THE COMPACT CULTURE

THE JAPANESE TRADITION OF "SMALLER IS BETTER"

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はしがき

多くの日本文化論や日本人論に関する本が出版されている．その多さは並ではない．他人を気にし批評したり，批評されたりすることを苦手とする日本人的な体質がそういう類のものを好むのかもしれない．出版物のなかには批判的でありながら＜迎合的＞であったりするもの，表層的で主観的な偏見のあるもの，時代錯誤に陥っているもの，また＜判っていない＞というような印象を与えるものも少なくない．加えて，良くも悪くも国際交流の進展している現代にあって，日本人の精神構造を地域差，階層差，職業差，世代差，家族差，男女差などの視点から捉えようとしても，原型的な日本人の実像などがどうにも浮かび上がってこない．このような玉石混交の多くの日本論には，実に，表層的・現象的な捉え方からくる勘違いも多いようである．

ところで本書は，日本人が普段から何か変だと感じつつも，うまく言語化できないナショナルな特質を日本人論として微細に論じたテクストである．この表題に掲げられているキーワードとしての “Compact” には，「縮小」，「圧縮」，「凝縮」，「切り詰め」，「縮み」，「小型」，「省略」といった意味が含まれているが，それらはいずれも負のイメージの色彩が強く，著者の意図にそぐわないため，「コンパクト」としてそのままを表題にした．というのも，そもそも本書の意図は，正のイメージを含めた活力ある真摯な視点から捉えた日本精神の構造論の提唱だからである．

本書のユニークな点は，著者である元韓国文化相李御寧氏（イー・オリョン）が，アジアの韓国人としての学識の蓄積と豊富な経験を通じた，きわめてユニークな捉え方で，欧米人にはもちえないような説得力で，日本人の特質を説き明かしている点にある．そのユニークさは，韓国人による裸の，画期的な日本論と言える．というのは，本書が，日本人の文化の根っこの深層（精神構造）を抽出し，それを現代の文化的現象に当てはめ，

日本人論の構想力の根底まで降り立ち，日本文化の特質を明快に剔抉しているからである．

確かに，欧米人や日本人による本格的な日本論は，イザヤ・ペンダサンの『日本人とユダヤ人』のベストセラー以来，生成され増殖されてきている．『菊と刀』『タテ社会』『甘えの構造』『エコノミック・アニマル』『日本株式会社』などはそれぞれ識者の根強い愛読書になっている．本書は，そうしたテクストに比べても，優劣つけ難い必読書で，表層的・現象的な捉え方に由来する幻想の衣を剥ぎとった日本文化論が裸体として，論じられている遜色のないテクストであると考えられる（紙面の限定によってそのすべてを掲載できないのが残念である）．

したがって，本書を読んで少しでも日本人の発想法の核を捉え直し，自国の歴史や文化のエッセンスに興味をもち，そのうえで英語でそれらを表現できるようになっていただければ，編注者の望外の喜びである．本書を通して，日本人の発想と日本語の特質が見えてくると，なぜ英語に対する苦手意識が生まれるかという理由も見えてくるはずである．外国語を知らない者は母国語についても知らないと言えるわけである．日本語のモノローグ言語を英語のダイアローグ言語にいかに発想転換するかがその苦手意識を克服するセラピィなのではないかと，編注者は考えている．

多様化した英語の新しい役割として英米文化から切り離し，国際的な表現の道具として英語を運用することが求められているが，発信型の英語としてシンガポールの英語，インド人の英語，フィリピンの英語，韓国人の英語のように，相互理解のために有効な媒体としての英語を開発し発展させることが日本人にも求められている．そのために，注釈にあたっては語学的注釈とともに，紙数の許すかぎり必要とする英語表現の事例と解説をほどこした．

