ISSN 2029-2074

REMARKS ON THE CREATIVITY OF JAPANESE RECEPTION OF WESTERN CULTURE: FROM LITERATURE TO POPULAR ART[1]

Takashi Kitamura[2]
Professor of Graduate School of Language and Culture, Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University (Japan)

Keywords: creativity of Japanese culture, Japanese reception of Western cultures, hybridity of Japanese culture, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Murakami Haruki, Takarazuka Revue.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: japonų kultūros kūrybingumas, japoniškas Vakarų kultūros priėmimas, japonų kultūros hibridiškumas, Akutagava Ryūnosuke, Murakami Haruki, Takarazuka reviu.

Introduction

The image of Japan used to be represented by traditional stereotypes such as Fujiyama/Geisha. How about the image of present-day Japan? Recently Japanese animation, manga and Otaku or Akiba have become popular in countries across the world, but the most familiar image that has been established as of late, is the complex of Fujiyama/Geisha and New Technology with high quality. This reflects dualistic image, namely the view that tradition and modernization coexist in Japan. We can go further to say that it can be replaced with the co-existing opposition of the East vs. the West or local/domestic culture vs. globalism.

To illustrate, we can take up one picture that appeared on the front

[1] This paper is based on my lecture given at Vytautas Magnus University on November 15, 2008.

[2] In this paper, Japanese names are written in the Japanese order, with family name first (i.e.Murakami Haruki), except the author's name.

cover of *Time* magazine several years ago. That was a picture of some *maiko* (apprentice geisha) talking over a mobile phone against the background of traditional houses along an old street in Kyoto. Obviously this represents the dualism of modern Japan. However, this picture depicts another aspect of Japanese culture, which is implicitly depicted by the mobile phone. A mobile phone should be small enough to be portable and is also required to have highly advanced features. Japan is a small island country. And Japanese people are rather small compared with European people. But Japan, after modernization, especially after World War II, achieved remarkable economic development, and has become the second biggest economic power in the world. Therefore, we can consider that the mobile phone in that picture was used as 'mis en abyme' of Japan, for the mobile phone, a small but excellent electronic device, is the epitome of Japanese images in the Western mind, particularly in the mind of American people.

Furthermore, there is yet another aspect of Japan represented by the mobile phone, which may not have been noticed by the photographer or the editor of the magazine. That is traditional Japanese aesthetics hidden within this small equipment. Let us cite a passage from the famous essay *The Pillow Book* written by a woman called Seishōnagon at the end of the Heian era in the 12th century.

> Chiisaki mono wa mina utsukushi.
>
> (Small things are all cute/pretty.)

There were many other adjectives to express positive feelings or affection toward objects, but this Japanese adjective *utsukushi* meant 'pretty' which can be translated into *kawaii* in modern Japanese. Later, various senses that represent beauty were integrated into the word *utsukushi*, so that its original meaning was lost and taken over by *kawaii*. Though the adjective *kawaii* has become one of the most well-known Japanese words recently along with the growing popularity of Japanese cartoon characters such as *Hello Kitty*, we can trace its origin back to the taste of a woman in the Heian era expressed in *The Pillow Book*.

Probably Lee O-Young, Korean researcher and the author of *Smaller is Better—Japan's Mastery of Miniature* (1984 (Japanese original: 1982)) was the first to claim compactness or reduction to be the characteristic of Japanese culture. He classified various instances that epitomize Japanese culture into several patterns of reductionism; for example a fan is an illustration of

folding, and a lunchbox is one of packing. And a transistor radio is another example from postwar Japan, which was produced by SONY in 1955, when it was still a small company.

Professor Lee's analysis is very interesting and we think it quite plausible, but Japanese culture cannot be characterized simply by orientation toward compactness. What is generally considered as typical Japanese culture ranges from gaudy aesthetics such as Tōshōgū in Nikkō and some Kabuki plays to Bushidō that is The Way of the Samurai, etc. We should think the orientation toward compactness is only one of the various aspects of Japanese culture.

