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**Summary Report on
the Exploration of Wisdom in Japanese Traditional Cultures
Believed to be Instrumental in Building a Sustainable Society
and Sharing the Wisdom with International Community**

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Ideas and Practice of Sustainability in Japan

Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Background of the Project	4
CHAPTER 1: Ideas of Sustainability in Japan.....	6
1.1. Ideas of Sustainability in Contemporary Japan	6
1.2. Ideas of Sustainability in Traditional Japan.....	9
1.3. Details of Japanese Wisdom regarding Sustainability	12
1.3.1. Spiritual Wealth and Peace of Mind	12
1.3.2. Identification with Nature and Spirit of Oneness.....	14
1.3.3. Learning to be Content	17
1.3.4. Idea of Reincarnation and the Cycle of Life Rooted in Society	19
1.3.5. Harmony and Continuity of Family, Community and Society.....	22
1.3.6. Freedom of Spirit.....	24
1.3.7. Ancestor Worship to Ensure the Continuity of Life.....	25
1.3.8. Education and Nurturing of Future Generations.....	27

INTRODUCTION

The Japan Association of Environment and Society for the 21st Century (JAES21) was established in September 1993 towards the objective of building a sustainable society. Since then, JAES21 has shown a consistent interest in the wise teachings and knowledge found in Japanese traditions and continued its efforts to learn from such wisdom. For instance, in October 1994, soon after its establishment, JAES21 organized a project to explore the ideas and life of Kenji MIYAZAWA, a poet and one of Japan's foremost writers of children's books. Project participants visited places noted in connection with the author and held a symposium. In May 1994, JAES21 conducted a Survey on the Environment and Culture under contract from the Environment Agency, part of which was reflected in the Government's White Paper on Environment. Since January 1996, JAES21 has hosted the U.S.-Japan Joint Seminar in Honolulu, Hawaii in alternate years. The seminar seeks to discuss the traditional teachings and knowledge passed on in Polynesia and Japan, and to explore the wisdom shared among our predecessors. The sixth seminar was held in 2006.

The JAES21 believes in the importance of exploring and spreading environmental ethics – including Japan's traditional wisdom—as a spiritual pillar to sustain our society in this era of global environment, and has launched committed efforts to promote the cause in various ways. It was our awareness on three issues that compelled us at JAES21 to renew our commitment in studying this topic for this research.

First, prominent environmental experts primarily in the West generally show interest in, and often admire, Japan's environmental technologies in energy conservation, recycling and other areas. However, from our experience we found that they show little or no interest in the thoughts, values and sensitivities of the Japanese that gave rise to such environmental technologies. This may be due to the fact that conventional efforts to communicate to the rest of the world the long-tradition of knowledge passed on in Japan have been less than satisfactory or easy to understand. By contrast, the characteristics of Japan's technological

capabilities have been transmitted to other countries in an easy-to-understand way.

Second, Japanese people themselves are losing sight of the traditional wisdom that served to sustain their society, being overwhelmed by the values, thoughts, technology, political system and other imports from the West that flooded into the nation after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. After the WWII, in particular, the mass-production, mass-consumption economic system has overpowered the Japanese society. With the increasing globalization of economy, the economic logic based on market principles has engulfed just about every aspect of life, eroding the values inherent in traditional teachings of being content with one's state of being or living in harmony with nature. We at JAES21 strongly felt the need to analyze why and how such changes took place, and to rediscover the values of such wisdom.

Third, we have a growing conviction that Japan's traditional knowledge and teachings can provide us with a powerful tool to surmount the current global chaos, as nations in the world including Japan struggle in search of a new identity, a new value system to deal with the globalization, and combat the deterioration in the environment caused by global warming.

Communicating and spreading such traditional thoughts, which are being lost even among the Japanese, in a planet with diverse values and ideas, will not be an easy task. Still, it is true that without such challenging efforts, we cannot hope to build a sustainable society.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Environmental Fund of Mitsui & Co., Ltd. and all people concerned for giving us this valuable opportunity to address this monumental challenge.

Saburo KATO and Konoe FUJIMURA

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Global warming and a myriad of associated problems are threatening the environment, the very foundation of human life and socio-economic activities. Socio-economic conditions in Japan and the world as a whole, meanwhile, have begun to exhibit various negative signs amid the trends of globalization. Short-term economic activities have resulted in disparities between the haves and have-nots around the world, forming a hotbed for terrorism that has sent shockwaves around the globe. Also, the decline in educational capacities has led to a moral and spiritual decay among young people and hampered the healthy development of the members of future generations. The sustainability of economic and human/social activities is at stake.

The idea of “sustainable development” was initially advocated at the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) in 1987. The Commission defined sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In 1992, the concept was incorporated into a global agreement at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) as the global community embraced the common goal of building a sustainable society in the 21st century.

However, social consensus on the concept of “sustainability” or “sustainable society” is yet to emerge in Japan. For this reason, past efforts to establish and develop the concept of sustainability in Japan have been based, for the most part, on thesis and theories written by researchers and scholars in the West.

Yet, Japan had built a sustainable society before World War II, particularly during the Edo period (1603-1868) when the policy of national seclusion was strictly enforced. Japanese can justly be proud of this unique example in world history, which shows that peace

and highly civilized culture can be developed side to side in a sustainable environment.

Many factors contributed to such a sustainable society during the Edo period, such as natural conditions endemic to the country, as well as philosophy, religion, ethics, education, art and culture and system of governance developed on the basis of the local climate and natural setting. Traditional ideas based on harmonious coexistence among people and between nature and people have served as a spiritual foundation for developing and maintaining the sustainability of Japanese society.

Unfortunately, however, the Japanese have not been able to share with the rest of the world the spirit of sustainability inherent in its traditional cultures partly due to the difficulty in explaining such ideas according to Western logic and also because the concept of sustainability is fairly novel even by global standards.

In this research project, we attempted to identify the concept of sustainability in Japan by extracting and collating descriptions of this concept from publications by leading Japanese intellectuals (including philosophers, artists, politicians, religious figures and entrepreneurs) and the way of life of the ordinary Japanese people. The excerpts were then put through a critical examination by a wide range of Japanese and non-Japanese intellectuals. The resulting papers to be published in Japanese and English will be presented to the global community through symposia and other opportunities as an intellectual property to be shared by all.

We hope our papers will expand the horizon of discussions on sustainability that had previously been conducted primarily in the U.S. and Europe, and contribute to the further development of global sustainability.

CHAPTER 1: IDEAS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN JAPAN

1.1. IDEAS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

While the concept of sustainability and its potentials have been discussed widely in the West, contemporary Japan also exhibits some of the wisdom of sustainability that is passed on through its traditional cultures.

