Chapter VII

Overview of Types of Japanese and Indian Civilizations

Introduction

Culture grows through people’s daily lives to form civilization over time and space. Civilization filters and absorbs both indigenous and foreign cultures to bring up universal value system. Human emotion is the motive of human behaviours to form philosophy, religion, ethics, political institutions and social system in civilization.

Attempt is made to characterize the two civilizations of Japan and India in conjunction with religious, social and foreign influences. Firstly, the Formation and Succession of Cultural Traditions grasp the spacial expansion and periodical progress of civilization on top of peculiarities of the two civilizations. Then, the Cultural Traditions and Social Customs define the emotional background of Japanese through daily life under Indian influence. The Pilgrimage as Cultural and Social Impetus finds the cultural circulation through pilgrimage as popular deed of faith. The Social Classification reveals its formation and relation to creating cultures. Lastly, the Foreign Impacts on Cultural Traditions and Social Customs conclude the dynamism and correlation among civilizations.

Formation and Succession of Cultural Traditions

Since ancient times, many cultures have arisen in various continents and regions. All of them have commonly revered the power of mind to understand the world through pure intellect.¹ Civilizations appear to share several points in common. All civilizations rise and fall. As each civilization reaches its peak, decadence prevails over human minds to...
cause pessimism and negativism. This always results in losing the flexibility to cope
with environmental changes both in natural and human aspects to bring the civilization
to an end. However, each civilization succeeds to some fragments of the previous
culture. Humanity always springs back to create utopia in a new civilization. Just as an
individual goes through a cycle of reincarnation, civilization also happens in cycles. The
end of one civilization means the birth of another.²

Civilizations across Space and Time

A.J. Toynbee reviews about the rise and fall of civilizations. Namely, civilization has its
own biological length of life just like a living thing. The breakdown of civilization is
occurred by the decline of quality of people with too long civilized lineage.³ Under
natural and human environments, the impact and pressure from the external world is
usually stimulative but not destructive. The decline of civilization is not caused by the
loss of its control power of human environment but the loss of its own decisive power.
One can be reminded of the saying about “A fresh wine kept in an old leather sack”.⁴
Then, he hits upon such a historical succession of civilizations based on Europe as the
first generation (Aegean Sea civilization), the second generation (Graeco-Roman
civilization), “Universal Religion” (Christianity) and the third generation (West
European civilization). Initially he applied this generation model exactly to India, i.e.
Indus civilization for the first generation, “Indian civilization” for the second generation,
Hinduism and the Mahāyāna for “Universal Religion”, and “Hindu civilization” for the
third generation.⁵ Apparantly this attempt ended in failure for the cultural continuity of
Indian civilization. It may be a more appropriate way to grasp the succession of
civilizations as changing cycles within a singular civilization rather than the relationship
of “apparention and affiliation” among civilizations. The invasion of nomadic races in
most cases became a momentum for changing a cycle of civilization as often found in
the history of India.6

The relationship between “Major Civilization” and “Peripheral Civilization” can
provide the clear distinction between the two civilizations in contrast. Ancient Japan
emerged as one of “Peripheral Civilizations” of the Chinese civilization by borrowing
several basic elements, e.g. the Ritsu-ryō institution, Buddhism, Confucianism and
Chinese characters around the seventh century A.D. in the Asuka period. Towards the
day of the ninth century A.D. in the Heian period, Japan took a step forwards to “Major
Civilization” by the independent development of national culture like its own characters,
literature, architecture, painting and sculpture. On the other hand, the Indian civilization
had kept on standing as “Major Civilization” since the Harappan period between the
West Asian civilization and the Chinese civilization, accompanied by those “Peripheral
Civilizations” as Southeast Asia, Śrī Lankā and Tibet. It assimilated various foreign
cultures mostly from the West as sometimes penetrated by invasions, but also
propagated its own cultures widely over other regions through peaceful contacts as
accumulated in Japan mostly under Buddhism.7

Peculiarities of Japanese Civilization

Some peculiarities of the Japanese civilization have been found since ancient times in
contrast with other civilizations. Firstly, largely owing to its geographically isolated
location from the continent as islands, the Japanese civilization could have formed a
single nation’s culture since the early period. Namely, people lived daily lives there
while they were aware that they lived in a small land as Japanese nationals under a
single body of central government. This notion may have engraved the decisive
characteristic in Japanese culture. For instance, Japanese people are conscious of the
originality of Japan and curious about different or foreign cultures. This has promoted Japanese belief on progressivism in its broad meaning. However, Japanese culture gave little impetus to neighboring countries in ancient times while various kinds of foreign cultural elements had been collected just like a snowdrift as seen typically in the treasures of Shōsō-in up to the highest grade. Secondly, the Japanese civilization has been based on the double structures of culture since ancient times. Namely, long before neo-Mongoloids migrated from the continent, brought the wet-rice agriculture with bronze and iron implements and accelerated the formation of the state, the aborigines of proto-Mongoloids had inhabited to develop the highly refined Jōmon culture under hunting, fishing and gathering economy for more than ten thousand years. Japanese culture has been deeply rooted from this nature-oriented Jōmon tradition in notion, faith, aesthetic sense, etc. even after the foreign elements, representing Buddhism, were penetrated and transformed into Japanese cultural background. Some Jōmon spirits seem to have been absorbed by Shintō, but not likely in their primitive sense. On the other hand, the continuity between the Harappan culture and the Vedic culture has been recently a main issue in the ancient Indian history, yet the difference between the two cultures does not seem to be so much as compared to the one between the Jōmon culture and the original Buddhist culture, though later amalgamated with Shintō. Thirdly, the Japanese civilization has been developed under the close connection between metropolises and provinces. The capital as prestigious and sacred centre appealed brilliantly to the provincial people and created the diversification and popularity among them, as they were eager to gather there like on festive occasions. The capital well absorbed, filtered and urbanized the rural cultures being brought by the provincial people, and thus developed new cultures. A typical example, though in medieval times, is the perfection of Nō drama from a rustic Saru-gaku founded by Kan’ami shortly
during his life time. In China, on the contrary, as metropolises were fortified, the urban culture and the peasant culture were kept separate without so much circulation between them. Similarly, in ancient India, the relationship between urban centres and rural society seems to have been rather distant, though in an economic cooperation each other. Thus Buddhism declined partly due to the decay of a certain urban centres, while Brähmanism based on rural areas revived in the post-Gupta period. Fourthly, though the economy of ancient Japan tended to increase its major portion in wet-rice agriculture in alluvial plains, yet people’s lives in coastal as well as mountainous areas should not be disregarded. For instance, the *dōtaku* (bronze bell) in the Yayoi period was originally made as musical instrument but later the large type was used in festivals. The festivals were probably conducted also among seafaring people, since a number of *dōtaku* engrave a sea turtle on knob or a seaman rowing a boat and a fish-finding-keep-like construction. Thus, without the interaction through sea and river, or the maritime and mountainous cultures, Japanese culture might have tended to a monocular culture of peasantry.

