

Magical Power of Japanese Culture

“You-I spirit” as Common word of Coexistence



日本文化の魔術

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Prologue

Many ordinary people of the world may feel something bad will happen and be involved in war before long, due to the difference in values and the biased views of the people. We have to avoid wars in any case, but it occurred in the past. My father died in the World War 2, and my family experienced poor life and witnessed the miserable people.

The war perpetrators and their supported people are responsible, even though they regretted for their behaviors, but the life of sacrifices never revive. Even Japanese people who had high moral and considerate heart were cheated by the perpetrators' propaganda. How should we get out from the propaganda?

For establishing fair coexistence society of the world, we should face to the truth of the world, and learn the structure and human nature. This booklet explains Japanese lifestyle culture, which is suggested to be adopted in the world. I hope you could find the solution in Japanese culture.

The Japanese people have lived in harmony with nature with the awareness that people are part of nature. Appreciating nature's bounty, they have developed thoughtfulness for others. Based on this concept, language and culture were born and have continued to evolve to the present day. I believe that Japanese culture, which has valued harmony above all else, has the ability to resonate with people in a chaotic world.

“Thoughtfulness for others,” which lies at the heart of Japanese culture, is a spirit of coexistence. In other words, it is expressed as **"You-I spirit."** It shows “I am here, thanks to you” that is a spirit to close to the heart of the other people and things with respect. The sound of “You-I” is coincidentally the same as the Japanese word for **"fraternity."**

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Chapter 1

**Which country should be
the next World leader?**

What are required for the world leader?



At present economic power and military power have been considered the factors of world power. Are those countries respected by the rest of the countries? Many scholars and intellectual people in the world see culture power would be most influential factor to be the world leader from now on. Then, they say Japan will be leader of the world and Japanese lifestyle culture become be the world standard model.

The Japanese reputed lifestyle culture includes, making a que where many people gather, safe public order that children and women can walk outside alone, moral that no stealing from stores when a disaster occurs. or when they found a purse or bag which are delivered to the police or relevant facility, and cleanness of streets and toilets.

Japanese think the public benefit first

Much research tell that Japan is the country where tourists want to visit most. There are lots of sightseeing assets, such as beautiful scenery, historical sites and delicious food. Among them the most impressed tourists are the kindness and warmness of Japanese people.

In many countries individual rights come first, but Japanese think the public that everyone shares the benefit is more important, and those who place preference on individual rights is seen selfish. Japanese always care the mind of others. In this regard Japan seems a socialist country, but a democratic country you can say anything freely.

What does the Japanese place value on?



Japanese people place more importance on the public benefit than personal interest. In the other terms, Japanese society is consisting of traditional coexisting spirit, which has been nurtured in the living surroundings. Japan is a mountainous archipelago country surrounded by the sea.

Japanese people have coexisted with the nature. Appreciating the blessings of nature, they worshipped mountain, river, sea, forest and many other nature creations as a god. Their thought and action developed into “Shintoism,” which is regarded as their traditional animism religion.

Agriculture work promoted coexistent spirit

In ancient time rice cultivation spread nationwide. For more production of rice co-working is essential. Naturally people care about others, showing cooperative posture. This attitude created a harmonious atmosphere and led to achieving their goal. You will see good Japanese teamwork in many fields.

There must be Japanese mindset of today rooted in history behind Japanese coexistent awareness and perspectives, and Japanese culture including Japanese language. Japan has the longest history in the world and has not conquered by the other nation (race). This fact may be also influencing to it.

How has Japan behaved in the world during modern time?



From the ancient age to the 20th century the world was in the power game, that powerful nations, mainly the west countries, exploited underdeveloped countries. In early modern times Japan was in danger to be invaded from the west and colonized. Japan stood up to modernize like western countries, enforcing economic and military power.

At that era, it was granted as a matter of course strong nations rule unmatured nations to control their people as colony, Japanese militarism rose and become ambitious to expand its territory. Then, Japan confronted over the rights and interests on Korean peninsula, and then developed into wars against former China and Russia. As a result, Japan won in Sino-Japanese war and Russo-Japan war.