Our point is that a mobile phone or a transistor does not only reflect Japanese aesthetics. Rather it is the combination of acceptance of Western technology with the Japanese taste for small things that has created these novel devices. To be sure, a mobile phone is not a Japanese invention, but Japanese mobile phones have highly evolved into a multi-functional instrument, being equipped with various devices such as internet, a TV receiver, a camera, a digital video recorder, and a music receiver with cute pictography called Emoji and wallpapers. Therefore we can say this exactly represents the dynamism of Japanese culture which creates novel things with flexible acceptance of foreign culture.

Culture is never static by nature. It is always moving. In our opinion, if Japanese culture has a distinctive feature, it lies not in the fixed stereotypes that are given by people overseas, but in the mechanism of creating new things while flexibly accepting extraneous things. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate our claim through some instances in language, literature and drama.

Characteristics of the Japanese Language

In ancient times, Japan didn't have any letters or characters. Culture was transmitted by means of oral speech. Then characters were imported from China, whose culture was highly advanced compared with other Asian countries at that time. At first Japanese people used the Chinese characters as they were for official documents, but later they began to use them to represent the sounds of the Japanese language. That is, they conceived a way of writing by using Chinese characters as phonograms. This system

was named Manyō-gana after the anthology called *Manyō-shū* (about 8th century), a famous collection of poems written in Chinese characters used as phonograms. During the Heian era, Manyō-gana evolved into two kinds of phonograms called Katakana and Hiragana which we use in present-day Japanese besides Chinese characters.

Originally Katakana were invented by clipping Chinese characters and were used as an aid for reading Chinese sentences; they were inserted among Chinese characters like a subscript to represent Japanese postpositions so that the grammatical structure of the sentences became clear. Such a mixture of Chinese characters and Katakana was used mainly in official documents or records, and in principle its use was limited to men. On the other hand, Hiragana the other system of Japanese phonogram was created by simplifying Chinese characters using soft curved lines. It was supposed to be used by women and for writing informal letters or poems, though today it is quite common for both men and women to use it along with Chinese characters and Katakana. Ancient literary pieces such as *The Tale of Genji* or *The Pillow Book* were written in Hiragana. Therefore these two types of Japanese phonogram arose from quite different ways of thinking, though they were both invented from characters imported from China. Thus we can see the archetype of the Japanese way of creating culture in the origin of Japanese phonograms as well as the present system of Japanese orthography that consist of three kinds of letters.

As for the history of the modern Japanese language, it was formed and established during the Edo period, when exchange with foreign countries was banned by the shogun. After the Meiji Restoration (1868), however, the characteristics of Japanese that is a language of flexibility and hybrid nature were much exploited in taking in Western culture from abroad. First, in order to take in culture from advanced countries in the West, translation was indispensable, but there were no Japanese language words to represent Western ideas such as love, philosophy, and economics. Then, they chose to represent these ideas by means of Chinese characters which are ideograms. In other words, the Chinese characters are, so to speak, empty boxes where they simply packed Western ideas. They even represented proper names of Western cities and countries using Chinese characters, but in this case characters which can be pronounced in sounds similar to Western names were chosen.

However, soon these proper names came to be written by means of Katakana, and names for things from Western countries, which also came in

as borrowings represented by Katakana, were naturalized into the Japanese language. It should be noticed that these loanwords represented by Katakana are often shortened through truncation and they are often combined with native Japanese words to form a new word along with a novel object. Let us take up KARAOKE a very popular Japanese word which would exemplify my point. Everyone should know KARAOKE, which has become global recently. But few might know the origin of the word. This word consists of *kara* which means empty, in other words 'without substance', and *oke* which is derived from orchestra through truncation. That is, this word is a hybrid compound which represents a form of entertainment 'without orchestra' where we sing to the recorded music, not to the live performance of an orchestra.