In 2004, Wangari Muta MAATHAI (1940-), a Kenyan ecological activist who won the first Nobel Peace Prize in the field of environment, brought to global attention the Japanese word “*mottainai*” and the spirit behind it. The term *mottainai*, which is an ancient Japanese concept, has several meanings according to the Japanese dictionary *Daijirin*: (1) the idea that valuable human resources and materials should always be put to full and good use so as not to waste anything; (2) awe and gratitude that nature is sacred and should never be violated by wasting precious resources; (3) a sense of obligation; and (4) disappointment (that things have moved away from their original state). While the meaning in (1) is more common in recent years, the word “*mottainai*” was originally used to describe a sense of gratitude and awe one feels towards other people and nature. “*Mottainai*” - a term symbolizing Japanese people’s concept of sustainability - implies that each object in life and nature has life of its own that must be respected in the same way as one would a fellow human being. Some of the works of Japanese *anime*, a style of animation originating in Japan that has spread globally, deal with the topics of social stability and the sustainability of life.

The legendary *mangaka* (Japanese *manga* artist) and animator Osamu TEZUKA (1928-1989) created the popular anime character Astroboy (*Tetsuwan Atomu*) in 1951. The universal theme that runs through many of his works is the respect for all life forms and themes relating to reincarnation. In *Tetsuwan Atomu*, Tezuka depicts the main character Astroboy Atomu (Atom in English) as a human-built robot with a strong sense of justice and a tender, human heart – not dissimilar to the “mind and heart” allowed only to humans by the God of Creation in the Christian tradition.

In his lifework *manga* titled *Hinotori* (*The Phoenix*) whose first episode began in 1954, Tezuka explores the essence of life and the human karma through the main character of the phoenix -- a life force that transcends time and space. The phoenix is said to live forever by diving into a fire and reincarnating itself once every 100 years. The work convinces us of the continuity and reincarnation of life, that all forms of life that exist in

this cosmos will live on and on. The choice of his lifelong theme -- reincarnation and the respect for life -- is said to have been shaped by his experiences during the war and medical training based on his background with Japanese traditional thoughts.

The works of Hayao MIYAZAKI, one of Japan's foremost *anime* writer/directors, also deeply reflect Japanese Buddhist thoughts on the cyclical nature of life: life that dwells in all animate and inanimate objects changes shape and place but will live on. Miyazaki's film *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, 2001) won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2003. One of his masterpieces, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushika*, 1982-) is set 1,000 years after humanity destroyed its own highly sophisticated civilization and scientific technology that had reached its zenith. The story revolves around the title character, Nausicaä, a charismatic young princess of the Valley of the Wind, a small state located by the Sea of Corruption. Racked by an adverse turn of events, the princess tries to come to terms with the inevitability of human tendencies to act and fight against each other—a recurring theme since time immemorial. It is also a story of repeated annihilation and regeneration of civilizations amid the confrontation between nature and scientific technology, and how humans have devised creative ideas to help in the regeneration.

Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke Hime*, 1997 film) deals with a struggle that takes place in a period of transition from medieval to modern era in Japan between the supernatural guardians of a primeval forest called *mononoke*—wild dogs, wild boars and other beasts who understand human language and Forest Spirits— and the humans who try to exploit the forest. In this work, as in many others, Miyazaki sends the message that the security of human life can be achieved only through living in harmony with nature that also has a life of its own.

Japanese have transmitted knowledge and ideas on sustainability globally, not just in the field of *anime* but also in science and technology. One example is Hideki YUKAWA (1907-1981), a theoretical physicist and the first Japanese to win the Nobel Prize in Physics with his theory of mesons, which explained the interaction between protons and neutrons. While he excelled in science, Yukawa was well-versed in the subject of Oriental thought, including Chinese and Confucian philosophy, based on his avid reading since childhood. He is also said to have taken interest in *haiku* poetry that comprises part of the literary tradition of Japan. Referring to the atomic bomb as the “absolute evil,” Yukawa appealed until the very end of his life against its use for lasting peace in the world. Yukawa's stance is thought to have been influenced by his friendship with Albert Einstein, known as the

“greatest physicist of all time” and an outspoken critic who appealed globally for the abolition of nuclear weapons. It is also attributed to Yukawa’s sense of responsibility as a scientist in a nation that sustained substantial damage from the atomic bomb and derives from traditional Japanese thought that emphasizes harmony and considerations for future generations.

The ideas of the world-famous Japanese architect Tadao ANDO (1941~) offer us thoughtful insights that support sustainability. Manifested in his unique expressions in exposed concrete and geometric shapes, Ando’s works demonstrate his thoughts on architecture as being rooted in its local climate and culture. In one of his publications, Ando wrote:

Each work of architecture must contain strongly etched-in elements rooted in the local climate, cultures and way of life that people can perceive with their five senses; they range from macro-elements such as geographical or cultural contexts, history on various levels and areas, and spirituality to more subtle elements like personal experience and impressions and memories inspired by a seemingly innocuous tree or leaf.

In fact, Ando’s architecture artfully incorporates natural elements into the building structure, which provides an excellent example of the Japanese sense of oneness with nature and freedom of the spirit.

As described above, various articles, works and technology in contemporary Japan give us an insight – albeit in an indirect form -- into the ideas and messages supporting human and social sustainability rooted in Japanese Buddhism and the spirit of Shinto. Unfortunately, however, one has to admit that such ideas are apparently being lost since the period prior to WWII or the Meiji Restoration under the powerful pressure of civilization of science and technology and consumer economy of the West.

1.2. IDEAS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN TRADITIONAL JAPAN

Just as in any other nation or race, the Japanese have traditionally devised various ways to sustain a stable society. The Japanese society prior to the Meiji Restoration was marked by a long period of peace, stability and sophisticated culture, although there were intermittent periods of conflicts and some violent confrontations. Overall, however, the period was a tranquil one in the history of humanity.

Located to the east of the Asian continent, most areas in Japan enjoy temperate climate and a rich natural environment characterized by lush forests. Blessed with bounties of nature, the spiritual foundation of Japanese people is said to have been shaped during the Jomon period that started more than 10,000 years ago, evolving over time into a form of animism called Shinto. In the mid-6th century, Buddhism reached Japan through China and the Korean peninsula, greatly transforming the Japanese outlook on nature. Many scholars point out that, along with Buddhism and Shinto, Confucianism and Taoism that have developed since ancient times in China have had a profound impact on the development of the nation's spiritual base.

Japan's traditional cultures are often merged together in one category, but they have undergone drastic changes over time, from the Asuka period around the 7th century to the Edo period (1603-1868). Such transformations greatly altered the nation's industry, diplomatic relations, and people's way of life. An examination of life in the Edo period, which is the main subject of the research in this phase of research, reveals the general characteristics of Japan's traditional cultures as discussed in the following sections.

First, most people in the Edo period believed in reincarnation and harbored a Buddhist-rooted sense of mortality and impermanence of things. Higher values were placed on attaining peace of mind than on attachment to material things. In other words, the idea of being satisfied with one's possessions or state of being was deeply implanted in the minds of Japanese people through Buddhist and Taoist teachings.