Japan's advance became the turning point of Asia

Soon Japan became to be regarded as one of the great nations, the only one nation in Asia. On the other hand, Asian nations wanted to be independent from their exploiting nations. Japanese military made use of the emotion of Asian people. Pretending the savior of Asia, and Japan gradually behaved arrogantly in Asia.

The strong western nations that colonized Asian nations were against Japan's advance to Asia, and it developed to the World War 2. Japan was defeated, and as a result it became Japan's turning point to seek the world peace nation. In addition, it led to the chance for many Asian countries to be independent.

Has Japan changed from a military power to peace power?



After the defeat in the World War 2, Japan has changed the diplomatic policy to become a peaceful country. Now in the Japanese constitution it is written that Japan abandons forever to hold the military and to solve disputes by armed force. In addition, the government has declared to prohibit to hold and using the nuclear weapons.

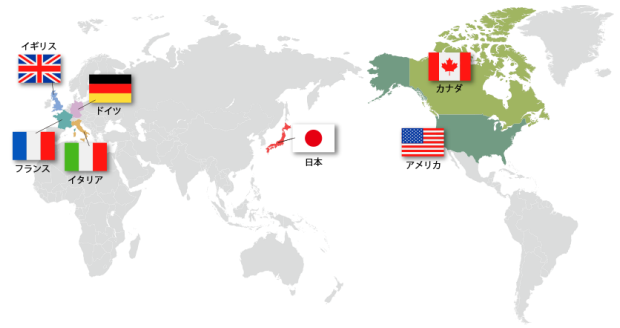
Japan has behaved since the postwar as a peace-loving country, but some nations still criticize Japan as a military and evil nation to hide their government failures. The strong nations that exploited underdeveloped nations now want to have normal relations with them in democratic way this time, but these nations are careful, because of their past behavior.

Shall we think how we can achieve the co existent society?

The past behavior of strong nations seems the cause of distrust. We are living in the world of 21 century. It does not move onto the better situation by continuing only to blame their descendants. We should seek a way for world peace.

Most present leaders of the world seem to be gangs who put on politician masks. They make use of the nation's assets and people to satisfy their cheap ambition with their group members. They don't care about sacrifices for their desire. To make it worse, people are indifferent about politics and many people even support them because of ignorance.

Why is Japan a member of the G7



G7 means Group of Seven, which is an intergovernmental political and economic forum of advanced democratic nations. After the defeat in the World War 2, Japan followed the USA and concentrated for the recovery from the completely destroyed land, leaving the defense of the nation to the USA.

As a result, Japan's economy made miracle growth, so that in 1968, only after 13 years from the end of war, Japan's GDP ranked the second after the USA and continued growth. Japanese people were described as "economic animal," and a book "Japan as No.1" written by American famous economist became bestseller.

Economic power to peaceful culture power

Due to the continuing growth as an economy power, Japan bashing started, especially from the USA as the peak in the 80. As a result, Japan's growth stopped and Japan's second GDP, which lasted 42 years dropped. However, Japan is being reputed as a democratic advanced and peaceful culture county by the people of the world. In addition, a G7 member is continuing.

Now, Japanese culture, especially subculture such as manga, anime, and game, together with high quality made in Japan goods are well accepted in the world. In addition. On the other hand, Japanese lifestyle customs such as manners and customs are also highly reputed. It has been proved by ever increasing the number of tourists to Japan.

Chapter 2

The peculiarities of Japanese lifestyle culture

What is the keyword of Japanese culture?



The base of all Japanese culture seems in the thought of their consideration to others. They place the most importance on the care of the feelings of others. They talk, not to hurt or embarrass others. For instance, when you bump into someone on street, you will say "I'm sorry." The person will say also "I'm sorry" without complaining to you.

Even if you make a mistake to damage someone, the person will not blame you or ask you for compensation, as long as you sincerely apologize for the mistake. Sincerity is more important than compensation for Japanese. If you show more sincerity admitting your mistake, the less compensation will be asked.

