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AGAINST HOMOGENEITY: VISUAL INSUBORDINATION AND DISCOURSES ON JAPANESE UNIQUENESS

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Abstract: Japan's identity has been a subject of particular array of discourses called *Nihonjinron* generated primarily in its native environment. Those discourses were especially dominant in postwar period and often marked as a result of national quest for reconstructing national identity after devastating defeat. Ranging from various fields of study, from linguistics, philosophy, sociology to geography and biology, *Nihonjinron* rhetoric implements the singularity of Japan and its people by insisting, among other aspects, on particularity of Japanese race and blood which enables mutual understanding among the Japanese and positioning foreigners as "culturally incompetent" to fully apprehend their culture or completely master their language. Therefore, such commending of ethnic and cultural homogeneity and uniqueness has been criticized as Japan's own strategy that supports a notion of its national identity as a paradigm of Western disparity.

However, this "self-orientalism" perspective operates as a far more complex factor than it appears to be; proclaiming the right to name and define Japan's identity as *sui generis*, as well as reinforcing western essentialism of a distant Other.

Questioning the idiosyncrasy, collectivism and production of meanings, this paper investigates the relation between the language, its "originality" and visual spaces in the domain of Japan's cultural identity.

Keywords: Japan, *Nihonjinron*, language, collectivism, visual space, Merleau-Ponty

EMPIRE OF NIHONJINRON

It is not unusual for a non-Japanese to be perplexed in an encounter with both real and imaginary Japan. The congested signs, variety of seemingly randomized elements, arbitrariness in their selection and their sheer amount enhance the disparity usually felt by foreign observers. How is this abundance of symbols and its systems communicated and understood? The answer could be found in a premise that the body is installed in a place of Japanese language, as Roland Barthes cunningly demonstrates in the following, unavoidably lengthy quotation from *The Empire of Signs*.

"Now it happens that in this country (Japan) the empire of signifiers is so immense, so in excess of speech, that the exchange of signs remains of a fascinating richness, mobility, and subtlety, despite the opacity of the language, sometimes even as a consequence of that opacity. The reason for this is that in Japan the body exists, acts, shows itself, gives itself,

without hysteria, without narcissism, but according to a pure – though subtly discontinuous – erotic project. It is not the voice (with which we identify the "rights" of the person) which communicates (communicates what? our – necessarily beautiful – soul? our sincerity? our prestige?), but the whole body (eyes, smile, hair, gestures, clothing) which sustains with you a sort of babble that the perfect domination of the codes strips of all regressive, infantile character. To make a date (by gestures, drawings on paper, proper names) may take an hour, but during that hour, for a message which would be abolished in an instant if it were to be spoken (simultaneously quite essential and quite insignificant), it is the other's entire body which has been known, savored, received, and which has displayed (to no real purpose) its own narrative, its own text." (Barthes, 1992: 9-10)

This body challenges the ideological constructions and forms the narratives, and pushes them away from the linguistic constraints. Barthes' reflective work on Japan suggests the lack or more precisely, the *elusiveness* of a meaning when dealing with such distant Other. All the knowledge foreigner desires to have about Japan has already been filtered and framed by one's corpus of ethnocentric understandings. The notion that the West cannot refrain from production of meanings and mythologizing the foreign cultures, Barthes destabilizes through his methodological instrument of empty signs. In order not to contribute to a history of texts which classify Japan as exotic, he "invents" the devoid one, that without ontology or grand narratives. In that manner, Japan could be rendered as both empty and full of contradictions at the same time, through its immense possibilities of comprehension.

In spite of that being said, *The Empire of Signs* has been characterized as somewhat supportive of the Orientalist discourse with "desire not to compromise the 'otherness' of the East by the symbolic nomenclature and projective categories of Western cognition" (Dale, 2001: 4) and strategy of not writing about Japan but about a country he has chosen to name "Japan". In addition, Barthes' work is labeled as ignorant of "Japanese historical explanations" of the addressed phenomena marked by the signs "filled with 'invisible' weight of a cultural investment determined by a specific history" (Turim, 1998: 128). However, this type of argument also overlooks the fact that these "empty signs" are also located in Japan's own imposing discourses. What remains 'invisible' is also the specific knowledge that Japan itself stimulates in others, directing it towards exoticism as well. In a number of decades, self-orientalism has been a prevailing strategy among the Japanese. Therefore, balancing between the mythologies and discourses carried out on the both sides seems to be an impossible task.