**Peculiarities of Indian Civilization**

As touched partly in Chapter I, also four major points are taken among several peculiarities of the Indian civilization. Firstly, the vast subcontinent yet peninsula made India rather secluded from other regions as a self-sufficient world. Even foreign invaders, once they settled in India, assimilated the insular spirit of India. The natural beauty nurtured a speculative mind and philosophical ideas. The monsoon climate and vast river plains were the source of wealth as well as the cause of stagnation with ease and luxury. The harmonious feeling with the nature becomes either a vitalizing factor for valued life or a degenerating factor into fatalism and inaction. Secondly, the Indian
civilization has kept long the continuity in modifications, unlike the other ancient civilizations like Egypt and Mesopotamia. Through the struggle between newcomers and earlier inhabitants, many dynasties rose and fell yet their states continued to develop rich cultures. Thirdly, Indian society has sustained the unity in diversity. A variety of land and climate tended to separate the subcontinent into different regions with various ethnic groups, cultures and social customs. Those complex societies have been united by the Hindu principles with beliefs, ethics and social class system. The three major divisions, i.e. North India, Deccan Plateau and the peninsula, led to the growth of distinct local characteristics under different roles in politics. Further the extensive coastline promoted trade and maritime activities. Their progressiveness gave impetus to the colonization as well as the penetration of Indian culture over the Greater India. Fourthly, the religious notion has always occupied a central position in Indian cultural life. The caste system has formed a unique and religious society. People struggled towards upgrading social status through Sanskritization, which vitalized yet complicated Hindu society. Nevertheless the religious tolerance has prevailed within Hinduism as witnessed by the doctrine of Trimūrti. The concept of predestination through samsāra and karma has worked to connect between moral and natural laws.

In conclusion, the characteristics of the two civilizations can be symbolized by the term ‘Unity in Diversity’ of India whereas ‘Diversity in Unity’ of Japan. The diversity of Japan represents its accumulation of various foreign cultures and provincial peculiarities within rather a narrow range as compared with India.

Cultural Traditions and Social Customs

Cultures are not always represented by national-heritage-like architectures, arts and
literatures but are commonly and widely prevalent among folk arts, amusements, festivals, faiths, customs and manners. Thus cultures become a backbone of people’s life styles. Throughout history, all cultural elements have been accumulated, refined and finally crystallized to the emotional tradition of ethnical group just like Japanese spirit. Attempt is made in pursuit of the influential elements of Buddhist and other Indian traditions remained in Japanese way of life and the similar or common elements concealed both in Japanese and Indian traditions based on a primitive faith to the nature.

Emotional Tradition of Japan

The yūgen (profoundity), wabi (simple beauty in solitude, being familiar in cha-no-yu, tea ceremony), sabi (elegant simplicity), iki (smartness) are typical artistic ideas of traditional Japan. The mono-no-aware (or mono-no-ahare written in original style) is the idea or taste for artistic judgement in the Heian period. The Heian culture reached a zenith of aestheticism in Japan, being represented by the kana literatures described in Japanese original characters like the Genji-monogatari. It may symbolize the longing for the past throughout the passage of time. The Kojiki and the Nihongi use the word of ahare, the Tosa-nikki of mono-no-ahare, and the Makura-no-sōshi of wokashi. The Tsurezure-gusa expresses Buddhist view of transience. The general image of mono-no-aware can be represented by cherry blossoms and bushi (or samurai, warrior class), being related to the short-lived existence. People of letters try to interpret the meaning of mono-no-aware, such as the sorrow of human existence, the emotional sensitivity to things, the pathos of things, or the meaningfulness of things.18

Japanese culture has been often regarded as the culture of imitation, but its real characteristic or greatness can be found in sublimating such a technical stage of imitation up to the culture of the way (dō) with profound morality, such as sa-dō (tea
ceremony), *ka-dō* (flower arrangement) and *sho-dō* (calligraphy). In pursuit of this culture of the way (*dō*) or moral principles, nothing could have been performed without the ideas of ancient India on its basis. They were the fruit of meditative culture embraced by the great nature of India.19

**Buddhist Life in Japan**

The ancient Indian custom of offering flowers at altars or scattering flower petals in religious ceremonies was adopted by Buddhists for the *Buddha-pūjā*. It was introduced through China to Japan where a sophisticated flower arrangement (*ka-dō*) was created for daily life as well as monastic functions. Similarly, the drinking of tea in Buddhist monasteries to make the chanting of *sūtras* easier began in China and developed into an aesthetic ceremony (*sa-dō*) in combination with a Christian mass in Japan. They resulted in aesthetic refinements in architecture, handicrafts, and etiquette for the commoners. Also in Japan, the use of incense in Buddhist rituals spread into an aesthetic incense-smelling ceremony (*kō-dō*) among laymen.20

Buddhist ritual dances were introduced to Japan from Asian countries mostly during the seventh century A.D., performed at the imperial court as well as temples, and developed into popular forms of expression. They were the *gi-gaku* (with masks, in Buddhist matters, flourished during the seventh to eighth centuries A.D), the *bu-gaku* (especially at the court, with *gi-gaku* music, during the ninth to tenth centuries A.D), the *san-gaku* (in the eighth century A.D., but popularized as *sarau-gaku* in the eleventh century A.D), the *en-nen* (popularized as a stage entertainment from *bu-gaku* during the tenth to eleventh centuries A.D), and some more popular dances, such as the *shishi-mai* (lion dance, from *gi-gaku*) and the *bon-odori* (from *o-bon* festival in summer). The popular *dengaku-no-nō* (rustic dance from *den-gaku* with Shinto influence during the
tenth to eleventh centuries A.D) and sarugaku-no-ndo (literally monkey-dance) developed into the stage drama in medieval times. Together with the elements of en-nen, MiBu-kyôgen (pantomime performances of Mibu, Kyoto) and kagura (indigenous deity rite), they evolved into the Nô drama and its farcical interlude nô-kyôgen, and finally reached the highest form of music-dance-drama.  

India in Japanese Daily Life

There still have been found various Indian influences upon daily life of modern Japanese. For instance, the alphabetical order of Japanese hira-gana and kata-kana was made in accordance with the phonetical order of Sanskrit alphabet in the tenth century A.D. The Iroha-uta song with 47 letters was created from the free translation of Buddhist poem. The Iroha-karuta cards with 48 cards, the habit of sugoroku (backgammon game), the practice of folding hands (aṅjalikarana), the religious custom of using a string of 108 beads (japamālā), the rituals of ancestor worship and the custom of cremation all originate from India. The sotōba with wooden tablets written in Siddham letters at a cemetery derives from stūpa. Finally the nasake (compassion or maitri) has become an essential part of of traditional Japanese characters.

