Chinese Culture and Japanese Identity: Traces of Po Chü-i in a Peripheral Country

Sukehiro Hirakawa

The word "nationalism," with its various Japanese equivalents, has been associated in many Japanese minds, as well as in Western minds, with nationalistic wars which Japan fought within the time span of fifty-one years: from 1894 to 1945. Japan fought against China in 1894-95, against Russia in 1904-05, entered World War I in a secondary role, and played an important "villian's" role in World War II. Westerners talk a great deal of the Japanese ultranationalism of the war years. Their Knowledge of Japan seems almost exclusively drawn from the World War II experience, so much so that other aspects of the East Asian traditions are often overshadowed. I would like to discuss in this paper then, about earlier expressions of nationalism which were largely in reaction to a Japanese sense of inferiority to China. The discussions about nationalism depend heavily on its definition. But, perhaps it is as well for me to avoid theoretical assumptions and confine myself to a straightforward narrative since Western readers are rather unfamiliar with the problem. First, an overview of cultural relations between China and Japan.

Japan of the 1980s is considered an economic power, however, Japan has always been conscious of her small size geographically: a peripheral country scattered along the continent. Diplomatic relations between Japan and China have not necessarily been equal because Chinese perception of the world order was hierarchical, while the Japanese were not always satisfied with that world view. Shotoku Taishi, Prince Regent of Japan towards the end of the sixth century, sent the following letter to the Emperor of China:

> The Son of Heaven in the land where the sun rises addresses a letter to the Son of Heaven in the land where the sun sets. We hope you are in good health.

Yang-ti, the Emperor of Sui China, was not pleased with this letter and said, "This is an impolite letter from the barbarians. Such a letter should not again be brought to our attention " (This is found in the *Sui History's* chapter on

East Barbarians). The Chinese were accustomed to a Sino-centric view of the world order and conceived of themselves as being on a higher plane than other peoples.

So far as the cultural relationship is concerned, in Japan's history, the first era of assimilating Chinese culture was in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries when envoys and students were sent to T'ang China. The second era was around the fourteenth century when ships were sent to Ming China. The third era was from the seventeenth century to the opening of the country in 1868. At that time, Confucianism became the ideological basis of the shogunal government in Japan. The fourth surge in the Sino-Japanese cultural relationship went in the opposite direction, with China's sending several thousand students a year to Japan after Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, at a time when the decadent Ch'ing dynasty abolished the examination system for governmental officials. We might add the fifth period which is just beginning: Den Xiaoping now sends to Japan many Chinese students. This is the general background of Sino-Japanese relations.

All through those years of contact with Chinese culture, the foreign book most widely read and studied in Japan was the *Analects* of Confucius. Indeed, there was a time when the Chinese *Analects* were far easier for many Japanese to understand than the Japanese *Tale of Genji*. Today, there are still quite a number of Japanese men whose names derive from the Chinese sacred book, which is one indication of how deep its influence has been in Japan. The Japanese Prime Minister of the 1930s, Hirota, who was condemned to death by hanging by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (by mistake, I believe) as the responsible war criminal for the Japanese aggression against China, had a Confucian name of kōki: ("A gentleman should be open-minded and resolute in his will" of the *Analects*). As Confucian influence in East Asia was so immense, I don't dare touch upon it. It is analogous to Westerner's speaking about the influence of the Bible in the Western world. Instead, I have chosen a literary figure, Po Chü-i, a Chinese poet of the eighth century, known also by his nom de plume Po Lo-t'ien whom Japanese pronounce Haku Rakuten, T'ang poet born in 772 and died in 846. I have chosen Po Chü-i because his case sheds light not only on the problems of literary influence but also on the problems of Japanese cultural nationalism.

Therefore, my discussion consists of two parts: the first part concerns Po Chü-i's influence; the second part details Japanese reaction. On the life and times of Po Chü-i, there is an excellent biography written by Arthur

Waley.[1] However,Waley did not deal at any length with the question of the poet's reputation after his death down to the present day. I traced his influence in Japan in one of my books written in Japanese,[2] and I shall try to communicate some of its contents. First, I shall introduce you to one of Po's poems. As a bureaucrat, Po, who was often sent to remote, unhealthy places, wrote:

> The Sun has risen in the sky, but I idly lie in bed;
> In my small tower-room the layers of quilts protect me from the cold;
> Leaning on my pillow, I want to hear I-ai's temple bell,
> Pushing aside the blind, I gaze upon the snow of Hsiang-lu peak . . . .[3]

The bureaucrat in a remote province obviously has little to do. He consoles himself by writing poems.