Nowadays more and more coinages are created by the youth while many of them are disappearing. Japan is a society where words as well as the objects or images they represent are excessively consumed. We can say it is a postmodern society in this sense. But we should not neglect the fact that one of the factors which brought about such a phenomenon lies in the flexible and hybrid character of the Japanese language.

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Murakami Haruki

The foundation of modern Japanese dates back to the Edo era as we have mentioned above, but it was not until the Meiji era that it was modified gradually into present-day Japanese as is now spoken. That is, as Japan promoted modernization bringing in Western culture, the Japanese language developed into what it is today.

Now let us turn to the field of literature. Needless to say literature is a verbal art. It is composed with words. Therefore, literature can be directly affected by its language. As for modern Japanese literature, the naturalization of Western culture, that is, the translation of Western literature had a crucial influence. It affected everything, namely, vocabulary, style, and subject, but we will focus our argument here on the subject or what the author tries to depict.

First let us take up Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927). He was the first Japanese modern writer whose anthology titled *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories* appeared in the series named *Penguin Classics* in 2006. Of course the inclusion of *Rashōmon* in the title emphasizes that the novel

written in 1914 is the original of the movie with the same title produced by Kurosawa Akira in 1951. Akutagawa was one of the elite that graduated from the English Department of Tokyo Imperial University and he was also the last pupil of Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916). He is well known for the fact that he was recognized at an early age owing to Sōseki's exceptionally high valuation. He was active in literature only for about 12 years, until he committed suicide at the age of 35, but since the *Iwanami* edition of his series contains more than 20 volumes, we can say he had a solid career as a writer.

By the way, Akutagawa's great master Natsume Sōseki as well as Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) belong to the first generation in modern Japanese literature. It was inevitable for them to confront the West. In their works, they frequently chose the subject of how difficult it was for the Japanese intelligentsia who had acquired a Western sense of values or Western ways of thinking to live up to their own principles. On the other hand, Akutagawa and other writers who belong to the second generation were expected to create innovative literature that could overcome the first generation.

Akutagawa was greatly influenced by Western literature and at the same time he searched for subject matters in Japanese classics, particularly the collected narratives written in the 12th century at the end of the Heian era named *Tales of Times Now Past*. Thus in his earlier works he incorporated the modern Western subject into his novels with exquisite plots and stylistic technique. However, he was endowed with a talent for writing short stories, so much so that he was unable to write a long novel—a task that was considered to be indispensable for a first-class writer in those days. He was also criticized for not being able to write anything without source material. In order to respond to such criticism, Akutagawa struggled to create a new realm, which led him close to insanity. To put it another way, the outside or the Other, which is often represented as another world, gradually came to invade his consciousness. Works such as *Kappa* or *The Life of a Stupid Man* that he wrote under tension between insanity and clear consciousness in 1927, the year of his death, make a conspicuous and peculiar figure in the history of Japanese literature. It can be said that his works and his way of life imply an actual problem that is directly related with our society of today.

Let us return to the anthology of Akutagawa's short stories. They were selected by Jay Rubin and translated into English, and surprisingly one year later in 2007, the English version was translated into Japanese. At first

sight, it is quite strange that a book originally written in Japanese and then translated into English was translated into Japanese again. But the reason is obvious. It is because the English version has an introduction written by Murakami Haruki, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: Downfall of the Chosen*. In addition, the translator Jay Rubin is the person who has translated major works by Murakami. Murakami Haruki wrote the following in this introduction:

> My own personal favorites among the "Japanese national writers" are Sōseki and Tanizaki, followed—at some distance, perhaps—by Akutagawa.

What is interesting here is 'some distance' between Sōseki/Tanizaki and Akutagawa that he pointed out. Let us consider what he meant by this comment. If you read through this introduction, you would realize Murakami had read the works by Akutagawa quite deeply with penetrating insight. Probably from Akutagawa's earlier works, Murakami had learned how to absorb Western culture, and from his later works such as *Kappa* he might have felt empathy with Akutagawa's awareness that this world is not homogeneous and the alien can easily come into our world, and in a novel like *The Life of a Stupid Man* he recognized again the fragmentary image of this world that reflects the dissociation of the ego.