Also, in the spirit of Shinto, the Japanese have shown respect and awe for the abundance of nature around them and traditionally worshiped mountains, rivers and trees for the deities within these manifestations of nature.

In politics, key political leaders generally displayed a strong sense of responsibility and mission and exerted self-restraint in their exercise of power. The Edo period was an era of autocratic rule by warriors. Politicians of the time followed *Bushido* or the

warrior spirit as outlined in *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, authored by NITOBE Inazo (1862-1933), a prominent agricultural economist, author, educator, diplomat, and politician. Nevertheless, the political rule in Edo was ethically controlled and restrained by the influence of Confucianism.

The Edo citizens, for the most part, willingly lived in honorable poverty, sought spiritual well-being, respected their ancestors, and esteemed harmony over fighting. Culturally, they positively valued the concept of *wabi* (rustic simplicity and quietness), *sabi* (beauty or serenity that comes with age), and *mottainai* (not to be wasteful but instead to fully value all material things) with little negative connotations of poverty.

In engineering, people in the Edo period took advantage of their resourcefulness to create various ingenious devices. Learning from guns, watches and other goods brought from the West and crafts imported from China and Korea, they easily adapted and developed their own skills, which later developed into the hallmark of Japanese technology.

Thus, in Japan, the knowledge and ideas that support sustainability have been shaped by traditional cultures. The features that characterize Japanese ideas may be identified more clearly through a comparison with the Judeo-Christian tradition in the West (Table 1). While not all were conducive to sustainability, traditional ideas in Japan are thought to contain elements that lead to sustainability (Table 2).

Unfortunately, however, the above-mentioned knowledge for a sustainable society that has been shared and passed on for more than 1,000 years has undergone drastic changes in the past century. Such transformations may be attributed to the national campaign of the mid-19th century called *fukoku kyohei*, aimed at building a nation of wealth and military strength by adapting the scientific and military technology introduced into Japan from the West. A symbolic example of this movement can be seen in the glorification of “steam power” by Yukichi FUKUZAWA (1835-1901), an intellectual leader who lived in this era of cultural enlightenment. Japan’s ambitions to build a prosperous state backed by a strong army were eventually crushed following its defeat in WWII. By the mid-20th century, however, the nation found a new focus to substitute for military might: economic growth.

In the course of achieving economic growth, Japanese people’s value systems went through dramatic transformations in a short period of time. In contemporary terms,

one could say the huge waves of globalization have altered Japan's traditional cultures to a point that they may be lost forever.

Fortunately, however, some conscientious citizens are beginning to rediscover the value of Japan's traditional ideas and realize that by putting them to use, they might help save the world in the 21st century society from potential chaos.

Take, for example, *Seihin no Shiso (Thoughts on Virtuous Poverty)*, a book written by the novelist and literary critic Koji NAKANO (1925-2005). The book was published in 1992 when Japan was still taking in the aftereffects of the bubble economy's fast-paced growth that lasted for about five years in the 1980s. At the time, *Seihin no Shiso* hit and stayed on the bestseller's list for many weeks. Many critics praised the book for encouraging the money-mad Japanese people to go back at the roots of their proud culture. Others criticized it for advocating "dangerous" thoughts that could put brakes on the nation's economic development. Nakano writes in the preface of this book, which fortunately still is read and discussed by many, as shown below:

Topics such as the protection of the global environment and simple living are often brought up in recent years. My impression is that such ways of life have been taken for granted in our cultural tradition, so self-evident that people did not even feel the need to express these ideas. Our ancestors lived in harmony with nature without being told to do so by anyone. The emergence of a mass-production, mass-consumption society and wasteful use of resources surfaced as a consequence of embracing principles derived from another culture. If the destruction of the global environment we see today is principally caused by Western values, this would suggest that the principles of a new civilized society to counter that destruction would probably be built on the philosophy of honorable poverty – a culture nurtured by our Japanese ancestors.

As noted by Nakano, most people in the world have been preoccupied for much of the 20th century with pursuing productivity gains, comfort and various pursuits that stimulate our consumption, thanks to scientific technology. Such ways of life have implanted in our minds the notion that the economy must continue to grow. However, one is able to identify in Japan's traditional cultures some enduring ideas for a sustainable society – the elements summed by such contemporary terms as "slow life" and "small is beautiful."

1.3. DETAILS OF JAPANESE WISDOM REGARDING SUSTAINABILITY

1.3.1. SPIRITUAL WEALTH AND PEACE OF MIND

One of the aspects of Japanese wisdom as it relates to sustainability was that a greater emphasis was placed on spiritual aspects than on material well-being. The writer Koji NAKANO introduces intriguing episodes in his book *Seihin No Shiso (Thoughts on Virtuous Poverty, 1992)* to describe how writers of the past emphasized inner peace over obsession with material wealth. He quotes from *Hojoki (Vision of a Torn World)*, an essay written by KAMO NO Chomei in the 12th century:

The most important thing in this world is that your mind is at peace. If not, you feel empty even if you live in a palace or castle. I prefer to live in my small hut if my mind is at peace (Note 1).

Nakano also introduces the ideas outlined in *Tsurezuregusa (Essays in Idleness)*, written around 1330 by the Buddhist monk YOSHIDA Kenko:

What a foolish thing it is to be governed by a desire for fame, status and profit and to fret away one's whole life without a moment of peace (Note 2).

Moreover, NAKANO himself wrote in his book:

Writers and artists of the Edo period who tried to withdraw from the secular world were aware of the fact that the greatest treasure for human beings can be found not in money, fame nor status, but to enjoy being alive in the face of the inevitability of death. Such an insight in praise of life must have been a source of great inspiration for writers and artists in the Edo period. In their resolve to live in a world set apart from riches and fame, such literary thinkers contented themselves with earthly poverty. They thrived in refined artistic sensibilities, a world apart from the secular human life of weighing advantages and disadvantages. One imagines that the essay written by Kenko probably came as an encouragement and theoretical support for those Edo artists and writers whose way of life has often been associated with "losers."

Looking back over Japan's cultural history spanning over a thousand years, many distinguished intellectuals who are still remembered today stressed the importance of

inner peace over obsession with material wealth. Writings from the past give us a picture of how people went about their daily life with a focus on spirituality rather than obsession with material possessions.

In recent years, we have witnessed growing interest in *bushido*, the samurai code of old Japan. According to *Bushido: Samurai Ethics and the Soul of Japan*, written by Inazo NITOBÉ (1862~1933), *bushido* is “a flower no less indigenous to the soil of Japan than its emblem, the cherry blossom.” In his book, Nitobe refers to *bushido* as “an organic growth of decades and centuries of military career,” and elaborates:

The Precepts of Knighthood, begun at first as the glory of the *élite*, became in time an aspiration and inspiration to the nation at large; (snip) yet *Yamato Damashii*, the soul of Japan, ultimately came to express the *Volksgeist* of the Island Realm.