The festival of Seven Herbs (nanakusa) is celebrated as an offering to Acalanātha in Japan on January 7 to keep away evil spirits and to ensure good health. The Tiruvadirai, Festival of Seven Young Herbs, is celebrated in Tamil month of Mārgali. The Gion car festival has been celebrated in temples in association with Yasaka-jinja for the unity of community in Kyoto. The car festival was introduced in Kāñcē of the Pallavas. The doll (navaratri) festival was introduced in Japan in the early ninth century A.D. It is celebrated at households having girl children by displaying dolls on shelves. The Bon (mālayapakṣa) festival for ancestor’s worship means a festival of hungry ghost
as well as a feast of lanterns to pray for all souls. The idea of food offerings to spirits of the dead was introduced in China by Amoghavajra in the eighth century A.D. The concept of offering (dāna) by lamp light, umbrella and water has been adopted in Japan as shōryō-dana in Bon festival. A bonfire at eve of Holi has a similarity to Donto-yaki festival in Japan, in which last year’s amulets, Happy New Year’s decorations, etc. are burnt out by bamboo fires.  

Some of Brāhmaṇical deities have been popularly revered for worldly benefits under Buddhist pantheon in Japan. For instance, Lakṣmī is identified with Śrī in the Śīi-sukta, a later supplement of Rgveda, and is regarded as the goddess of fortune in the Pāli literature. In Diwali festival, Alakṣmī, goddess of misfortune, is driven away and Lakṣmī is welcomed. Lakṣmī is called Kichijō-ten in Japan. The idea of Kāli-pūjā and Lakṣmī-pūjā in Bengal has a similarity to the one of Setsubun-e celebrated on February 3 in Japan. Then people scatter roasted soy beans in order to drive away goblins and draw in fortune, shouting, “Goblin, go out! Happiness, come in!” Sarasvatī was originally the goddess of river and fertility, and further added merits of eloquence, learning and arts. In Japan Sarasvatī is called Benzai-ten, being worshipped as the goddess of wealth and music, playing biwa (Japanese harp) instead of vīnā in her iconography. She represents the other form of image of snake-head and human-body, amalgamated with the god of Uga as goddess of river and water.  

Japanese people have kept traditional customs inclusive of foreign elements. Annual events are celebrated according to four climatic seasons and rice-agricultural cycle, i.e. New Year’s house decorations by pines erected at gate, straw ropes hung at entrance and rice cakes displayed at alcove, Setsubun in February, Hina-matsuri (doll festival) in March, O-higan to pray for the souls at graves in an equinox week in March and September, Tango-no-sekku (boys’ festival) in May by displaying a helmet replica.
at home and flying carp streamers, *Onda-sai* (rice-planting ceremony), *Tanabata* (star festival) in July when Altair (star of herdsman) and Vega (star of weaver-princess) can meet once a year according to a Chinese legend, *Bon* festival in August to hold Buddhist memorial services for ancestors’ souls welcomed with sacred fire and seen off with bonfire besides enjoying *Bon* dances, *Kariage-matsuri* (harvest festival) and *O-tsukimi* (moon viewing) at full moon in September, and *Ô-misoka* (new year’s eve) when temples start ringing bell 108 times, symbolizing the casting away of 108 worldly passions.  

Japanese customs and manners have been under the great influence of religious ideas particularly of Buddhism and the primitive faith for spirits in nature prior to Shintō. The *misogi* (purification) is one of the basic ceremonies in Shintō and it is sometimes practised by laymen who take bathing in waterfall or river to pray for success in particular matters in their lives, just as Indian people take bathing in the Gaṅgā. There has been the tradition of female shaman called *miko* and shrine maiden called *uneme* since ancient times like Queen Himiko of Yamatai state and *Saïô* at Saiku. Ancient people were afraid of the curse of evil spirits and tried to pacify their souls by conducting rituals, which became the origins of some traditional festivals like the Gion festival in Kyoto originated from the *Goryô-e* at Gion and *Mushi-okuri* (literally sending off insects). The festival is famous for its procession of decorative cars (*dashi*). It derives from India, being mixed with the decorations on a stage of *den-gaku*. *Gozu-tennō* (bull-head-mounting *deva*, an incarnation of Bhaisajyaguru Buddha or being identical with Susa-no-o in Shugen-dō, originally a violent Shintō god), *oni* (demon), *tengu* (evil spirit with wings and long nose or hawk face in Shugen-dō) were originally devils but later worshipped as guardian deities among the populace.
Onbashira-sai

It has been common to erect columns in front of temples in India. Further, in Himachal Pradesh there are several temples in which a long wooden pillar is erected near temple buildings, e.g. Manu temple in Manali and Muni and Rāma temple in Vashisht. This tradition reminds Japanese of the Onbashira-sai (Festival of Holy Pillars) celebrated at Suwa-taisha, large Shintō shrine. The tradition to erect Holy Pillar is found at festivals around the world, e.g. the Sawadawa, tree of life, at Mt. Kailāśa in Tibet and the Rat Machendra in Nepal of erecting a pillar on a decorated car to pray for rain. The Suwa-taisha is located near Suwa Lake, surrounded by mountains in Nagano Prefecture, central Japan. The Nihongi mentions that in A.D. 691 the imperial order was instructed to worship God of Suwa by erecting a stone pole at a root of big tree. The festival of Onbashira-sai was first recorded in the ninth century A.D. of the early Heian period. The worship originated from dragon or snake, being recognized as the incarnation of God of Suwa, controller of wind and water. The shrine is divided into Upper Shrine in the south and Lower Shrine in the north. Worshipped are Takemitaka-no-kami (god of lake-water, wind, agriculture and later battle) and Mishagushi-no-kami (Mother Goddess). More than ten thousand shrines named Suwa-jinja are available all over Japan under the head of Suwa-taisha. The Onbashira-sai is celebrated from April to May in every seven years by erecting wooden pillars at four corners of each shrine to acknowledge the descending god to those holy pillars. At the same time shrines are newly built. Other shrines of Suwa-jinja also follow to erect smaller pillars. Archaeologically the worship of erected pillars has been revealed in several Jōmon sites. Of the meaning of erecting pillars, there are various theories mostly referred to as the strong influence of Buddhism or Ryōbu-Shintō in which Shintō gods are recognized as the incarnations of the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, e.g. to appeal four virtues of god, i.e.
compassion, charity, devotion and offering, to guard the country by four guardian 
deities originated from Brähmanical deities, to guard the country by four Bodhisattvas, 
i.e. Samantabhadra, Manñjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya; to symbolize four ways of 
dokko, the ritual tool of esoteric Buddhism originated from vajira, to set up the 
boundary area of Suwa-taisha, or to identify the place of main shrine inside four corners 
of sanctuary. The periodical interval to conduct the festival with its process may suggest 
the close relationship to the origin of slash-and-burn agriculture. The festival involves a 
large number of inhabitants throughout a whole process, i.e. selecting trees in 
designated forests of mountains at a distance of ten to twenty kilometers far from the 
shrines in seven years before the festival, cutting down and fixing trees with about 
seventeen metres in length by fire-purified cutting tools, pulling pillars from the forests 
down hills across rivers through village fields by numerous manpower of village people 
with an attending horse-riding parade of ancient costumes, cutting the edges of pillars in 
triangle form, erecting the pillars at the shrines, and finally conducting the ceremony to 
 consolidate the pillars to stand up on the gorund. Himāchal temples located on hills 
erect a single pillar, whereas Suwa-taisha surrounded by forests erects four pillars. 
Himāchal temples may have a relationship to Tibetan or Nepali tradition, whereas 
Suwa-taisha may have kept the Jōmon tradition. Eventually the events to erect holy 
pillar(s) may commonly share the belief to celebrate the god descending from the 
heaven to the top of pillar.27