Japan's identity has been a subject of a particular array of discourses called *Nihonjinron* generated primarily in its native environment in order to profess its "uniquely unique" culture. (Ko, 2011: 11) The emergence of those discourses could be traced in the 19th century and Japan's "transformation" into a modern state, but they were especially dominant in the postwar period and often marked as a result of national quest for reconstructing its identity after a devastating defeat. This "cultural exceptionalism" does not presume the standpoint "only-we-the-Japanese-know-what-Japan-is", but is partly a result of a self-defending strategy against foreign criticism of Japan in terms of racism, ethnocentrism and "narrow-

mindedness" (Befu, 2001: 1). Still today, questions such as "What is Japan?", "Who are we, the Japanese?", "What is Japanese society?" remain to be significant in Japanese mind, resulting in continuous (re)publishing of the works on this subject matter in post-millennial era. Cultural determinism of Japan as a postmodern society is also categorization that is supported in and outside of Japanese borders, which sustains the primacy of accumulative mythologizing to reality.

Even in the late Tokugawa period (1603-1868), a Confucian scholar Aizawa Seishisai wrote a collection of political essays entitled *New Theses (Shinron)* (1825) which insisted on Japanese eminence in the world and their self-sufficiency. Aizawa introduced a term *kokutai* (国 *koku* – country、体 *tai* – body, substance, style) in order to justify the policy of national isolation and to emphasize both ethnic and cultural superiority. Promoting Japanese predominance, the origin of Japanese emperor is directly linked with sun goddess Amaterasu (Aizawa mentions that many emperors saw her in their reflection in the mirror) and universal superiority of its people is unquestionable through many bodily metaphors ("our Divine Realm rightly constitutes the head and shoulders of the world and controls all nations", Western "barbarians" are positioned as "lower extremities of the world", emperor is seen as Amaterasu's own "flesh and blood" (Wakabayashi, 1999: 149,157). Based on relative disinformation about the Western governing success through Christianity, he proclaims that the "essence of a nation" is only to be found in the unity of government and religion where "all people in the realm are of one heart and mind" (ibid, 152). Inclining to corpora-centric logic, this indicative homogeneity of Japanese

nation has been underpinned with a conviction that relation between ruler and its people is of the same importance and intensity as parent-child bond and affection, which leads to securing a strong nation through strategy of unquestionable loyalty.

This perspective is further developed during the Meiji Restoration when the efforts to transform almost all aspects of Japan were increasingly present. By adoption of Western technology and values, everything from political system and industry to culture and society, was subject to a radical shift.

"With this framework, the *kazoku kokka* (family state) was projected as an enduring essence, which provided the state with an elevated iconography of consanguineous unity, enhanced the legitimacy of new economic, social and political relations, and provided the Japanese people with a new sense of national purpose and identity." (Weiner, 2008: 1)

During this period, in transcendence of modernity, the birth of a nation-state was reinforced, as Michael Weiner states, by *minzoku* (ethnicity, nation) paradigm which supposes that „both race and nation were regarded as naturally occurring phenomena“ (ibid, 2). Pointing to the authors such as Takakusu Junjiro and Kada Tetsuji and their notions of „culture of Japanese blood“ and superiority of *ketsuzokushugi* (the ideology of the blood family), Weiner identifies the process of „the naturalization of culture“ when biological determinants support the homogeneity of the Japanese nation. On the other hand, when questioning complexity of traditional/modern dichotomy in Japan and searching for ways to "improve" Japanese race, some intellectuals supported ideas of mixing Japanese and "Caucasian blood" through institution of marriage with Europeans. (Befu, 2001: 126)

It is argued that in the pre-war discourse, national culture has been regarded in a same manner as biological/ genetic configuration of Japanese race – as "the manifestation of a primordial or innate essence which enabled Japanese alleged superiority among the rest of the nations."^[1] Noteworthy in this context, in "Making Sense of Nihonjinron", Sugimoto Yoshio proposes the $n=e=c$ equation which defines interchangeability of the concepts of nation, ethnicity and culture in the realm of *Nihonjinron*. The Japanese term *nihon minzoku* stands for both "biologically racial" and "culturally defined ethnic group", revealing the linguistic and ideological "vastness" in favor of aforementioned equation. Thus, culture in Japanese context seems to be a part of an organic entity which unified and intellectually molded its people.

