this was not allowed among those of the lesser ranks who were restricted to the confines of the gardens [Yanagita 1967: 28–31].

4) A correspondent for the *Asahi Shimbun* reported on Indonesia the following: "Indonesia had well and truly entered the dry season when I was sent there.... At night I went out for a walk dressed in a singlet and shorts. A young woman who was approaching gave me both a look of surprise and condescension and inquired 'Are you Japanese?' in a way as if to make sure I was. I was faced with just this type of situation a number of times. Come to think of it, for the 81% of Indonesia's population that live on the islands of Java and Sumatra, to show a bare arm, especially the upper part of the arm, is taboo." *Asahi Shimbun*, April 4th, 1981, "Tokuhain Memo". In regard to the Korean Peninsula, see Cho Shokichi [1973: 143]. In general, the peoples of South East Asia and China are embarrassed when they see another person's semi-naked body. Among Thai female students who come to study in Japan there was one who could not stand the public baths and went for a year without having a bath.

5) The *hadaka matsuri* are usually held in midwinter at Shinto shrine precincts, where crowds of men stripped to loincloths push and shove, jostling against each other to reach and get hold of some talismanic object set out of reach at a very high position. These rites often have a divinatory function. Summer *hadaka matsuri* instead are considered purificatory rites, and crowds of naked men enter a river or the sea, with much splashing of water on one another.

RESISTANCE TO WEARING CLOTHES

A life of wearing clothes and shoes was not to become the norm among the lower strata of society until as late as the end of last century (the thirties of the Meiji Era). To people who did not feel shame in relation to nakedness, decrees banning it seemed to be proof of the irrationality of the imposed 'civilization'. It was a very painful adjustment for such people and thus, before the use of clothes got firmly rooted in the charter of social norms, there was a strong resistance to these decrees, both overtly and covertly.

In 1873 (the 6th year of Meiji) there was an insurrection against the new regime that rocked the province of Ayabe (now Kyoto Prefecture) in what became a major incident that affected the entire area. Together with opposition to the military draft and the new economy policy the rioters included "Allow Nakedness!" in their slogans [YASUMARU 1891: 64]. This single conspicuous instance must have been the tip of the iceberg.

Thus, in turns and twists, nakedness was banned from public places. More importantly, because of this, nakedness came to be a source of shame in people's consciousness. From a social point of view, this process is a course of modernization in which public order penetrates so deeply as to change the body itself and our consciousness of it. From a cultural point of view, nakedness acquired a new meaning as the connection between it and sexuality was strengthened.

With regard to the latter point, it goes without saying that nakedness had not always implied something erotic. It is often said that in Japan naked parts denote coquetry only when set in the context of the tension resulting from the relationship between the naked and covered parts. For example, the simple exposure of private parts is not immediately connected with coquetry. Certain peasants, depicted in a travelogue about a north-eastern province written in early modern times, lived most of the time almost naked, even exposing their private parts. "In these provinces, women both young and old wore a short undergarment and close fitting trousers (*momohiki*) when they set out for the fields but on their way back, after working in the fields, they would have taken off their trousers, retaining only the upper undergarment (*juban*) that barely reaches the buttocks. Thus, even though their private parts were exposed they thought nothing of it." [MIYAMOTO 1980: 211] For these peasants, the specific parts of the body that arouse sensual impulses must do so only in specific situations.

When the exposing of the body was thus quite the norm, the dependence of sexuality upon situational conditions was much stronger than in our times and, accordingly, one may assume that in everyday life the domain occupied by sensual matters was quite restricted. However, as the habit of wearing clothes spread, the covered body itself became the object of suppressed desire. In addition, the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which connects nudity with shame, helped to change nudity itself into a symbol of sexuality. Seen in this context, as the situational dependance of erotic matters weakened, and eroticism was diffused into the

realms of everyday life, nudity itself became endowed with rhetorical expressivity and came to appear even in the most unexpected situations.⁶⁾ This is the state of the present consciousness in Japan concerning nudity. That is, nudity has acquired a positive message.