It is taken ugly to make excuse for your error

If you make excuse to avoid the responsibility, it is taken as ugly person by the Japanese. This way of thinking may be influenced by the bushido (samurai moral code). It has been considered ugly and shameful to excuse the mistake. So, samurai even conducted harakiri (taking the responsibility, die cutting their belly by themselves to cover the dishonor), which was regarded respectable and admired.

The Japanese views life is transient like flower and feel sympathy and beauty for perishing life as fate. You may say this thought is influenced also by Zen philosophy and Shintoism, which accept everything as it is, and human beings are also a part of nature. Behind of all Japanese culture these are reflexed.

What does the phrase “Read the atmosphere” mean?



In Japanese, the phrase is said “*kuuki wo yomu*” (read the air). The Japanese place importance on the harmony of the group. So, they tend to behave or talk along the group’s flow. If you place priority on your remarks or behavior, you will be regarded as a selfish and mean person.

This is a typical Japanese attitude in a group, they are afraid to be an outsider of the group. Most Japanese think they a part of the whole and feel their mind at ease in group.

Therefore, they cooperate to clean streets, toilets and the safety of the town to keep the public order. The “group” can be replaced with “society” and the “world.”

Other culture based on Japanese perspectives

The Japanese perspective is seen visually in mail address writing. In many west countries the writing order starts with name, and street, region...country, but in Japan it starts with country, then region ...name. You may say it shows that individuals belong to the society, and Japanese modesty and coexistent mind have been natured.

Hospitality that entertains guests is also well-known Japanese culture. This is also based on consideration for others. It is regarded best to prepare before the guest request something. For instance, If the guest says “it’s hot today,” the host should notice the guest may want some drinks and serves it.

Why don't Japanese say straight to others?



Such Japanese attitude has been criticized by none-Japanese people. Japanese have been aware of it. In 1989, the book “Japanese who can say No” written by former Tokyo Metropolitan governor with head director of Sony Corporation became bestseller. Japanese are still hesitant to say "No" clearly. Why is it?

Basic Japanese attitude is formed by Japanese culture, which places importance on harmony. They speak not to hurt others, so that they speak to others carefully selecting words. The person who was spoken feels the consideration and notices the points behind the words. This way of speaking is regarded common sense and is practiced even now.

"Matured attitude" would decrease disputes

Though it is common to deliver words indirectly to avoid excitement of others in Japan, but it does not work at international stages. Some countries attack or criticize Japan as their statement is vague and not enough. Japan usually does not make excuses much to their claims. Japanese think the more refute, the more they would be excited.

This attitude would be referred to Japanese phrase "matured attitude" (*otona no taiou*). By not responding to their misunderstanding, Japanese take attitude to wait till they will calm down. If this culture is accepted worldwide, international disputes would be less. Do you support this Japanese culture?

Why do the Japanese thank supporters first for their achievement?



You may often see the Japanese athletes say, when their achievement is made, thanks first to all the people including coach and family who have supported them for a long time. This is not complementary to their supporters. They really think so. In Japanese language there is a phrase “*okagesamade*” (Thanks to you), used casually in everyday life.

In group activities, they show more power than usual, especially in team sports, so that they make a good result for the team. This may come from the mindset of the Japanese. Each person doesn't want to be a cause of losers, but to contribute to their victory. This is also referred to the Japanese culture of consideration to others.

Japanese care the emotion of losers

It is shown most in traditional Japanese martial arts such as sumo and judo. The winner doesn't show smile or joy by body action of the victory, considering the emotion of loser, it is the manner taken as a matter of course. Some non-Japanese show joy as natural behavior, but it is regarded disgrace.

In Japanese martial arts Japanese people don't respect winners who are proud of the victory, especially those winners with less fighting spirit and using cunning techniques that even it is not against the rule. Japanese are generally reputed in the world as modest people, and love modest and considerable people.

How does the Japanese see weaker?



Japanese sympathize and close to the loser who fought seriously. In the middle age, the military commander Yoshitsune destroyed the rival enemy and became the hero, and his elder brother Yoritomo became the first shogun. However, Yoritomo expelled Yoshitsune to death, as his tactics and fame destroy the harmony with Yoritomo's subordinates.