Many premises of *Nihonjinron* can perplex those readers who are not well informed of these discourses. The examination of Japanese cultural characterization comprises the vast body of work – from scholarly writing to an "impressionistic essay on Japan without any methodological or scientific rigor" (Befu, 2001: 2). Such seemingly broad specter of discourses is conceivable due to terminology of word *ron* which translates as "theory", "doctrine", "interpretation", "argument", "standpoint", "comment", "essay" etc. Methodology that *Nihonjinron* writers often employ is comparative dissimilarity that Japan shares with other countries; hence those discourses generate "the facts" about other cultures as well. This cross-cultural approach inevitably pushes those discourses in (racial) hierarchal classification. On the other hand, indifferent to method of applied generalization and declarative descriptive style, Japan welcomes foreign participation in *Nihonjinron*, proving that Japanese "are keenly

interested in the Otherness of themselves" (ibid, 56). American anthropologist Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) (a study which was commissioned by American government in order to provide better understanding of people whose territory they would soon occupy) was on a best-seller list in Japan selling more than two million copies after its first translation.^[2]

Through this cacophony of divergent and sometimes contradictory perspectives, the core of *Nihonjinron* is based on ethnicity discourses which proclaim archetypal exclusivism and homogeneity of the Japanese people through their relation with the emperor with whom they share their blood. Ranging from various fields of study, from linguistics, philosophy, sociology to geography and biology, *Nihonjinron* rhetoric implements the singularity of Japan and its people by insisting on particularity of Japanese race and blood which enables mutual understanding (among the Japanese) and positioning foreigners as "culturally incompetent" to fully apprehend their culture or completely master their language because "comprehension of these unique features supposedly requires not rational or logical understanding but intuitive insight [...] only natives can achieve" (ibid, 67). More precisely, these theories recognize that the fluency in Japanese and correct usage of honorific and polite expressions could be achieved by foreigners, but not to the degree of "complete thinking" in Japanese which could only be regulated by the patterns of their nativeness and mother tongue.^[3] Does this standpoint suggest that the true meaning, understanding and communication actually go beyond language? If so, then we should explore the realms that produce the meanings away from conventional linguistic system and towards taxonomy of bodily comprehension.

However consistent Japanese blood might be (as proposed by numerous *Nihonjinron* theories), their bodies are undeniably different. Precisely this discrepancy of the bodies is to be recognized in the work of Japanese filmmakers and their "unique" aesthetics and politics. In *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film*, Darrell Davis explores the works of famous directors of wartime period who reconstructed the national identity under imposed Western influences. By defining "monumental style" of these films through celebration of the Japanese tradition, Davis notes that "films in the monumental style don't just preach the gospel of Japaneseness, they integrate *kokutai* – the body of the nation – into the technical design of the films to produce a work with a somatic, palpable flavor of Japan rather than a mere exhortation." (Davis, 1996: 113)

I would like to propose the perspective that surpasses the limitation of Japaneseness as oneness, namely that which is characterized solemnly through elements of traditional culture and collective/unified spirit. Therefore, I argue against rigid critical categorization of collectiveness and uniformity of the Japanese (people and artists) and incline to give prominence to heterogeneous groupings, each unveiling their own "universalities" through bodily representation.

In *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron* (2001), famous Japanese anthropologist Befu Harumi who engaged in investigating the "uniqueness" of Japan's national identity over the years, outlines the methodology of not undermining the extreme and overly disputable claims of Japaneseness discourses. Instead, he takes them as a platform which can deepen one's knowledge in terms

of "form and function" of this particular "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm). Opposed to Andrew Miller's and Peter Dale's perspective of critical evaluation of *Nihonjinron*, Befu's non-judgmental attitude allows analyzing Japanese culture by implementing various discourses (in a range from mundane to knowledgeable) that Japanese produce in order to (re)invent their identity. If we take Zygmunt Bauman's notion that all communities are not realities but constructed projects, and in addition, Michael Foucault's standpoint that only within discourse it is possible to generate the truth, the "falsity" of *Nihonjinron* perfectly encapsulates the cinematic frame where fiction always emanates the various truths.

When dealing with Japan, the terms such as "originality", "adaptation", "copying" and "reinventing" (of the language, but which often go further from the linguistic field and are applied to Japanese cinema, art and technology in general) appear to be frequent. Influences of Chinese political, religious and cultural elements during the 7th century, and certainly technological advances of the West in the 19th century are singled out as "borrowings" which mark Japanese curiosity and inferiority.