Now let us review the influence of the Chinese poet in the imagery of a Japanese scholar-statesman, Sugawara no Michizane, who was born in 845, one year before Po's death. Michizane went into exile in Kyūshū, where he wrote many peoms in Chinese. (It is important to note at this point that despite the proximity of the two empires, the Japanese and Chinese languages had little in common. Therefore, speaking in Japanese and writing in Chinese was a great strain. Yet, the knowledge of written Chinese was indispensible to scholars or government officials in Japan):

Hearing Wild Geese

> I am a banished man and you guests;
> We are both lonely wayfarers.
> Leaning on my pillow, I wonder when I shall
> be allowed to go back;
> But you, wild geese, can no doubt go back
> home next spring.

Not Going Out of the Gate

> Since I was banished and put in this poor hut,
> I have always been in horror of death.
> I only gaze upon the color of Tofurō's roof
> And listen to Kannon's temple bell.

The image of the man leaning on his pillow gazing and wondering derives of course from Chū-i's poem. As the place of Michizane's exile was Dazai-fu in Kyūshū, the temple in the poem was changed from the Chinese I-ai to the Japanese Kannon, and the snow of Hsiang-lu peak to the colour of

Tofurō's roof. (Tofuro was a government building whose roof is said to have been built with Chinese tiles). Michizane was an exile who was "always in horror of death," and actually he did die in exile, but he continued to write poems imitating Pò Chü-i.

Michizane lived during the Heian period, so named because the capital of Japan was at Heian, present-day Kyōto. This period, from 794 to 1184, was also called the Fujiwara period because Japan was dominated by the Fujiwara family. Institutionally, Japan and China were quite different. Japan was governed by the aristocracy while China was governed by the bureaucracy and Chinese bureaucrates were selected by state examinations. This imported system did not fit the Japanese reality. Michizane was promoted to a high rank in the court for his scholarly merit, but later he was banished by the Fujiwara family and died in exile. Michizane must have been popular, though, among the people who did not owe loyalty to the Fujiwara family. After Michizane's death, many natural disasters and calamities occurred. In order to placate the spirit of Michizane, he was deified and a Shinto shrine was erected in his memory. Michizane was considered to be the symbol of those who by their own scholarly merits attain a very high rank. His Tenjin shrine in Kyōto still has many devotees today, notably mothers who pray for their children's success in university entrance examinations and buy amulets.

Now let us consider the depth of the penetration of Chinese culture into the Japanese courtly life. Sei Shōnagon is a lady-in-waiting who wrote in Japanese *The Pillow Book* around the year 1000, more than a century after Michizane's time. Po Chü-i was known to the Japanese during his lifetime, and by the year 1000, his *Literary Collection* was widely read among the Japanese. Sei Shōnagon herself put the book at the head of her list of important works. *Pillow Book* contains the following episode:

> One day, when the snow lay thick on the ground and it was so cold that the lattices had all been closed, I and the other ladies were sitting with Her Majesty, chatting and poking the embers in the brazier.
>
> "Tell me , Shōnagon," said the Empress,
> "how is the snow on Hsiang-lu peak?"
>
> I told the maid to raise one of the lattices and then rolled up the blind all the way. Her Majesty smiled. . . .[4]

It was because Shōnagon, as well as the Empress, had remembered the phrase in Po's poem quoted above that she instantly took the hint. If a princess of Japan today refers to a phrase from Shakespeare at Court, I do

not think any lady-in-waiting would catch the allusion. It is not a question of quality of the ladies-in-waiting; I wish merely to suggest that even a representative of English literature like Shakespeare cannot have as much influence today as Po Chü-i had one thousand years ago. I also doubt whether even at the English Court a princess would convey her thought to a lady-in-waiting in a phrase from Shakespeare, as if they had a code between them.

In the Japan of the tenth century, however, people who memorized famous phrases of Po, like the Empress Sadako and Sei Shōnagon, were not necessarily exceptions. Lady Murasaki, a contemporary of Shōnagon's, wrote in her *Tale of Genji* as follows:

> Once when all day long he had sat watching the snow whirling through the dark sky, at dusk the clouds suddenly cleared, and raising the blinds and leaning on his pillow, he looked out on such moonlight as only the glittering nights of late winter can show. Far off the faint chiming of the temple-bell whispered that another day had passed.[5]

It is needless to say that this image also came from the poem by Po quoted earlier, although the passage from the *Tale of Genji* has aesthetically a different mood from Po's poem, in which the poet idly lay in bed in the late morning. There is also an episode in which Lady Murasaki taught Po's *Literary Collection* to the Empress Akiko, to whom she was a lady-in-waiting. Despite the prejudice against women studying Chinese (which was thought to be uniquely a gentlement's occupation), Murasaki wrote in her diary that

> Since the summer before last, very secretly, in odd moments when there happened to be no one about, I have been reading with Her Majesty the two books of ballads (by Po) . . . .