In this book, NITOBÉ explains how *bushido* greatly influenced the spiritual foundation of the Japanese.

The virtues espoused in *bushido* are: “Rectitude (the course of justice),” “Courage (the spirit of daring and bearing)” “Benevolence (the feeling of love, tolerance and compassion),” “Politeness (courtesy),” “Veracity and Sincerity,” “Honor (name, face and pride),” and “The Duty of Loyalty (fidelity to the lord).” Examples in the book showing how the samurai actually applied these virtues illustrate their way of life that emphasized spiritual matters over material possessions. The samurai received lessons in fencing, archery, *jiujutsu* or *yawara*, horsemanship, use of the spear, military tactics, calligraphy, ethics, literature, and history because, as *Bushido* notes, “The first point to observe in knightly pedagogics was to build up character.” In addition, luxury was considered to be the biggest threat to moral character. A life of austerity and simplicity was demanded as a principle of *Bushido* was not to seek personal gain. While *bushido* greatly influenced the way of life of samurais, all forms of education during the Edo period focused on ethics education and elevating spirituality, which helped build a culture centered on the wisdom of valuing spiritual rather than material aspects of life.

International intellectuals have praised the high educational level in Edo period Japan. This is due to the fact that the educational system comprising *terakoya* (temple school) and *han* (domain) schools was indeed firmly established during the Edo period. At these educational institutions students became practitioners of ethics under the influence of Confucianism and Buddhist thoughts. In other words, education in those days was focused on building the student’s character and teaching moral lessons along

with practical skills. This way of thinking was also prevalent in vocational education for merchants, craftsmen and farmers. All these probably combined to maintain high levels of education and also of morality and spirituality among the Japanese.

One could also say that during the period of national isolation – and consequently the material shortage caused by the difficulty of importing commodities and the geographical constraints of an island nation -- people had no other choice but to find solace in spirituality and peace of mind. Nevertheless, it is also true that there is a limit to the pursuit of material affluence under the finite global environment. In that sense, the way of life of the Japanese during the Edo period, which emphasized spirituality and inner peace over material wealth, can offer us an important insight into sustainability in the 21st century and beyond.

1.3.2.IDENTIFICATION WITH NATURE AND SPIRIT OF ONENESS

A culture that grew out of the rich natural environment in Japan is filled with a sense of identification and oneness with nature. It is remarkably different from the views of nature in Judeo-Christian traditions where humans stand between God and other animals and plants, entrusted by God to protect and control nature. By contrast, in Japanese traditional cultures based on Shinto and Buddhism, human beings are a part of, and not in the position of protecting or controlling, nature. This is illustrated clearly in the nature views since the *Jomon* era (BC 10,000 to BC 400) that can be identified in *Manyoshu (the Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves)*, the oldest national anthology of poems compiled in the 8th century, and also in Japanese art works up to the present day.

It is considered that nature and climate in Japan have an overriding influence on its culture. While the nation is blessed with rich nature brought on by the changes of the seasons, it has also experienced harsh natural disasters such as typhoons, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Since the distant past, Japanese had to learn ways to live in accordance with the natural laws and conditions in order to survive.

Furthermore, environmental and climatic conditions influenced the development of religious foundation of the Japanese and the way people got along with nature.

Toji KAMATA (1951~), a Shinto songwriter, discusses the traditional Japanese sense of divinity:

The ancient Japanese saw the works of God and the presence of spirits in all creation and natural phenomena as the universe. They saw the thunder god in thunder, the earthquake god in earthquakes, the fire god in volcanic eruptions, and the water god in floods. For example, people even identified god in typhoons from the fierce appearance of *Yamata no Orochi*, a big snake of eight branches in Japanese mythology (often called the Eight-Forked Serpent in English). The ancient Japanese recognized the work of spiritual forces, spirits of ancestors and the dead in nature, in human affairs and in everything (*Shinto Towa Nanika (What is Shinto?)*, PHP Shinsho, 2000).

Divinity was perceived as the greater being beyond any act of human intelligence and power. In the presence of the sacred, people spontaneously put their hands together in the prayer posture out of awe and respect. In awareness of the insignificance of their existence, the Japanese lived a frugal and simple life as the essence of Shinto, steeped in the daily lives of people. In the heart of Shintoism dwelt the feelings of awe, respect, reverence and adoration towards the workings of Mighty Nature and ancestors, eternal history and life

Renowned philosopher Takeshi UMEHARA (1925~) asserted that Buddhism introduced to Japan has gone through a “Japanization” process in the country’s natural environment, climate, and traditional cultures represented by Shinto. The process eventually culminated in the idea that Buddha dwelt in every soul as represented by the saying, “*sansen somoku shikkai jobutsu* (The mountains and rivers, and the plants and trees, one and all become Buddhas).” For example, he discusses Nichiren (1222~1282), a 13th century Buddhist monk who founded the Nichiren sect of Buddhism, in his book, *Kami To Hotoke, Taironshu Daiikkan (God and Buddha, the First Series of Discussions)*:

It was believed in ancient India that animals as sentient beings can become Buddha but not the plants. Later the idea that plants could turn into Buddha emerged in China. The concept that not only animals but also plants could become Buddha was then developed in Japan.

UMEHARA also referred to the literature of Kenji MIYAZAWA (1896~1933), a distinguished poet and author of children’s literature, viewed sometimes as a spiritual successor to Nichiren. UMEHARA wrote that in the world according to Miyazawa, “Animals, plants and all living things send a message on the preciousness of life even as they prey on one another for survival and help each other at times.” MIYAZAWA’s

work, *Cello Hiki no Goshu (Cellist Goshu)* is a compelling story about a mediocre cellist named Goshu. When Goshu was practicing at night to improve his cello, a calico cat, a cuckoo, a raccoon dog pup and a field mouse showed up one after another. By the time Goshu managed to meet each one of the requests made by the animals, he had become a great cello player. In this work, Miyazawa treats humans on the same plane as other animals in a lucid explication of UMEHARA's argument.

The genetic scientist Kazuo MURAKAMI (1936~), in his book of discussions with the Zen priest and writer Sokyu GENYU, describes the interdependence of nature and life forms from the perspective of genetic research. In his book, MURAKAMI asserts:

As all living things share the same genetic codes, we are all brothers and sisters. If we develop this idea further, we come to the conclusion that human beings, pebbles, birds, water and everything on this earth are made of the same substances, and we are all part of this 'something great' (*Kokoro No Chikara (Power of Heart)*) (Chichi Publishing Co. Ltd., 2006).

Also, Masao KAWAI (1924~), a prominent zoologist, emphasized how humans in traditional Japanese society lived interdependently with nature when examined from a zoological viewpoint, noting: "No single species in the wild became extinct in Japan prior to the 19th century, which is truly remarkable by world standards."