However Murakami has never assumed such an attitude; he never depicts the dissociation of the ego. This should be what Murakami meant by 'distance' between Sōseki/Tanizaki and Akutagawa. We can confirm this point in the same introduction:

> Upon reflection, it seems to me that my departure point as a novelist may be rather close to the position adopted by Akutagawa. Like him, I leaned heavily in the direction of modernism at first, and half-intentionally wrote from a standpoint of direct confrontation with the mainstream I-novel style. I, too, sought to create my own fictional world with a style that provisionally rejected realism. <…> I also learned most of my technique from foreign literature. Unlike him, however, I am basically a novelist rather than a short-story writer, and after a certain point I went on to actively construct my original storytelling system. I also live an entirely different kind of life. Emotionally, though, I continue to be drawn to several of the best works that Akutagawa left us.

Thus what Murakami learned from Akutagawa was how to recognize the actual world. As for the way to represent it, he learned it from Sōseki, and probably more about it from Tanizaki. Today Tanizaki is regarded as one of those who typify Japanese novelists, but he also began his career as a writer of short stories like *The Tattoer* (1910) and was struggling to become a novelist by trial and error, when Akutagawa was suffering with the same

trouble. However, eventually Tanizaki created his original pattern of narrative and overcame the difficulty, which is contrastive to Akutagawa.

Another contrast between Akutagawa and Tanizaki can be seen in their tastes in Japanese classics. Akutagawa's preference was the collected narratives such as *Tales of Times Now Past* (12th century), a hybrid of stories originated in India, China and Japan. On the other hand, Tanizaki loved *The Tale of Genji*, a very long novel which was written by Murasaki Shikibu around the same period as *Tales of Times Now Past*, so much so that he translated it into modern Japanese.

At this point, we should add a supplementary explanation about Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965). It may be presumed both in Japan and abroad that he is a writer who expressed traditional Japanese beauty. But this is not necessarily true. For instance, he admired a traditional Japanese toilet in an essay entitled *Praise of Shadows* (1933), but the house in which he was living at that time was equipped with a flush toilet of the latest western style. This anecdote shows that Tanizaki loved Japanese tradition but at the same time he was familiar with Western culture.

In particular, in the 1910's when he was struggling to transform himself into a novelist, he learned from a book by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), Austro-German sexologist and psychiatrist, that there exist many genius artists in the West who had a masochistic nature like Tanizaki himself. While trying to translate some prose poems by Baudelaire such as *Fool and Venus*, he created an image of a fool or an artist kneeling before an ideal woman and made it into his pattern of writing. From this appeared his first novel *Naomi* (*The Love of a Fool*) (1924), which brought about a newborn Tanizaki as a novelist. This pattern was obviously expressed in *A Portrait of Shunkin* (1933) and was continuous in the series of his works until *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (1961) that he wrote in his last days.

In this way, both Akutagawa and Tanizaki tried to find a way to adopt foreign culture creatively. And for that matter, it is also true of Murakami and he should have been creating his world observing his favorite writers'struggle with the West. We would like to claim that this is represented also by the design decorating the cover of Akutagawa's book of short stories. Needless to say, the design on the cover is an important factor that affects the context of the book as a para-text.

As to the first edition of *Penguin Classics*, a samurai with a sword is depicted in the Ukiyoe style, which is an obvious stereotype of traditional Japan. On the cover of its deluxe edition, we find part of a comic book

Rashōmon the story of Akutagawa depicted as Manga by Tatsumi Yosihiro. From this we can easily read the message that Akutagawa has evolved into Manga, which represents modern Japanese culture. This would be another example of reproducing the stereotype of recent Japan.