It is well known, too, that the authoress made many references to Po's poems, and especially to "The Everlasting Remorse" in the first chapter of the *Tale of Genji.*

In addition, we have material which statistically shows how widely Po Chü-i was read in Japan in that era. The *Tale of Genji* was written about 1000 A.D., and in about 1018, a Sino-Japanese anthology called *Wa-Kan-Rōei-shū* was compiled by Fujiwara no Kintō. This Sino-Japanese anthology served as a standard textbook in Japan for more than five hundred years. When

the Jesuits came to Japan toward the end of the sixteenth century, an edition was published by the Christian printing press in Nagasaki as a Japanese language text for missionaries. The contents of the anthology are classified as follows:

Wa-kan-Rōei-shū (Sino-Japanese Anthology) compiled in 1018

- Total 804
  - Chinese poems 588
    - 234 by Chinese poets (138 by Po Chü-i)
    - 354 by Japanese poets (44 by Sugawara no Fumitoki) (38 by Sugawara no Michizane)
  - Japanese poems 216
    - (26 by Ki no Tsuraykui)

The anthology indicates something of the tastes of the Japanese in that era, and it continued to influence them. Even the Nō plays written centuries later in the Muromachi era contain many references to Po's verses collected in this anthology.

Po Chü-i knew that his poems were read in Japan, for he said in 845 that copies of his works had been taken to Japan and Korea. As for the relationship between Po and Japan, there is the following episode:

> A curious story, connected with Po's cult of the Future Buddha Maitreya, is told in a collection of anecdotes called *I Shih*, which dates from the second half of the ninth century: 'In the first year of Hui Ch'ang (841), when Li Shih-lêng was Inspector General of Ch'ê-tung (the region just south of the Yangtze delta) a merchant met with a hurricane which blew his ship far out of its course. At last, after more than a month, he came to a great mountain, upon which the clouds, the trees, the white cranes were all of strange and magical form unlike any that he had ever seen in the World of Men. Presently someone came down from the mountain-side and having asked how he had got there and heard the merchant's story, told him to tie up his boat and come on shore. "You must present yourself to the Heavenly Master," he said. He then led the merchant to a vast building that looked like a Buddhist or Taoist monastery. After his name had been sent in, the merchant was brought into the presence of a venerable Taoist whose hair and eyebrows were completely white. He was seated at the upper end of a large hall, with some twenty or thirty

attendants mounting guard over him. "Being a man of the Middle Kingdom," the aged Taoist said, "it must be by some special ordinance of Fate that you succeeded in reaching this place. For this, I would have you know, is the fairy mountain P'êng-lai. But as you are here, I expect you would like to have a look round." And he told one of the attendants to take the merchant round the Palace precincts and show him the sights. He was led on, past jade terraces and trees of halcyon brightness that dazzled him as he passed. They went through courtyard after courtyard, each with its own name, till they came at last to one the gate of which was very tightly locked and barred. But he was allowed to peep in, and saw borders full of every kind of flower. In a hall that opened on to the garden was a cushioned couch, and on the steps that led up to the hall incense was burning. The merchant asked what courtyard it was. "This," said his guide, "is the courtyard of Po Lo-t'ien. But he is still in the Middle Kingdom and has not yet come to take possession of it." The merchant made note of what he had heard, and when after a voyage of some weeks he arrived back at Yüch-chou, he told the whole story to Li Shih-lêng, who in turn sent a full report to Po Chü-i. Po had always striven for re-birth in the Paradise of Maitreya, and he replied by sending to Li two poems:

A traveller came from across the seas
Telling of strange sights.
'In a deep fold of the sea-hills
I saw a terrace and tower.
In the midst there stood a Fairy Temple
With one niche empty.
They all told me this was waiting
For Lo-t'ien to come.'

Traveller, I have studied the Empty Gate;[6]
I am no disciple of Fairies.
The story you have just told
Is nothing but an idle tale.
The hills of ocean shall never be
Lo-t'ien's home.
When I leave the earth it will be to go
To the Heaven of Bliss Fulfilled.[7]

Arthur Waley imagines the circumstances in which the two poems were

written: according to Waley there is not very much doubt as to what actually happened. Po's immense popularity in Japan had already begun, and some Chinese merchant visiting Japan was asked whether Po was still alive and was told that if the poet ever came to Japan a wonderful reception awaited him, or words to that effect. Hearing of this, Li Shih-lêng wrote a story somewhat on the lines of the one just quoted, transposing the merchant's report into a typical Taoist tale in which Japan figures as one of the Islands of the blest (as it often was in poetic language). Li Shih-leng's story was an elegant trifle meant to flatter and amuse Po, of whose illness Li had no doubt heard.

By chance, I found the following anecdote in a Japanese book entitled *Kokon-chomon-jū*. It reveals the psychology of the Japanese who were waiting for Po to come. The title of the anecdote is: "Ōe no Tomotsuna converses with Po Lo-t'ien in his dream." It says:

> On the eighteenth of the tenth month of the sixth year of Tenryaku (952), Po Lo-t'ien appeared in Councillor Tomotsuna's dream. Tomotsuna was enchanted to see Po, who was dressed in white and a dark ruddy face. Four men in blue followed him. When Tomotsuna asked him, "Have you come from the Heaven of Bliss Fulfilled?" The poet replied, "Yes." Although Po said he had come to say something to Tomotsuna, he awoke from his dream and felt very sorry.