In writing before you, such phrases are not used to enforce the discourses that position Japan and rest of the world in dichotomies of favored and underprivileged, or marking Japan's identity as an aberration of others'. Equally important, even though we are dealing with nationally determined culture, I argue against drawing the conclusions on the Japanese uniqueness following the *Nihonjinron* discourses on homogeneity, but rather intending to identify the issues that are more lucidly displayed in this specific cultural context

and which could provide a perspective which breaks its self-contained scholarship and offer a new approach towards world cinema and national identities in general.

Moreover, *Nihonjinron* theories could be enforced in cinematic readings in order to turn against its own self-alienating, constricted aspect and provide more liberal attitude in communicating cinema.

SURPASSING THE LANGUAGE

Japanese language is a complex system of three different scripts – *hiragana* (basic Japanese syllabary of 46 characters used for native words that are not written in ideogram, as well as verb and adjective inflections and particles), *katakana* (phonetically same as hiragana, used for transcriptions of foreign language words, loan words, onomatopoeia, scientific terms)^[4] and *kanji* (adopted Chinese characters used in writing one or more words with at least one of from each categories of two readings: *on yomi* – Chinese “sound reading” and *kun yomi* – Japanese “meaning reading”). Also, *romaji* – an application of Latin script in Japanese language is an inherent segment of Japanese writing system. This specifically complex writing system enforces the individual to “maintain throughout his or her lifetime a continually growing relationship with the written language, one which moves constantly towards a great mastery of the non-phonetic” (Burch, 1979: 36). Noel Burch claims that Japanese language is the only such in the world that practiced equal usage of a phonetic and a non-phonetic writing system which enabled the Japanese to effectively deal with Western technology, far better than those who kept non-phonetic system to this day. Following Jacques Derrida's premises on

logocentrism and “a hypothetical grapho-centrism” as opposite ideologies, he further concludes that linear and non-linear writing modes supported the radicalization of Chinese thought in Japanese aesthetics and art. (ibid, 41)

One of the most recognizable names in *Nihonjinron* discourse is Kindaichi Haruhiko who wrote *Nippongo (The Japanese Language)* (1957)^[5] – a book known as a classic defense of the national language, and the nation itself following the logic of “supposedly perfect isomorphism”^[6]. Kindaichi promotes the “unique position” of Japanese language among the languages of “civilized countries”, insisting that Japanese was not influenced by other languages due to its both geographical and linguistic isolation. He acknowledges direct Chinese influence – especially on vocabulary but then lessens it in a way by reminding us that this influence happened “hundreds of years ago, and that there has been no such influence since” (Kindaichi, 2010: 33). Although Chinese influence is acknowledged to some extent, in the *Nihonjinron* discourse it is often rendered as peripheral since it is a matter of antiquity.

The problem of Japanese language and “lack of its originality” has been a topic in Tze-Yue G. Hue's *Frames of Anime – Culture and Image-Building* (2010) where she singles out the Japanese complex of “borrowed language” and elaborates her viewpoint that “constant national ‘desire’ to seek a referential space for self-understanding, self-projection and self-expression led to discovery and application of a new medium [Japanese animation] in the twentieth century” (Hu, 2010: 18). This viewpoint can be supported by famous Japanese professor and cultural theorist, Kato Shuichi who explained Japan's profound

sensibility to aesthetic as a consequence of the country's long-lasting isolation politics. "Japanese culture became structured with its aesthetic values at its center. Aesthetic concerns prevailed even over religious beliefs and duties" (Quoted in Cavallaro, 2013: 47).

Hu proposes the method of "preframing of reality and truth" in Japan in the context of visual forms where phenomena are free of "already pre-arranged or pre-classified by an existing organized language" (ibid, 16). Author supports this thesis with notions of both Eastern and Western philosophical explorations of language limitations, starting from Zen Buddhism *Lankavatara Sutra* (translated in English by famous Japanese author Suzuki Daisetz T.) which diminishes the importance of the spoken and written words:

- "the truth is beyond the words",
- "words are not the highest reality, nor is what is expressed in the words the highest reality",
- "the attachment to words as having self-nature takes place owing to one's clinging to [...] false imaginings since beginningless time",
- "even when there are no [corresponding] objects there are words, Mahamati; for instance, the hare's horns, the tortoise's hair, a barren woman's child, etc. --they are not at all visible in the world but the words are; Mahamati, they are neither entities nor nonentities but expressed in words. If, Mahamati, you say that because of the reality of words the objects are, this talk lacks in sense. Words are not known in all the Buddha-lands; words, Mahamati, are an artificial creation. In some Buddha-lands ideas are indicated by looking steadily, in others by gestures, in still others by a frown, by the movement of the eyes, by laughing, by yawning, or by the clearing of the throat, or by

recollection, or by trembling." (Suzuki, 2009)