Returning to the cover of the Japanese translation of the *Penguin Classics* edition, you can see there a cat beckoning a spider hanging from a branch. This spider evokes *The Spider Thread* (1918), a famous short story by Akutagawa which is familiar to most Japanese people. At the same time, you can assume that this spider also designates Akutagawa himself as a form of metonymy. Then why should there be a cat? In the context of modern Japanese literature, we should suppose that the cat stands for *I am a Cat* (1905) and its author Natsume Sōseki. As I mentioned earlier, Sōseki was the teacher of Akutagawa and at the same time the writer to whom Murakami looks up as a model in his writing. Therefore we can say this picture implicitly represents Sōseki and Murakami who are beckoning Akutagawa toward them. In other words, we could assume that this picture tries to place Akutagawa in the flow of modern Japanese literature that starts from Sōseki and leads to Murakami.

It should also be noticed that Tanizaki wrote a novel about a cat titled *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women* (1936). This would lead us to another assumption that this cat should represent Murakami who respects the two writers. Furthermore, in a famous novel by Murakami *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) a cat plays an important role, showing the cat is also related with Murakami himself.

Hybridity in the *Takarazuka Revue*

In the last section, we discuss the *Takarazuka Revue* (usually called *Takarazuka*), a very original example that typifies modern Japanese drama. The *Takarazuka Revue*, which started as the All Female Opera founded by an enterpriser named Kobayashi Ichizo, is an opera company composed only of unmarried actresses, which is probably unique to Japan. It is based in Takarazuka, a suburban city near Osaka, but it has its own theatre in Yūrakuchō near the Ginza district in Tokyo, too. Many people frequent these theatres, and they are both prosperous. The company has also given quite a few overseas performances, including the ones at Kaunas and Vilnius in 1975.

Takarazuka consists of five troupes named Hana (Flower), Tsuki (Moon), Yuki (Snow), Hoshi (Star) and Sora (Cosmos) with more than 20 directors. They have their own orchestra and even an exclusive channel on cable TV. Their performance entertains us with traditional Japanese dance and at the same time a musical, the scene of which is usually set in Europe or America. It is particularly noticeable that they have consistently een producing the stereotype of France as is conceived by Japanese people in general since *Mon Paris* (1927), namely the lovely country France, or the flowery city Paris. It should also be noted that *The Rose of Versailles* which was first performed in 1974 is now considered as a representative work of *Takarazuka*. *Berusaiyu* (=Versailles) *no* (=of) *bara* (=the rose) which is abbreviated as *Berubara* by the above mentioned Japanese reductionism, has been staged repeatedly since 1974. In this section we would like to take up this work as the main topic, but before that we should explain briefly the history of *Takarazuka*, particularly the founding principles of Kobayashi Ichizō.

Kobayashi had a dream of producing "National Theatre", the theater as a form of popular entertainment that is suitable for modernized Japan. He thought performance of Western opera as is would not be successful in Japan. Instead he aimed to create a new theatre for the general public which is based on Kabuki, a Japanese traditional drama, and incorporated Western music, songs and dances. That is he tried to found his ideal theatre on the basis of harmony between the West and Japan. At the beginning of the Shōwa era, the success of *Mon Paris* (1927) and another big hit, *Parisette* (1930), brought about the golden years of Parisian revues in *Takarazuka*. *When blooms the violet,* one of the French pieces sung in *Parisette,* was adopted as the anthem of the company, which helped establish the identity of *Takarazuka*. For that matter, this song in the original French piece is titled *Quand refleuriront les lilas blancs*, the literal English translation being, *When blooms the white lilac*. By replacing the white lilac with violet, they established an equation of Paris violet virginity *Takarazuka*. This would provide us a clue to understanding the French image unique to *Takarazuka.*

Then what became of Kobayashi's idea to create a new theatre for the general public based on harmony between the West and Japan? It has subsisted in the program as a mixture of Japanese and Western works, and actually *Takarazuka* has never had a program consisting only of Western works. Even during the period when the Western revue was prosperous,

newly produced Japanese works predominated in number. It is symbolic that a double feature program consisting of a Japanese piece and a western one, *PARFUM DE PARIS* all the dresses were designed by Takada Kenzo was performed on New Year's day in 1993 in commemoration of the new grand Takarazuka theatre, which shows that *Takarazuka* is still based on harmony between Japan and the West as well as the typical image of Paris.