本書の著者である李御寧は 1934 年に韓国に生まれた．ソウル大学国文科を卒業した後，1960～73 年韓国日報，朝鮮日報の論説委員を歴任，1981～82 年国際交流基金の招聘により東京大学比較文学研究室客員研究員などを歴任した．90～91 年には韓国初代の文化相を務めた．現在梨花女子大学教授の地位にあり，文芸評論家としても活躍している．主著に本書以外に

『韓国人の心』，『韓国と韓国人』，『ふろしき文化のポストモダン』などがあり，その他の著作は次の通りである．評論集には『運命の糸紡ぎ—これが女性だ』，『西洋から見た東洋の曙』，『一枚の木の葉がゆらぐ時』，『韓国の神話』，『歌よ，先年の歌』などがあり，小説には『将軍のひげ』，『無翼鳥』，『暗殺者』がある．また戯曲・シナリオには『奇跡を売る百貨店』，『春香伝』，『エミレ，エミレ』などもある．なお 1979 年には韓国文化芸術賞を受賞した．『俳句で日本を読む』の刊行などで日本での活動も盛んである．

1995 年 6 月

編　注　者

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1

SMALLER IS BETTER: FOUR EXAMPLES

1 Boxes within Boxes—The Principle of Inclusion

Tōkai no	On the white sand beach
kojima no iso no	Of a tiny island
shirasuna ni	In the Eastern Sea,
ware nakinurete	Bathed in tears,
kani to tawamuru	I toy with a crab.

This famous poem by Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912) literally reads like this: "On the white sand of a beach / Of a small island / Of the Eastern Sea, / I am damp from crying / And I toy with a crab." Within its thirty-one syllables, there is nothing in the way of vocabulary that would identify the poem as Japanese. Nor is there any particular feeling, no social or historical reference within it, that is peculiar to Japan. What is there then about this poem that makes it so Japanese? It is the poem's structure, or more specifically, its syntax. Consider for a moment the repetitious use of the possessive *no* (rendered as "of" in the literal English translation). In the lines *Tōkai no / kojima no iso no / shirasuna ni* (On the white sand of a beach / Of a small island / Of the Eastern Sea), the connective *no is* sandwiched into the phrase three times. Four

nouns are connected in succession by the possessive particle *no.* Such a strange structure would never appear in Korean writing, either in prose or in poetry. Thus to translate the poem into Korean (or, for that matter, English), one must alter its syntax, and in so doing, the poem loses its appeal.

Korean and Japanese sentence structure are generally considered to be more or less the same. The major difference between the two languages is vocabulary, and it is normally argued that the special characteristics of each language are to be found in their lexical differences. In other words, just by changing the vocabulary (though not the word order) a Japanese sentence will become Korean; a Korean sentence, Japanese. This could not happen either between Japanese or Korean and Chinese or between one of the two and any of the Indo-European languages. But what is noteworthy about Takuboku's poem is the peculiarity of its syntax.

A joke that used to be popular among young Koreans who did not know much Japanese illustrates how odd Japanese syntax sometimes appears to Koreans: Why does a Japanese clock, however well made, always run several minutes behind a Korean clock? Because the Korean clock goes "tick-tock, tick-tock," while the Japanese clock goes "tick-tock *no* tick-tock *no*."

This joke came about because often when Japanese tried to speak a few words of Korean they would pepper their Korean with a lot of unnecessary possessives. But it shows how even ordinary people noticed the fundamental syntactic difference between Japanese and Korean. This difference is so noticeable that even Korean children who do not know Takuboku's poem recognize that some-

one who uses a lot of possessives in his Korean speech is doing so in imitation of the Japanese language.

A number of examples illustrate the point. In Japanese, one does not say "starlight" but "star's light" *(hoshi no hikari).* Similarly, a Japanese would say "firefly's light" or "insect's chirp." A Korean, on the other hand, would omit the possessive and simply say "starlight," "firefly light," and "insect chirp." There can be very few other languages in the world—certainly Korean is not among them—that use possessives as much as Japanese. When Takuboku added not two but three possessives to his poem, he did so as a kind of toast to the Japanese language. And surely these possessives are the secret to the success of his poem.