THE CONSTRICTED BODY

From the social point of view, insofar as we consider this process of the disappearance of the naked body in Japan to result from official intervention and its influence on the perception of the body, it is obvious that in any society the body is subject to some sort of constriction, be it implicit or explicit. In pre-modern Japanese society, it was among the samurai and civilian upper classes that constriction of the body in both movements and posture was most greatly imposed through the pressure of education, etiquette, and the value placed on "face", but this did not filter down to the lower levels of society. Of course, this does not mean that there was no social constriction of the body among the lower strata. In traditional society, the kind of constrictions that existed were those associated with the expected demeanour and required behaviour befitting one's social position, as a peasant or a carpenter, etc. In other words, it was necessary that the body become truly conformed to its community, estate, or corporate group in which everyone was mutually known, and roles were visibly perceived.

However, in Japan, as in Europe and America, a modern state was formed by drawing out contextualised individuals from their binding communities and placing them into an anonymous public sphere. (Just because such sphere was anonymous, it became necessary for each individual to have a surname.) Because in such a society both the public sphere and official power are maintained principally through communication, a national language becomes a serious issue. So, too, is the body, being a basic medium for expression, equally required to conform to a given code of etiquette so that its movements can be universally understood. In Japan a typical example of just such a conforming process can be seen.

REMODELLING THE BODY

Until the Meiji Era, the traditional posture of the Japanese population, which consisted mostly of peasants, was that of a stooped back, with the chin thrust forward and the four limbs bent. Even while walking, the knees were kept bent and

6) In those days when even during the day the greater number of Japanese houses were dimly lit, the senses were probably more stimulated by touch than they are today. In relation to this it is often said that Japanese beauties come from places where the water is limpid, but obviously just because the water is good does not mean that changes in the face or body will occur. Rather, as suggested by the colloquial expressions 'skin like snow' and 'soft velvety skin', it was indeed the beauty of the softness of the skin that was loved.

there was no counterbalancing swinging of the arms. If they were told to use their arms, they would start to walk swinging the right arm with the right leg and the left arm with the left leg, a gait termed *namba* in Japanese. It was this sort of bodily movements that the Meiji government consciously set out to systematically reform, realizing this policy in educational institutions in 1886 (the 19th year of Meiji). In that year, the ardent advocations for reform by Mori Arinori and others were accepted, and military gymnastics, based on line movements, were added to the school curriculum. Japanese physical education originated then, and has remained much the same up until the present day. It differs very little in form from a military drill, with its strict attention to posture, repeated standing in rows and marching in file. As first pointed out by the *kabuki* dramatist Takechi Tetsuji, the Meiji government took such a decision only after considering the following event.

Although the government eventually prevailed over the Southwestern (Satsuma) Rebellion, their vastly superior military forces suffered frequent defeats in the battles at Kumamoto in 1877 (the 10th year of Meiji). This was thought to be because the hastily conscripted government soldiers, of peasant origin, were unable to compete effectively with the Satsuma samurai professionals. It was particularly evident that the peasants were not able to move 'en masse', march, run fast, charge, change directions, or advance in a crawling posture. In sum, they were completely lacking in mobility and in the ability to act as a group.⁷⁾

Also in Europe, modern soldiers endowed with what Michel Foucault calls a 'submissive body' [1975: 137], that is to say uniform and exact postures, movements, and puppet-like rhythm, were created by banning peasant-like postures and gestures, and through the imposition of strict discipline and drills by the authorities. In Japan's case, however, the wide gap between the original body to be corrected and the ideal image of the reformed body was much greater than in Europe. Moreover, in that such drills were incorporated into Japanese elementary education, one can say that the influence of intervention by the Meiji government, in relation to the people's body and its movements, was much more drastic and total than in Europe.

