

The Idea of the Body in Japanese Culture and its Dismantlement

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At the heart of a culture lies a certain view of the body, and this view decides which perceptual experiences the culture chooses to value. In trying to achieve those experiences, certain principles for moving and handling the body are established, and these principles then set the standards for the mastery of essential skills that penetrate through all fields of art, creating a rich foundation from which the culture can flourish. The culture of traditional Japan, which disintegrated at the hands of the Meiji Restoration, indeed possessed such a structure. The idea of the body, the shared perceptual experiences, and the principles of movement that existed in traditional Japanese culture were radically different from those that arrived from the West and have been blindly disseminated by the Japanese government ever since the Meiji Restoration.

This paper discusses the feeble underpinnings of modern Japan as a culture built upon the destruction of its own traditions, and explores the possibility of giving birth to a new culture by looking into the structure of its lost traditional culture.

Keywords: Japan, Idea of the body, Doho, Kata, Gyo, Meiji Restoration

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1. The Scenery of Death in Modern Society

There is a national policy in Japan that has continued without pause to this day, for nearly one hundred and forty years since the Meiji Restoration in 1868. This is the policy of Westernization, which has led to the continuing disintegration of the traditional Japanese view of life and body, as a whole. By accepting this policy, the Japanese people did gain the practical lifestyles of a modernized society filled to the brim with Western scientific technology. At the same time, however, they have, by their own hands, effectively dismantled and obliterated a culture with a 2000-year tradition. It is still not known who actually instigated the most drastic social reform that ever occurred in Japan's history; of which class they belonged to, or what their objectives were [Oishi, (1977)]. In any case, the Meiji Restoration was triggered by the opening of Japan's ports to foreign trade in 1854, when the Tokugawa Shogunate, succumbing to military pressure by the United States and European countries, made the decision to end its 200-year policy of isolation. This decision by the Shogunate caused

chaos throughout the nation. Samurai, angered by the cowardly stance of the Shogunate, rose in rebellion, while the exportation of raw silk led to economic turmoil caused by drastic rises in prices. As a result of internal and external pressure, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, then Shogun, had no choice but to surrender his power in 1867.

The new Meiji administration established an Emperor system based on the constitutional monarchy of Prussia, deploying State Shinto, a nationalistic form of Shintoism, in place of Christianity – the core of Western culture – and quickly proceeded to recreate the nation. While politics, economics, and industry went through reforms based on Western models, the policy of modernization, Westernization, and scientific progress would also extend to the lifestyles of the general population.

On the surface, this policy of Westernization seemed to be a measure for guiding the people of Japan to adjust to their new government, constructed in the short span of just two years after the collapse of the Shogunate. In reality, however, it aimed to reject and dismantle every aspect of traditional

Japanese culture through the unyielding glorification of Western civilization. The policy consisted of three main factors – agitation, governmental orders and regulations, and information control – none of which permitted room for traditional culture to coexist with the new order.

It was the imperial and royal families who first adopted Western lifestyles, as though setting an example for the rest of the nation, inciting a sense of yearning amongst the people for all things Western. Thus the emperor – the symbol of Japan – came to serve also as the symbol of Westernization. The media followed, spreading shallow words glorifying Western civilization and boycotting tradition. Their slogan, "Bunmei Kaika"(the blooming of civilization), resounded throughout the nation.

Even the historically adored wild cherry trees were cut down and used as firewood all over the country, because they stood as a reminder of the former feudal system. And instead, Someiyoshino, an artificially created hybrid cherry tree, was prized because it was a product of "science": it flourishes in most any type of soil condition, blooms gloriously and almost simultaneously, and possesses a sense of uniform beauty, where its flowers bloom before any leaves appear on its branches. But like all other artificially bred plants, the Someiyoshino has no scent; it did not inherit the intense scent of the wild cherry. And while the life span of wild cherries is said to be three hundred, sometimes five hundred years, Someiyoshino lasts for only seventy or eighty [Horibe, (2003)]. This uniformly beautiful, artificial cherry, deprived of scent and longevity by human hands, was planted all across the nation, and would eventually be designated as the national flower of Japan. If the birth of modern Western civilization could be compared to the blooming of a flower rooted in the soil of the traditional cultures of the West, then modernity in Japan is an artificial flower that did not come from any real soil. The fate of the cherry trees suggests the true nature of the emergence of an artificial and deformed modernity in this country.

Naturally, the destruction of wild cherries was only a small part of the monumental changes taking place. Perhaps the most significant of the Restoration's destructive activities was the government order to separate Shinto and Buddhism. This act, which was carried out in order to establish State Shinto, triggered the anti-Buddhist movement, leading to the destruction of historically valuable Buddhist temples, statues, and

tea huts throughout the nation.

Even staging of the traditional theatre art, Noh, was prohibited after the Restoration, forcing almost all Noh actors to switch occupations or terminate their careers.

Amidst such an atmosphere of total rejection of anything traditional, the Westernization of clothing was popularized, first through military and government uniforms. At the same time, Western food culture was introduced through hospital meals, and Western architecture through public facilities. Wearing neckties and clothes with buttons, eating beef, drinking cow's milk, entering buildings with one's shoes on – such things never done by the people of Japan in its two thousand years of history became the first tests of loyalty imposed by the Meiji government.

The government proceeded to issue increasing numbers of prohibitions and orders to switch trade or leave public service. For example, with the decision to introduce Western medicine as the official medicinal practice of Japan, the government devoted enormous effort into eradicating the long-standing practice of Chinese medicine. Resistance by doctors of Chinese medicine was strong, and in the end, it took more than forty years until this effort was finally realized. During this time, in order to decide which of the two was superior, a hospital was established in order to gather data on the effectiveness of both medicines on the disease, beriberi. The result of the so called East-West beriberi competition however, was an equal match, and conflicts between the two schools intensified – even leading to the attempted assassination of Sohaku Asada, famous doctor of Chinese medicine and leader of the resistance [Fukagawa, (1956)]. Here is where we see the shameless scheming nature of the Meiji government's policy of Westernization. A look at the newspaper articles in those days reveal series of irrational writings such as, "Compared to the ugly black liquids prepared by doctors of Chinese medicine, look how beautiful the snow-white powders of Western medicine are!" Practitioners of Chinese medicine were forced to fight such unfair accusations spread by the media.

The introduction of Western medicine sought to accomplish more than the Westernization of medicinal practices. It was by nature, an anti-Shogunate policy. For example, the preserving of acupuncture practices, which did not exist in Western medicine, seemed from the outside to

be a salvation measure for the blind, who were traditionally relegated to this line of work. However, the practice of acupuncture recognized by the Shogunate was Japanese acupuncture, the system of which was created after a thorough scrutiny and revamping of Chinese acupuncture. So it was Japanese acupuncture that was prohibited, and those who practiced it were ordered to switch to Chinese acupuncture instead [Machida, (1985)]. In other words, the policy of Westernization was characterized by the complete rejection of Japanese tradition, and anything of foreign origin was valued and welcomed.