What is the nature of that secret? It is the Japanese love for abbreviation, the tendency to reduce the complex to the simple in language. Why do the Japanese, inventors of the world's shortest poetic form, the *haiku,* use multiple possessives so frequently when most of the rest of us are trying to avoid them? Because, I believe, the possessive *no* functions as a vehicle for reducing in scale all manner of thoughts and forms. There is an intimate connection between the brevity of Takuboku's thirty-one syllable poem and his use of multiple possessives. The possessives are what allow Takuboku to achieve so much in so little space.

An analysis of the lines "On the white sand of a beach / Of a small island / Of the Eastern Sea" will make this clear. First, we must understand that the English syntax here is the exact opposite of the Japanese; an accurate but highly awkward English rendition of these lines would be: "On an Eastern Sea's / Small island's

beach's / White sand." What Takuboku has done is to use the possessive *no* to reduce the vast, boundless "Eastern Sea" to a "small island." Then, with two more possessives he has further reduced the scene from "small island" to "beach" to "white sand." By the end of the poem, we are down to a tiny crab. And since the poet is weeping, we have in essence the great Eastern Sea in a single teardrop.

Takuboku's is not just an ordinary short poem. By means of the unique syntax of the Japanese language, he has shrunk the world, beginning with the Eastern Sea, down to the scale of a box garden. And this reduction is expressed in concrete linguistic form by the use of the three possessives. The essence of his poem does not lie in the surface meaning of the tears or the crab he describes. Rather, it is in his contracting of the scene of the Eastern Sea down to a crab and a teardrop, and in the structure he uses to that end. This manipulation of grammar allows him to produce a uniquely Japanese poem, one that could hardly have been created in any other language.

This feature can be found throughout Takuboku's poetry. Whatever the subject, his poems invariably exhibit this contracting structure, as for example in the following:

Haru no yuki	Spring snow softly covers
Ginza no ura no	Three stories of brick
sangai no	On a backstreet in Ginza.
rengazukuri ni	
yawaraka ni furu	

(Literal paraphrase: "Spring snow— / On Ginza's backstreet's

/ Three stories' / Brick building, / It softly falls.")

Although the scene is no longer the Eastern Sea but Ginza, in the middle of a big city, the characteristic use of possessives to reduce the scene in scale remains intact. Ginza is gradually scaled down to the roof of a three-story brick building just as the sea gave way to a tiny crab in the other poem. The movement is exactly the opposite of the ripples that occur when one tosses a stone into a pond. By the use of the possessive *no* the images of the poem form a series of successively contracting concentric rings. The force of the *no* is implosive rather than explosive.

By no means is this technique limited to Takuboku. Another fine instance of this can be found in the famous translation by Ueda Bin (1874–1916) of Verlaine's "Fallen Leaves." In one especially note-worthy line Ueda uses the word *no* four times (once in the nominative case, the other times as a possessive) where Verlaine uses *de* only twice. In so doing, the translator preserves the sonority of the original. To the Japanese ear, the much-maligned repetition of possessives becomes a kind of music.

The tradition of *no* is as old as Japanese literature itself. Take, for example, the following poem by Emperor Tenji (614–71):

Aki no ta no
kariho no io no
toma o arami
waga koromode wa
tsuyu ni nuretsutsu

Here in my flimsy hut
Roughly thatched of cut grasses
Amid the autumn fields,
My robes are dampened
By teardrops of dew.

(Literal paraphrase: "The roughness of the cut-grass thatching

/ Of my temporary hut / Of the fields of autumn— / My robes / Are wet with [tear]drops of dew.")