Now, let us look at examples in real life that provide us insights on how people in the old days lived in harmony with nature. In 1687, the fifth shogun of the Edo period, TOKUGAWA Tsunayoshi promulgated an unusual edict against cruelty to all living creatures, which absolutely forbade abuse against dogs, cats, birds and other animals. For instance, farmers who cut a tree on which birds were nesting, showmen who trained dogs, cats and mice to do tricks for show, and dealers who traded live fish were punished severely. Among the many laws enacted during the Edo period, this is known as one of the most oppressive laws for the commoners of the time. Viewed from another perspective, however, the fact that this strict law for animal protection was enforced at the initiative of the shogun at the end of 17th century under the influence of Buddhist thoughts and helped to protect the environment, albeit indirectly, is an achievement in itself, made possible by the Japanese people's sense of oneness with nature.

Meanwhile, the Japanese urban structure was based on the natural landscape and the water systems, and has developed according to the laws of nature. The city of Kyoto, initially built under the influence of Chinese culture along the grid-zoning system (*jori*),

was later transformed to accommodate the flow of the Kamo River and its topographic features. At the same time, the flood control methods developed by TAKEDA Shingen and KATO Kiyomasa, feudal rulers of the Era of the Warring States (1493-1573), employed excellent technologies based on a thorough examination of the water system to utilize its force without going against the laws of nature.

Also, the longing to bring nature closer to home played an important role in shaping the cityscape as well. People devised ways to incorporate nature into old samurai residences, *machiya* (town houses) and *nagaya* (apartments) using gardens in various forms. Shrines and temples dotting the city also played the role of maintaining harmony between nature and people's lives.

Furthermore, books on agriculture in the Edo period, in which approximately 80% of the population was engaged in agriculture, serve as another instrument that illustrates how farmers' lives were so intertwined with nature. For instance, SHAKUJOIN, who was head priest of Genpuku Temple in Dewa-no-kuni (present-day Akita Prefecture), cautioned in his book *Uyo Shuhoku Suidoroku (Book on River and Land of Uyo Shuhoku [Akita Region], 1788)* against indiscriminate logging to secure the water resources essential for rice farming. At the same time, SHAKUJOIN also forbade the overexploitation of marine resources, explaining that if people continued indiscriminate fishing, marine life would eventually be exhausted, leading to a huge loss for the nation. Based on their daily experiences, people believed in the importance of living in accordance with the laws of nature because they believed that violation of the natural law was certain to invite retribution in the form of natural disaster. Thus people in those days were aware that living interdependently with nature and not fighting against its laws would lead to a sustainable life.

Therefore, based on their inner beliefs and environmental conditions, people in traditional Japan seem to have acquired the wisdom of living in accordance with natural laws, which in turn secured the foundation of their life.

1.3.3.LEARNING TO BE CONTENT

Learning to be content with what one has is another aspect of traditional wisdom handed down from the past. However, this important knowledge is being lost in more recent times. It is rarely discussed nowadays as the country became materially affluent in relatively short time since after WWII when mass consumption culture was introduced, mainly from the U.S.A. and won over people's hearts.

Kazuo YASUHARA (1935~), a journalist-turned-economist, traces the roots of this 'spirit of being satisfied with one's present condition' to the teachings of Buddhism and of Laozi, the founder of Taoism (Note 3). Also, Yasuhara notes that the importance of being happy with the present is also emphasized in some classic literary works including *Ojoyoshu (The Teachings Essential for Rebirth, 985)* (Note 4) by GENSHIN (924~1017), a monk of Tendai Buddhism and *Yojokun: Japanese Secrets to Good Health* (Note 4), written by KAIBARA Ekiken (or Ekken, 1630~1714). Kaibara, who played an active role in teaching ethics during the middle of the Edo period, wrote the book when he was 84 years old.

Moreover, Koji NAKANO wrote at the beginning of his book, *Taru Wo Shiru: Jisoku Shite Ikiru Yorokobi (Learning to be Content: The Joy of Self-sufficient Life, 2004, Asahi Shimbun Company)*:

It has become evident that the ways of life in the 20th century built upon the illusion of production and consumption of goods, acquisition and possession of goods and never-ending progress of science and technology, by themselves, did not bring happiness to people. People, I believe, are searching for a principle that differs from an endless desire for more things or ceaseless pursuit of comfort and convenience. One such alternative principle in my opinion is seeking ways to be content with what one has got. Beyond mere curbing of desires, this is a means by which we are able to reach a far deeper sense of fulfillment in life.

Nakano notes further that, "Perhaps, learning to be content could be the most important and central virtue in life for people on this earth in the 21st century."

The idea of learning to be content was also mentioned in instructions for merchants in the old days. ISHIDA Baigan (1685-1744), a business leader in the Edo period, launched a school of thought called *Sekimon Shingaku (The Study of Heart by Sekimon)*, in which he preached the way of the merchants. He claimed that a merchant should keep the bare minimum profits to sustain himself and his family, and keep business running. He taught that the key to continue sustainable business is not to make a great gain but learning ways to reach true contentment.

The first full-scale book on agriculture in Japan titled *Nogyo Zensho (Complete Book on Agriculture, written by agricultural scientist, MIYAZAKI Yasusada, 1697)* discusses the need to stockpile food supplies and lead a frugal life as a provision against poor harvest

and other contingencies. Also, the book *Uyo Shuhoku Suidoroku (Book on River and Land of Uyo Shuhoku [Akita Region])*, mentioned earlier, notes that people should refrain from excess logging to sustain rice farming and cautions against overexploitation of marine resources that could lead to huge loss for the nation.

The common thread running through all these thoughts stresses that it is the ‘wisdom of contentment’ that leads to a society’s sustainability. As we have seen, the spirit of contentment has been a source of wisdom of sustainability in Japan both from a philosophical perspective and also in real life. In fact, it could provide a very important lesson in the ethics of building a sustainable world in the 21st century.

1.3.4. IDEA OF REINCARNATION AND THE CYCLE OF LIFE ROOTED IN SOCIETY

The circular nature of all life is a notion profoundly familiar to the Japanese, with telltale signs marking the passing of time and seasons. In spring, cherry blossoms bloom in all their glory and in summer, cicadas buzz as rice and wheat produce berries. When the autumn comes, people enjoy the joy of harvest, the chirps of insects in the grasses and the change of the colors of leaves. Then the cold winter wind comes as the snow dances and whirls. Thus the four seasons in rich diversity come and go. Indeed, these changes of the seasons and the phases of the moon must have inculcated into the Japanese mind the concept that everything circulates with regularity. It is true that changes of the seasons and the phases of the moon in one way or another can be observed in many other countries as well; nonetheless, the Japanese have harbored remarkably delicate and deep sensitivities in the perception of such changes, which found their way into literary and artistic expressions and etched in people’s daily lives.

In Japan, these transitions were perceived not only as relating to nature but also to the death of humans and all living creatures. What happens after death has been an overwhelming subject of interest for people of all ages and places. In the old days, the prevailing idea among the Japanese was of reincarnation, the idea that one is reborn after death, and as a result, people go back and forth between this world and the afterworld.