Students of various fields such as architecture, cooking, and medicine, were all forced to learn Western theories if they desired to acquire official trade licenses, newly required by the government. It was through the establishment of such systems that the government attempted to cut off the transmission of experiential knowledge and thereby end the tradition of the apprenticeship system. For example, by imposing the study of Western architectural theory -- based on the metric system -- on Japanese architects, the government effectively obstructed the passing of knowledge from master carpenters, who based their building art on the traditional Japanese scale system, to their apprentices. The traditional architectural methods of Japan, which enabled construction of the world's largest wooden structure with no less than a thousand years' lifespan, were based on an entirely different theoretical system from Western architectural methods. Riding the wave of Western theory worship, the Japanese government, however, has continued to force the Westernization of architecture to this day, without due investigation or recognition of the value of its country's traditional methods. In 1959, the government officially adopted a resolution proposed by the Architectural Institute of Japan, to prohibit the construction of wooden architecture. Six years later it issued an order that forbid use of the traditional Japanese scale system [Matsuura, (2002)]. Japan's building codes promote the construction of concrete structures that are advantageous in making fortresses out of cities, and this is leading to the disappearance of wooden structures, born from this land and climate, which have upheld the lifestyle of the Japanese for two thousand years. As a result, the magnificent forests of Japan are now in deterioration.

Governmental control of information also occurred

within the new educational system, established in 1872. With its curriculum constructed entirely on Western theories, the educational system became a stronghold for the process of Westernization. The biased education system, which again glorified Western studies, would lead the intellect and sensitivities of the Japanese people towards ignorance of, and disdain for, their own traditional culture.

Even such subjects as art, music, and physical education, designed to cultivate students' aesthetic sensibilities-- not to mention more general subjects -- played a major role in dismantling traditional culture and spurring the process of Westernization.

The curriculum of art introduced the brilliant colors of the West, while traditional Japanese colors were thoroughly forgotten; their principles of harmony left untaught. The traditional Japanese rich sensitivity for colors is obvious when we look at kimonos or the traditional mountings used for calligraphy and painting. A book of sample dye colors from kimono makers in the Edo period reveals one hundred shades of grey and forty eight shades of brown, each with a name of its own [Nagasaki, (2001)]. The dye makers' ability to create such an enormous variety of colors through the use of plant materials is a testament to their superb skills. But more astonishing is the fact that clothes-makers and even consumers were able to distinguish all of these shades. To the Japanese, colors were something that seeped into the materials; they worked to enhance the inherent quality of the raw material. The new colors that arrived from the West, on the other hand, coated over raw materials. This encounter shocked and confused the subtle sensitivity toward colors that the Japanese had held until then. One hundred and forty years later, the result of such education is demonstrated in the vulgar sense of colors seen in the cities of modern Japan. On the streets, store signs and handout pamphlets show no sign of subtlety. It is as if the use of loud and flashy colors alone could suffice in imitating the Western sense of colors. Such education has surely squandered more than a few fine talents out of which excellent Japanese paintings could have been born [Nakamura, (2000)].

Meanwhile, music education disarranged the traditional concept of sound. The Japanese sense of sound was developed through religion. Sound created through deep and focused intensity was considered to have the power to cleanse impurities. The Ki-ai techniques handed down by Shinto priests

and mountain ascetics, the chanting of Buddhist monks, and even the act of cleaning were all religious practices, or music, based on the mystery of sound. The use of the hataki – a duster made of paper and stick – and broom originates from Shinto rituals, which invited the Divine by purifying the surrounding environment through the use of sound. They were not used for the purpose of achieving sanitary cleanliness. The sound of the Noh-kan (bamboo flute used in Noh drama) was for resting the dead, the Shino-bue (reed flute) for inviting the dead to visit this world. The sense of depth held by sound in traditional Japanese culture was based on a sensitivity towards sound that was entirely different from that found in Western music. Yet music education in schools taught only Western music, with its theory based on an equally tempered scale that is essentially an exception among all other music born on this planet, and students who sang according to the traditional Japanese scales were looked down upon as being tone-deaf.

Physical education likewise dismantled traditional ways of moving the body (explained later in this article), teaching only exercises and movements based on the mechanics of movement transmitted from the West. This resulted in the creation of great disparity between perceptions of the body held by old and new generations, making transmission of the body-culture from parent to child unduly difficult. As a consequence, today there are countless adults who cannot even use chopsticks properly, let alone sit in the traditional form of Seiza.

The one hundred and forty years of biased education has forced the Japanese intellect to be utilized solely for translating, interpreting, and imitating Western civilization. Certainly, during those years, Japan has produced high-quality electronic goods, and automobiles that were jokingly called "mobile living rooms", but those things have nothing to do with Japanese culture. They are rather simple expressions of the shock experienced by the Japanese in encountering the modern civilization of the West. In other words, those things are copies of the image of modern civilization reflected in the Japanese eye. That strange and exaggeratedly soft car seat and suspension is a simulation of the sweet soft feeling the Japanese people, who up to that point had never sat on anything but hard Tatami mats, felt when they sat in Western-style sofas for the very first time. The excessively pragmatic electronic products,

filled with more conveniences than the average person can handle, is an expression of the impact felt by the Japanese as they were blinded by the brilliantly bright light of the electric bulb, after living so long under the wavering light of old Japanese candles.

The lengthy closed-door policy of Japan warped its encounter with Western civilization. Lacking any common denominators with modern societies of the West, the Japanese had turned their tremendous sense of disparity into glorification and worship, as a means of self-protection.

Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan has been quite successful in dismantling its own traditional culture. However, it has not been able to create any kind of new culture through the assimilation of Western civilization. This is of course only natural, for culture cannot be born from imitation and yearning alone. Blinded by that brilliant image of modern civilization, the Japanese were not able to meet with the actual culture, which gave birth to, supported, and managed that very civilization. In other words, they never truly understood the traditional sensitivities of the Western people, and therein lies the tragedy of today's Japan. Of course, there is no way to transplant a culture. The culture of a country, nurtured through the accumulation of experiences over centuries of tradition, belongs to the land from which it was born, and to that land only. It does not permit absorption or imitation by another. Scientific thought, founded on pragmatism, objectivism, and positivism, which Japan so avidly attempted to emulate since the Restoration, must then also have been an inevitable product of the culture – the land and spirit – of Western countries. Japanese scientists who participate in international academic gatherings for the first time are always startled to find that Western scientists mention God without any hesitation during discussions. This is because in Japan, being a scientist necessarily means being a materialist and atheist at the same time. For post-Restoration Japan, science was virtue and also religion or faith.

Modern Japan has thus become an anomaly in world history – a pure product of "modernity", established without ever possessing a foundation of true culture. It is a nation, in which experiments of the most extreme "modernity" occur.

After all, "culture" is nothing but the ability to make the world in which we live one of richness

and beauty. It is the perceptual ability to convert and recompose objective time-space into human time-space. Through the discovering and sharing of this ability, "culture" enables the people belonging to its land to appear in all of their beauty. Yet, at the same time, it comes with the dangerous potential for self-destruction because, by nature, its existence and value cannot be perceived by those who live within it, those whose very lives are supported by it.