A story from the *Record of Ancient Matters,* Japan's oldest written history, also illustrates my point. Emperor Yūryaku, whose reign dates are traditionally given as 456–79, is having a banquet with some courtiers under a huge zelkova tree near the Hatsuse River. A leaf from the zelkova tree flutters down into the cup of saké a young lady-in-waiting has just served to the emperor. He strikes her for her laxity and is about to kill her when she recites an impromptu verse to the enormous tree, which seems to overarch the whole world. Preserving the use of possessives, it might roughly be rendered as follows: "A leaf of the tip of the branch of the top falls down to a branch of the middle; a leaf of the tip of the branch of the middle falls down to a branch of the bottom; a leaf of the tip of the branch of the bottom falls into the saké cup." Upon hearing this poem, it is said, the emperor pardoned the lady. In the poem, the heavens are reduced to a saké cup and the huge zelkova tree to a single leaf.

What is the cultural significance of our discussion? People have a particular outlook toward the world on the basis of which they interact with their environment. This outlook gives meaning and shape to the things with which it comes in contact. Culture manifests itself in various functional and qualitative forms, but in the long run all of these manifestations are produced by a common conscious outlook toward the world. This outlook, or orientation, shows itself in languages—in their structure more than their vo-

cabulary. This is why I believe that the syntax formed by multiple use of the possessive *no* provides one clue toward understanding the unique structure of the Japanese consciousness. And once we have uncovered the secret of this *no,* we have arrived at the idiom of the Japanese consciousness, the essential Japanese outlook toward the world, and understood that this is to reduce the world in order to understand it, reduce the world in order to express it, reduce the world in order to manipulate it.

Takuboku did not see the elements of his poem—the Eastern Sea, the small island, the beach, the white sand—as a disordered jumble. He found a certain connection between the things that exist in space, and he brought to bear a specific viewpoint in organizing those elements into a poem. It would have been absolutely impossible for him, in the brevity of a thirty-one syllable poem, to have given explicit and particular descriptions of the world around him or of his own feelings. Instead, precisely because he fit them all into a consistent spatial framework, he was able to pull the elements together into a single unit. And this is why his poem is not long, indeed could not be long.

To Takuboku, the Eastern Sea in itself is too large. He can only understand it intimately if it envelops him. The only way he can "play with" the Eastern Sea is by conceiving of it in the form of a little crab that has a hold on his finger. This in turn produces the poem's ironic juxtaposition of alienation from and harmony with the world, expressed by the poet's weeping and playing at the same time. Without a reductive outlook toward the world Takuboku could not have written of such feelings.

The poetic device of reducing space by using a successive series of possessives is given concrete expression in the boxes-within-boxes so popular with the Japanese, each box slightly smaller and fitting inside a larger box. Not only boxes. We also find pans-within-pans and bowls-within-bowls (the latter usually coming in sets of seven). The boxes-within-boxes principle allows a large number of objects to be stored in a small space and makes them easier to carry around.

Since ancient times the Japanese have favored this convenient, compact, and functional way of making sets of utensils. A three-meter pole made in this manner can be telescoped into a pole half a meter long. A boat constructed in this way can be dismantled and the pieces fitted together so that it makes a box that can be carried about on land. In fact, during the Edo period (1603–1868) the Japanese used just such poles-within-poles and "folding boats."

The reductive structure of successive possessives finds verbal expression in brief and beautiful poems. It finds concrete expression in the portable and convenient utensils made like boxes-within-boxes. These two manifestations are splendidly united in this *haiku* by one of the poets of the Mino school:

Suzushisa ya	Cool lakes nestle
umi o ireko no	Among mountains within mountains,
Hakone yama	The Hakone range.

2 The Fan—Fold It, Hold It, Bring It Closer

The simplest, clearest example of the Japanese propensity for making things smaller is the folding fan (*ōgi*, or *sensu*). The Chi-

nese character used to write the word "fan" originally meant "door panel," indicating its broad, flat shape. Almost every society in the world has its version of a flat, open fan, called *uchiwa* in Japanese. We can imagine the earliest humans fanning themselves with leaves of trees whenever they needed a cooling breeze. 5

In the *Gu jin zhu,* a Chinese encyclopedia compiled about A.D. 300, it is claimed that the flat fan was invented by the legendary Emperor Shun in the second millennium B.C. It describes this first fan as being made from the tail feathers of a quail. In Egypt a superb flat fan dated the fourteenth century B.C. was unearthed from 10 Tutankhamen's tomb. Yet both the Chinese and Egyptian fans are rigid, flat, and of fixed shape.