Takeshi UMEHARA identified this concept of the cyclical nature of life in *Iomante* (literally, to send something/someone off), the traditional brown bear sacrifice ceremony (designed to “send off the bear” to thank the bear deity for providing bearskin and meat) of the Ainu:

The thought (the eternal circulation between the afterlife and this life) reminded me of the theory of the eternal recurrence by Friedrich Nietzsche. Eternal recurrence is a subjective belief as a desire of will, but Aino's *Iomante* is an objective belief of the eternal return. One might suppose that this could have been the concept common to all humankind in the age of hunter-gathers. We humans should go back to such common beliefs where humans and animals live together and at the same time, human life circulates like that of animals and plants. This is the world of truth. I just do not believe in the prevailing view of the modern world based on the righteousness of humans playing a central and domineering role over other animals and plants – where that is called 'progress.' (*Kami To Hotoke, Taironshu Daiikkan [Kami (Shinto God) and Buddha, the First Series of Discussions]*).

The idea of circulation was also rooted in the lives of people. The rebuilding of shrines at *Ise Jingu* is a good example. *Ise Jingu* is Japan's highest shrine honoring the Imperial Family, dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami. For over 1,300 years, wooden shrines at *Ise Jingu* have been rebuilt every 20 years. *Ise Jingu* comprises a shrine complex housing 125 individual shrines including the Inner Shrine, the Outer Shrine and the Exceptional Shrine, and all buildings are replaced at different times (not all together) every 20 years. 'Chairs for the gods' and other religious items said to number close to 1,600 are also remade at this time. Altogether more than 10,000 cypress trees are used for the renovation of these buildings and artifacts, which are supplied entirely by the forests managed by *Ise Jingu*. Old building materials are efficiently reused, and nothing is discarded. It is a miracle that such an event has been continued every 20 years for such a long time in a self-sufficient way, literally incorporating the idea of circulation in the recycling of shrine buildings. This rejuvenation process has helped to conserve forest resources and preserve and pass on the traditional arts and crafts along with associated cultural traditions.

Furthermore, it is considered that the rebuilding process at *Ise Shrine* is based on Shinto teachings of eternal rejuvenation as expressed in sayings: "Petals fall after bloom, but the flowers remain intact," or "After blooming proudly and beautifully in spring, cherry blossoms fall to the ground but the bloom will come again in the following year and over and over. In the same way, the human body would eventually decay over time but the soul is eternal."

It should also be noted that the concept of the cyclical nature of life has taken root in the heart of craftsmen who have kept traditions alive. Tsunekazu NISHIOKA (1908~1995), a well-known shrine/temple master builder described in his book:

A tree is not a material object; it has a life of its own, nurtured by Mother Nature, just as we humans. Trees and humans are both part of nature. My work as a carpenter is to have a good talk with these trees to hear their silent voices and to turn them into another life form called building. Architecture, as you know, is a collaborative work between the life forces of humans and those of trees. People in the Asuka period knew this very well. (*Ki No Inochi Ki No Kokoro [Ten] (The Life of Tree, the Heart of Tree [Heaven])*, 1993, Soshisha Publishing Co. Ltd.)

The idea of circulation can also be found in the Edo period, which is known to have developed a culture based on thorough recycling. For instance, old kimono and clothes were distributed through secondhand clothing stores. People wore used *yukata* (light cotton summer kimono) as night clothes, and when it was tattered, cut it up for use as diapers, and then as rags. Torn rags were burned so that the ash could be used as fertilizer. Besides secondhand clothing stores, there were also many different types of trades that recycled goods; general repairers, bamboo pipe-stem dealers repairing tobacco pipes; lock repair; hoop dealers changing the hoops of wooden bathtubs; abacus repair; tinsmiths mending pots and pans. Thus everything was used right till the end of life, and there was even a market where bits and pieces collected here and there were traded. As a result, there were a extremely few things that ended up as garbage – for instance, sludge from the drain and surplus soil, roof tiles and fragments of earthen wares at the burned-out sites after a fire. This may explain why the streets of Edo were so clean.

Moreover, the wisdom of recycling was exercised in agriculture as well. For example, farming villages collected human waste as an important source of fertilizer. Farms near Edo (Tokyo) had high production efficiency, as farmers in these villages could take advantage of the huge human manure resources that were produced in close proximity. In turn, they were able to sell their produce right away in the mass-consumption society of Edo, completing the mechanism of circulation. A book on agriculture titled *Aizu Noshō (The Aizu [present Fukushima Prefecture] Book of Agriculture)* details some ingenious methods to secure the necessary fertilizer for farm production by utilizing just about any waste from everyday life and livestock farming. The section on how to build a toilet explains ways to construct one so as to fully utilize the human waste from the farmer's own household, eliminating the need to purchase human manure from

external sources. This is an excellent example of the wisdom of sustainability: integrating farm production with household activities to recycle materials internally and minimize input from outside.

Such Buddhist notions of the cycle of life are believed to be behind the effective use of scarce resources to support life in the Edo period.

1.3.5.HARMONY AND CONTINUITY OF FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

SHOTOKU Taishi (Prince SHOTOKU, 574~622), a regent and politician of the Imperial Court who established the foundation of Japanese culture, declared in the first article of his Seventeen-Article Constitution enacted in the year 604: “Harmony is to be valued, and an avoidance of wanton opposition to be honored.” The era in which SHOTOKU Taishi lived had its share of violent confrontations as all his family members were killed by political enemies after his death. If for that reason alone, SHOTOKU Taishi provides an especially poignant lesson in the importance of harmony for the Japanese. For more than 1,400 years since the first constitution was enacted, his teaching has stayed alive in the hearts of Japanese people, etched in memory like DNA.

Similar ideas were advocated by OKAKURA Tenshin (1862~1913), the Japanese scholar who contributed to the development of arts in his book written in English, *The Book of Tea* (1903):

The average Westerner was wont to regard Japan as barbarous while she indulged in the gentle arts of peace: he calls her civilised since she began to commit wholesale slaughter on Manchurian battlefields. Much comment has been given lately to the Code of the Samurai,—the Art of Death which makes our soldiers exult in self-sacrifice; but scarcely any attention has been drawn to Teaism, which represents so much of our Art of Life. Fain would we remain barbarians, if our claim to civilisation were to be based on the gruesome glory of war. Fain would we wait the time when due respect shall be paid to our art and ideals.

Tenshin’ reiterated this argument in his book *The Awakening of Japan* (1904).

Furthermore, Buddhist philosopher Hajime NAKAMURA (1912~1999) described in his book, *Nihonjin No Shii Hoho (Ways of Thinking of Eastern People)* that Japanese people have a strong tendency to esteem social nexus:

Among the objective causes which might account for such a tendency in the Japanese people...people living on rice inevitably have to settle permanently in one place. (snip) In such a society individuals are closely bound to each other. This helped to forge intuitive understanding among people, establishing a form of understanding and expression that blends in an emotional and sentimental atmosphere.