**Pilgrimage as Cultural and Social Impetus**

The pilgrimage expresses the thorough affection for homeland to strengthen the 
religious sentiment and to expand the geographical consciousness. In other words, it is a
regional and national identification process on a basis of popular cosmography, mythology and ascetic life style. The sacred places can be regarded as common but rare information equipment in ancient society as people wandered around frontiers in pursuit of detachment, healing and spiritual interaction. Thus the pilgrimage stimulates to organize networking of sacred places, renewing stories and legends. Further it boosts the amalgamation and transformation of different cultures through individual travel and common information network, and the cycle among seclusion, emancipation and salvation. The pilgrimage in China started from the reverence to mountains and overlapped with the Buddhist faith to the Five Mountains originated from Rājagrha. Japan shared a similar notion and system of pilgrimage. It also created the culture of travel amusement (yugyō-bunka) like citrakathi (picture-storytelling) in India, kyō-geki drama in China and kabuki dance in Japan. A group of entertainers went around sacred places and gathering spots to show their performance of art.

The word Tīrtha derived from the root Vṛtī (to swim, to cross waters), with assigned meanings like watering places, bathing place or place of pilgrimage on the banks of sacred streams. From the early Christian era, in India, the term tīrtha began to be used in a sense of holy place of pilgrimage. The decline of commerce and the gradual decay of urban centres seemed to have contributed to the development of pilgrimage. Most of the declined urban settlements were recognized as tīrthas in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. The important pilgrimage centres were either related to the crossing of trade routes or the confluences of rivers and sea. A number of imaginative myths associated with gods, goddesses and sages were created to motivate the yajamanas to carry out pilgrimages. Mixing with historical events, they appealed the sacredness with divine personalities, established some rituals and reflected a set of social relationship, customs and behaviour. Thus many holy places grew all over the
subcontinent. A few selected tīrthas are Gayā, Ayodhyā, Vārāṇasi, Haridwar, Mathurā, Prayāga, Kuruksetra and Amaranātha in the northern zone; Guheśvara, Nāsik, Dwārakā and Arbuda in the western zone; Ekāmra and Purī in the eastern zone; Ujjayinī and Vidiśā in the central zone; and Amarāvatī, Kīśkindhā, Kāṇcipuram and Kanyakumāri in the southern zone.32

Vārāṇasi (Benares) has been one of the most popular Śaivaite tīrthas since the third century A.D. It has been developed on the left bank of the Gangā between the rivers Varuṇā and Asī. The Purāṇa holds it as an abode of gods and goddesses and Gangā. Only at this place the stream of the Gangā changes to the north direction for the Himalayas where Śiva is said to reside at Mt. Kailāśa. Vārāṇasi has prepared for the virtual world with complete religious equipment to fulfill visitors, i.e. more than 3,000 temples and small shrines headed by Viśvanāth temple, 42 routes of pilgrimages, memorial services for ancestors, bathing at ghāts, boating, shopping special products, etc. Pilgrims pour water or milk into linga and pray at each pilgrimage point. The poured water runs through drain always to the north. Naturally the bathing lets pilgrims feel themselves the water stream to the north.33 Similarly all over Japan, there are such cosmological connections with water in every season as watering garden, drawing fresh water from river, bathing in river or waterfall, and floating lanterns of spirits and souls down river. Those water networkings may have been designed within urban space as the equipment for people not to run distant away from the nature.34

Pilgrimage to Ise

Ise-jingū is placed as the central Shintō shrine in Japan, where Sun Goddess Amaterasu is revered as the founder of imperial family. The Yata-no-kagami (bronze mirror) is the object of worship as one of the Imperial Regalia. The five major ceremonies have been...
celebrated among one thousand-odd annual rituals, i.e. Toshigoi (festival for starting agriculture in February), Kan-miso (offering divine clothes in May), Tsuki-nami (in June and December half-yearly), Kan-name (offering fresh rice plants in September) and Nii-name (harvest in November).  

The pilgrimage to Ise-jingu (O-Ise-mairi) has been the most popular among the populace. Particularly during the Edo era of early modern times, it came into fashion enthusiastically several times all over Japan partly as a recreation for commoners in combination with the pilgrimage to Kumano, south-west of Ise. For convenience of pilgrims, various travel facilities were provided, e.g. palanquins, horse-ridings, running mail-carriers, milestones, wayside tea booths and inns. Accordingly a number of lodging towns flourished along routes of pilgrimage like Ise hon-gaido, the main road from Naniwa (Osaka) through Yamato (Nara) to Ise across rivers and mountains.

Pilgrimage to Kumano

The pilgrimage to Kumano (Kumano-mōde) was regarded as the penance for purification by walking along a long path in order to return to the next world by detaching from the past filled with earthly pollutions. Several pilgrimage routes were opened from the north, west and east in the Kii Peninsula, i.e. from Mt. Kōya, Mt. Yoshino (Okugake mountain ascetic route), and west and east coasts. It was about one month journey for a group of retired emperor to go there and back to Heian-kyō with palanquins in the Heian period, crossing passes at a distance of about 300 kilometres.