Gradually the materials used to make rigid fans became more sophisticated, evolving from leaves to feathers and then paper. Rigid fans made of paper already existed as art objects by the 15 fourth century A.D. in China. And the Korean history *Samguk sagi (History of the Three Kingdoms)* relates that even before the Koryŏ dynasty beautiful fans made to look like peacock feathers were exchanged as gifts of the highest value. It seems likely that the rigid fan made its way into Japan from China and Korea. But as 20 soon as the fan arrived in Japan it underwent a revolutionary metamorphosis, and the folding fan was born.

Legend has it that the folding fan was invented by the Empress Jingū (traditional reign dates, A.D. 201–69) during the Japanese conquest of Korea. She is supposed to have been inspired when she 25 saw the wings of a bat. Whatever the truth of this explanation, it does seem that it was in Japan the folding fan was first used.

Delving into the historical records of the folding fan, one finds that it represents an unusual countervailing current in the normal flow of culture. The *Song shi (History of the Sung Dynasty,* compiled in 1345) relates that the Japanese priest Kiin brought folding fans with him as gifts when he visited the Song court. It notes that he presented, among other things, "one lacquer fan box decorated with gold and silver dust, twelve cypress folding fans and two 'bat wing' fans." In another Song dynasty chronicle the writer tells of his surprise at seeing a Japanese folding fan being sold by a merchant, and he describes the fan in detail. One Ming dynasty record states flatly that "there were no such things as folding fans in ancient China," and another indicates that the folding fan was first introduced into China by barbarians from the southeast. At least one Korean record also indicates that China did not originally have the folding fan, and that the Chinese used rigid fans similar to the ones used in Korea.

Neither the Egyptians who built the pyramids nor the Greeks who constructed the Parthenon ever felt the breeze of a folding fan. Originally there were no folding fans anywhere in Europe. They did not arrive until Portuguese merchants opened trade routes to China in the fifteenth century. Even then, it was not until the seventeenth century that the use of folding fans became widespread. French Impressionists such as Degas and Manet would gather at a Paris cabaret where the waitresses wore kimono and folding fans hung on the walls.

There existed, however, something known as the "Koryŏ fan." According to Chinese records from the Sung and Ming dynasties,

China first got folding fans of pine wood from the kingdom of Koryŏ in Korea. Japanese scholars assert that the Chinese probably mistook as Korean fans what were really Japanese in origin. They theorize that the Japanese folding fans found their way to Korea and from there to China. This is not the place to enter into the controversy. Suffice it to say that since the human figures painted on the so-called Koryŏ fans are wearing Japanese style clothing, the theory that folding fans originated in Japan would seem to carry more weight. In any case, regardless of who first invented the folding fan, the fact remains that it is the Japanese who are most fond of it. We are told that when the Chinese first saw a collapsible fan in the Sung dynasty they greeted it with "derisive smiles." A long time passed before it was widely accepted by the Chinese people; for a great while it was only used by courtesans. To the eyes of those on the Asian mainland, the small folding fan must have looked like a toy. The expansive Chinese could not understand the Japanese propensity for reducing things in size.

How did the Japanese come to invent the folding fan? Scholars have proposed several hypotheses.

