

JAPANESE BEAUTY AS CULTURAL IDEOLOGY

The Aesthetics of Conservatism in “Post-postwar” Japanese Intellectuals

| JANG In Sung

Since the end of the Cold War, Japanese conservatives have propagated their conservative opinion through proactive media activities. This paper delves into the traits of the post-Cold War Japanese conservatism by examining the political aesthetics of Nishibe Susumu (1939~) and Saeki Keishi (1949~), who negate Japan’s postwar system and envision the emergence of the “post-postwar” Japanese society. Grasping their political aesthetics could be accomplished by recognizing their conservative understanding of common sense, social order, and nation-state.

In negating Japan’s postwar system, Nishibe and Saeki reveal their romantic feelings and combative spirit, particularly when they discern the Japanese society’s paradoxical situation that is caused by the disjunction between Japanese people’s experience and common sense. Despite their emphasis on the equilibrium between traditional and modern values, such perspective collapses when they regard social order more highly than individual liberty. Their conceptualization is actually weakened by its own rigid understanding of the Japanese communal state, redefined by reassessing the meaning of tradition, history, and consciousness—that they endeavor to elevate by recalling Japanese people’s patriotism in past wars.

Aspiring to terminate Japan’s postwar system, their view of paradox, equilibrium and communality significantly differs from that of Fukuda Tsuneari (1912~1994), a famous conservative literary critic who ardently published his conservative opinion in postwar Japan. “Post-postwar” conservatives, mostly social scientist critics, prefer communal life to individual existence, social order to individual freedom, and national experience to personal life. This perspective differs from the attitude of “postwar” conservatives, represented by literary critics. The “post-postwar” conservatives’ effort to overcome modernity seems to be correlated to the weakening of literary criticism in the Japanese intellectual society.

• **Keywords:** Japanese conservatism, Japan’s postwar system, post-postwar consciousness, Nishibe Susumu, Saeki Keishi, Fukuda Tsuneari, common sense, social order, communal state

A Discovery of Japan's "Landscapes" in the Meiji Era: Focusing on the *Illustrated Guide Book for Travelers around Japan* | PARK Sam Hun

This paper aims to explore the significance of Japan's landscapes in the *Illustrated Guide Book for Travelers around Japan* (total 7 volumes), published from 1888 to 1890 in the Meiji Period. The examined landscapes include the landscapes using the emperor as a vehicle, landscapes visualizing the Meiji government's national slogans such as the civilization and enlightenment policies and its industrialization initiative, and other landscapes illustrating newly added areas as the other within Japan. These landscapes set precedence to those in the *Shiga's Japanese Landscape*, which views the Japanese landscape from a scientific perspective. In this sense, the *Illustrated Guide Book for Travelers around Japan* should not be regarded as a simple travel guidebook but as an imagined geography of modern Japan, building a cornerstone to understand and accept "Japan" discovered in the *Shiga's Japanese Landscape*.

• **Keywords:** Meiji, landscape, nationalism, travel, sight

The Japanese Beauty Stratum and Kawabata Yasunari | CHO Jung Min

Kawabata Yasunari, the first Japanese to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, received the award in 1969. On the occasion, he delivered a commemorative speech *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself: An Introduction* (美しい日本の私-その序説) at the Swedish Academy, which was a groundbreaking event that achieved the recognition of "beautiful Japan" worldwide.

What is the "beautiful Japan" that Kawabata underlined to such a great extent? After Japan's defeat in the World War II, he proclaimed to return to the "tradition of Japanese beauty," "old mountains and streams," and "ancient Japan" at every occasion. It was a kind of measure available to stitch up and settle the situation after the defeat, in that postwar scars and pains could be patched up as far as a direct link could be built between the "ancient Japan" and "present Japan." The experience of losing wars was not imprinted on the "ancient Japan." Accordingly, if the "ancient Japan" that remained a "pure and beautiful time" could be wholly and newly obtained in such a postwar situation, the concept including "Japan," "Japanese race," and "Japanese tradition" could be seamlessly resurrected, leaving the war period vacant. On this account, Kawabata highly appreciated the classical literature that is distant from the modern Western literature and emphasized the classical literature's inherent essence of Japanese beauty. In this context, it may be that Kawabata's adherence to the "Japanese beauty" after the defeat was an act of active forgetting and reconstructing in relation to the war or defeat.

Meanwhile, it is an undeniable truth that the virtual reality and fictional truth in the "beautiful Japan" were gradually pervading the postwar conversation, as Kawabata's symbolic authority and narrative were introduced. In addition, it is notable that Kawabata's aesthetic worldview is widely cited in today's Japanese society as a political rhetoric or ruling strategy. Once invoked in the contexts of globalization or nation-state, the "beautiful Japan" still actively constitutes an emotional community.