7) It is usually suggested that the Southwestern Rebellion was one that proved that if the peasant soldiers were properly trained, they would have fighting powers to compare with that of the professional samurai and thus, on this note, it is said the argument of whether or not the conscription system was necessary was settled. However, on the other hand, it must also be noted that the ability of the troops of the opposing Satsuma clan to hold out against government troops for over six months, despite the lack of backup from the authority of the Emperor and despite comparatively meagre funds and equipment, was indeed an astounding feat. Thus, the final outcome must also be attributed to the lack of experience in warfare tactics on the part of the government troops.

It might also be noted that in France, after defeat in the Franco-Prussia War (1880-1881), there was an inclination for school physical education to tend towards military training but this did not take place in such a thorough manner as it did in Japan.

THE STANDARDIZED BODY

There is no question that what the official powers of modern Japan had planned to reform was not only the above-mentioned 'technical aspects' of the human body. The 'expressive aspects' of the body (as was the case for language) were also subjected to discipline and subsequently to taboos and constrictions. In the modern state, just as speech was subjected to a national language policy, so too were the expressive aspects of the body made to conform to a 'national' standard through military service and school education. For instance, the formal greeting (*jingi*) attributed nowadays to *mafia*-like gangsters and gamblers in the fictitious world of *yakuza* films, actually was a form of salutation peculiar to various type of migrant artisans and differed in forms of postures and phrases according to the group.⁸⁾ But such forms of salutations, and the very communities they bound together, were dissolved under the silent pressure of the public order, to remain only in a legendary form amongst the socially marginalized *yakuza* groups. Forms of salutation, in general, eventually took on the uniform shape of the bow now prevalent in modern Japan.

Whilst greetings were thus standardized within Japan, another sort of standardization was being sought on the international scene. In 1879, General Grant, the former president of the United States, stopped in Japan during his tour around the world and was granted an audience with the Emperor. On that occasion the Emperor stepped forward towards the General and for the first time awkwardly shook hands with him in what is an important episode in this overall process of the standardizing of behavior.⁹⁾

COMMUNICATION AND THE BAN ON NAKEDNESS

One can cite numerous other examples of how official power interfered deeply in the perception and movements of the body. However, the greatest obstacle for

8) I myself am unfamiliar with any systematic studies that tackle this subject. But as descriptions of single cases, it can be noted that there are a good number of works to be found that deal with the work of artisans, laborers, etc. For example, Iwamoto Yoshiteru describes roof tilers in his book [Iwamoto 1980: 10–14]. The autobiographical work of the popular novelist, Hasegawa Shin, *Aru Shisei no To* [Hasegawa 1972], can be considered a reference for the subject of those laborers known as journeymen. Ogata Tsurukichi's studies on *yakuza* [Ogata 1933] also presents some important arguments on the matter.

9) As a form of greeting in the West, the fact that there is a the gesture of kissing the hand of a lady was common knowledge. It seems, however, the nobles of the Emperor's entourage were ready to prevent, even by the use of their swords, if necessary, any further action by General Grant—just in case he should fancy to show the Empress the honor of kissing her hand.... Eventually, however, it seems he neither kissed nor shook the hand of her Highness. See Kimura Ki [1957a: 28–33; 1957b: 246–249].

government officials was the custom of going about semi-naked, despite the decrees banning it. This custom had not been in any way odd within the respective communities, but when the Japanese were confronted with people who had the habit of wearing clothes, there occurred a discrepancy in communication. This transpired because each group had a different understanding of the meaning of nudity and of the meaning of the 'civilized' behavior of wearing clothes (especially Western ones). The divergence was all the greater when foreigners were involved, because mutual understanding of the body was next to impossible. Hence, to avoid unwanted misunderstandings, the officials had to ban nudity, and one can assume that eventually even the common man turned to a life wearing clothes out of similar concern.

According to the late folklorist Miyamoto Tsuneichi [1980: 212], there was a hamlet of only three households in the mountain recesses of Niigata Prefecture. There the men and women made a living mainly by raising silkworms. Whilst working during the summer months, they remained totally naked, up until about 1955. However, when a postman began to deliver mail to their isolated surroundings, they soon began to clothe themselves. Miyamoto remarks that their habit changed because of the intrusion of someone from the outside world; but one can surmise that concern about wanting to avoid misunderstandings by someone wearing a uniform also came into play.