The Kumano-mōde became prevalent among the populace from the medieval times, being called “Ants’ pilgrimages to Kumano”. This owed largely the activities of mountain ascetics who came to settle in provinces all over Japan and provided pilgrims with guidance, lead, prayer services, accommodation arrangements, etc. as oshi (master)
or sendatsu (leader). Further the nuns of Kumano demonstrated and explained to people
the pictorial stories drawn in mandalas, e.g. Nachi Sankei Mandara (for pilgrimage in
Nachi) and Kumano Kanjin Jikkai Mandara (for guiding to Ten Worlds of human
reincarnation in Kumano). (Plate III Figure 5) A wooden image of Ragyō-shōnin
(naked holy priest) at Seigan-toji of Nachi is said to have been introduced from India. 36

Pilgrimage to Tateyama

Tateyama mountain range occupies the northern Japan Alps with rocky Mt. Tsurugi.
Formed by volcano-tectonic movement, its landscape is full of variety, i.e. volcanic
craters, boiling springs, spouting sulphurs, poisonous gas, a large plateau created by
lava flows with high waterfalls, etc. The heavily snowy climate leaves snows even in
summer and curled landscapes cut by glacier. 37

The central shrine at a peak of 3003 metres high was possibly built at the
beginning of the tenth century A.D. The Saint Jikō is said to have opened the mountain
for worship when he shot an arrow to a bear in a forest, drove the escaping bear into a
cave in the mountains, and received the oracle by Amitābha Buddha who incarnated as
bear. 38 In the middle of the Heian period, Buddhism taught about the mappō (latter days
of the Law) and the sufferings at the Hell after the death. Joined with the old belief in
the Hell existing at Tateyama where the souls of the dead be destined to go up, they
formed to reveal the view of other world in mountains. After the story was introduced in
the Konjaku-monogatari-shū (Collection of Tales of Times Now Past) in the late
eleventh century A.D., Tateyama became widely known all over Japan. At the end of
the Heian period, its pilgrimage became popular as its landscape with aiguille Mt.
Tsurugi compared to the Hell. People could experience both worlds of the Hell from
terrible volcanic scenery and the Pure Land from grand mountainous view, yet staying
alive in this world. They started either from Iwakura-ji or Ashikura-ji as the bases of Shugen-dō under Tendai sect, walked up to the plateau, climbed Tateyama, and toured around the Hell valley.  

The ceremony of Nuno-bashi Kanjō-e (abhiṣeka on Cloth Bridge) was conducted exclusively for the salvation of women at the Uba-dō (old woman’s hall) of Ashikura-ji since women had been prohibited to enter into the holy mountains until A.D. 1871. Wearing white grave-clothes with bandage, they entered into the Emma-dō hall where they received the judgement of Yama, crossed the bridge, entered into the Uba-dō where they performed ceremonial practices under the guidance of priests, looked up at Tateyama through windows, and finally gained a firm confidence of rebirth in the Pure Land. This ritual process comprises the memorial service in live status, the rebirth after temporary death and the salvation for women.

For the propagation of the Tateyama faith, monks of the two temples actively went all over Japan, spread charms for fortune, interpreted pictorial teachings of the Tateyama Mandara, recited the Kechi-bon-kyō (sūtra) to purify women’s pollutions affected by bloods like at mense and birth. The Tateyama Mandara depicts the opening story of mountain, climbing route, Nuno-bashi Kanjō-e, festival of Tateyama-gongen, the Hell and the Pure Land, etc. in a panoramic view. (Plate III, Figure 6)

Other well-known pilgrimages continued up to the present are the Ohenro in which pilgrims walk around 88 auspicious places around Shikoku, wearing a braided hat and white clothes similar to grave clothes as the temporary ceremony of death and rebirth; and the pilgrimage to Mt. Kōya, the headquarters of Shingon sect, in which people offers sūtras, ashes and hairs to wish being favoured with the salvation of Kūkai at the time of his revival, who is believed to have been in meditation at the inner shrine since A.D. 835. Similarly, but under far magnificent natures over a vast subcontinent, the
Hindus aim at round-pilgrimages to the *Parikrama* of Kailāśa Parvat, the *Chār Dham Yatra*, the four corners and the seven sacred cities of India.

**Social Classification**

The social class system was prevalent both in ancient India and Japan, irrespective of the minuteness of classification and the extent of rigidity. In a positive aspect it contributed to the development of various industries, cultures and social welfares, whereas in a negative aspect it caused the discrimination by excluding heterogeneous groups from society. To some extent, this may have functioned as a safety device of loosening social tensions for ruled classes to find a despised object or as a shelter for outlaws to escape from social restraints.

**Caste**

The basic characteristics of caste are the endogamy, hereditary occupation and exclusive commensality and community within a caste group. The caste system has promoted the unity and mutual aid within a certain caste group, while it has caused the discrimination among castes. The caste has been formed under ethnical, religious, political and occupational backgrounds. In other words, it has been consolidated as a result of the long process of social evolution with mixed factors. It has kept on changing and its actual situation has varied by region, class and occupational group. The *Puruṣa-sūkta* of *Ṛgveda* (X. 90) mentions about the sacrifice of a primeval giant called Puruṣa, of whose body the *Brāhmaṇas* was made from mouth, the *Rājanya* from arms, the *Vaiśya* from thighs, and the *Śūdra* from feet. In the *Ṛgveda*, the term *Varṇa* (*Āryan* colour) is used of all the three higher castes, contrasted only with *Dasyu-varṇa*.
In the Later Samhitas, the Brāhmaṇa is placed to be superior to the king, or the power of the Kṣatriya is derived from the Brāhmaṇa. The Bhagavad-gītā verse (IX. 32) puts women, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras in one and the same category of people. From the sixth to second centuries B.C., struggles were continued between orthodox Brāhmaṇism and heterodox Buddhism and Jainism as well as among the three higher castes to capture the social hegemony. Finally the superiority of the Brāhmaṇas was established to tighten the close relationship with the Kṣatriyas. The Dharma Śūtras and Śāstras prescribe the right, duty and code of conduct for each varṇa on the basis of superior Brāhmaṇas. Megasthenes divides the Indians into seven classes. His ‘confusion’ between classes and occupations probably suggests that the society was broadly divided according to an occupational factor rather than a theoretical classification. The Buddhist Pāli texts place the Kṣatriyas on a higher position than the Brāhmaṇas and refer to the people ranking below the four castes as hīna-jāti (low tribes). Around the beginning of the Christian era, various clans and occupational groups emerged in North India as the result of foreign invasions, conflicts and mixtures on the basis of agrarian society. The intermarriage among different castes was prohibited doctrinally, but in reality the anuloma marriage was admitted and even the pratiloma marriage was found. Accordingly the Manu-smṛti was compiled around the second century A.D. It aimed to enclose the people born by intermarriage into the varṇa order under strict regulation and classification. During the Gupta period, the social system based on varṇa order was completed. In the early medieval age, jāti was formed, while Hinduism was doctrinally systematized. The doctrine of saṃsāra and karma was infused into the caste order as the eternal truth. Then the heredity of occupations and the birth were placed inseparable in the social classes. The social system turned from the ancient four varṇas to the medieval complex jātis.
There have been large discrepancies between scriptural concept and real social order. Many jātis of untouchables are omitted from Hindu society. All the four varṇas are not everywhere represented. The principal groups of social interaction are families, lineages, jāti groups and village communities. Yet the varṇa scheme leads to assess jātis of different geographic and linguistic regions. The Hindus are either dvijas (twice-born) or ekajātis (once born). The dvijas are either religious or secular professionals. The ekajātis are either clean or unclean Śūdras. The discrimination among castes by ranking was caused by the Brāhmaṇical judgement on purity or pollution. The utmost characteristic of varṇa scheme lies in the unified system between endogamy and exogamy. A caste member had to select a spouse within a same varṇa, in which the marriage within a same gotra and sapinda was prohibited.45