It is the scenery of birth and death that symbolizes, most directly, the culture of any country. The scenery of death in today's Japan is a mechanical one. Its background is the hospital, where people are detained by life-support systems. Behind the closed doors of their waiting rooms, doctors call this the "spaghetti syndrome". This is the scene we find in geriatric wards, where our elders are restrained with belts around their arms and legs so as to prevent them from their unconscious attempts to pull off the numerous catheters attached to their bodies. What we see here is not the sacred image of one greeting the final chapter of his or her life. It is not the image of transmission from parent to child of the final and most profound word, the drawing of one's "final breath", which throughout history was considered one of the most important activities in human life. In a mere thirty minutes after death, salesmen from funeral services appear in front of the surviving family. In recent years, merchants asking for organ transplants will arrive beforehand. It is this empty, "scientific" image of death that symbolizes our nation's modernity, and this has come to be because modern society separates body from life, body from character, body from self. Our "freedom-loving" modern government may not govern its citizens' lives, but it does govern its citizens' bodies. While they do recognize freedom in most other aspects, not one "developed" country recognizes freedom of choice when it comes to medical treatment. If our bodies were considered inseparable from the lives that we lead, then choosing methods of medical treatment, birthing, and dying, would naturally be an issue belonging to each individual's ideology and thought. Modern nations, however, have implemented Western medicine, which considers body and life to be of separate spheres, as their official form of medicine. Thus, they try to control birth, medical treatment, and death, or in other words, our bodies. In Western medical science, the body is only a tool: a machine to be used by its owner's will.

Therefore receiving medical treatment is no different from repairing broken machinery, and death becomes merely the production of waste material. Hospitals have already turned into processing facilities for industrial waste, with organ transplants serving as part of their recycling business. Anybody who senses something strange about this mechanical image of death that is now the norm in the hospitals of Japan will realize immediately that science in itself can never become "culture".

As we greet the 21st Century, perhaps the time has come to reconsider the disintegration of our traditional culture that began with the Meiji Restoration. Time passed can never be reclaimed, but at least we must come to understand our past to the point that we are able to genuinely mourn its loss. We should look back now at our lost culture so that we can move forward towards the shaping of the new culture that is to come.

2. Perceiving Life in All Things

Among the policies of Westernization that drove the disassembly of traditional Japanese culture was the calendar change, issued in 1873. With this, the Meiji government decided to abolish the lunar-solar calendar that had been used for twelve hundred years and replace it with the Gregorian, or solar calendar. Actual use of the new calendar was implemented only twenty-three days after issuing the order, and as such, caused great confusion amongst the general population. But more importantly, it had an enormous impact on the Japanese people's fundamental sense of the seasons and cycles of life. The old calendar was commonly called the "farmer's calendar" because of its close ties to the cycles of agricultural activities [Fujii, (1997)]. It was calculated not only through astronomy, but was based on a deep understanding of the life cycles of plants and creatures of the land, with further adjustments made according to observations of the heavenly planets. It can be said that the switch from the old to the new calendar was in essence a switch from a life-cycle-centered time order to an objective time order based on the Western science of astronomy.

The old calendar marked New Year's Day at the first signs of spring, symbolized by the blooming of plum blossoms and the bush warbler's song; the second month with the cherry blossoms; the third month with the peach. Time was kept according to

the cycles of nature-life activities, which basically do not act in regular time intervals, as do the planets and stars. For this reason, a gap will inevitably occur over time between a life-cycle-based calendar and an objective planetary time order. Because the old calendar placed more importance on the growth cycles of plants and creatures, and on the human experience of the seasons, with less emphasis on strict calculations of the objective regularity of planetary movements, every year would begin on a different day according to the new calendar. Each year, in the eleventh month, the calendar for the following year was announced, and people would plan their next year's schedule of agricultural activities, events, and festivals accordingly. The Meiji government considered this life-cycle-based calendar to be unscientific, and decided to use the astronomy-based solar calendar instead. A time order that is rational from the viewpoint of astronomy, however, is not always rational from the viewpoint of human and creature life. Modern science rejected the life-centered time order and proposed the measurement of objective time. This is much like taking tempo in music, originally established according to the speed of walking, and converting it into mathematical time measured by metronomes, thereby making music that feels stiff and suffocating for player and audience alike. Or, it is like replacing human breathing with artificial lungs that move in mathematically regular patterns of repetition. The rhythms of Life, however, exist in a different order from mathematical cycles of repetition.

With the changing of the calendar, the Japanese people's sense of the seasons entered into confusion. The new calendar gives them no choice but to live in a time frame that is completely cut off from traditional Japan. For our ancestors, the beginning of the new year always came with the clear feeling of spring's arrival. Now however, New Year's Day is smack in the middle of winter. And yet, every year the Japanese continue to greet each other with New Year cards containing words that celebrate the arrival of spring. This is nothing but the performance of a ritual, acting out the new spring without the experience of it. On the seventh day of the year's first month, every household in Japan eats rice porridge cooked with seven spring herbs. However, it is the seventh day of the first month according to the old calendar, in which all seven types of herbs are actually present in the fields. None of them

can be found on January 7th of the current calendar. Thus, in order to proceed with this fictitious rite, the stores line their shelves with artificially grown herbs from greenhouses. Similarly, the festival of Hinamatsuri, where families celebrate the growth of their daughters, is on March 3rd. On this day, every household with a girl will set space in their homes for dolls dressed in traditional robes and place peach flowers to their side. Peach flowers are not in bloom on March 3rd of the new calendar. Again, the stores line their shelves with flowers from the greenhouse. The people of modern Japan repeat such false events year after year. Yet, they continue to introduce their own country to people overseas with the explanation that "the beauty of Japanese culture is in the harmonization with Nature."

The important point is that virtually no one in Japan today realizes this disparity. They have lost the direct perceptual experience of the changing seasons, and what remains is only the conceptual relationship between the dates and the events. In any case, the strange tendency of the Japanese today to act like the traditional people of Japan towards others, after accepting the governmental policies of Westernization and rejecting tradition for so long, could be considered an interesting subject for the study of psychological disease.

Ironically, most Japanese do not realize that while the years of historical events are recorded according to the Western calendar in every book on Japanese history, the month and day, in the same books, are actually recorded according to the old calendar. Another example of their confusion concerns the alias names that belong to each month. Although these names make no sense unless used according to the old calendar, people continue to use them for the new calendar months. What results is the disconnection between name and experience: Minazuki, the name of the sixth month of the old calendar, which means "the month with no water", is now used for the month of June, despite the fact that June is in the middle of the rainy season. In such circumstances, it is no wonder that most Japanese today have lost their interest in reading and understanding classic literature.

In the end, perception of the seasons among modern Japanese is merely the recognition of temperature change. The different seasons have become nothing but the categorization of temperature distribution over the course of a year. For people

who lived with the old calendar, however, perception of the seasons was certainly not based on temperature change. They paid close attention to the subtle messages received from the natural environment that surrounded them, and delighted in cultivating a delicate awareness of the changing of the seasons. This is clearly demonstrated in the Waka and Haiku poetry of old.