This standpoint could be accompanied with Heidegger's conviction that the problem with Japanese language is that "it lacks the delimiting power to represent objects related in an unequivocal order above and below each other" (Heidegger, 1982: 2). Not only that the words are beyond reality (Zen) but it seems that Japanese language evades the principles of rational order or categorization. In Heidegger's *On the Way to the Language* (1956), dialogue takes place between the "inquirer" and certain Japanese, mediating on questions of language, hermeneutics and possibility of communicative interchange between the interlocutors coming from different cultures. Reminiscing of prominent Japanese philosopher Kuki Shuzo (with whom Heidegger had contact) and his attempt to examine the essence of Japanese art through European aesthetic concepts, the inquirer asserts the certain danger that arises from the language of the dialogue – not of *what*, nor the *way* it was discussed but the radically different "nature of language" or, we should add, the variance of the bodies that produce it. The further critical issue emerges when defining or speaking about something which then conforms the object of a discussion. The hidden nature of language and "house of Being" (which implies the essence of language) cannot be fully comprehended by European (metaphysical) conceptualizations. Aware of different concepts of the East and West, Heidegger uses inquirer to ask the Japanese "what does the Japanese world experience or understand by language" in European sense. Interestingly, after a silent pause the response comes in the following manner – "there is a Japanese word that says the essential being of language, rather than being of use as a name for speaking and for

language" (ibid, 23). This is further articulated through cohering the notion that "the essential being of language cannot be anything linguistic" (ibid, 24) with the "house of Being". Heidegger then proposes that the certain hints and gestures (visible in *noh* theatre when for example on the empty stage, actor uses his open hand and positions it in the eyebrow level to depict mountain scenery) touch upon the nature of language "without doing it inquiry". This conclusion is similar to Japanese psychologist Sasaki Masao's reasoning on formation of images and what he names "empty writing" – practice of using forefinger to write on the palm or in the air, kanji "in order to bring the required form [...] into consciousness" (Hopkins, 1999: 174). In both instances, body enables the imaginary appearances. Could it be that Heidegger's articulation of the language problem suggests the same notion as *Nihonjinron* theories of inadequacy of foreigners to comprehend Japanese? Is it, therefore, possible to achieve deeper understanding through the images of the bodies as they bypass the structural and discursive differences of the languages, sharing the same biological patterns and conditionality?

Barthes writes about knowing the foreign language without understanding it –

"to descend to untranslatable, to experience its shock without ever muffling it, until everything Occidental in us totters and the rights of the 'father tongue' vacillate – that tongue which comes to us from our fathers and which makes us, in our turn, fathers and proprietors of a culture which, precisely, history transforms into 'nature'." (Barthes, 1992: 6)

Perhaps it is possible to grasp the kind of language Barthes dreams about – that which does not assume

the words that came from the mouths of "our or their" fathers, but which is instantly produced and comprehended through bodies which show resistance to ideology.

Consequently, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the language serves as congruous and highly applicable when dealing with the questions of art and culture in Japan. In his conception of language, the body is a vessel that enables thoughts and ideas, for "the ideas we are speaking of would not be better known if we had no body and no sensibility; it is then that they would be inaccessible to us" (Quoted in Dillon, 1999: 80).

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), he critically evaluates both empiricist and intellectualist theories of language, noting that language accomplishes thought and not presumes it, that is – speech only completes the thought and does not translate a "ready-made thought".

The primacy of perception in Merleau-Ponty's term, refers to a body as a base for experiencing the world, because "every perception is a communication" by "coupling of our body with the things" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 332), that is to say that the perceived object can never be separated from the one who perceives it.

Later in his posthumously published work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964) notion of embodiment diverted his attention from phenomenology to "flesh of the world" which stands for intertwining and reversibility of the sensate and the sensible. Presuming that communication is always pre-established, Merleau-Ponty suggests that in order to

"understand language as an originating operation, we must pretend to have never spoken, [...], look at it as deaf people look at those who are speaking,

compare the art of language to other arts of expression, and try to see it as one of those mute arts". (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 46)

J. B. Pontails observes that Merleau-Ponty always relates language "to forms of pre-linguistic expression, like painting, where he sees meaning emerge, but in a less articulated way" (Quoted in Dillon, 1993: 80).