During the Second World War *Takarazuka* suffered various losses like any other form of amusement, but soon after the war it revived earlier than other theatres. In postwar Japan, French culture was widely popular for a while, from literature, art, film, to chanson. However, American culture, particularly in the realm of amusement or consumable culture, gradually became overwhelmingly influential. And such a trend led *Takarazuka* to turn to America, in particular Broadway musicals. In 1967 the first performance of a Broadway musical *Oklahoma!* was given, followed by *West-Side Story* (1968) and *Carousel* (1969). Though at that time it was said that an actress was not physically capable of playing the male role of a Broadway musical, they managed to acquire great skills in dancing through hard training. As a result the basis of their unique style was brought forth, the style which is based on Japanese traditional Kabuki and composed of French image and American skills. *The Rose of Versailles* was the very embodiment of that style.

The original of this work is a manga series of the same title which was drawn by Ikeda Riyoko. The story is set at the French Revolution in 1789. Its main themes are the tragedy of Marie-Antoinette, Quuen of France guillotined with her husband Louis the Sixteenth, and the love of Marie (as a woman, not as a Queen) with Felsen, a handsome Swedish Count; it also depicts the impressive devotion of Oscar to the royalty. Oscar was first Commander of the Royal Bodyguard but finally fought and died for the people. In fact, Oscar, a character invented by Ikeda Riyoko, as a hero and a heroine in the long story, is a beautiful woman and she loves Felsen. This manga had a high popularity from the beginning, and when it was published as a book it became a marvelous hit.

The first performance by *Takarazuka* was the one in August 1974, which was a success beyond expectations. After that, *Berubara* was put on the stage in a single feature program, which was exceptional as we mentioned above, and became, so to speak, the work that represents the identity of *Takarazuka*. Until today *Berubara* has been presented repeatedly,

and always on special occasions to designate the turning point of the company. For instance, from the end of 2005 to the next year, it was performed to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Marie Antoinette. On March 17th, 2006, it was reported by the press that the total number of audience since 1974 had reached four million. Even if many of them should be repeaters, it is a marvelous feat. Many people have discussed various factors in this success, but we could point out some reasons to claim that they have achieved the creative reception of Western culture exquisitely in this work.

Firstly, the acting in *Berubara* is based on the Kabuki style. It is quite natural because it should reflect the direction of Hasegawa Kazuo who was formerly the most famous matinee idol in Japan and came from a Kabuki family, but we can find in it also the philosophy of Kobayashi Ichizō, the founder of *Takarazuka*. Secondly, the advanced technique of Broadway musicals obtained by severe daily training enables the performance of violent dances in the battle scenes. Thirdly, the rococo style of Versailles and the Parisian atmosphere on the scenes to depict the life of commonalty give us a stereotypical French image through the whole story. Therefore, by its hybridity, *Berubara* succeeds in creating an original space that exists nowhere else in the world. The conventional pattern that is composed of a Japanese piece and western one has become unnecessary, because Japan and the West are blended in perfect harmony in one piece of the *Berubara*. Finally, we will refer to the music. For example, in *Berubara-Felsen and Marie-Antoinette* played by Star troop in 2006, most of the songs sounded like Enka, or Japanese traditional popular songs in minor keys. There is no French chanson.

Certainly the story is set in France, but none of the other elements are French. However, we never consider this matter negatively. This hybrid character of *Takarazuka Revue* clearly reveals a fundamental stance when Japan receives foreign or western cultures.