The direct perceptual experience of contact with the seasonal cycles, examples of which abound in the classic literature of Japan, speaks of a most fundamental aspect of traditional Japanese culture: namely, a worldview in which all things possess life. This ability to perceive that all things are alive, resonating in harmony with one another, is what guaranteed people the certainty of being alive. "I am alive." was indeed synonymous with "Everything else is alive." Cultivating the ability to perceive a sense of liveliness in all that surrounded oneself was, directly, the way to nourish one's own life. Ze-ami(1363?~1443?), considered the founder of Noh, explains to his disciples in the "Fushikaden", that "the Way of Poetry fosters longevity and so should be learned by any means" [Nogami & Nishio, (1958, p.11)]. Today, no one would think that poetry could serve as a method for gaining health. But in a world in which everything is alive, everything, including poetry and Noh, could lead to longevity. Because creating a reverberating relationship with the natural world was exactly the way to invigorate one's own life.

The traditional culture of Japan is an artisan culture. Master craftsmen of all fields have relayed the same words to their apprentices for centuries on end. Without exception, they claim that the materials used for their art are "alive". The dye maker says that the cloth is alive; the potter says that the clay is alive; blacksmiths maintain that the steel they hammer is alive [S.B.B. Inc., (19xx)].

The steel nails forged by traditional Japanese blacksmiths contain more impurities than modern nails produced in the smelting furnace. Yet, it has been discovered that nails taken out from structures built six hundred years ago are still without rust and in perfect condition to be reused today. This fact, which goes against the theories of science, may not in itself demonstrate the belief that everything was alive, but it does suggest how the blacksmith's long-standing conviction of the life in steel could be poured into a single nail to become a powerful and

lasting life force.

This world view, in which all things possessed life, was also the foundation of the construction methods for traditional wooden architecture. Timber material used for construction was traditionally left out to weather for a period of approximately ten years. After World War II however, scientists advanced their way into the timber industry, analyzed the amount of moisture contained in the weathered timber material, and introduced a drying machine that could achieve the same level of moisture reduction in the course of just three hours. This compressing of ten years into three hours, however, takes away the moisture in timber on a cellular level, making superficial the timber's ability to absorb moisture. In other words, it robs the wood of its original attributes, leading to a shorter life span. From the start, scientific proof has always required making visible the invisible. The method used by science is to convert what cannot be quantified into something that can be: In this case, "weathering" into "drying". Weathering timber for ten years means to leave the timber out in the rain, wind, heat, and snow for ten years. The shrine and temple carpenters of Kyoto actually weather their timber in water in order to exchange the old water contained in the wood with new. This obviously and fundamentally differs from "drying". The weathering process allows the timber ten years to adjust to itself to a different environment from that in which it was raised, and this reflects the ancient attitude that considered timber "alive". It was this ability to perceive timber wood as alive that enabled the creation of wooden structures with life spans of a thousand years.

The policy of Westernization, however, continues in the world of architecture today. Government regulations require a moisture level of under 20% for construction timber. This is a number impossible to achieve through natural weathering methods, and in actuality means that the government permits only the use of artificially dried timber for construction. Although it is true that the unit strength for each piece of timber is increased when moisture levels are contained below 20%, the natural attributes of wood are lost; its ability to breathe is robbed. Western architecture places emphasis on unit strength, but it does not see timber as a living being. By all practical means, wood is treated in a manner no different from steel beams. Traditional architecture, on the other hand, emphasized balance. It sought strength through

balance, and considered the life force of the timber to be of utmost importance in achieving the desired balance.

For the past hundred years, science has done its best to rob time of its power. But life grows and ripens with time, and the compression of time necessarily comes with sacrifices. Just as listening to music requires time that does not allow compression, forced growth will only result in abnormal development. The layering work of lacquer workers, the blacksmith's forging of nails, the work of the swordsmith, all of these coexist with time. For centuries on end, craftsmen have focused their attention on the grasping of Ki (timing) and the utilization of Ma (the in-between, lull in time). The swordsmith's work is to heat the iron, remove the iron from the fire at precisely the right timing, then after an appropriate lull, cool the iron rapidly with water before returning it to the fire. This process is repeated over and over, and the art is in mastering the right timing, degree, and interval (Ki, Do, Ma). These skills have made possible the creation of swords that cannot ever be reproduced with the most advanced of modern machinery.

Each medicine pill that doctors of Western medicine give to their patients contains a multiplicity of effective ingredients. The patient simultaneously consumes, for example, ten effective ingredients through a single pill. This speaks most directly of the nature of the pursuit for "efficiency" seen in artificial drying and forced growth methods mentioned before. In simple terms, it is the conversion of time into space, and we should recognize that here lies the true cause of modern medicine's harmful side effects. In the practice of Chinese medicine, the doctor gives a single effective ingredient to the patient, then observes the resulting condition before deciding on what to provide next. This means that they need at least ten days in order to give the patient ten effective ingredients. To observe a patient's conditions, and then respond according to his or her progress is a process that is quite natural, and certainly should not be scorned as being "inefficient". It only seems inefficient because science has recognized value in replacing the invisible rhythms of life contained within time with the visible movement of clock-time. The philosophy here is one that values result over process, outcome over experience. We should reconsider whether the fulfillment we seek in life is about experience or result. Rhythm within time

provides us with rich experience and the certainty of being alive. Under the pretext of positivism hides the absurdity of the scientist who turns on the lights in order to investigate the nature of darkness.

One of the very basic skills in the art of traditional carpentry is to be able to take one glance at a piece of sawn wood and discern its top and bottom. This is because traditional carpenters believe that each piece of wood retains the memory of heaven and earth from when it stood in the mountains, and furthermore, that the wood would not gain new life unless it was set to stand according to that memory. The distinction between front and back is equally important. The front is the side of the tree that faced the sun; the back is of course the opposite. Trees that grow on the east facing slopes of a mountain are used as pillars for the east side of buildings; trees from west facing slopes are used on the west side. The pillars for each of the four directions are arranged according to the way they grew in their homeland, and it is believed that the trees can gain a second life in this manner. In fact, when just one pillar is set with top and bottom reversed, the resulting space will exude an odd feeling of disparity. The traditional spaces inhabited by the Japanese for two thousand years were constructed using such methods that harmonized living material with life [Nishioka, (1993)]. The resulting feeling of being surrounded by life intangible was exactly the sense of comfort they chose to cherish.

In this manner, the basis of the construction methods found in traditional Japanese wooden architecture differs from that of Western architecture. However, the traditional methods acquired through accumulated experiential knowledge alone would not make Japanese architecture worthy of the title, "culture". The "culture" of Japanese architecture lies in the indivisibility of the carpenter's sensitivity from its construction methods. The discovery of how one's perception or awareness of the intangible can be utilized in the execution of certain methods so that those methods acquire life – this is what the Japanese of old called Waza (art or skill). The refinement of such Waza, or in other words, the refinement of one's sensitivity – to continue with the example of architecture – is what initiates correspondence with the dweller's own sensitivity, and in turn creates a sense of richness and comfort in the inhabited space.

In essence, "culture" is the sharing of certain intangible values by a people – the collective

consciousness of a people, gathering towards the abstract.

Consider the traditional Japanese kimono. Unlike Western clothes, the kimono is not an end in itself. The actual product is not the kimono, but rather the fabric from which it is made. By nature, the kimono is composed entirely of straight-line cuttings. Therefore, it can easily return to its original fabric state, simply by taking apart its stitches. The fabric then can be re-dyed or reused to make a new set of clothing. It can even be handed down through several generations of ownership. Such a concept of regeneration is fundamental to the cultural worldview in which everything possesses life.