The jātis are endogamous and hereditary social groups. They are based on groups of occupations to function as the system of integration across regions. The ranking among numerous jātis within a peculiar area can be materialized according to the regional conditions in combination with varṇa scheme. Meanwhile the dominant castes appeared in respective regions, irrespective of four varṇa orders. They occupied a superior position with wealth or power usually as landholder. Eventually they obtained the higher status in varṇa order through Sansritization.46

A.J. Toynbee points out a common historical fact. Namely, when rulers could not eliminate or merge a heterogeneous group within society, they tended to split and insulate the group within territory. Then they were driven out from particular work fields to disadvantage. Instead they concentrated on the remaining occupations of which they often gained an exclusive power in society. Parsis in India played the same role of moneylender as Jews.47 There are various theories about the origin of untouchability, e.g. racial differenciation, pratiloma marriage and notion of purity and pollution. The
untouchables bore heavy disadvantages in Hindu society, i.e. no social contacts, no drawing water, no ownership of property and religious disabilities. The *Manu-smṛti* (10-51, 54, 55) suggests the existence of out-caste called *Candālas* under the notion of untouchability, saying that the conquered *Mleccha* should be treated as *Candālas*. However, untouchables always played a vital role in society in facing dangers particularly related to the blood and the death. At any ceremony associated with birth, marriage or death, lowly drummers and musicians frightened away evil spirits through their performances. At birth, an untouchable mid-wife faced this potential danger to assist a mother. When a potentially dangerous spirit was invited, the untouchable was expected to act as shaman. Because of his closeness to dangerous spirits, he was avoided and became an ‘untouchable’. Yet, society could not work without untouchables. Out of handicraft jātis in Bengal, Chitrakāra or Paṭuśa (painter) holds the tradition of picture-preaching art. Wandering from place to place, they performed to sing about popular stories of Hindu mythology by showing pictures, initially as a part of missions. The *Arthasastra* and early Buddhist texts mention about various wandering artists like aditikauśika, ganthika and ahiguṇthika who wandered around for entertainments, sometimes employed in spies by rulers. Their peculiar natures of wander, extraordinary performance and sorcerous ceremony struck people with terror yet contempt later. This similar kind of wanderers out of ordinary society was found in Japan, e.g. hijiri (wandering ascetic), biwa-hōshi (lute player), yashi (showman) and kawara-mono (field performer). For instance, Kōya-hijiri wandered all over Japan to encourage people to offer ashes at Mt. Kōya as the Pure Land.

**Social Classes in Japan**

Under the *Ritsu-ryō* institution during the Nara period, the commoners were divided
between court-rank holders and non-rank holders, most likely between the rulers and the ruled. Government officials were recruited from any person who passed the state examination. In fact, however, sons of the fifth-rank nobles and above were automatically granted the prescribed rank so that the way to government official was quite limited for the commoners. The court-rank holders could obtain incomes according to their rank and office, exempted from all taxes besides those levied on land grants. The court-rank holders were divided between the elite nobles with the fifth rank and above and the petty nobles with the sixth rank and below. The elite nobles were guaranteed various special privileges and in reality the succession of court rank. To the imperial family and elite nobles, servants (chōnai or shijin) were officially provided.

The commoners (ryōmin) were mostly farmers (hakutei) and some functional groups (shinabe), etc. They were producers of goods and services mostly for state’s income. Rice fields were provided to commoners, their women and slaves with different shares of areas according to the Handen-shūjū-no-hō (laws of rice land allocations). They had to pay the tax of about three percent of crops (so), to provide products instead of physical service in the capital (yō) and special products in each province (chō), and to be engaged in public works and military services.

The slave class (senmin) was strictly divided into five subgroups by the goshiki-no-sen (laws of the lowly of five colours in clothes), according to the type of ownership and the extent of freedom. They were state slaves (kanko), private slaves (ke’nin), state chattel slaves (ku-nuhi) owned by the central government as buy-and-sell property, private chattel slaves (shi-nuhi) owned mainly by temples, shrines, officials and wealthy farmers, and the imperial-mausolean slaves (ryōko) owned by officials. However, slaves were a minority with less than ten percent of population. Kuzu from Yoshino and Hayato from southern Kyūshū, being considered as different races, served
the emperor with their peculiar sorcery and accomplishments.51

The origin of the buraku (community of senmin, literally lowly people) has been controversial. The Engi-shiki (Procedures of the Engi era, completed in A.D. 927) mentions that a specific place of confluence in Heian-kyo should be prohibited for the ransō (or hinin, literally non-human beings) and the tosha (or eta, literally much polluted beings) to live in as a group of senmin. As the oldest extant literary source using the word of eta, the Chiri-bukuro (c. A.D. 1280) mentions that they should not get in touch with human beings, as sudara (Śūdras) in India are said to be wicked tosha (slaughters) who kill living beings for sale. The origin of the buraku may have been mixed up with several factors like foreign ethnic group, profession and faith under a large influence of Buddhist views of brutes and impurities.52

In the Kamakura era, social classes were defined more clearly under the law of Bakufu (headquarters of warriors) as a basis of state administration, i.e. the samurai (warriors), the bonge (farmers, artisans and merchants) and the genin (slaves).53 In the Edo era, the society was rigidly divided into four classes, i.e. warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants (shi-nō-kō-shō). Though respected socially, court nobles and priests were minor groups regulated under the particular institutions by warrior rulers. This classification entirely differs from the caste in India. The buraku community was separated from ordinary society under the administration of danzaemon as quasi-warrior.54 The treatment of dead cattle and the manufacturing leather products were restricted as the exclusive role for eta. It was prohibited usually to be seated together and to share tableware with senmin. Eventually the individual distinction tended to turn the buraku issue into an exclusiveness of blood relationship of senmin.55