Tomatsuna might have known the two poems of Po quoted above so he could ask him if he had come from "The Heaven of Bliss Fulfilled," the Paradise of Maitreya.

Po Chü-i was a Buddhist devotee, but in Japan he was once deified in a Shinto shrine near Kyōto. The deification is understandable since Sugawara no Michizane, who was regarded as Po's Japanese counterpart, was deified in the shrine of Kitano Tenjin, it would seem appropriate that Po be worshipped as an incarnation of wisdom and poetry. I don't think that the shrine dedicated to Po Chü-i exists today at Nishi-no-kyō. However there still is in Kyōto a Shinto festival car dedicated to Po Chü-i, which makes a parade together with other cars dedicated to gods and historical heroes of the Japanese people during the gion Metsuri festivals.

If one tries to find a parallel in the West for the relationship between Chinese culture and the surrounding East Asian countries, the relationship

between classical Latin culture and the European countries will correspond. As written Chinese had been the cultural language and *lingua franca* of the East Asian countries for more than 1,200 years, so was Latin for European countries. An example of the correlation is the image of the teacher of Chinese classics who often appeared in Japanese novels and who resembles the teachers of Latin in Western novels. He is conservative and severe, wears a moustache, and makes his pupils memorize passages. The pupils do not like this old-fashioned manner of teaching, but later they remember the classes with nostalgia. James Hilton's *Goodbye Mr. Chips* has its counterparts in Japanese literature.

Nevertheless, there are some aspects of the relationship between Chinese culture and the East Asian countries which differ from the relationship between classical Latin culture and the European countries. First, many European languages belong to the same linguistic family as Latin, whereas Japanese and Korean do not belong to the same family as Chinese. The origins are different. Second, some Europeans may regard themselves as the inheritors of classical Latin culture, but it is impossible for the Japanese to think that they are the direct inheritors of Chinese culture. There are eight hundred million or more Chinese living on the Chinese continent. Even if the present-day Chinese of the mainland are rather ignorant of their own past and if perhaps some Chinese classics are much more studied in Japan and in the United States of America, than they are in China, still the direct inheritors of the Chinese culture are those who speak Chinese in their daily life. Finally, Latin culture now, unlike in the days of the Roman Empire, threatens nobody, while China, with its great population, can still be a threatening presence for the surrounding countries.

Now what I have said in the first half of my paper may appear to have nothing to do with Japanese nationalism. It was a rough sketch of Chinese literary influence on Japan, and particularly of Po Chü-i's immense popularity among the educated Japanese. But I should not talk too much about the cultural borrowings of the Japanese because it confirms the stereotype notion of Japan as a nation of borrowers. Literary historians look for Po Chü-i's influence in the *Tale of Genji*, but what is most imporant is the fact that the literary genre of psychological novel was a Japanese invention. Chinese began to write novels only in the fourteenth century.

Now I come to the second, and main, part of my discussion of Japanese nationalism. Among Japanese works of literature I very much like Nō plays. In one of them, written probably by Zeami, I think we can recognize early

expressions of Japanese cultural nationalism. The title of the Nō play in question is *Haku Rakuten,* which is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese poet Po Lo-t'ien (Po Chü-i). As I said earlier, in the ninth century the composition of Chinese verse became fashionable at the Japanese Court. Japanese men like Sugawara no Michizane wrote in Chinese, as Europeans of the Middle Ages tended to write in Latin instead of the vernacular languages. But fortunately, in Japan, thanks to sexual discrimination, women were supposed to be uncultured and therefore continued to write in Japanese. That was one reason why the masterpieces of Japanese literature of that time were written by ladies-in-waiting.

Native forms of poetry disappeared in Korea, where the Chinese influence was overwhelming. In Japan, too, under the strong foreign influences, Japanese had a sort of identity crisis. The Nō play *Haku Rakuten* deals with this literary peril. It was written at the end of the fourteenth century, a time when Japanese art and literature were for the second time becoming subject to strong Chinese influence.

Historically, Po Chü-i (Haku Rakuten) never came to Japan. In Zeami's play, however, Haku Rakuten is sent by the Emperor of China to subdue Japan with his art. On arriving at the coast of Kyūshū, he meets two Japanese fishermen. One of them is in reality the god of Japanese poetry, Sumiyoshi no Kami. In the second act the god's identity is revealed. He summons other gods, and a great dancing scene ensues. Finally, the wind from their dancing sleeves blows the Chinese poet's ship back to his own country. As a drama it is almost nonsensical, but it is interesting because the Nō play sheds light on the ambivalent attitude of the Japanese toward China: the attraction of Chinese culture and the defensiveness of the Japanese.