One scholar has suggested that rigid fans of paper covering a frame were introduced from China. The Japanese already had a similar type of fan using *birō* palm leaves instead of paper (even now in Kyushu fans are made this way) and the *birō* palm leaf, when grasped at the sides, tends to fold up like an accordion. Someone, this scholar argues, had the idea of joining the properties of the Chinese paper fan and the palm leaf. By tying strips of cypress wood together so that they could be opened and closed, the

cypress fan was invented. Another scholar has theorized that the idea of the folding fan came from the *shaku,* a kind of ceremonial baton, since the ribs of the earliest cypress folding fans are similar in shape to the cypress *shaku,* and since both the cypress folding fan and the *shaku* were ceremonial articles in the imperial court. Still another theory has it that the idea came from ancient wooden clappers that were made by gathering several wood strips together, drilling a hole in each of them, and tying them together with a cord.

Of course, it was not really an external stimulus such as a palm leaf, a ceremonial baton, or a set of wooden clappers that brought about the folding fan. Rather, it was born of the Japanese propensity toward making things—in this case, the rigid fan—smaller. In the folding fan, we see a metaphor for Japanese culture itself.

In one sense, a folding fan is just a shrunken rigid fan. It simply takes the form and materials of the rigid fan and folds them so that they can be easily held in the hand. In geometric terms, it is a plane become a line. The effect of this is that the rigid fan, which can only exist apart from the user, becomes something that can be easily drawn in and held close to one's body. As the tenth-century priest-poet Ekei wrote:

> Half hidden in the sleeve,
> A folding fan;
> It calls to mind the moon
> Not yet emerged.

The folding fan is a rigid fan one can store in one's sleeve. If a

rigid fan is the moon, a folding fan is the moon in its potential state, "not yet emerged."

A *haiku* by Shigetsugu puts the matter even more clearly:

The sun, the moon
Both held in one hand—
A Shura fan.

The Shura fan, favored by warriors and also used on the Nō stage, was made with a black frame and usually bore a painting of the sun and the moon. Ekei's moon "half hidden in the sleeve" becomes in Shigetsugu's poem a moon "held in the hand." On the surface, of course, Shigetsugu is referring to a sun and a moon painted on the fan, but on a more abstract level his fan is a means by which the larger world, the distant celestial world, can be brought close to us and reduced to fit into a human hand. To fold up a fan is to shrink the world itself. Rather than objectifying space by leaving it as a wide, flat plane, folding a fan is a concrete way to make that infinite plane, the world, easier to grasp. Thus, in the way the Japanese went about reducing the fan we can learn a great deal about Japanese epistemology, aesthetics, and practicality.

We must understand that the folding fan's primary importance was as a tool for understanding the world; it was not just a practical utensil for directing a cooling breeze toward oneself. Originally it was treated as a ceremonial object for use in court rituals. It was not until the seventeenth century that it began to be used by common people as a practical cooling device. Looked at in this historical light, it is clear that what lay behind the shrinking of the rigid

fan into a folding fan was more than mere practicality. The folding fan was seen as a way to understand reality and as a symbol of reality itself.

Not only have the folding fans made specifically for use in religious ceremonies always been treated as ritual objects; so too have the ordinary cypress or paper folding fans. From ancient times, they have customarily been bestowed as gifts of appreciation on dutiful retainers. Folding fans were not only used for cooling oneself, they have also always been an indispensable accessory in a formal clothing ensemble. The reason why folding fans, unlike rigid fans, have taken on ritual meaning and have long been given as tokens of esteem is because of their significance as symbols of the Japanese perception of reality.

Because a folding fan can be closed, it can also be opened. The folding and unfolding of a fan is a way of grasping the mysteries of reality, for the opening and closing of a fan is like the folding and unfolding of fate, and the movement involved in creating and diverting a breeze with a fan is, literally and figuratively, a kind of beckoning. It is a way of having a direct experience of the world by giving concrete form to a vague, formless reality and of bringing that form close to oneself.

One of the purposes of religious ceremony is to give concrete form to the transcendent, thereby making it more understandable. Special folding fans perform the same function and thus are used in such rituals as the tea ceremony and funerals, and in earlier times monks used them like prayer beads.