The construction of Ze-ami's Noh even included correspondence with the dead. Noh is a theater art with a unique construct involving dance, song, and storytelling. The story is acted out by three main characters – traveler, monk, and ghost. What Ze-ami expected from the performers was neither acting nor emotional expression, but direct correspondence and harmonization with the dead. Noh, for Ze-ami, was a ritual of purification, in which the dead were to be pacified and reborn. This serious theme cast by Ze-ami brought about the concept of Yugen (usually translated as the "subtle and profound"), to Japanese culture. The perceptual experiences of Mono no Aware, Wabi, Sabi, and Yugen – crucial in the understanding of Japanese culture – all emerged from that same world view, and for this reason could be shared by the Japanese [Shinkawa, (1985)].

The Ise Shrine is Japan's foremost Shinto shrine, with a history of fifteen hundred years. In the vast forest compounds of the shrine, a certain ritual has been repeated every morning and evening throughout the shrine's entire history. This ritual, called the Higoto-Asa-Yu-Ohmikesai, involves cleansing of the shrine and offering of foods to the Spirit. Self-sufficiency is the rule; all offerings must come from within the shrine compounds. The shrine has its own gardens and fields from which to harvest rice, vegetables, and fruits; saltpan where salt is extracted according to ancient methods; and a well that has never gone dry for fifteen hundred years. The food is prepared with spiritually purified fire, called Imibi, kindled by rotating a wooden drill on a dry wooden slate – a method dating to the Yayoi Period – while the plates are made of unglazed pottery fired in the shrine kiln. The most outstanding aspect of the Ise Shrine is its ritual of Shikinen Sengu. This ritual

consists of the total disassembling and reconstructing of the shrine's buildings once every twenty years. Construction materials for the new buildings come entirely from the shrine's forest. With these materials, the buildings are reconstructed in the exact same form, and new trees are planted in place of the logged trees, to be used for the reconstruction ritual that is to happen two hundred years later [Yano, (1993)]. These activities, continued over a span of fifteen centuries, is where the shrine's views on life and the world are told without use of language.

In this way, the idea that life exists everywhere was the underlying current beneath Japan's traditional culture. It recognized life in all things, leading to the certainty of correspondence between all things, and touched upon that which flows ceaselessly from past to future.

3. The Idea of the Body in Asceticism

With the arrival of Buddhism fifteen hundred years ago, the era of kings, symbolized by the great tombs, came to an end, and Japan was ushered into a new era, ruled by religion. As with the Meiji Restoration, the lifestyles of the Japanese people were dramatically transformed. Curiously enough though, in contrast with the Meiji Restoration, the changes that occurred with Buddhism's arrival actually seemed to clarify the distinct nature of Japan's culture.

Fortunately for Japan, Buddhism was not transmitted directly from India, coming through China instead. During its travels in China, Buddhism had no choice but to merge with the antecedents of China's indigenous Taoism, such as the various practices of mysticism including fangshu, and the philosophies of Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu. These practices, which were later integrated into Taoism, all involved ascetic practices for the purpose of cultivating longevity. Therefore the Buddhism that arrived to Japan was one already baptized by the Chinese, meaning that it was characterized by a strong emphasis on Taoist-like ascetic practices [Sekiguchi, (1967)].

Although its purpose may have differed from Taoism, Japan's native religion, Shinto, was also a religion fundamentally centered on practice rather than doctrine. Both were religions that emerged as spontaneous occurrences more than anything else, with neither possessing any founding person. And

the two have much in common, such as their sense of pure and impure Ki or energy and their methods of utilizing Ki. They also shared the fate of being forced to present distorted images of their practices by arming themselves with awkward theories in attempt to resist being overtaken by Buddhism. This however, was only because both religions, by nature, valued experience over speculation, perception over theory. Taoism's pursuit of longevity and immortality was entirely different from the pursuit of healthiness by people of today. Taoists proclaimed "Tao" as the Source that brought harmony to all things, and sought the genuine experience of being one with it [Maspero, (1983)]. Meanwhile, Shinto was not the animism that became the favorite label for all primitive religions. It was a religion that did not seek the divine outside of one's self, instead taking the inner experience of Kashikoki (reverence or awe) and calling it Kami (the divine) [Kageyama, (1972)].

Such religions, which place importance on inner experiences, will inevitably arrive at various practice methods that use the body as intermediates for their aims. In the case of Japan, these methods, called Gyo, became the common denominator that would enable the Japanese to accept the essentially academic and speculative religion of Buddhism, and let it take root in its culture.

At first, Buddhism was established as an official religion during the Nara Period (710~784) through the diligent effort of Shotokutaishi (574~622). However, because it leaned heavily towards politics and placed little importance on practice, it did not capture the hearts of the Japanese people. The increasing population of monks and nuns became a financial burden for the government, while the successive building of provincial temples and the construction of the great statue of Buddha at Todaiji Temple impoverished the people. During this time, it was not Buddhism, but rather Shugendo, a blend of Shinto and Taoism founded by En no Ozunu, that was wholeheartedly welcomed by the people of Japan. In Shugendo, practitioners isolated themselves in the deepest wilderness of the mountains – an area feared tremendously by the general population – in order to test their discipline and receive power from the mountain deities [Wakamori, (1972)]. It was not so much a religion as it was a set of ascetic practices, or Gyo, which sought a specific kind of religious experience. The

great respect given the mountain ascetics by the people of the time demonstrates how religion for the Japanese was fundamentally not about religious texts and doctrines, but was based on veneration and awe for Gyo. And it was not the seeking of reward in this life that resulted in this sense of respect. Rather, it stemmed from the historic inclination of the Japanese towards inner observation.

It was the widespread popularity of Tendai and Shingon, two sects of Mikkyo (esoteric Buddhism), both founded during the Heian Period, that pointed out this inclination in clear terms. The Shingon sect, founded by Kukai (774~835), placed its headquarters on Mt. Koya, and proceeded to gain great popularity among the public with its heavy leaning towards esoteric and ascetic practices not found in previous forms of speculative Buddhism during the Nara Period. Furthermore, it possessed a philosophy. – lacking in Shugendo – to back its faith in supernatural mysteries, and thus fulfilled the conditions for gaining official recognition as a religion from the government, despite being a teaching that centered on Gyo.

Meanwhile the Tendai sect, founded by Saicho (767~822), established its headquarters in Mt. Hiei. Saicho's tenets incorporated the four studies of En (also Hokke, the Lotus Teachings), Zen (meditative disciplines), Kai (Buddhist Precepts), and Mikkyo or esoteric practices. But sensing that his study in the esoteric aspect of Buddhism could not stand up to Kukai's, he attempted to create a system of esoteric Buddhism distinct from Kukai's Shingon. His wish would finally be realized through his disciple, Ennin [Katsumata, (1972)]. The Tendai sect selected the mountains as its training grounds and sent many excellent disciples into the mountains. As a result, the Tendai practitioners mixed with the mountain ascetics of Shugendo, who were still revered by the general population, to such an extent that it eventually became difficult to distinguish between Tendai and Shugendo practitioners. Even with Saicho's first-rate knowledge of Buddhist teachings, the Tendai sect had to emphasize aspects of the teachings that went beyond language and speculation – the esoteric practices – in order to gain popularity among the general population.

