

Jonathan M. Reynolds. *Allegories of Time and Space: Japanese Identity in Photography and Architecture.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. 352 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-3924-6.



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An Ethnographic Surrogate for Nationalism

Almost every study by Walter Benjamin mentions allegory, which is pre-eminently a sort of unusual experience as it is not cut off from being and concerned only with manipulating its repertoire of signs. In *Allegories of Time and Space: Japanese Identity in Photography and Architecture*, Jonathan Reynolds borrows this notion to examine Japanese identity through its representation that is not to be viewed for its end product but for its process. By addressing modernity and the cultural-political context of Japan in the period between the 1940s and the 1980s, Reynolds underscores the notion of a "return to Japan" (p. xvi), [1] which acted as a catalyst for discoursing on Asianism for theorists such as Yukichi Fukuzawa, Mizoguchi Yuzo, and Yoshimi Takeuchi. [2]

In this book, the intersubjectivity which emerged from the reciprocal relationship between Japan's postwar high and low cultural forms is highlighted by tackling "tradition" (p. xix) as a method for counterbalancing the anxiety about postwar Japan's national identity caused by the invasion of external cultural-political forces. To a certain extent, the relatively "underdevel-

oped" premodern Japan becomes a source for postwar Japanese artists to reconstruct identity. The "pure blood" of premodern Japan thus becomes an approach to remove the veil of modern cultural practices—hybridization and to see the very "authentic" inner part. This examination places the synchronic discontinuity in the diachronic continuity of history. Characteristically, Japan's postwar historicity was highlighted by the ironies and contradictions of modern consumer culture and the rural culture. Quoting the historian Watsuji Tetsuro's reading of Martin Heidegger, Reynolds grounds an ethnographic notion of cultural nationalism and associates the physical environment with the human subject and its social dimensions.

Reynolds applies two methods in this book: a comparative perspective and an ethnographic approach, which in turn allow the author to differentiate between historicity and subjectivity. For instance, through a comparative study of the photographer Hamaya Hiroshi's participatory play, he draws a distinction between wartime Japan when the Japanese lived in strait-

ened circumstances and the imperialist propaganda's ideological utopia that projected the imagery of a picturesque Xanadu. Importantly, by differentiating this "realistic-and-fake" relationship, the definition of a nation in postwar Japan's nationalist identity is reconsidered, coming from either a nation-state or a nation. By positioning Japan either in a more politically driven nation state or in a more culturally rooted nation, the exploration of nationalism is shifted from identifying what this nation is to what it stands for. Postwar Japanese identity thereby resonated with postwar Japanese artists's search for a return to Japan through an anxiety about the real homeland, which had gone missing.

The artist Okamoto Taro and his search for prehistoric modernism are exemplified. Reynolds argues that forms of Japan's prehistoric historicity (such as Jomon artifacts) have been used as a source of avant-garde art in postwar Japan. To some extent, the deconstructionist concept of *différance*, proposed by Jacques Derrida, that a sign can represent the present in its absence and hence takes the place of the present is implied.[3] In Reynolds's analysis, the emergence of a multiethnic empire of Japan caused the crisis of cultural identity, as it conflicted with the very foundation of the Japanese nation, which is equated with the Yamato people (named after the Yamato period of Japanese history, 250-710 CE), who are considered the dominant source of the native ethnic group of Japan. That is, a tradition is shaped as the cultural basis of Japanese roots, and the search of the past is not static but rather dynamic. Therefore, he believes that, when compared to Pablo Picasso's discovery of African history, Okamoto's historical observation distances the past neither from him nor from the present. The same perspective is applied to the architect Tange Kenzo and his design inspirations drawn from the Ise Shrine. Tange's suggestion that premodern Japanese architecture was used to evoke national identity, therefore, enabled the transition from legitimizing the establishment of an empire to being a modernist prototype thereafter. The German architect Bruno Taut's role that a orientalistically transformed the world's view of the Ise Shrine from a valueless object to an influential one is another example. Within these examples, the author argues that photographs not only built a new medium for the viewers but also identified a surrogate for nationalism.