Therefore, in the reduction of the flat fan to a folding fan we can

also see the concepts of beckoning, drawing closer, and holding. In the Japanese mind the tendency is not to face out toward the world and the transcendent gods and move toward them, it is to beckon them inward and draw them closer to oneself. In most ages in most other countries the wind in literature is associated with images of something being blown away. But in Japan the wind is something which *comes to* you from the other world, something which envelops you. In other words, the image is of beckoning, or drawing closer. One scholar has counted more than forty poems in the great thirteenth-century poetry anthology *Shinkokin-shū* that use the phrase "the wind comes blowing" *(kaze zo fuku)* in this manner.

In Japanese mythology there is a story of a artful person who called the sun back up by waving a fan. This upsetting of the natural order incurred the wrath of the gods and brought about the fan wielder's downfall. In *haiku,* there are countless poems about drawing the moon closer. Koreans have written many poems in praise of the moon. But these poets did not beckon the moon to draw it closer. They sought to leave this world and rise to the moon's level of reality. This attitude is found in an old Korean folk song that can be paraphrased as follows: "With a gold and silver ax, I shall cut down the moon's laurel tree and with it make a three-room hut, there to live forever with my mother and father."

But Japanese *haiku* poets beckon the moon from its distant setting and try to draw it closer, like a folded fan. Take, for instance, the moon of Ryōkan, poet and Zen priest (1758–1831):

A thief—

At least he left behind
The moon at my window.

Or Issa's moon:

Hey, you kids!
Which one of yours is it,
This red moon?

The contracting quality of the fan also gives it a pivotal role in Japanese aesthetics, for a fan can be folded up and the painting carried along in one's pocket. The folding fan is portable art. By analogy, we can easily see why Japanese prefer picture scrolls, which can readily be rolled up and carried, to the immovable picture in a frame. In order to paint a picture on the small surface of a folding fan one has to reduce the size of the subject, be it a flower or a mountain, to tiny dimensions. Then, as one folds up the fan, the subject gets even tinier.

The crafting of the folding fan is in itself an exercise in reduction. To make a cypress fan one must shave thick boards into paper-thin slices. The technique displays an aesthetic consciousness oriented toward the small and finely detailed.

The folding fan is also an integral part of the performing arts, indispensable to traditional Japanese dance and the dance performed in Nō plays. Indeed, Nō actors insist that the fan actually creates the art of a Nō dance. Of the fan in No drama, Paul Claudel wrote: "It is a flower in glorious bloom, a blazing torch in the hand, a moment of quiet contemplation, the resounding of demons."

Kabuki, too, requires a fan. In short, where there is a fan, there is painting, there is dance, there is drama.

The very shape of the folding fan—a semicircle that demonstrates perfectly the concept of contraction—is considered by Japanese to be a model of beauty. By coincidence, it is also the shape of Mount Fuji.

No matter how wide one opens a folding fan, it is still limited by its basic shape, which was designed with contraction in mind. Its semicircular form is straining with potential for contraction. When the fan is open, this strain is most intense at the pivot, so the tendency of the fan is toward closing rather than opening. The folding fan shows the opposite of the Western concept of perspective: it gets larger and wider as one moves toward the edge—a kind of reverse perspective. Japanese paintings and gardens often show this kind of reverse perspective, and perhaps the folding fan gave birth to the concept.

This said, we must not forget the folding fan's practical function. Toward the end of the Heian period, in the twelfth century, folding fans were being mass-produced in Kyoto. Although solid evidence is hard to find, Hata Koretatsu, in his book *Yomo no suzuri (The Four-sided Inkstone),* states: "The present-day custom of attaching the suffix *ya* [literally, 'house'] to a shop's name originated with fan shops, which always used that suffix in their names." If this is true, then the making and selling of fans must have represented one of Japan's earliest ventures into commercialism.

Japan's fan commerce was not limited to the domestic market. From the earliest times of production in Kyoto, Japanese paper fans

were being sold in China. This fan trade lasted until the Muromachi period (1336–1568), and during that time China imported Japanese fans and then reexported them to Europe. Thus the honor of being the first Japanese good to dominate the world market would appear to belong to the folding fan.