The play's author, Zeami (1363-1443), lived about six hundred years after Po Chü-i. As Zeami felt the strong, all-pervasive influence of Chinese culture around him, the name of Po, Haku Pakuten, occurred to him as the representative Chinese poet. I imagine Zeami must have had the same state of mind as Dante when Dante let Virgil appear in the *Divine Comedy* as the representative Latin poet. Po Chü-i was, as it were, the symbol of Chinese culture. The Nō play begins with Po Chü-i's self-introduction:[8]

> I am Haku Rakuten, a courtier of the Prince of China. There is a land in the East called Japan. Now at my master's bidding, I am sent to that land to make proof of the wisdom of its people. I must travel over the paths of the sea.

(Bertolt Brecht, incidentally, who was very interested in Nō plays, adopted this style of self-introduction in many of his plays).

Following Po Chü-i's introduction, two Chinese verses are used to describe the voyage across the sea. On arriving, the poet finds two Japanese fishermen, the elder of whom speaks to him:

> OLD FISHERMAN
> . . . I am an old fisher of Nihon. And your Honour, I think, is Haku Rakuten of China.
>
> HAKU
> How strange! No sooner am I come to this land than they call me by my name! How can this be?

Then follows a conversation between the two:

> HAKU
> Answer me one question. Bring your boat closer and tell me, Fisherman, what is your pastime now in Nippon?
>
> FISHERMAN
> And in the land of China, pray how do your Honours disport yourselves?
>
> HAKU
> In China we play at making poetry.
>
> FISHERMAN
> And in Nihon, may it please you, we feast our hearts on making *uta*-poetry.

When Haku talks about Japan, he calls it Nippon, while the fisherman pronounces it Nihon. This is a theatrical device to emphasize that Haku is a foreigner. *Uta* is a native form of Japanese poetry composed of thirty-one syllables.

It might be because of their different social positions that Haku Rakuten omits the honorific terms of speech while the fisherman speaks deferentially. Haku even composes a Chinese poem about the scene before him, which to Haku's surprise, the fisherman instantly puts into *uta* form:

> HAKU
> How strange that a poor fisherman should put my verse into

a sweet native measure! Who can he be?

FISHERMAN
A poor man and unknown. But as for the making of *uta*, it is not only men that make them. "For among things that live there is none that has not the gift of song."

The old fisherman who thus preaches the virtues of Japanese poetry is in reality Sumiyoshi no Kami, the chief of the three gods of *uta*-poetry, and in the second act his identity is revealed. The poetry contest ends in a great dancing scene:

CHORUS
The God Sumiyoshi whose strength is such
That he will not let you subdue us, O Rakuten!
So we bid you return to your home,
Swiftly over the waves of the shore!
First the God Sumiyoshi came.
Now other gods have come –

- - - - -

As they hovered over the void of the sea,
Moved in the dance, the sleeves of their dancing dress
Stirred up a wind, a magic wind
That blew on the Chinese boat
And filled its sails
And sent it back again to the land of Han.
Truly, the God is wondrous;
The God is wondrous, and thou, our Prince,
Mayest thou rule for many, many years
Our Land Inviolate!

In Japan today there are about two million people who take lessons in Nō chanting or dance. Very few of them are interested in the libretto of *Haku Rakuten* because the dramatic quality of the play is not very high. To professional actors, the play is interesting mainly for its dancing scenes. But to cultural historians who are interested in the love-hate relationship between China and Japan, the play is in many ways extremely revealing.

The problem of Chinese culture and Japanese identity is closely related to the problem of the Japanese language. In East Asia, almost all peripheral

countries that came under the Chinese influence adopted the Chinese writing system. The Vietnamese spoke Vietnamese but wrote in Chinese, the Koreans spoke in Korean but worte in Chinese. Neither country developed its own writing system for more than ten centuries. It was rather natural for them to write their histories in Chinese, just as the Venerable Bede wrote the first British history in Latin and St. Gregory of Tours worte a history of the Franks in Latin. In Japan, however, something different happened. At the beginning of the eighth century, the Japanese compiled their first histories. One is called *Kojiki* or the *Records of Ancient Matters*, and the other is called *Nihonshoki*. The compiler of the *Kojiki* wrote some parts of what a professional reciter of old legends dictated to him in Japanese. At that time the Japanese syllabary had not yet been invented. So the compiler took great pains to devise a method for representing Japanese sounds using Chinese characters phonetically. This must have been much harder for him than simply writing the whole book in classical Chinese. Yet he must have wanted to be true to his conviction that some parts of the national records should not or could not be translated into Chinese. These parts are Japanese poems.

The first anthology of Japanese poems, *Manyōshū*, was compiled around the year 760. In 905, the second anthology of *uta* poems was compiled. This anthology, *Kokinshū*, has a preface in Japanese which begins by insisting on the virtues of Japanese poetry: "Everyone can make an *uta* poem, rich or poor, known or unknown, not only human beings but also nightingales on plum trees; even frogs in ponds can express their poetic emotions. . . ."