LACK OF INDIVIDUALITY IN JAPANESE CLOTHES

It took a long time for the people to accept the habit of wearing clothes. Until the beginning of the 1880s only military men, the police, and high ranking public officials wore Western clothes every day. Women were even later in getting into the habit. It was only after the beginning of the Taisho Era (1912–1926) that they started to catch up.¹⁰⁾ This slow pace of change has a strong relationship to the Japanese perception and consciousness of the body. As postures and movements are to a considerable degree constricted by clothes (for instance, wearing a tight wide sash with the kimono causes a woman to walk in small steps with the toes turned inwards), ways of bearing and posture tend to undergo change as clothing changes. However, this is not just a question of such visible aspects alone; the matter reaches far more deeply into the consciousness in its relation to the body.

Clothes and footwear indigenous to Japan are generally made in a set size that fits all. Wooden sandals (*geta*) can be worn by anybody, as a kimono can be. These can be borrowed from someone and be handed down from parents to children without any refitting. The ability to adapt any kimono to the body simply by wearing it correctly must be assessed as an advantage. Westerners, such as Rudofsky [1979: 245], have shown great interest and admiration for the practice of Japanese inns and hotels of providing a light kimono for their guests to wear during

10) Cf. Kato, H. and Maeda, A. [1980: 207–209].

their stay.

Upon reflection, however, it should be noted that the making of close fitting clothes for a specific individual is more the exception in the history of clothes design than the rule. The Indian *dhoby* and *sari* are made to a standard size, as was the toga, the ceremonial robe of ancient Rome that was wrapped around the body, not to mention the tunic worn in Europe, which consisted of one length of cloth sewn down the sides with three openings for the head and two arms. Until the Middle Ages, European clothing was basically something that was wrapped around the body comfortably, with little differentiation between male and female clothing.

Generally it can be said that clothes such as the Japanese kimono possess the characteristic of interchangeability, in the sense that compared with Western clothes that belong to a specific individual, they can be worn by anybody. Moreover, they can be said to have the characteristic of continuity in that they can be passed on for use by successive generations.

INDIVIDUALITY OF WESTERN CLOTHES

The original form of present-day Western clothing first appeared in Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries, but it is assumed that it was not actually invented there. The modern Western jacket, with buttons and frogs, seems to derive from that of Turk-Mongol peoples; the most ancient record of such clothes in Europe can be found at the end of the 10th century in present day Bulgaria.¹¹⁾ From that time, clothes were made to fit closely to the body. Accordingly, clothes that were cut to suit a specific person could not fit another¹²⁾ and thus became individualized and personalized, to be neither borrowed nor inherited without embarrassment. (In contrast to furniture, which can be inherited, previously worn clothes in the West are not used as part of an inheritance except that they are passed on to servants.) This

11) See André G. Haudricourt [1948].

12) If we were to consider the technique of the tailoring of clothes in Europe in the 'idealistic' sequential developing stages of 'one piece of cloth → tunic → robe → suit (with jacket)', up until the stage of the comfortably made 'robe', the central operation involved in tailoring can be said to have been the 'sewing together' part. (Here by idealistic I do not mean to infer that the progress from one stage to the next involves the casting aside of the previous stage.) However, in the tailoring of the jacket suit, operations center upon the 'cutting' of the material in order for it to fit the body precisely. In modern-day European languages, the fact that the terms for such a 'maker of clothes' is divided into two classifications reflects these two differing operations.

The French 'tailleur', English 'tailor', German 'Schneider', etc. all have their origins in 'a person who cuts' and describe a person who makes men's suits. In contrast to this, the Italian 'sarto' and Spanish 'sastre' come from the Latin 'sartor' and as the terms suggest mean 'a person who sews together', thus stopping at the older form of the word used to describe a maker of clothes [Haudricourt 1948].