There were also the discriminations for artists, e.g. the Nō players and the monkey trainers who conducted the ceremony with monkey to pray for the health of horses.56
However, buraku people contributed to peculiar industries as well as social welfares, e.g. the production of Japanese drums and banjos, the dismantling carcases of cattle, the contribution to anatomy and medical science, the assistance at prisoners’ hospitals, the disposal of the dead at street, and the making of well-known Japanese gardens like at Kinkaku-ji, Ginkaku-ji, Saihō-ji, etc. in Kyoto.\(^{57}\)

Buraku people could not be fully classified by their professions. Most cases seemed to be solved by impurity, which was judged by the ruling class from social order. It is an essence of the buraku issue that buraku people were placed ‘out of society’, as the Konjaku-monogatari-shū mentions that humans do not associate with them.\(^{58}\)

Thus, Japanese society was basically divided into the rulers (nobles or later warriors) and the ruled (commoners), besides priests and later court nobles. On the other hand, Hindu society was divided into ‘twice born’ and ‘once born’ among varṇas under the Brāhmaṇical doctrines as the Brāhmaṇas at the top closely tying up with the Kṣatriyas. However, the society was practically worked out under the finely divided occupational groups, jātis, in each community. Both in Japan and India, either minor or sizeable, the untouchables were discriminatively split out of society, yet indispensable in society as they largely supported people’s living, cultures and industries.

### Foreign Impacts on Cultural Traditions and Social Customs

The similar cultural phenomena between two different regions are usually understood either by propagation or autogenesis as human ideas tend to become basically same everywhere.\(^{59}\) However, this sort of viewpoint should be considered more concretely. Namely, a similar idea may have been created under similar ecological environments and historical progresses.
There was no civilization without interchanges. Civilization formed itself by its contacts with other civilizations. The propagation of civilization is divided into direct propagation and indirect propagation by notion and idea. Direct propagation is divided further into overall propagation and partial propagation. Overall propagation was made when one civilization was entirely transferred and grafted on the other civilization by migration, invasion, etc. For instance, the expansion of the Kusānas into the subcontinent activated the indigenous civilization of India. Partial propagation acculturated relevant cultural elements selectively. Those foreign elements as wet-rice agriculture, iron tools and Buddhism transformed greatly the original Japanese civilization.60

When some cultural elements of one civilization penetrated into the other civilization, they were transformed to fit the fresh soil and climate of civilization. The indigenous culture was also transformed by amalgamating with foreign culture and a new type of culture was created. The religious propagation shows the typical pattern for foreign religions to amalgamate with indigenous ones, then to transform themselves and finally to become popularized. For instance, the amalgamation of Buddhism with Hellenism boosted the Mahāyāna and Buddhist art of Gandhāra.61

The creativity of civilization was performed by the combination among foreign cultural elements. The history of civilizations was made up by imitation, addition and transfer of cultures. The civilization holds multi-layers, hybrid and coexistence of cultures. The “Heteronomous Autonomy” is a development formula of civilization. There is neither the independent and genuine development in parallel nor the “Autogenic Succession” of civilization.62

The land, river and sea lanes functioned as the traffic route for people’s travel, the trade route for goods exchange, and the communication route for transmission of
information, knowledge and technology. The oasis metropolises and port cities emerged as market places as well as cultural centres for mediation. Every civilization closely linked, influenced and transformed each together. Through the Steppe route, the oasis route and the southern sea route over Eurasia, those mobile people of nomads, traders and seafarers intermediated between the East and the West civilizations. The islands like Socotra, Śrī Lankā, Indonesia, Formosa, Ryūkyū and Tsushima, and the peninsulas like Arabia, South India, Malay and Korea also became the relay points.63

Foreign Influence on Japan
In the course of ancient times, Japanese people, living in the archipelago, had assimilated two great continental civilizations of China and India as well as other foreign cultures, and nurtured their peculiar cultural traditions under the Japanese civilization on the basis of indigenous elements since the Jōmon period. Even indigenous elements were inspired through the constant interchanges among neighboring regions. The ancient times were the starting point to have directed the cultural tendency. It started merely as a peripheral region of the Chinese civilization but later created its original cultures through the transformation of foreign elements in the the Heian period around the tenth century A.D., about four centuries after the official introduction of Buddhism. Taking instance from the epochs through interchanges with the continent, the wet-rice agriculture across the East China Sea brought up the Yayoi culture, the horse-riding nomadic culture from the Steppes impacted on the establishment of Yamato Dynasty with the Kofun culture, the culture of western regions from the oasis route led the cosmopolitan culture in the Nara period, and the Sui and T'ang cultures brought back by envoys prospered the aristocratic culture during the Nara and Heian periods.64
Japanese have been good at choosing the most suitable things for them among various foreign cultures. In a common life of the Edo era, people informed Shintō gods of baby’s birth, celebrated a wedding at a Shintō shrine, spent daily lives according to the ethics of Confusianism and conducted Buddhist rituals at funeral. In Shintō this world is the best place whereas the Hades of afterlife is a polluted place, in Buddhism this world is a worldly place called shaba whereas the afterlife is greeted in the Pure Land, and in Confusianism this world is everything – those conflicting religious notions were used properly and naturally by the common people, which symbolizes the Japanese opportunism, as succeeded by the modern society to a large extent.65

Foreign Influence on India

Throughout ancient times, various foreign groups came into India, i.e. from the West, Achaemenids, Pahlavas (Parthians), Magas, Sassanids, Yavanas (Greeks); from Central Asia, Šakas (Scythians), Kušānas (Yueh-chis), Abhīras, Hūnas, etc. In the sixth century B.C. the Achaemenids occupied the North-West. From 327 to 325 B.C. the Macedonian Greeks invaded India under Alexander the Great. From the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. the Bactrian Greeks, the Šakas, the Pahlavas and the Kušānas continued inroads into India. From the third to sixth centuries A.D. Sassanids invaded and occupied the lower Sind. The Hūnas appeared in the fifth century A.D. Thus, foreigners kept on moving from Central or West Asia into India for about one thousand years. They monopolized political powers in the North-West, yet finally became Hinduized. The cultural impact of Romans was given largely by trade contact. Similarly the contacts with Chinese were commercial, cultural and religious.66