This tragic story was becoming theater plays and movies in many times. They are made along with Japanese emotion and moral. Though they understand Yoritomo's decision as the leader, people felt sympathy so much for Yoshitsune who became a fugitive, that even the phrase "*hangan biiki*" (favoritism for Yoshitsune, or weak people) was born.

Japanese respect the fair judge

In Japanese another phrase "*kenka ryou seibai*" (both sides have a cause of dispute), which concept had been applied on disputes in samurai era, and continuing to present as a mean of solving fights. Japanese feel unfair to stand on one side, and like to see that both sides equally stand, or prefer *hikiwake* (draw) settlement.

You can say Japan is a country of empathy and fairness. Japanese have the similar value, so they can respect the perspectives of others confronting, and regardless of written contract, they know to compromise, considering the others' position, Therefore, the number of trial cases are very few in Japan, compared to other countries.

Chapter 3

Admired Japanese cultural spirit

NOGI Maresuke- **Japanese military** **commander of Japan-** **Russia war**



出典：国立国会図書館「近代日本人の肖像」

When Japan was starting to advance the continent like western strong nations, then Russia was ambitious to expand its territory in the same area and interfered in Japan. As a result, in 1904 Russo-Japanese war broke out over the interest of Korean peninsula. After fierce battle, contrary to the world prediction, Japan won the war.

Japanese soldiers were in full of joy, but Nogi thought of the loser's emotion of the Russian commander Stoessel, so Nogi treated him as a friend, and celebrated the end of the war drinking sake together. This is the bushido spirit, or Japanese empathy culture. There are many of these kinds of stories in war time.

Nogi was regarded loyal to Emperor and enshrined as a god

Nogi committed suicide with his wife, soon after the death of the Meiji Emperor.

It is said Nogi had been felt responsibility for his mistake and followed the Emperor's death. In a civil war he was the captain of a squad of the new government supporting Emperor. He was in a position to manage the military flag, but it was robbed.

The Emperor was regarded a living god at that time, and Meiji Emperor was the symbol of the Meiji Restoration (Modernization) and after death the Meiji shrine was built in Tokyo. It was taken as virtue to follow the bushido-like philosophy that samurai's duty is to die for loyalty. Nogi shrine was also built, and he was enshrined as a god.

SUGIHARA Chiune- **Diplomat who saved life** **of many Jewish people**



Under Nazi occupation of Europe, many Jewish people escaped into Lithuania, which was regarded as a neutral country. However, in 1940 a pro Soviet Union regime was born in the country and it was a matter of time before it was merged with the Soviet Union. If absorbed, they would have no chance to escape to the third countries.

They had only one escape route. It was obtaining transit visa from Japan. So, they rushed to the Japan consulate. At that time Japan was scheduled to make alliance with Germany and Italy. Sugihara asked Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to permit to grant the visa for them, but his wish was turned down.

"I did only what I should."

He decided to issue visas by himself, but it was very risky decision. He then worked very hard to issue visas every day for rushing Jews people. Soon Lithuania merged with the Soviet Union, and the Japan consulate was closed. However, from his hotel Sugihara continued to issue travel certificates, which could substitute for visas.

Sugihara saved more than 6,000 Jewish people, but it is said he was forced to retire after he came back to Japan. In 1985 he was recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations" by the Israeli Government. He commented, "It is not the matter that newspapers and TVs make a fuss about. I did only what I should."

Untold story of bushido on the battle of the sea



In World War 2, Japan fought against the USA, Britain and other nations. The Japanese military was in a fierce battle off the shore of Indonesia. The British warship, the Encounter was sinking, and its soldiers were jumping into the sea. They were far from the shore, and before long the exhausted soldiers began to drown.

Sometime later a ship was spotted in the distance, and the soldiers had hope of being rescued. However, their hopes soon turned to despair. The approaching ship was the Japanese military warship, *Ikazuchi*. The British soldiers prepared themselves for death. But to their surprise, a number of ropes were thrown out to them from the ship.

The truth had been hidden to the public

Some Japanese soldiers criticized this order of the captain Kudo, but he shouted "It is not a fair fight if you don't come to the aid of your weakened enemy. This is bushido." Over 400 British soldiers were rescued. The general, who was reported said, "you weren't in the wrong. But if this is disclosed, you will be labeled as a traitor," and the truth had been hidden.