In order to compose poems in Chinese you must have some bookish knowledge beforehand, but it is much easier to make poems in the 31-syllable *uta* form. Indeed, the first anthology of the eighth century contained poems composed by people of all walks of life – from emperors and empresses down to soldiers, beggars, and prostitutes. In the Nō play *Haku Rakuten*, the Chinese poet was surprised when a poor Japanese fisherman put his Chinese verse into an *uta* poem. Po Chü-i asked "Who can he be?" and the Fisherman replied:

> A poor man and unknown. But so far as the making of *uta*, it is not only men that make them. "For among things that live there is none that has not the gift of song."

The quotation is precisely from the preface of the second national anthology *Kokinshū*, and this needs some more explanation. In the first

national anthology there were verses composed by people of all walks of life. In *uta* poetry there was very little discrimination by education.[9] Every one knows it is not easy for all to be equal in the use of a language, as a distinction can be made on the basis of the abundance or poverty of one's vocabulary. As far as verbal richness is concerned, an uneducated person cannot be a match for a learned man, but in the case of *uta* poems, these verses are supposed to consist of exclusively native Japanese words; the use of words of foreign origin is discouraged. Adoption of words of foreign derivation would give rise to a "discrimination by education." As long as the vocabulary permissable for use in Japanese *uta* poems remains restricted to native Japanese words, there is little danger of verbal discrimination. Ki no Tsurayuki may have exaggerated a bit, but rich or poor, educated or uneducated, Japanese are equal before *uta* poems.

From this discussion, which was first advanced by Prof. Watanobe Shōichi of the Sophia University, Tokyo, and which became the topic of controversy between Prof. Roy Miller of the University of Washington, Seattle, and myself in the summer 1981 issue of the *Journal of Japanese Studies,* one definition of what a Japanese is becomes easy. A person can be identified as a Japanese if he writes an *uta* poem. This sense still somewhat remains within us. In 1974, there was an American-born Japanese lady living in Oregon whose *uta* poem was chosen for the traditional *uta* contest held annually before the Emperor. We thought of her as a real Japanese regardless of her citizenship. In fact, she was invited to meet the Emperor. Also among those whose poems were selected was a blind person, and everybody is of the opinion that there is no discrimination by sex or wealth.

In the Nō play *Haku Rakuten,* the *uta*'s superiority is supposed to be proved when the wind from the dancing sleeves of the native gods blows the Chinese ship back to China. The Chorus sings a song in praise of the Emperor which might show that the Emperor and *uta* were the conditions for the self-identification of the Japanese. I quote the final phrase:

> The God is wondrous, and thou, our Prince
> (Emperor),
> Mayest thou rule for many, many years
> Our Land Inviolate!

This song, as well as the phrase, "And the land of Reeds and Rushes /Ten thousand years our land inviolate!", which the god recites when he begins to dance, is quite similar to the verse of the Japanese national anthem.

Although the national anthem was selected in the middle of the nineteenth century, the person who chose it among many old songs, exactly discerned the age-old aspirations of the Japanese nation.

Reading the Nō play *Haku Rakuten* after having seen a series of episodes that show how the Japanese wished Po Chü-i to come, one is tempted to smile wryly, for the play shows so plainly the contradictory psychology of the Japanese intellectual confronting an advanced, great nation – China.

As I have already mentioned, Po himself knew of the existence of Japan and that his poems were read there, but he cannot have had any intention to go abroad. The Japanese, however, desired so earnestly that Po would visit Japan that they once even dreamed of it. However, when the influence of Chinese culture became very strong and the Japanese began to feel uneasy about their cultural independence, they made Po visit Japan, held a contest with him to triumph over him, and eventually drove him back to China with the divine wind – all in their imagination. It is like a weak child who fights with himself and thinks he has won; yet, in spite of such childishness, this play is interesting, for it shows the psychological effects of cultural conflict.

The French Canadians who do not like to use English, the Flemish Belgians who revolt against the French imperialism of the Walloons, and many people of Southeast Asia who are obliged to speak the language of their former colonial masters all must have experienced the same sort of feeling. When we look back in the history of Western Europe, we find many examples of the same nature. The early expression of Italian national self-identification is found in Dante's use of vernacular language; the French began to talk about l'esprit gaulois in the sixteenth century when Joachim du Bellay wrote the defense and illustration of the French language. This was a nationalist movement more than two centuries before the French Revolution. What is interesting about Dante, Joachim du Bellany, and Ki no Tsurayuki is that they were all poets. Scientists, philosophers, and diplomats could express themselves in Latin or written Chinese, but to express the innermost poetic feeling, the most convenient vehicle is the mother tongue. This is a well known fact. We are *not* always aware, though, of the following phenomenon: – in cases of mixed languages such as Japanese, English, or German, some poets tend to use words of native origin. For example, Nietzsche, when he wrote *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* used words of exclusively Germanic origin. That is why the language in *Zarathustra* is as powerful as an orchestra's performance. Anglophone Canadian children learn by heart "In Flanders field

the poppies blow" when the Remembrance Day approaches. While listening to it, I got the impression that John MacCrae's poem contains only one or two words of Latin origin: "cross" is the one. Although originally borrowed, "cross" has been so perfectly assimilated into English that few will doubt its being "native."