The Japanese have learned to attach unduly heavy importance to their social ties in disregard of the isolated individual (*Nihonjin No Shii Hoho (Ways of Thinking of Eastern People [Classics of Modern Japanese Thoughts and Culture], 1948)*).

Such a spirit of valuing harmony and continuity of social units formed the foundation of people's life. The *oya* system is one such example. The *oya* of the Edo period was a keeper of rental houses and also a caretaker of apartment residents in charge of street-level administration and judicial system. These caretakers were stationed at the guard house set up at the entrance of an alley. As a trusted and familiar figure among residents, *oya* helped in settling disputes among people and gave out pieces of advice. Moreover, *oya* also managed a reserve in the form of "community expense," and a system of mutual assistance was established centering around the *oya* in terms of financial aspects as well. In the absence of powerful bureaucratic organizations, this community mechanism functioned effectively based on the Japanese people's respect for harmony.

The city of Edo (Tokyo) had another mechanism of mutual cooperation in the form of a fire fighting group called "Iroha 48 Fire Brigade," initially organized by private citizens. In addition, there was an atmosphere of communal childcare as the whole community celebrated the arrival of a newborn baby and residents helped each other out in childcare as well as in other affairs.

At the same time, although it is true that the feudal system of the Edo imposed various constraints on people, people in those days took over their family's business and carried out their given responsibility in society, which made it possible for people to live in peace and harmony by helping one another. In other words, the way of living within one's means helped to maintain a spirit of *wa* (harmony). It should be noted that under the Shogunate system and the national isolation policy, citizens basically were not permitted to travel freely from one place to another. An expert in various fields of medicine, Gen OOI (1935~) termed Japan a "closed society" as fundamentally different from the open societies of the West. People in the Edo period were most probably

aware that the only way to ensure the continuity of their society and living was to live together in harmony within the limited occupational choices and the given space.

On the other hand, signs revealing the fact that utmost importance was placed on the continuity of social units can be identified in the *bushido* (samurai code) spirit, which served as the backbone of the Shogunate system. When we consider that a sustainable society cannot be achieved in the presence of internal conflict, it is evident that the sustenance of individuals or society could be at stake without harmony and emphasis on the continuity of social units. People in the Edo period probably were aware of this through their experience in the long years of civil wars.

1.3.6.FREEDOM OF SPIRIT

The Edo period often provokes the image of oppressed people under a feudalistic regime. In reality, however, there seemed to have been quite a bit of freedom allowed in education, arts and literature. Indeed, the regime strictly imposed the Shogunate system, national isolation policy and prohibition of preaching Christianity, and did not tolerate criticism or freedom of assembly pertaining to such national policies. Nevertheless, studies show that there was much room for free speech as long as one did not touch on these government policies.

The Edo era produced numerous masters and luminaries in art, literature and learning including *kabuki*, *bunraku*, novels, *haiku* and *tanka*. The vigorous creative and artistic spirit may be attributed to the flexible education and apprenticeship system, tailored to the regional characteristics or the future occupation and needs of the student. Instructions were designed to teach the basic knowledge required of members in that particular community or domain. Also, it is thought that thorough education in reading, teaching and arithmetic (abacus) prepared the ground for many students to enjoy literature.

Moreover, as a characteristic of the Edo period worth noting, people in those days took a keen interest in ingenious and elaborate handicrafts and devices as well as *wazan*, the unique old system of Japanese mathematics. The ingenuity of *wazan* probably served to add another dimension to the Japanese mentality with well-developed sensibilities in literature and the emotional domain. These sensibilities are thought to have nurtured the strength for the Japanese to understand and absorb, or to stand face to face with, the Western civilization of science and technology that poured into the country from the West after the Meiji Restoration. This force may have functioned as a springboard by

which the nation overcame numerous difficulties that accompanied the introduction of Western civilization.

Hajime NAKAMURA described the spirituality of the Japanese in his aforementioned book:

The Japanese are willing to accept the phenomenal world as Absolute because of their disposition to lay a greater emphasis upon intuitive sensible concrete events. Just as Japanese are apt to accept external and objective nature as it is, so they are inclined to accept man's natural desires and sentiments as they are, and not to strive to repress or fight against them (*Nihonjin No Shii Hoho (Ways of Thinking of Eastern People [Classics of Modern Japanese Thoughts and Culture]*, 1948).

Nakamura says that on the other hand, the “Japanese manifest more of the spirit of tolerance and conciliation,” and their emphasis on the reality has enriched their material and artistic life. He also notes that the Japanese have “intuitive and emotional tendencies” as manifested in literary and artistic expressions, while they do not like “complicated, structural thinking” or abstract or metaphysical speculation.

The philosopher Toshio YOKOYAMA points out:

The term *bunmei* (civilization) means to ‘illuminate in rich diversity.’ A stable, enduring society can be found in many instances, even in the Stalinist Russia. However, a sustainable society must be one that offers positive insights and happiness.

Freedom of thought and expression is an integral and important element of a sustainable society and civilization. It was this freedom that enabled people of the Edo to establish a sustainable society.

1.3.7. ANCESTOR WORSHIP TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF LIFE

The Japanese attitude towards ancestor worship, which has continued since the Jomon era and fortified by Shintoism, is another critical point in the study of sustainability. If we assume that humans are reborn as humans or as another form of life after death, a belief that vividly exemplifies the essence of ‘sustainability,’ then it is only natural for us to show respect to our ancestors – parents and grandparents who brought us into this world. While Japanese people have lost many of the traditional virtues, their attitude

towards ancestor worship seems to have continued intact to this day. Even today, many Japanese people go back to their hometowns to get together with their families and friends and to visit family graves during the *bon* (observance for the spirits of the dead in summer) period and the New Year. It illustrates in concrete form the heart of ancestor worship that dates back to the Jomon Era.

Tetsuo YAMAORI, a scholar on religious studies, argues in his book that the ethnic Buddhism that equates the dead with the soul and with Buddha has captured the hearts of the masses. According to Yamaori, Japanese Buddhism traces its roots to a combination of primitive worship in *kami* (god) in the Jomon era, belief in the spirits as exemplified in the *Manyoshu*, the earliest collection of Japanese poetry, and Pure Land Buddhism:

I noted earlier that Japanese Buddhism is characterized by the notable influence of *mushi*, or nothingness to the point of transcending the self. It was the worship of ancestors and remains that have supported Japanese Buddhism at the grass-roots level. People believed that their path to *mushi* lies in leading a prudent, humble life in the presence of ancestors. Similarly, they were convinced that the soul of ancestors dwelt in their remains and ancestors watched over those living in this world (*Buddha Wa Naze Kowo Sutetaka (Why Did Buddha Abandon Children?)*, 2006, Shueisha Publishing Inc.).