As for the reason why religions centered on asceticism were preferred, and why they emerged in the first place, some say that it is because the people of those days believed in, and feared, supernatural

phenomena such as curses and evil spirits. But such things are also of religion. Religion is, simultaneously, the source from which curses and evil spirits arise, and the power that releases people from those things. The presentation of a certain set of values necessarily includes the act of defining the obstacles that stand in way of its realization. This is not limited to religion. When we discover new possibilities, we also define our limits. In establishing what is normal, we define abnormality at the same time, which is why the number of diseases always increases as new cures are developed. The issue, then, is not what the Japanese people feared, but what they felt reverence and awe for. It was not belief in the Buddhist doctrines or love of incantations that moved the people of traditional Japan. What they had was simply a feeling of reverence for ascetic practices. It was the focused intensity involved in Gyo and the non-ordinary experiences it brought about that they worshipped.

This special adoration of the Japanese for Gyo further crystallized with the development of the Zen sect, which began with Eisai and Dogen during the Kamakura Period. Zen – the focusing of one’s awareness in sitting meditation until entering a state called Shikantaza (just sitting) – perfectly matched the sense of Gyo sought by the Japanese, and was a religious teaching that was deeply assimilated into Japanese culture.

Zen was more than a religion that centered its practice on Gyo. It was Gyo itself. Its doctrine explained that which it sought through the use of a single word – Mu (nothingness) – and its denial of all thought and speculation possessed a sense of purity similar to Shinto. While Shugen and Mikkyo demanded worship and total reliance on the spiritual or sorcery powers of the ascetics and priests, Zen refused reliance on anything other than the self. This religion, which suggested the possibility of deliverance through nothing but the cultivation of one’s own powers by means of one’s own practice of Gyo, strongly appealed to the inclinations of the Japanese people. In the end, Japan’s culture was so deeply influenced by Zen that it has become impossible to separate Zen from the concept of "Japanese" that we hold today. Its style, its doctrines, and its practice of Gyo did not remain within the bounds of religion. The Zazen mind was directly assimilated into the everyday life and work of the general population, greatly contributing to the

formation of various Ways or Do, such as Kendo, Sado, and Kado, and furthermore to the Waza, or art, of the craftsman.

The underlying current of Gyo seen in Shinto, Shugendo, Mikkyo, and Zen reveals not only the Japanese view on religion, but also tells us of the inner experiences cherished and sought by the Japanese people. The mighty tranquility of Shinto, the supernatural experiences of Shugendo, the viscous undulating quality of Mikkyo, the cutting purity and somberness of Zen – the Japanese people delighted and cherished these inner experiences at a distance of one step from the religions themselves, and through this, were able to furnish their culture with a sense of depth and expansion.

The above four systems of Gyo can be divided into two categories. The practices of Shugen and Mikkyo aimed to acquire powers beyond the ordinary, seeking the transformation of the self from a state of powerlessness to divine strength. The existence of adverse conditions is a given here, and what we see is the powerful conviction to overcome all adversities. The Gyo of Shinto and Zen, on the other hand, was of clearly different nature. Their practice was not for the sake of supplementing that which the practitioner lacked, nor was it for driving growth towards a more powerful state of being. They were rather for the return to one’s original nature by the shedding off of all that is extraneous. Theirs were Gyo of subtraction rather than addition, of returning the colorful to the transparent. The inclinations of the former two are for invigoration; they are Gyo of the Sun. The latter two have inclinations towards detachment and placation; these are Gyo of the Moon. Both went through repeated ups and downs in accordance with the times and helped to establish the underpinnings of Japanese culture. For example, Kabuki, which derives its name from the word "kabuku" (to tilt/slant), was born out of the discovery of beauty in being off-balance. Its underling tone is one that can be found in the Gyo of Shugendo and Mikkyo. Meanwhile, the aesthetics of Yugen established through Ze-ami’s Noh, shares a common ground with the Gyo of Shinto and Zen.

In the end, the stream of Gyo from Shinto to Zen refined the Japanese concept of ascetic practices and contributed to the formation of the Japanese idea of the body. Although each of the four religions possessed distinct views on ascetic practices, a common thread can be found when seen through the

idea of the body.

In Gyo the body is utilized as a tool to break through volitional concentration. Its method is to focus one's awareness on certain perceptual occurrences in the body, and to switch the attention, for a while, from one's thoughts to one's body. The various ways in which the hands and fingers are held during meditation, known as Inso, are a typical example. The deliberate forcing of the body into conditions of stress, strongly associated with the practice of Gyo, is another. By repeatedly imposing great burden onto the body, the practitioner's attention is forced to switch from mental concentration to bodily concentration.

In the next step, the aim is to separate the self from the body, to which we normally suppose it belongs, in order to encounter the body that is apart from the self; or in other words, to encounter pure Body. This is the body that belongs only to Nature itself: the body "as is". To encounter the body "as is" means that all sensations of the flesh disappear. What emerges instead is a body of mist or air-like quality. The nature of this newly emerging body is one of total passivity; it can fluctuate with the true sense of being "alive" only after inviting or welcoming into one's self what is not of the self. The practice of Gyo sought the entrance into this sublime state of passivity. The contrast between the two categories of Gyo then has its roots in exactly what they decided to "invite". For the practices of Shugendo and Mikkyo, it was Unwavering Mind, while for Shinto and Zen, it was the Source of all things. In this way, when the practice of Gyo is understood as a phenomenon of the body, it then becomes possible for four different religions to emerge while sharing the same structure of ascetic practice.

One could say that this inner state of "inviting" or "welcoming" was the essence of the idea of Nature held by Japan's culture. The Japanese word, Kangaeru (to think) was originally Ka Mukaeru (to welcome in that which is there). Thus for the Japanese, the thinking process itself was a passive activity, literally meaning the "inviting" or "welcoming" in of its object. And it was this "inviting", this entering into a state of passivity or receptivity, which the Japanese called "natural". They placed more value on the "seeing" or "coming into sight" of things while one was in a non-self state than on the volitional act of looking or observing. They valued the receptive state of "hearing" over

the volitional act of listening. And such states were to be reached by means of concentration through Gyo. The Tsugaru jamisen is a musical instrument, a three-stringed lute, from the northeastern parts of Japan. What is demanded from its players is to acquire an original piece of music that they can call their own. Traditional Japanese music, unlike Western music, does not boast a great variety of musical pieces. Rather, performers are to cultivate the improvisational ability to play the same single piece in varying ways according to the time and place of the performance. The late Takahashi Chikuzan, master Tsugaru jamisen player, carried out a Gyo, in which he played his instrument for eight days and eight nights without rest. According to Chikuzan, by the eighth day, all awareness of his own playing had disappeared. He could no longer hear the sounds supposedly coming from the instrument he was playing, and he began to see his body as a field of white light. From the depths of this whiteness, he heard a song he had never once heard before. It was this song that was to become Chikuzan's original composition. In this way, musical pieces in the art of Tsugaru jamisen were not creations by the artists, but something the artist invited into his or her self, something that arrived from somewhere unknown. The practice of Gyo gives birth to different outcomes depending on what the practitioner invites within. In this case it was music.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that the idea of the body in Japanese culture was shaped by the practice of Gyo. For the Japanese, the body was not merely a tool to be utilized for daily life. It was a place in which the abstract was to be received. Unlike the Western view of the body, it was not something that could be managed by the person's will, but could be brought to a state of harmony through the focusing of Ki, which occurs when one breaks away from a state of volitional concentration. Furthermore, the workings of such a body are not of machine-like automaticity. By nature, it can only improvise its every movement. It fluctuates in resonance with the vibrations of life, in a world where everything is alive. And when it moves, through the receiving of a force from outside itself, its movement is not the self-oblivious trance-like movement of the possessed – its center is never lost.