Why did the Japanese folding fan become an international commodity? Probably because it was more compact, thus more portable and convenient, than the rigid fan, and because of its novelty. To make a product smaller and more convenient and to make an unusual product that nonetheless elicits the response, "Why didn't anyone think of this before?"—these have always been the qualities of Japanese goods, in the past as today.

Just as the concept of inclusiveness created the "boxes-within-boxes culture," so the concept of folding-up made possible a number of characteristically Japanese objects, the folding fan preeminent among them. The Japanese sought to fold up everything they saw. They even tried to fold up the walls that separate rooms, and the result was the *fusuma*, a sliding paper-covered door on a wooden frame that surely must be the world's most flexible "wall." The Japanese paper lantern closely resembles Chinese and Korean models, with one important difference: the Japanese version folds up. Because of their flexibility, even the largest of lanterns can, like the fan, be folded up flat for storage.

The Japanese proclivity to fold things up shows no signs of waning. During the Taishō era (1912–26) sliding umbrellas were introduced from Germany. By 1950 the Japanese had made the first collapsible umbrella. Just as happened with the fan in the past, the

Japanese took something and made it smaller, then turned around and reexported it, gaining control of the market in the process. In the early 1980s, the Japanese developed an even smaller umbrella, one that folds three ways and is the world's shortest, measuring eighteen centimeters. Now the umbrella, just like the fan, can fit in your pocket.

Then there is the transistor, which after the war helped Japan break into the international marketplace. This, too, was made possible by the Japanese belief that in order to make something more manageable, more compact, and more functional, one has to make it smaller. In a sense, then, the "transistor culture" goes all the way back to the Heian period. Japanese folding fans, nothing more than imported Chinese rigid fans reduced in size, then reexported, produced a miracle by taking the functionalist West by storm, a storm that today shows no signs of abating. It has its latest manifestation in smaller, simpler cameras and electrical household appliances, not to mention the more sophisticated world of VLSIs.

Although the Japanese imported the basic idea for many of these products from China or the West, their special contribution was in reducing them to fit the hand, and this allowed Japanese products to take the lead.

In the case of fans, eventually the Chinese market became flooded, and they were no longer considered desirable items. Some Japanese scholars suggest that as a consequence Japanese merchants turned to threats and eventually force to market their goods, and this was the origin of the notorious *wakō,* the Japanese, pirates of the fifteenth century—an early example, perhaps, of trade fric-

tion. Historical sources indicate that by the fifteenth century the Chinese, for their part, associated the fan trade with Japanese piracy and loathed both. How little things have changed!

3 The Anesama Doll—Take Away And Pare Down

The concept of reduction is most clearly seen in miniatures. To miniaturize something is to take an actual object and shrink it in size with all the details intact so that it becomes an exact but smaller copy of the original. The Japanese yield to no other people in their ability to do this, as we can tell from a glance at the records of "the world's smallest." The world's tiniest miniature airplane is 1.6 millimeters long and has a wingspan of 1 millimeter, making it smaller than a common housefly. This little plane won the grand prize at the 1970 World Paper Airplane Convention in the United States. It was made in Japan, the work of Takewaka Hiroshi of Shiga Prefecture. Japan also takes the laurel wreath for the world's smallest motorcycle. It is 17.5 centimeters long and weighs 1.7 kilograms. Its tires, casters borrowed from a chair, are five centimeters in diameter. The engine, of the type used in model airplanes, is started by a battery. Its inventor, Hasegawa Shūji of Tokyo, is said to have ridden 10 meters on it.

To succeed in miniaturizing, delicacy and subtlety are required. Japanese have long competed in writing characters on grains of rice. Yoshida Godō is a gold medalist in three events of the "Miniwriting Olympics," having written 600 characters on a grain of rice, 160 characters on a sesame seed, and 3,000 characters on a soybean. From writing we move to etching, and the record here