As a change in terms occurred, so too did a change occur in the operations of the making

is a constant characteristic that European clothes have possessed until this day; as a result an individual avoids wearing clothing that looks exactly like the clothes that others are wearing, for clothing has become a way to express individuality.

Men often tend to wear similar attire, but even in this case individual differences are expressed through the use of colors and differing patterns on neckties and accessories. Even in the case of so-called folk costumes, that at first glance all appear to be quite the same, there actually exists a subtle form of rivalry that concentrates on creating slight variations in the costumes' details. Undoubtedly, bourgeoisie men's wear became simplified and uniform in design from the 17th century on. This tendency began in the present day Benelux countries and in Britain. Unlike women's clothing, for certain formal occasions a standardization of men's wear almost equal to that of uniforms was demanded. From approximately the same period, the uniforms of soldiers were also fixed. (This corresponds to the above-mentioned reordering of the body.)

However, what makes European official and military uniforms recognizable is precisely their uniformity, that is, their contrast to the variety of the clothing of private life. But in reality, this contrast is no more than a variation in the 'cut' with which Western clothing is essentially endowed, and the apparent variety of private clothing is in fact limited to seasonal changes and to minor variations within, or deviations from, the code of clothing for a particular periods of time as this code is marginally modified in order to express individuality. This is a situation that has continued without change from the time clothes began to be individually tailored.

FROM THE SHARED TO THE INDIVIDUAL

From a broad perspective, the change from Japanese traditional clothing to Western clothing can be understood as a transformation from interchangeability and continuous usage to individuality and single usage. If we consider clothes, as an extension of the body, to be a projection of the image of the self, this implies that a change in consciousness has occurred. That is, a consciousness of the body as something that possesses interchangeability and the ability to straddle generations has been transformed into an image of the body that is individual and that emphasizes the uniqueness of the person.

of clothes as more difficult techniques became involved. Women's clothing, which remained fundamentally at the stage of the 'robe', can be made in the home with just a few sewing skills. However, considering that the making of men's suits in the home is a task near to impossible, an understanding of this change will be clear. Due to changes in tailoring technology, the making of men's clothing became a specialized profession around the 12th century, and tailors came to form an influential class of craftsmen. Many of the folktales, presumed to have their origins in the Middle Ages, that deal with tailors, have this sort of historical background.

FUNCTIONAL ADAPTABILITY AND INDIVIDUALIZING OF THE BODY

As the wearing of clothes became enforced, the Japanese body was abstracted from the nakedness that was once taken for granted in the community. Furthermore, taking up the wearing of Western clothes, the Japanese body loses its interchangeability and becomes personally unique.

We must consider yet another aspect of the modern body. By belonging to a certain community or occupation, the body had previously developed the gestures proper to that group. However, as people began to be freed of community restrictions and as the mechanization and occupational mobility of modern times has advanced, the body has effectively tended towards a functional generality. Thus, the characteristic of the modern body is its individuality, from the aspect of consciousness, and its general adaptability, from the aspect of social functioning.

Moreover, when considering this from the point of view of the transmission of ideas and emotions, as the shared aspect of the body fades (a topic I hope to deal with later), communication by implicit gestures, which is based upon the analogical experience of people becoming mutually acquainted with each other's body, changes to a form of communication which stresses a verbal language that is more articulate and employs an affirmed universal set of symbols.

TRANSMISSION OF THE BODY

However, the transformation in the consciousness (or expression) of the body that occurs in the change from a state of interchangeability and sharing to particularity and individuality never reaches an extreme as long as the stressed individuality is based only on variations of a single code, for example, the dress code for a given period of time.

In any society, as our bodies are given to us by our parents via the medium of the body's genetic information, the body can be said to be one's own while still belonging to another. Hence, the idea of an absolutely unique self can be sustained only through performing in a world of make-believe.