This instinctive inclination of the German and the British to use Germanic or Anglo-Saxon words in expressing sentiments while relying on borrowings of Latin-Romance origin when it comes to descriptions of intellectual matters is an exact parallel to the Japanese situation.

The difference is that in Japan there are millions of people who write poetry in *uta* form. I am not very sure of the number, but about 50,000 poems are sent to the Imperial poetry contest every year. Professional poets select them, but selected poems written by housewives, businessmen, farmers, and others are generally far superior to those composed by the professional poets themselves or by the members of the Imperial family. In the art of *uta* or *haiku* poetry, Japanese are very democratic people. Every newspaper has its page of *uta* and *haiku* poetry, even the communist party paper.

Now if we look back at the Nō play *Haku Rakuten,* we see some other expressions which are associated with Japanese nationalism. In the play Japan is protected by Shintō gods and by the divine wind. This is a mythological station of the historical events surrounding abortive Mongol attempts to invades Japan in the thirteenth century. The Japanese withstood the attacks with the help of typhoons. Hence the expression "divine wind" is in Japanese *kamikaze*. These Mongol invasions were the only serious foreign incursions the Japanese experienced before the twentieth century. As is well known, when the situation in World War II became unfavorable in the fall of 1944, the Japanese called on the same imagery in deploying thousands of *kamikaze* attack planes.

Among the world's big nations, Japan was the most isolated and the latest-comer in the society of nations. The physical isolation of Japanese archipelago from its nearest Asian neighbors is a very important factor in the shaping of the Japanese nation. Japan was ideally semi-detached in the sense that it was able to introduce the products of Chinese civilization without being politically dominated. Great Britian's contact with the Eurasian continent has been much more complicated . The Japanese could remain outside power struggles among continental empires, and Japanese governments never tried to divide and rule the continental Chinese, at last not before the twentieth century. Dover strait, which is 23 miles wide, is

easy to cross, but Tsushima strait is 120 miles wide and impossible for anyone to swim across. It was quite understandable that many Japanese intellectuals were pro-Chinese in past centuries because the Japanese were practically never threatened by expansions of the Chinese empire. This pro-China sentiment is still very powerful among the Japanese, and Chou En-lai utilized it remarkably well when he tried to normalize the Sino-Japanese relations.

There are scholars who argue that Japan could modernize rather rapidly thanks to her earlier experiences; having already had experiences of borrowing selectively from Chinese civilization, Japan could introduce easily reforms inspired from the West. That explanation seems to be true to a certain extent. I would like to show an example in the field of modern literature. One of the greats of the Meiji literature is Mori Ōgai. He went to study in Germany in the 1880s. After coming back to Tokyo, Ōgai wrote short stories of surprising modernity. In one of them entitled "Fumi-tsukai" (A Messenger) the action took place in Saxony near Dresden. Ōgai made a remarkable description of a piano concert. Western music was something quite new to the ears of the Japanese. Until the appearance of Ozawa Seiji in the 1960s the Japanese did not believe in their musical talent. In the Meiji period according to a diary left by a German professor Japanese students of the Tokyo Music Academy were not at all enthusiastic about learning Western music. That was the general situation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However the scene of a piano concert described by Ōgai was so passionately beautiful that everyone believed that the author had described the scene as he had seen it or as he had heard it in Germany. The truth is that Ōgai applied very skillfully some expressions he had found in a poem by Po Chü-i. Those who are familiar with Po Chü-i's poetical works know that one of his masterpieces is not about piano but about lute. Ōgai applied the expressions originally used by the Chinese poet for a lute performance to describe Western music or more exactly the psychological state of a young German girl who passionately played the piano. The episode is somehow indicative. It confirms the impression we have of the Japanese students of the last century: they studied European culture with the same diligence with which they had studied Chinese classics before. The generation of Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki were soundly bi-cultural compared to later generations. After they had passed away, apart from very few exceptions, the Japanese did not pay much attention to Chinese classics as an essential part of their general culture. It is perhaps easier for today's Japanese to read English translations of Po Chü-i than to read original Chinese texts. The situation is rather sad

but the tendency is inevitable.