• **Keywords:** Kawabata Yasunari, *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself*, Japan's return, war defeat and literature

About Things Jōmonesque: The Japan Tradition Debate and the Problem of the Other | CHO Hyun Jung

This study examines the 1950s Japan tradition debate and its interest in the primitive Jōmon period. The powerful and primitive aesthetics of Jōmon artifacts provided leading Japanese artists and architects with a vitality with which to renew the depressed Japanese culture in the wake of the Allied Occupation period. However, understanding of Jōmon varied according to different needs of each advocate. A comparison between Okamoto Tarō's and Tange Kenzō's view of Jōmon would be particularly illuminating in offering two competing models of postwar Japan's cultural identity in a global context. While avant-garde artist Okamoto Tarō favored the populist Jōmon over the aristocratic Yayoi, architect Tange Kenzō advocated the synthesis of Jōmon and Yayoi. If Okamoto's enthusiastic embrace of Jōmon led him to pursue the universal primitivism shared by Japan's ancient past art and the world art, Tange's reinterpretation of Okamoto's Jōmon theory encouraged Tange to formulate an authentic national identity of postwar architecture that is both modern and uniquely Japanese.

• **Keywords:** Jōmon, Yayoi, Okamoto Tarō, Tange Kenzō, Japan tradition debate

The Revival of Traditional Beauty and Reconciliation between the East and West in Matsui Fuyuko's Contemporary "Nihonga" Works | CHOI Jae Hyuk

This paper examines how Matsui Fuyuko adapted the traditional techniques of "Nihonga," Japanese-style painting, in a contemporary realm of art. Since the term "Nihonga" was coined in the modern era, its art world is considered to be deeply rooted in a conservative way of thinking. It postulates a binary of the East and West that is unopposed, demanding Nihonga painters to implicitly perceive its inherent difference. However, Matsui nullifies such division, rather embracing the multifarious facets of the art's current development that has enabled artists to express their subject matters through methods of re-appropriation. In this respect, she successfully accomplishes her artistic objectives—to render human sufferings, madness, and traumas—by reintroducing and integrating both the technical and contextual elements of Nihonga on a picture plane in an unprecedented way. Taking into account her strategic approaches, she could be regarded as a critical inheritor of the genre, who asks provoking questions while succeeding the antecedents of Nihonga.

• **Keywords:** Matsui Fuyuko, Nihonga, tradition, supernatural painting

ARTICLES

A Reevaluation of Okakura Tenshin in the Second Sino-Japanese and Pacific War Era | KIM Yong Cheol

During the Second Sino-Japanese and Pacific War, Okakura Tenshin was reevaluated in Japan. His thought served as the basis of the aggressive, militant Asianism and provided the first sentence of *The Ideals of the East*, hence “Asia is one” as the slogan. In this process, the Japanese translation of *The Awakening of the East* seems to have played a key role in *The Ideals of the East* and *The Awakening of Japan*. At first, *The Awakening of the East* was written during his stay in India. It reflects his sorrowful indignation and was not published in his lifetime, implying his intention to keep it unpublished. *The Ideals of the East* seems to be in relation to Japan’s identity and its past, *The Awakening of Japan* to Japan’s situation since the Meiji period, and *The Awakening of the East* to militant Asianism. Tenshin was reassessed and came to be revered as the pioneer during the Second Sino-Japanese War, due to the needs of the time rather than his achievement itself.

• **Keywords:** Okakura Tenshin, Second Sino-Japanese and Pacific War, *The Ideals of the East*, *The Awakening of the East*, Asianism

A Study on the Discursive Fields of War in the late 1880s: With an Emphasis on A Discourse on Japanese Armament | CHOI Jeong Hun

This paper examines the way Yamamoto Chūsuke justified the expansion of armaments in his *A Discourse on Japanese Armament (Nihon gunbiron)*, a political pamphlet hitherto nearly neglected by the academic field. His work will be analyzed in comparison to the discourses of Ueki Emori and Nakae Chōmin, well-known opponents of the military expansion. Despite their differences, Yamamoto shared major assumptions with his potential opponents. The consensus was that wars could not be justified by themselves, and that the abolition of wars or standing armies as a utopian scheme should be supported in principle. In his justification of war, Yamamoto was distinguished from Ueki in that he considered the necessity of territorial integrity and rejuvenation of people’s vitality. Yamamoto also differentiated himself from Chōmin, when he analyzed the contemporary *Sei/Ikioi* filled with dangers of a war, albeit sharing Chōmin’s pessimistic attitude towards the abolition of armies in his times. This examination implies that non-governmental discourses on arms and wars in the 1880s developed from their distinct discursive fields, in which each writer constructed his own discourse by selective connection and disconnection with those of opponents.

• **Keywords:** Yamamoto Chūsuke, *A Discourse on Japanese Armament (Nihon gunbiron)*, Ueki Emori, Nakae Chōmin, Fukuzawa Yukichi