In 1971, when Emperor Showa visited Britain, where there was a huge demand to apologize for the war and he was criticized. At that time a British diplomat Samuel Falle, who was rescued from the Encounter wrote an article about his experience at that time in "Time" magazine. After that, British criticism quieted down.

Bond between the islanders and the Japanese soldiers



At the nearly end of World War 2, 12,000 Japanese soldiers were stationed at Peleliu Island in Palau, near the Philippines. Japan improved the island infrastructure, and the relation between islanders and Japanese soldiers were very friendly. In 1944, 42,000 American forces equipped with the latest modern weapons are coming closer.

The islanders communicated their decision to the Japanese commanding officer, Colonel Nakagawa that they would fight alongside the Japanese troops to defend their island. However, the colonel was angry for this, saying “You think the mighty imperial army would fight alongside mere natives,” and told them to leave the island,

US admiral admired the Japanese samurai spirit

The islanders realized that Japanese soldiers had not considered them as equals. On the day islanders were evacuated to other islands, not a single soldier came to see them off. But when the boat left the shore, all Japanese soldiers appeared on the beach and waving their hands. Among them was the colonel and the islanders realized he said such words to save us.

Before long, fierce battle continued for 73 days. American Admiral Nimitz remarked they suffered the heaviest losses in any landing operation, and in the monument of the island he left such words: Visitors to this island should be told how courageous and patriotic the Japanese soldiers were. Defending the island, they fought until all died.

The Emperor's remarks changed the postwar Japan



Japan was defeated in the World War 2, and Japanese Emperor Showa was to be judged as the A-class war criminal in the trial. The Emperor and the General MacArthur who was the head of the occupied Japan had a meeting. MacArthur thought the Emperor would make excuses for the war and beg for his life.

It is told the Emperor said “About my life, I follow the trial decision, but I beg your help the people for rebuilding Japan.” MacArthur was moved by his unexpected remarks and attitude. On the other hand, he heard that no people involved in the war blamed the Emperor, on the contrary they are sorry that they brought him in the situation.

MacArthur made use of Emperor's authority

The Emperors of Japan lasting in the same family more than 1,500 years has been the highest authority, and Japan is recognized having the longest dynasty in the world. Before the war, the Emperor was regarded as a living god and untouchable. At present, he became the symbol of Japanese people, and not involved in politics.

MacArthur knew that still about 90 % of Japanese supported the Emperor system by after the war survey about Emperor. He was afraid that Japanese might uprising, if he pursued the Emperor. So, instead he made use of Emperor's power for rebuilding of Japan. It was successful and Japan made miracle recovery to be an economic power.

Chapter 4

Japanese language as a cultural heritage

Is Japanese language itself also Japanese culture?



I believe that the language works like the OS of computer and the culture is software to understand the mind and values of the people. Japanese language is the base of all Japanese culture. The peculiarity of the language can be in the expression and structure based on the thoughtfulness of the Japanese people.

There are many Japanese unique phrases often used such as *oseawani natte imasu* (I appreciate your caring), *yorosiku onegaisimasu* (Please treat me generously), and *otsukaresama* (Thank you for your work). These are considerate expressions to others, or reflection of the mind of the Japanese. These work to keep their good relationship.

Japanese language is based on thoughtfulness

In Japanese language, subjects are often omitted. Besides when the listener would understand in the context, when the speaker wants purposely to avoid strong impression, they are omitted. They care or read the mind of others. You may know Japanese language has *keigo* (respecting words), which are used for elderly people, superiors, customers, strangers and so on.

There are many different expressions and words used for different people considering their relation. Japanese choose the most proper terms depending on the person. If you take the Japanese language, as the OS of Japanese culture, which is based on thoughtfulness to others, you will find the exquisite base of Japanese culture in it.

What is the uniqueness of the Japanese language?



The history of Japan starts with the Jomon era, which is believed to have started about 13,000 years ago. It lasted more than 10,000 years peacefully with abundant food. They communicated in Yamato language, which is considered Japanese original language, and had coexisted with nature.