The fact that gestures and bodily movements are also transmitted unconsciously over generations is clearly shown in the following case [*Shukan Asahi* 1981]. It involves an episode of domestic violence within a family in northern Japan. There, the daughter of high school age would punch and kick her parents, and pull their hair generally causing great commotion and advancing to the stage where nothing could be done with her. The parents, fearing the violence of their daughter, asked relatives to stay with them. Nevertheless, even in front of her aunts and uncles the girl continued to create havoc.

Then an uncle who had dropped in to visit them from Tokyo witnessed one of her violent tantrums. Later he remarked about this incident, "This may seem odd but I was surprised at the way that girl got angry and at the way she behaved. Those gestures were the living image of my own father's [the girl's grandfather's]

movements." When the daughter was just a child, her grandfather, prominent in his own town as a man of fury, had often yelled at and chided his eldest son (the girl's father) who had a limp and a very quiet personality. These gestures of the grandfather had, at some unknown point of time, been unconsciously transmitted to his granddaughter.

The next case shows how even non-ordinary gestures and body movements are assimilated throughout the wider community of relations and neighbours. It involves the founder of the Omoto Sect, Deguchi Nao (1836–1918). According to Yasumaru Yoshio's study, *Deguchi Nao* [1981: 59, 74–93], before she became possessed for the first time by the god Ushitora-no-Kami in 1892, her eldest daughter and her third-born daughter—both of them married and not living with her—had become possessed, one after the other. At about the same time (1891) in Ayabe, a rather small area in Kyoto prefecture, twenty-eight cases of 'insanity' were reported.

In the first case, the body movements of the grandfather were transmitted to his granddaughter, but in the case of Deguchi Nao the fact that, even before she became possessed, her family (including those who were then living with other families) experienced possession or 'insanity'. This shows that the family shared 'body idioms' on a non-ordinary sub-conscious level as well. Furthermore, this shared assimilation can be seen to be transmitted to the wider sphere of the neighboring community.

The American folklorist, Archer Taylor [1965: 34–36], has stated that gestures are an important part of folklore. However, from the Deguchi example it can be seen that both ordinary and non-ordinary gestures are in fact, transmitted (inherited). The body itself may therefore be thought of as tradition.

THE BODY 'REAPPEARS'

The idea that a body is unique to an individual is, no doubt, an Occidental one. However, until recently, the ideas of 'blood' and of 'lineage' included a strong awareness of the body's transmission and recurrence. It is this awareness that Roland Barthes [1975] expresses when he notes in the caption of an old photograph of his family: "At the very end of this line: my body".

This awareness is most conspicuous in name-giving customs. Today, names are most often freely chosen in order to emphasize the child's individual characteristics. Yet in Europe even until very recent times, the custom was to give a child the name of their grandparents or godparents (usually close relatives). Also, it is a widespread practice in Europe to give the name of a child who has died young to the next born child. (It is well known that the Spanish artist Salvador Dali was given the name of his seven-year-old brother, Salvador, who had died three years before Dali's birth. He, himself, often explained that through his eccentricities he was attempting to prove that he was no one other than himself and not his dead brother, Salvador.) As a result, it was not unusual for a number of the same names to be repeated amongst kindred. In fact, amongst a group of shepherds in contem-

porary Greece with which I am familiar, it is quite normal for a number of a person's first cousins and neighbours to have the same name and, without hesitation, to call each other by their own names.

The late French linguist Emile Benveniste, referring to the fact that in several Indo-European languages grandsons are called 'little grandfathers' noted:

In many Indo-European societies we find the belief that a newly born child is always the reincarnation of an ancestor, going back to a certain number of generations.... When a son is born to somebody, it is the grandfather of the child who 'reappears', and this is why they have the same name. The young child is, as it were, a diminutive representation of the ancestor which it incarnates: it is a 'little grandfather', who is born again after an interval of a generation. [BENVENISTE 1973: 191]

This form of naming completely differs from that which impresses particularity and singularity in an attempt to distinguish an individual's personality. Rather, here we see a view of 'humanity' in which, as Benveniste states, "strictly speaking, there is no birth, because the ancestor has not disappeared, he has only been hidden away." [BENVENISTE 1973: 191]

THE LIMITS OF THE AWARENESS OF INDIVIDUALITY

In the case of modern Japan, it is perhaps unnecessary to point out that the idea of the unique and individual body is not well established. As discussed above, in the transition of clothing styles Japanese traditional clothing was not completely cast aside; rather a way of life was established that blended both Western and Japanese styles. As for the matter of posture and movements, despite the fact that the 'correct' posture of 'shoulders back' and 'chin out' was taught in the schools, once back in the real world of their towns or villages the Japanese would return to their traditional posture of bent backs and limbs. Even today, these circumstances have little changed.