Conclusion

We have discussed the mechanism of Japanese reception of foreign, especially western culture, working through Language, Literature and Drama. Of course, the examples that we gave here are showing only some aspects of this mechanism. But at least we can say that this mechanism has

created Japan's dynamism, changing imported cultures into original ones. Then one might ask where lies the essence of Japanese tradition. It's very difficult to answer. But we dare say the things created by accepting foreign cultures have been gradually fermented or matured in a long history and crystallized into the so called Japanese tradition.

References

1. Akutagawa, R.2006. *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*, ed by J.Rubin, Introduction by H.Murakami, Penguin Classics, London.
2. Akutagawa, R.2007. *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke Tanpenshū* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Short Stories], ed. by J.Rubin, Introduction by H.Murakami, Shinchōsha, Tokyo.
3. Lee, O-Y. 1984. *Smaller is Better Japan's Mastery of Miniature*, Kodansha, Tokyo.
4. Seishōnagon. 2007 (1962). *Makuranosōshi* [The Pillow Book], ed.by K.Ikeda, Iwanami, Tokyo.

Abstract

Japan has incorporated various foreign cultures, modifying them in its own manner to create a new, original culture. For example, Japanese people long ago imported KANJI (Chinese characters) to transcribe their language, but a few centuries later they modified KANJI and invented their own characters called KATAKANA and HIRAGANA. With the arrival of the Meiji period in 1868, putting an end to the period of isolation that lasted for 250 years under the Edo Shogunate, Japan opened its doors to foreign trade and diplomatic relations. In an instant, a flood of western cultures surged toward Japan and had a significant influence on various aspects of Japanese culture, from its language to its lifestyle. Furthermore, the end of the Second World War brought another influx of American and European products. Now, in the age of globalization, Japanese can enjoy everything from all over the world in their daily life. However, Japan has never had cultural exchange with western countries unilaterally: there is always a creative modification in the process of receiving western cultures. We can find many foreign elements even in seemingly very Japanese culture; on the other hand we can also recognize some characteristics peculiar to Japan in Japanese reproductions of western cultural scenes. In this paper we will consider such a dualistic aspect of Japanese culture focusing on its hybridity and flexibility.

Santrauka

Japonija, perėmusi skirtingas užsienio kultūras ir savaip jas sujungusi, sukūrė naują ir originalią – japonų kultūrą. Pavyzdžiui, japonai jau seniai savo kalbos transkripcijai naudoja iš kinų perimtą raštą KANJI (liet. *kandži*) (kiniškus hieroglifus), tačiau per keletą amžių jie modifikavo šį raštą ir sugalvojo savus rašmenis, vadinamus HIRAGANA ir KATAKANA.

1868 m. prasidėjus Meiji (liet. *Meidži*) laikotarpiui, kuriuo baigėsi Edo šiogūnato vykdyta ir 250 metų trukusi šalies izoliacija, Japonija atvėrė duris užsienio prekybai ir diplomatiniams santykiams. Vakarietiškųjų kultūrų srautas akimirksniu užplūdo Japoniją ir labai paveikė įvairius japonų kultūros aspektus: nuo kalbos iki gyvenimo būdo. Antrojo pasaulinio karo pabaiga sukėlė dar vieną amerikietiškų ir europietiškų gaminių bangą.

Gyvendami globalizacijos amžiuje, japonai savo kasdieniame gyvenime gali mėgautis viskuo, tačiau Japonija vis dėlto niekuomet nevykdė vienpusių kultūrinių mainų su Vakarų valstybėmis – priešingai, vakarietiškųjų kultūrų perėmimo procesas visada buvo labai kūrybingas. Vakarietiškosios kultūros elementų galime rasti netgi iš pirmo žvilgsnio grynoje japonų kultūroje; kita vertus, japonų kurtose vakarietiškos vaidybos reprodukcijose galime atpažinti kai kuriuos būtent Japonijai būdingus bruožus. Straipsnyje analizuojamas šis dualistinis japonų kultūros aspektas, o daugiausia dėmesio skiriama japonų kultūros hibridiškumui ir lankstumui.