To reiterate, the body for the Japanese was a place for receiving life. Life, in this case, is not the life of the individual person or creature, but the

Life that flows through all beings in a world where everything is alive. This Life has never died. If the union of sperm and egg is the beginning of individual life, then Life is what makes that union possible. Both sperm and egg must be alive to begin with for their union to occur. Thus Life exists beyond the individual. Life is a formless current that never ceases, and the individual's body is but a boat riding this current. The boat cannot move on its own. The body can move only because it is riding the current of Life at large.

The concept of Gyo, which underlay the four religions of Shinto, Shugen, Mikkyo, and Zen, penetrated into the daily lives of the general population by the time of the Kamkura and Muromachi Periods. This should not be understood as the spreading of religious teachings, but as the dissemination of Gyo itself. The practice of Gyo then was able to break out beyond the field of religion to become the foundation for a certain view of the body, and would further give birth to the concept of Kata, or form. Kata is the symbolic expression of the Japanese view on the body, born from Gyo. The Japanese reverence for Gyo would eventually shift into a sense of respect for Kata.

4. The Philosophy of Kata

It is the way we view our own bodies – whether consciously or unconsciously – that decides which perceptual experiences we choose to value. In trying to achieve those experiences, we then establish the ways in which we use and move our bodies. In short, each and every motion made by a human being is a reflection of his or her own idea of the body. This is not limited to visible physical movement. For example, while it is true that our breathing is restricted by the structure of our respiratory organs, exactly what we consider a "deep breath" is determined by each individual's view of the body. Similarly, while the act of eating cannot deviate from the structure of the human digestive system, it is our idea of the body that dictates exactly what feeling we consider "satisfying", and when we feel we have had enough. And whereas our physical balance is affected by the force of gravity on the structure of our bodies, exactly what bodily sensation we choose to call "stable" depends on each person's concept of the body.

Therefore, if a group of people possesses a distinct

way of moving or using the body, it follows that they must share a common view of the body. The formal way of sitting in Japan, called Seiza, may generate nothing but a sense of restriction to most Westerners. For the Japanese however, sitting in Seiza traditionally brought a sense of peace to the mind. This way of sitting with both knees bent results in a sense of complete immobility. It halts the mind from intending any following motion, and in fact, executing sudden movements from this position is quite difficult. Sitting in Seiza forces one to enter into a state of complete receptivity, and it is in this position that the Japanese wrote, played music, and ate. In times of sadness, of prayer, and even of resolve, Seiza was indispensable for the people of Japan. Seiza was a Kata for receiving: a Kata that fulfilled the necessary conditions for one's entrance into a state of true receptivity.

Seiza is an attempt to negate all awareness of the flesh, for flesh reflects human intention in excess. In trying to cancel out the mind's volitional activities, the ancients had discovered this method of bringing harmony to the inner body by drawing out the sensation of the bones and seeking a sense of balance between the bent knees, spine, pelvis, hip joints, ankles, and other joints. In pursuing Kata, the Japanese of old placed importance on awareness of the bones over awareness of the flesh. By doing so, they had succeeded in negating the mind, and letting the body – the body, which belonged to Nature and not to the self – emerge "as is".

However, in order to heighten one's sense of the bones, the process of sitting in Seiza must follow certain rules. The act of bending the knees on its own does not negate awareness of the flesh. To start, one must stand leaning forward with knees slightly bent. Next, draw one foot backwards, both feet flat on the floor, and begin bending the knee of the leg in back. The front knee merely follows. Once both knees have landed on the ground, the big toes are placed on top of one another. With successful execution of this process, the thighs will end up being completely parallel to the floor. If the thighs slope down towards the knees, it indicates that the person has not truly entered into a bone-centered state. In this manner, Kata is not just about certain positions taken by the body. Rather, it is the entire process of movement required to achieve the inner perceptual experience of "receiving."

This method of entering into Kata while seeking

balance of the bones can be recognized in almost all fields within Japanese culture. For example, there is the Kata of Kyudo, the Japanese art of archery. In the standing position, the legs are spread wide apart so that the knees are positioned directly below the elbows when both arms are extended and spread to the sides at the height of the shoulders; the feet point maximally outward. This was the usual stance in Kyudo up until the end of the Edo Period, and anybody taking this stance will know exactly how it feels to stand on one's bones. This stance also makes it very difficult to tense the muscles in the arms. Therefore, the bow cannot be pulled by muscular tension in the arms; the archer must "receive" something into himself in order to pull the bow. Additionally, in Japanese archery, the target is aimed using not just one eye but both eyes. And it is not only the eyes that aim. The archer sees his belly and tries to make its shape into a perfect circle.

Similarly, the Kata for using the hishaku (ladle) in the Japanese tea ceremony, Sado, is quite difficult unless one's awareness of the bones is heightened. The hishaku is used to scoop steaming water out of the kettle, and is then turned upside down to pour hot water into the tea bowl. But Sado rules state that when the water is poured into the bowl, the upper arm must rotate in synchronicity with the ladle. When the average modern person tries to do this, what follows usually is that the arm only rotates from the elbow and below; the upper arm does not. This is an act that can only be accomplished by achieving keen awareness of the bones through sitting Seiza.

Interestingly enough, a basic skill in Sumo wrestling is to grip one's opponent by the belt and throw him by rotating the upper arm, just as the tea maker does with the ladle. This skill, called Kaina gaeshi (lit. turning the upper arm) can only be executed by gripping the opponent's belt with powerful engagement of the little finger. Only by doing so does awareness of the bones heighten, and without awareness of the bones, Kaina gaeshi cannot be accomplished.

Whatever the field, the numerous Kata in Japanese culture all share a common structural principle, demonstrating the sharing of a common idea of the body by the Japanese. All Kata are constructed without use of the flesh. Therefore concepts of tension and relaxation are irrelevant. A Bushi (warrior) holding a sword, a carpenter using a hammer, a dressmaker doing needlework – in each

case, the object is never constrained by the holder's hand. At any given moment, the sword can be slid out from the Bushi's hand. The same applies to the hammer and needle. All are simply placed inside the Kata of the hand; they are not held by grip. Regardless of how light the tension, an object held by use of tension cannot slide out of the hand unless that tension is released. Meanwhile, objects placed inside the Kata of a hand, achieved through awareness of the bones, can easily slide out of the hand even if the shape of the hand is unchanged. In this way, the hand that does not constrain the object it holds is also unconstrained by that object.