What should not be overlooked, though, is the fact that the Japanese, like many other peoples, have borrowed foreign ideas when it made sense to do so. Moreover, from time to time, Japan became less eager to introduce foreign ideas. There were even nationalistic reactions, as we have seen in the case of the Nō play *Haku Rakutan*. I have to say something about the self-conscious cultural nationalistic movement which occurred in Japan in the eighteenth century. At that time, Confucianism was the official ideology of the shogunal government, and Chinese studies prospered in isolated Japan. At the same time, though, Japanese scholars began to study Japanese mythology and early anthologies of *uta* poems, as well as the *Tale of Genji*. Among the so-called National Scholars, Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) was the greatest of the philologists. He wrote commentaries on the *Kojiki* compiled one thousand years earlier. Webster's definition of "nationalism" fits Motoori well: it reads in part "loyalty and devotion to a nation, especially an attitude, feeling or belief characterized by a sense of national consciousness, an exaltation of one nation above others, and an emphasis on loyalty to and the promotion of culture and interests of one nation." In 1977 a book was written on Motoori Norinaga by a Japanese critic, Kobayashi Hideo, which got many favorable book reviews and was almost unanimously chosen as the best book of the year. It is symbolic that the book that got such high marks is about the National Scholar Motoori. Japanese are again becoming more and more confident in their traditional values and in their native system of behavior. After the "second opening of Japan" following World War II, Japan is now entering the phase of using imported ideas in a more "Japanese" way, incorporating them into the existing culture.

I should say something about Chinese nationalism. Nationalism was lacking in China. The reason is very simple: China was the world itself. The Chinese for many centuries did not take the "barbarians" outside Chinese influence very seriously. China was a self-sustained world economically, politically, and culturally. There was no psychological reason for the Chinese of pre-modern times to be nationalists, except under Mongol domination.

However, Chinese students became nationalists when they came to Japan around the turn of the century. Thousands of Chinese students who came to Japan wanted to rebuild their country, wanted to modernize China. But the Meiji Japan which they considered as the model of modernized nations turned out to be an imperialistic power. It must have been a very painful

experience for the Chinese students in Japan to be despised by the Japanese whom they had considered Eastern barbarians. Japan became a hotbed of Chinese revolutionaries; Chou En-lai was one of those students who came to study in Japan.

Before ending, I would like to relate an episode which deals with the end of Japan's nationalistic venture in World War II. The episode is also about the suggestive power of Po Chu-i's verse.

The Japanese Admiralty building had been burnt down in an air raid in May 1945. Later, Navy Minister Yonai was on duty in a big air raid shelter at the site of the office. In the beginning of June, Admiral Yamanashi visited the Navy Minister. Yamanashi Katsunoshin was senior to Yonai Mitsumasa; he had served as the Vice-Minister of the Navy at the time of the London conference of 1930. (For his efforts to conclude the disarmament treaty, he was later expelled from the Navy). During the war the retired admiral was the principal of the Peers College. When the old Yamanashi said he was anxious about the Navy Minister's high blood pressure, Navy Minister Yonai said: "Well, I can't take care of myself, now that even the Admiralty office is burnt down!" Then Yamanashi suddenly changed the topic: "Have you ever read Po Chüi-i's poem? I'm now studying him, and have found a nice poem:

> The prairie fires never burn it up;
> The spring wind blows it into life again.

"No matter how much you worry about, you can do nothing at the moment. The grass in the burnt fields will grow again when the spring wind blows. Yonai, didn't Po say a wonderful thing? " And Yamanashi went off.

Admiral Yamanashi was giving a hint: "Don't hesitate to make peace now. Japan in defeat surely looks like burnt fields, but the grass will grow in the fields," That was Yamanashi's suggestion which Yonai followed.

> Thick, thick the grass grows in the fields;
> Every year it withers, and springs anew.
> The prairie fires never burn it up;
> The spring wind blows it into life again.[10]

When I recite this peom by Po Chü-i, I clearly remember the vast burnt fields of Tokyo in 1945. After the fiasco miliatristic adventures of the ultra-nationalistic Japanese Empire of the 1940s, Japanese efforts were shifted to the field of economic recovery. To those Japanese who saw the burnt fields of Tokyo or of Hiroshima, this verse of Po Chü-i still makes a

strong impression.

Notes

1. Arthur Waley: *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949.)
2. The original Japanese version, more detailed, is in Hirakawa: *Yōkyoku no shi to seiyō no shi* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun-sha, 1975).
3. Translation by Ivan Morris in *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, 2 vols. (Columbia University Press, 1967).
4. Tranlation by Ivan Morris, in *op. cit.*
5. Translation by Arthur Waley in *The Tale of Genji* (George Allen & Unwin, 1957), p. 889. As the phrase "leaning on his pillow" is lacking in Waley's translation, I added it in the quotation.
6. The Empty Gate means Buddhism.
7. The episode and the two poems are translated by Arthur Waley in *The Life and Times of Po Chū-i*, pp. 197-98.
8. The following excerpts of "Haku Rakuten" are from Arthur Waley's *Nō Plays of Japan*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921). I made a slight modification: instead of "we venture on the sport of making *uta*, " I inserted the line "we feast our hearts on making *uta*-poetry,"as this is an important difference in attitude toward poetry.
9. I owe this argument to Professor Watanable Shōichi's article "On the Japanese Language." The English translation of Watanabe's article appeared in *Japan Echo*, 1, No. 2, (1974).
10. Translation by Arthur Waley in *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i*, p. 13.