Yamato language is developed with the vowel-based sound words, which was believed that the words spoken out have *kotodama* (mysterious language power), and it had no characters. Some people say that in ancient time, characters were made mainly for promises and it was not necessary in Japan since they trusted each other.

Do Japanese take in foreign culture and evolve in Japanese style?

As Japan was an island country, they are curious about different culture, and imported kanji from China. They adopted it in Japanese language. Firstly, they made use of the kanji reading as Japanese reading characters assigning to the similar Japanese sounds. Before long they created simpler sound characters, or hiragana and katakana.

In Japanese there are many words that have the same pronunciation, but different meaning. Then, to make the Japanese word meaning clear, they used the kanji for the Japanese words, which have the same meaning. They also imported western words and used katakana characters to describe them.

How has the Japanese language developed?



The Japanese people coexisted with nature and took their sounds as words in the language, Now, they are called onomatopoeia and say there are the most in the world. It may have worked as the base for adopting foreign words and led to the evolution for the Japanese language.

In Japanese, it is used to be written vertically (from top to down), but nowadays it is also written horizontally (from left to right), and four different characters (hiragana, katakana, kanji and alphabet) are used. There are also abundant words. Because of this, they can deliver their mind with delicate nuance to others to keep their good relationships.

Japanese can express subtle nuances

In these days PC is mostly used for communication. Then, *emoji* (icon characters), which can be expressed the writers' emotion, was created in Japan and is spread to the world and used. Japanese also created many new kanji words when western culture and concept are introduced to Japan after the late 19 century.

They are used also in China today. Some non-Japanese say Japanese use too much *aizuchi* (responding words), but this shows their attitude listening to close to the speaker. Now you will be realized that Japanese language itself is also culture.

Why is Japanese language itself considered as art?



Unlike English that the sound is made after forming a word by alphabets, Japanese word is formed by combining some characters (sounds). Each has only one sound. For instance, cherry blossoms (*Sakura*). You don't know how to pronounce in English until you know the whole alphabets (cherry blossoms).

However, in Japanese you can start to read or write each character (sound) separately as “*Sa-ku-ra*.” In English you count the numbers of a sentence by words, but in Japanese by characters (sounds). In Japanese a group of 5 or 7 characters sound most beautiful. The Japanese poems have been developed as art using this pattern.

There are two types in the Japanese word art

One is *haiku* based on 5-7-5 format. Eg. *chi-ru sa-ku-ra* (falling cherry blossoms) *no-ko-ru sa-ku-ra mo* (the rest of cherry blossoms also) *chi-ru sa-ku-ra* (falling cherry blossoms).

Another is *tanka* based on 5-7-5-7-7 format. in these formats they express their emotion or impression of beautiful nature, ephemeral life, etc.

There are also other art activities regarding Japanese language. Calligraphy lesson is included in the curriculum at many schools. Besides, Card games. *hyakunin-issu* is competed to gain the cards in which excellent *tanka* of 100 masters are written, and *Karuta* in which proverbs are written has been one of the family games.

What does the "You-I spirit" mean?



Many ordinary people of the world support the "my country first" or "me, first policy. Is it the right decision? It is understood to place importance on your survival. However, if you are on a sinking boat, you will share the food and work together with other passengers to stop sinking. This way of thinking is the unspoken consensus of most Japanese.

Japanese think they are a part of the society and are coexisting with others. So, they always care the eye of others and behave with the idea of "after you" or "I will follow you." This attitude is seen in Japanese culture as modesty, consideration, hospitality and others. They even adjust their tradition to accept foreign culture.

The essence of the You-I spirit is in Japanese language

When they introduce themselves to non-Japanese, they say in the order of their first name and family name, respecting other culture. Moreover, they adopted western description on the place names such as "toukyou as Tokyo," and "oosaka as Osaka." These conducts must come from "You-I spirit."

The term "You-I spirit" represents Japanese lifestyle culture as also seen in *busido* and I wish to work as the symbol phrase of coexistence. As a fact that Japan has established an ideal nation with the spirit. I believe it has possibility to be the world model You can learn the sprit deeper in the Japanese language learning process.

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