As an inner perceptual experience, heightening awareness of the bones creates the sensation of entering into the space between the flesh. To use another phrase, it is the entrance into the Ma or crack between tension and release of the muscles. While awareness centered on the bones is the normal state of awareness in Kata, if the intensity of concentration is to be further heightened, then the practitioner must enter into the various Ma or borders within the body. These are, for example, the perceptual borders between neighboring parts of the body, such as hip and buttocks, or arm and torso; or the borders between actual perceptual experiences, such as extension and compression, or expansion and contraction. Even deeper awareness involves the focusing of one's awareness on a state in which one is neither self nor other, where one is neither the initiator nor the reactor. Paradoxically, this state is, at the same time, a state in which one seems to be both self and other, initiator and reactor.

The pursuit for Kata, seen in every aspect of Japanese culture, stems from the fact that the ancients of Japan had discovered value in states of "receptivity", where one's volition was cancelled out. Once entrance into a "receptive" state is established through Kata, the ability to respond to one's own will becomes remarkably poor. Any movement following one's entrance into this state becomes entirely dependent, not on will or volition, but what one "invites" or "receives" into oneself. For example, one can make movement occur through the receiving of Strength into oneself. Based on the Western view of the body, strength is produced by the tensing of muscles, which is in turn initiated by one's volition. On the other hand, the Japanese believed that Strength was something to be "received" into oneself, something that arrived from a place unknown

and therefore was entirely unrelated to any tension produced by one's own volition. Strength was something that had to be perceived directly, without relation to muscular contraction. The Japanese use the expression *Chikara ga waku* (strength rises forth) to describe this direct perceiving of Strength, and the volition-negating act of entering *Kata* is what induces the rising forth of Strength from the unknown.

There are an endless number of tales, in which masters from various fields of art accomplish miraculous acts, which would be impossible through the use of strength or force in its normal sense. It is a matter of fact in the world of *Budo* that old men of tiny build can throw huge opponents with amazing ease. And while the Western art of ballet is unmistakably an elegant and beautiful dance form, it is unlikely that a ballet dancer would be performing after the age of forty. Traditional Japanese dancers, on the other hand, do not fade in strength or beauty even at the age of ninety. This is only because the dancer enters into a state of receptivity, in which Strength, rising forth apart from the dancer's volition, is "invited" in order to induce movement.

What the Japanese artist in *Kata*, awaiting the arrival of Strength, seeks is the experience of Body moving spontaneously, without any involvement of the artist's volition. The needle worker says that the "needle moves". They do not say, "I move the needle". The calligrapher says that the "brush runs", while the carpenter claims that the "plane advances". These expressions, in which the person is never the subject, describe work done through a kind of Strength that is not of volition or tension, and furthermore, conveys that the work is done spontaneously and in an improvisational manner through the arrival of Strength into oneself.

This feeling of "receiving" or "inviting in" is the basis of the Japanese' sense of improvisation. Improvisation, for the Japanese, was not based on free will, in contrast to the concept of improvisation in modern arts such as free-style music. It meant the spontaneous occurrence of inevitable actions that emerge in the here and now. For this reason, improvisational acts are called "natural", when the Japanese word for "natural" or "Nature", directly translated, is "happens by itself". *Chuang-Tzu* wrote of a master cook cutting up an ox for the king of *Wei*. When the king asks him how his blade could stay as good as new although he cut up oxen everyday, the cook replies, "When sense and understanding

cease, the spirit moves freely." [Kanatani, (1971, p.93)]. The cook explains that when cutting meat, if he just focuses without trying to plan or guess the right course for his blade, the crevices within the meat appear naturally, and the blade begins to move by itself [Kanatani, (1971)]. This is the sort of experience shared by Japanese artists and craftsmen pursuing mastery of their *Waza* or art.

Thus, the artist's capability was demonstrated primarily, by his "receptive" ability, or in other words, by the perfection of *Kata*. And secondarily, by having the speed necessary to respond to the arriving sense of Strength.

Here, speed does not mean quickness in responding, but rather that the artist's action in response to the arriving Strength is "just right". Matching Strength could only be accomplished by acquiring the "right" sense of *Ki* (timing), *Do* (degree), and *Ma* (interlude/ space between).

The mastery of *Ki*, or timing, involves being able to capture the beginning emergence of Strength. The word *Sottaku no Ki* describes the act of the mother bird pecking her egg from the outside, at the exact moment in which the hatching chick tries to pierce the egg from within. This act, which is "matching" at its best, is exactly the sense of speed sought by the Japanese. They were convinced that the observing of external facts was never enough if one was to grasp "right" timing in such a manner. Only by seeing within themselves and seizing the beginning of Strength's arrival was it possible. For according to the sensitivities of the Japanese, the mother bird is not objectively observing the egg, she is merely acquiescing to certain demands that emerged within her body. The Japanese believed in a sense of correspondence – an exchange of the abstract – that did not involve transmission and receiving of physical information such as seen in the process of stimulation and response. Furthermore, this correspondence was believed to occur only when one entered into the noble state of "receptivity" called *Kata*.

Thus, to respond was to "correspond". The Japanese love for Zen stems from the winning sense of speed found in Zen dialogues. It would not be an overstatement to say that the arts of *Renka* and *Haiku* poetry were able to take root in the culture for the same reason. We can also say, that it was this sense of "speed", in the broadest sense of the word, which attracted the Japanese mind to the concept of *Ichigo*

Ichie (one chance, one encounter). Such was the sense of speed pursued in traditional Japanese arts.

Mastering Do, or degree, means that after capturing "right" timing, one is able to execute a movement to the degree that is exactly appropriate to the emerging sense of Strength. This has to be the minimum required movement, unwavering, with no slack. The body's Shin, or core, must move in order to accomplish this. A movement of "right" degree, no matter how miniscule, amplifies the arriving sense of Strength so that it reverberates throughout one's entire body. And this is what enables the "invited" Strength to retain its force over the course of a certain activity. Such movement does not exhaust Strength. On the contrary, Strength is actually magnified through the acquiring of "right" degree, and this is one of the main characteristics of the concept of movement in traditional Japanese culture.

The mastery of Ma implies impeccable use of the interludes between actions. This is based on the belief that the pausing of one's action, without breaking Kata, could make way for the arrival of a new sense of Strength from within the resonating lull. It is within this lull that one can experience the activities of the invisible or intangible. Ma is the underlying rhythm that brings all skills of art to life. The blank space within ink paintings, the beauty of naturally occurring sounds in the tea ceremony, the tokonoma, which represents the use of "no-use" – the overflowing rhythm of Life in Japanese culture is hidden within the Ma of activity.

This philosophy of Kata was a system of techniques for using the body that comprehensively involved the Japanese view of the body, their perceptual inclinations, and the distinct ways in which they used their bodies. This system, established most likely during the Kamakura and Muromachi Periods, became the foundation for Japanese culture. It cultivated the grounds for the blooming of Waza or skills in all fields, and was the driving force for the assimilation of Chinese civilization into the land of Japan. This system of bodily skills, which existed beneath and throughout all aspects of Japan's culture, differed entirely from the Western idea of the body that was disseminated by the government and blindly accepted by the general population after the Meiji Restoration. Over the course of one hundred and forty years since the Restoration, the Japanese people had, in this manner, and by their own hands, paved way for the

disintegration of the structural core of their own culture.

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