The image worship had no place in the Vedas. The rituals of image-worship first appear in the Purāṇas. The cult of image worship was influenced by foreigners. For
instance, the sun worship was already in vogue in the sixth century B.C., but the cult of Sun image worship and Sun temples were introduced from Persia with the advent of the Magas. Several funeral customs are possibly traced under foreign influences, e.g. the exposure of the dead to vultures introduced by the Magas, the *Sati* and self-immolation with dead master or relatives by the Scythians, and the erecting memorials of the dead and expressing sorrow by slashing cheek, face, etc. under the Kuṣāṇa influence. On top of foreign influences, the utmost foreign contribution to the religious field would be the propagation of Buddhism over Central Asia and China during the reign of the Kuṣāṇas. Indian cultures were introduced to East Asia together with Buddhism. Especially Kaniska’s devotion to Buddhist faith has been evidenced by several archaeological remains and artifacts, e.g. the foundation of the great stūpa and vihāra at Puruṣapura and the representation of the *Boddo* on gold coins. Further, he is said to have summoned the fourth Buddhist Council in Kāśmir. Buddhism was clearly divided into two different sects and the Mahāyāna had been promoted since then. On the contrary, the Hūnas destroyed probably all places of worship whether Hindu or Buddhist as well as many cities. The Hindu caste society was shaken and brought into many changes. The Hūnas’ raids affected the Indian trade and commerce with Central Asia. They repeatedly attack the Gupta Empire and turned the Golden Age into confusion.67

In accordance with the emergence of the Mahāyāna, the Kuṣāṇas boosted the Buddhist art both through the Hellenistic art of Gandhāra and the indigenous art of Mathurā. The both schools of art further developed through mutual stimuli. Whether the Buddhist image was of foreign or indigenous origin, practically the Kuṣāṇas popularized its production.68

No stone-made architecture and sculpture have been discovered in India before the fourth century B.C. during the reign of Aśoka, when the use of stone seems to have been
introduced all of sudden in a matured art on a large scale. This may have been the result of interchange with the Seleucids, as exemplified by the Great Hall of Columns excavated at Kumarahar and a number of columns with animal capitals. Though D. B. Spooner suggests the Graeco-Persian influence like from the Hall of Hundred Columns at Persepolis, they were most probably the outcome of fusion between indigenous traditions and foreign styles. Some theory suggests the architectural influence on the rock-cut Buddhist vihāras from the tombs of Achaemenian emperors. Most characteristics of the Greek ornaments have been found in Indian art and architecture.69

The Alexander’s invasion left a number of Greek settlements in India. Those cities continued to flourish even after his turnover to the West. The Kuṣāṇas had always cultivated friendly relations with the Roman Empire both on political and economic grounds, holding check in the neighboring Parthia. Accordingly, India could develop a flourishing Roman trade to gain a favorable balance of trade for two centuries, intermediated by the Near East.70

Almost the entire history of Indo-Greek Kings of Bactria has been known through their coins only. The Greek word drachma was adopted by the Indians as Drammas. Even Śaka and Pahlava coins followed the reduced Indo-Greek standard. The Kuṣāṇas introduced a gold currency which served as a prototype of the gold coinage of the Imperial Gupta rulers.71

Foreign influences through Greeks, Persians, Seythians, etc. had prevailed not only in the above fields of religion, art, architecture, commerce and coinage but also in the other fields of philosophy, political system, language, astronomy, idea of era, glass technology, dress patterns and food habits, etc. all over Indian way of life, with much greater impact than generally noticed.72 Thus, a large capacity of the Indian civilization as “Major Civilization” digested foreign elements inseparable with Indian way of life,
further extended its great influences over the Greater India, and finally reached Japan across the sea at the easternmost end of Eurasia.\(^7\)

In conclusion, the Japanese civilization could select foreign elements to fit its soil, thanks to a geographical distance from the continent across the sea. Eventually it formed and deepened its national culture around the tenth century A.D. onwards. Further, within the country, new cultures mostly spread from the capital to provinces to develop local cultures. On the other hand, the Indian civilization kept on undergoing foreign influences directly by invasions and migrations through the ages. As a result, the Indian civilization was constantly transformed. Further, as foreigners mostly entered from the North-West and moved around the North, the extent of foreign influence varied by regions. This further boosted regional diversities of cultures peculiarly in the South. Even throughout the period of foreign invasions, South India remained as a refuge for the culture of the North and contributed towards the completion of Hindu culture.\(^7\)

**Interchanging Civilizations**

In ancient times both the Japanese civilization and the Indian civilization could share some similarities owing to the cultural influences from India to Japan, but yet kept large differences due to the basic differences of geographical location and ecological environment. The Japanese civilization was placed as “Peripheral Civilization” with a rich original culture, whereas the Indian civilization as “Major Civilization” with large foreign influences.

M. Kobayashi proposes the functional concept of civilizations named “Medium Civilization” to grasp the dynamism of civilizations. Nomads in the Steppes, traders at oasis metropolises and port cities, and seafarers in islands and peninsulas played a major role in “Medium Civilization”. Civilization grew and developed through
encounters and interchanges, being intermediated by “Medium Civilization”. The “Medium Civilization” grew in bordered areas among civilizations and many cultures stayed and mixed up together over there. The Kuśāṇa which gave birth to the Mahāyāna formed a typical “Medium Civilization”. The Southeast Asian civilization was also a great “Medium Civilization” which grew at an important connecting point along the southern sea route to intermediate various civilizations over Eurasia. The dynamism of civilizations appears more obvious from such a fact that “Major Civilization”, “Peripheral Civilization” and “Medium Civilization” became interchangeable. 75

As already referred to in Chapter II, the “Interchange Sphere of Civilizations”, proposed by S. Itō, is another framework to grasp the progress of civilizations from the viewpoints of dynamism and correlation. It is defined as the space for constant interchanges in a certain region for a certain period, e.g. Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and East Asia Sea. Civilization could be formed with “Interchange Sphere of Civilizations”. It was the space for encounter and clash, contact and amalgamation, and interchange and union among civilizations without pause. 76 Civilization is regarded as the uniting force to synthesize relevant elements in forming a common way of life. Religion occupies a large part of uniting force. 77 In each civilization, many other civilizations flowed and stayed. Civilization formed itself through the mutual relationship with other civilizations. Thus, civilization has been in a constant process of evolution as an existence. A large variety of civilizations can be compared to Mandala where humans, materials, moneys and information are moving, crossing and connecting each other, floating in space and time. 78

The ancient interchange between India and Japan through intermediary regions provides the moderns with profound wisdoms especially in the importance of a series of process as propagation, acculturation, assimilation and transformation of foreign
cultures into the individual culture. The recent globalization by Information Technology seems to materialize the ubiquitous society. However, one should bear in mind that the mutual respect of individual cultures as kept by the ancients is a starting point to realize the universal civilization deeply rooted in human soul.

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