Thus, the authenticity captured by a Benjaminian examination of postwar Japanese photographers is projected from a reconstruction of a purer Japan, when compared to postwar Japan's hybrid and international-

ized scenario. What the author emphasizes is the cultural autonomy of the photographers as a form of resistance to the status quo caused by Japan's defeat in the war and the foreign occupation as a consequence. For example, the photographer Tomatsu Shomei's career engagement with Okinawa, the phenomena of Japan's Americanization, and the bottom-up resistance are observed by the author in different contexts as either scaled in Japanese culture, or Okinawan culture, and even anti-Americanization culture. It is the author's contention that Western culture was appealing and inescapable, but it was always potentially poisonous (p. 148). Through his reinterpretation of Tomatsu's photographic capture of the American military presence, Reynolds depicts it as a perception of not only an offense against the rights of the Okinawan people but also a violation of nature. Particularly, the observation of African Americans's double role in the US military as the segregated minority and as a part of the occupation, reflects Okinawan society's contradictory nature as both the passive victim of history and a marked example of democracy in Japan.[4] What is also implied is the internal colonization of Okinawa, which underscores the Other in the existing Other's nationalist construction. Okinawa, hence, becomes a tricky case. On the one hand, the author argues that its presence is an allegory of authentic Japanese culture; on the other hand, it is questioned, as the culture in Japan is treated as low culture, similar to the Burakumin (an outcast minority in Japan).

The association of the homeless status of Japan's national identity with modern Japan's urban nomads is the last case analyzed. Centered upon the invasion of exoticism and commodity culture in contemporary Japanese society, the architect Ito Toyoo's designs are analyzed along with a series of internationally classed figures, issues, and cases, such as the French architectural theorist Marc-Antoine Laugier's primitive hut, the German architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg, the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier's Dom-ino project, the French poet Charles Baudelaire's depiction of Paris, the concept of rhizome proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and, finally, the iconic metabolism movement in Japan. All the analyses were done under one main purpose, which is to identify a culture beyond nationality yet grounded in the tradition of Japan (p. 231).

This book provides an alternative to approaching nationalism and a context in modern Asia which is likely not being decoded fully by the Western epistemology. One important value of this book is the author's crit-

ical historiography of key figures, events, and cases in every chapter. The book hence presents a critical history of postwar Japan, perceived from an artistic and architectural view. If there is one frailty of this book that should be pinpointed, it would be the format of discourses. The discussions are presented in a chronological way, yet they also interrelate different time periods in analysis, which makes the presentation less straightforward. The most obvious part is the arrangement of illustrations and their unorganized in-text indications. Furthermore, the geographic and psychological inclusion are also confused, e.g., Taiwan is described as a part of South-east Asia and as a country that has an antipathy towards Japan (pp. 182-183) despite being geographically located in East Asia. The antipathy described is also highly arguable. As a former colony, Taiwan represents an interesting case in that the populace's sympathy is generally stronger than antipathy due to its continuous colonization. The cavil, however, is unlikely to veil the pivotal role of this book in the field. This work will be appreciated by those who are interested in nationalisms in Asia which take a perspective from its representation in art and architecture.

Note

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[1]. The notion of a "return to Japan" discoursed in modern Japan was centered around Japan's cultural and political subjectification, or re-subjectification, while its traditional identity construction was diluted with the introduction of Westernization and modernization. This notion in the early postwar period was also focused on rebuilding Japan's national confidence after its defeat in the World War.

[2]. Yukichi Fukuzawa, "Datsu-A Ron," *Jiji Shimpō* (Tokyo: 1885); Mizoguchi Yuzo, *Hoho to shite no Chugoku* (Tokyo: Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989); and Yoshimi Takeuchi, *Takeuchi Yoshimi symposium* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1996).

[3]. Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Identity: A Reader*, ed. Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman (London: Sage, 2000), 87-93.

[4]. This contradiction is implied by the fact that African Americans, on the one hand, are still racially regarded as the subalterns in the US military, but, on the other hand, also represent the majority in the US military. Okinawan society's relationship with Japan is echoed by this relationship.