Accordingly, although an awareness of the body as being particular and unique was created during the process of modernization, this is only a partial awareness. Nor is such partial awareness unique to Japan. In any society, to a greater or lesser degree, communication cannot be established without going through the process of 'being acquainted' with other's bodies by experiencing a common bodily feeling. Even linguistic messages depend a great deal upon the information transmitted by means of the inarticulate voice itself. Consequently, in no society is the complete individualization of the body possible.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE JAPANESE VIEW OF THE BODY

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that changes in the awareness and view of the body have occurred over time. For instance, from a slightly different perspective,

the Japanese word now commonly used for 'body' is *karada*. A quite different view of the body is expressed in the word *mi*, which was commonly used until recent times. *Mi* reflects a view that completely differs from the English 'soul' which contrasts with the 'body'. As we can see in some idiomatic expressions such as *mi o ireru* (to devote and exert oneself), *mi ni shimiru* (feel deeply, touch the heart) and *mi o katameru* (to marry and settle down), *mi futatsu ni naru* (to become a mother, literally, 'to become two *mi*'), *mi* is something that is functioning and that possesses life. It also does not possess any clear individuality and distinct demarcation lines. In this sense, it is not a physical body clearly distinguished from the heart and mind but, in fact, through its functioning, is something that permeates the body, mind, and heart. However, today this word is simply used in the forms of such fixed expressions and *karada* has come to be used in its place. The term *karada* is close in meaning to the English word 'body', as something abstracted from spirit and soul and synonymous with a physical entity only. In this sense a transformation from the idea of *mi mo kokoro mo* (mind, body, and soul) to a dualistic understanding of the two separate entities of body and soul is indicated.

This calls to mind the passage from the famous ethnographical account on New Caledonia by Maurice Leenhardt, who conducted anthropological research on the island for more than twenty years at the beginning of this century whilst carrying out missionary work. One day, in order to measure the change in the thinking of the natives who had been converted to Christianity, he asked one elderly Canak the following question:

"In sum, is it the notion of spirit that we have brought into your thoughts?"

The old man promptly objected. "Spirit? Bah! You haven't brought us spirit. We already know of the existence of 'the spirit'. We always acted according to our spirit. But what you have brought us is the 'body'."

[LEENHART 1978: 263]

Here, what is translated as 'spirit' is the power of a mythico-magical ancestral spirit, called *ko*, that was for the natives not a vague metaphorical being, but one with a real and clear existence. They had no idea of a separate physical body. Rather, it accorded to both the natural and supernatural, with even its internal impulses being the results of the influence of some totemic or supernatural being. The physical body was not perceived as being a distinct separate entity, nor was there any name that referred to it.¹³⁾ Thus, in explaining their identity with a maternal uncle, the natives understood it as a literal unity and oneness of two persons. However, in learning the concept of 'body', they came to view this relationship as a 'set of dual entities'. Leenhardt remarks that simultaneously the meaning of dual nouns, peculiar to their language, was also lost.

The transformation of consciousness of the body within Japan, from (1) inter-

13) We can see similar observations in a more recent study [Sudo 1987: 87-106; 1989: 125-126].

changeability and sharing to (2) particularity and individuality, discussed in this chapter parallels the above account. Neither of these sets of elements is absolutely or totally in contrast. However, from looking at the transformations that have occurred in these last hundred years or so, it must be said that these changes have had a decisive influence on the body itself, and on the meaning and the image of the body in Japan.

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