By "secreting its own signification", art without words – such as music and painting – communicates with its audience on the level of idea exchange demonstrating Merleau-Ponty assertion that "the fact is that we have the power to understand beyond what we could have spontaneously thought" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 219). In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language, thought and language are not absolutely relatable, language is not considered as a sign of thinking.

The matter of language is closely related to the notion of silence. Thought and language are joined in a certain transformative process which then leads to differentiating of *thinking language* and *speaking thought*. As silence envelops the language on the level of "thinking language" or is required before and after "speaking thoughts" Merleau-Ponty suggests that "language lives only from silence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 233). The meaning which signs of language enable emerges from the interval that comes between the words. Merleau-Ponty uses metaphor of footprint as a mark of body movement in order to imply the meaning of thought that language carries. Acknowledging his classification of two languages – empirical and creative, we should address the importance of silence in terms of creative language which "frees the meaning captive in the thing" (Johnson, 1994: 82), allowing us to probe the uninspected meanings that come from the unvoiced bodies of Japanese cinema.

Film director's position stands in the same platform as writer's or painter's, only to be installed in their fine middle – not on the "wrong side" (ibid) of the writer who only has to deal with language neither in the "silent world of lines and colors" of painter's expression.

Merleau-Ponty suggests that "we must uncover the threads of silence with which speech is intertwined" (ibid, 83-84) and the medium of both cinema and body appear to be appropriately most suitable for this task. Not just that silence enables the comprehension of what's been said but it offers communicative strategies which produce the meaning in equally ambiguous ambience. "There is no choice to be made between the world and art, or between "our and absolute painting, for they blend into one another." (ibid, 86)

When dealing with Japanese art, the same precondition follows – cinema and body are reveled to the degree that they should not be inspected separately. Drawing on a Federic Jameson's notion that the visual is "*essentially* pornographic" and that films in general "ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body" (Jameson, 1992:1), we are bound to uncover all the layers which conceal Japan's body and silently look at its undisguised flesh.

On a track of Tanaka Katsuhiko's impression that "the habit of pessimism towards the mother tongue" (Quoted in Yeounsuk, 1996:14) is unquestionable trait of Japan's cultural identity, and acknowledging the fact that Japanese language was never used (written) without the aid of Chinese, it is viable to suggest that in Japan, apart from language, other communicative practices are expected and desired.

As Susan Sontag remarks, Barthes views Japan as "aesthete's utopia", a "culture where aesthete goals

are central" which "liberates" the prosperity of signs. (Sontag, 1996: xxv) The comprehension of the affluence of signs does not occur firstly through language but, I argue, the communication and transgression of

ideas occur though both body images on the screen and in the "real" bodies of audience. In Japan, the body is the base that contrives the formation of the contact with the (outer) world.

ENDNOTES

- [1] The victorious outcome of Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) theoretician Kato Hiroyuki "explained" pertaining social Darwinism; in 1869 Fukizawa Yukichi ranked countries and nations on an evolutionary scale inevitably resulting in the primacy of Japanese racial and cultural qualities.
- [2] Benedict did not visit and conduct research in Japan, but based her work on interviews with Japanese-Americans and Japanese experts.
- [3] Look further the work of Tsunoda Tadanobu.
- [4] Hiragana and katakana are often referred collectively as kana.
- [5] During postwar period, within commanding self-orientalist discourse, Japanese language was also a subject of extreme criticism. It was considered "limited" facilitating only emotional instances and not providing any logical communicative agency. In 1946, famous Japanese writer Shiga Naoya published an essay titled "Japanese Language Problems" in influential journal Kaizo where he proposed replacing Japanese language with another language such as French. Such suggestions were also visible in the past when Mori Arinori recommended to establish English as national language. Mori defended his position with an attitude that the Japanese were eager to modernize their nation but such task would be unfruitful with a weak tool such as Japanese language (which was actually derivative from Chinese and therefore never autonomous). He proclaims a strategy of abandoning the linguistic amalgam of Japanese and Chinese, that is – a „weak medium of communication“, and infusing English language as a language of Japan which has had and will continue to have a great use outside Japanese territory. In Japanese language and its "incompleteness", Shiga found great danger to national prospects, arguing that possibly the war could have been avoided if this replacement occurred sooner. Shiga's radical proposal motivated Kindaichi to write *Nippongo*

which leads to conclusion that Japanese language has been a subject of both empowering and disempowering ideologies.

- [6] Referring to a relation between speaker of the Japanese language and carrier of Japanese culture opposite from those par example of English or French domain differentiating various cultures and nations. Further look: Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*.

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