Refuting the argument that ancestor worship amounted to ethnic religion devoid of the essence of Buddhism, Yamaori maintains, “to the contrary, it (ancestor worship) was an indispensable quality that helped Buddhism to survive in Japan.”

Another important point is that people have carefully passed down the wisdom of their predecessors. For example, the techniques of shrine and temple carpenters were passed on strictly by the word of mouth from the master to apprentices and never committed to paper. Yasuo NAKAYAMA, an education critic and expert on Shinto, notes:

If the techniques are written down and compiled into a manual, they would inevitably be revised and corrected for convenience’s sake or to suit the occasion. However, the techniques and methods communicated by the word of mouth would be passed on from person to person without any revision and preserved intact forever.

He added that this is the wisdom unique to Japanese people.

Thus, as an important element in the wisdom of sustainability in Japan, the Japanese have maintained the continuity of life and society and handed down everyday knowledge and skills by worshipping ancestors and predecessors under the influence of Buddhism, Shinto, the Confucian idea of respect for elders and belief in reincarnation described in 1.3.4.

1.3.8. EDUCATION AND NURTURING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

During the Edo period, not only the educational institutions such as *terakoya*, *han* schools and private schools, but also the communities and worksites provided places for learning designed to foster the next generation. This enabled continued education as people in every class were given an opportunity to learn at various places, in spite of the feudal system. This proves that people in the Edo period were aware of the utmost importance of education and fostering the future generations in maintaining a sustainable society. Unlike the present time, opportunities to move up to higher social classes through education were almost nonexistent in the Edo period. For this reason, learning was free from the negative influences of competition. The relationship between teachers and students was not built on money or interests, nor was it affected by the monetary economy. In other words, education occupied a secure position as a foundation for cultivating people, with less distraction by other social factors.

Apart from school education, the people of Edo were dedicated to affectionate childcare, as illustrated in a travel record, *Japan Day by Day*, written by Edward S. MORSE (1838-1925):

It is a remarkable sight to see four women out of five, and five children out of six, lugging babies upon their backs.

Thus far I have never seen the slightest sign of impatience on the part of the mother. I believe Japan is the only nation in the world that yields so much to the babies, or in which the babies are so good.

In addition, at the apartments in the Edo period, it is said that an environment of mutual assistance in the neighborhood was established. For instance, when a woman became pregnant she would wear a maternity belt by way of tacit announcement, and residents would celebrate the event and help her out by giving advice. In an era of high infant mortality rates, children aged six and younger were in fact treasured as

“messengers of God.” It was a culture where not only the parents but the whole neighborhood got together to celebrate the birth of a child and extended the very best care for the newborn baby.

It is evident that the sustainability of society and people in the Edo period was supported by solid confidence in education and its values and the custom of communal responsibilities to childcare.

Explanatory Notes

[Note 1]

Notes on *Hojoki (Vision of a Torn World)*, 1212, Author: KAMO NO Chomei (1155~1216)

There is a famous line written in this book: “Sore Sangai Wa Tada Kokoro Hitotsu Nari,” meaning: “In this world where all living things live and move, reality depends upon your mind alone” (translation referred to the same title translated by Yasuhiko MORIGUCHI and David JENKINS, Stone Bridge Press, 1996).

[Note 2]

Notes on *Tsurezuregusa (Essays in Idleness)*, 1330, Author: YOSHIDA Kenko (Approx. 1283~approx. 1350)

Regarding the abovementioned book, NAKANO wrote: *Tsurezuregusa* has been popular among Japanese people like *Essais (Essays)* by Michel Eyquem de MONTAIGNE since it was published, and it is a classic work that greatly influenced Japanese taste and reasoning. Kenko described that it was a foolish thing to be governed by a desire for fame, status and profit and to fret away one’s whole life without a moment of peace (translation referred to the same title translated by Donald KEENE, Columbia University Press, 1967). His idea drew renewed attention during the Edo period, and has since significantly influenced the way of life of the Japanese. Kenko drew attention to the foolishness of people who were interested in only making money. The contemporary equivalent of such a trait in modern times would be constantly purchasing the latest, new products—a car or a house—as soon as they are put on the market. It is the same thing and such ideas of Kenko touch our hearts anew.

[Note 3]

YASUHARA explained in his book, *Taru Wo Shiru Keizai: Bukkyo Shiso De Tsukuru 21 Seiki To Nihon (Economics of Contentment: Creating 21st Century and Japan by Buddhist Concepts)*, November 2000, The Mainichi Newspapers), that there are two major sources that established the idea of being content in the minds of Japanese people. One is the teachings of Buddhism, as he quotes the following words from *Buddha No Kotoba (Sutta Nipata* ed. Hajime NAKAMURA, 1984) which refers to early Buddhist scriptures:

“With no greed, no deceit, no thirst, no hypocrisy—delusion and blemishes blown away—with no inclinations for all the world, every world, wander alone like a rhinoceros. (1.3. A Rhinoceros Horn, The Snake Chapter)”

“Contented and easy to support, with few duties, living lightly, with peaceful faculties, masterful, modest, and no greed for supporters. (1.8. The Discourse on Loving Kindness, The Snake Chapter)”

“Stomach not full, moderate in food, having few wants, not being greedy, always not hankering after desire: one without hankering, is one who's unbound. (3.11. To Nalaka, The Great Chapter)

Another source cited by YASUHARA is the teachings of Laozi, the founder of Taosim who lived in the 4th century BC. The following words are quoted from *Tao Te Ching*:

“Those who know others are intelligent; those who know themselves are truly wise. Those who master others are strong; those who master themselves have true power. Those who know they have enough are truly wealthy. Those who persist will reach their goal. (Chapter 33)”

“... true wealth requires greater loss. Knowing when you have enough avoids dishonor, and knowing when to stop will keep you from danger and bring you a long, happy life. (Chapter 44)”

“There is no greater transgression than condoning people’s selfish desires, no greater disaster than being discontent, and no greater retribution than for greed. Whoever knows contentment will be at peace forever. (Chapter 46)”

YASUHARA especially drew attention to the point of “Those who know they have enough are truly wealthy,” and added his interpretation: “This does not mean to bear with life in a halfhearted way. It rather means that he who conquers his lust and knows that he is content with modesty is truly wealthy. In other words, it is a concept that one could enrich the mind and could lead a full life only when he accomplishes victory over his selfish greed and when he becomes aware of this.”

[Note 4]

About the two works by KAIBARA Ekiken (1630~1714)

Koji NAKANO introduced in his book, *Taru Wo Shiru: Jisoku Shite Ikiru Yorokobi (Learning to be Content: The Joy of Self-sufficient Life, 2004, Asahi Shinbun Company)*, the concept of learning to be content as proposed by KAIBARA Ekiken in his *Yojokun: Japanese Secrets to Good Health (1713)*. He translated Ekiken’s words into modern speech: “You should leave off an appetite with any delicacy you might find. If you eat to the fullest until you get tired of eating, an evil will fall upon you afterward. If you can control your craving for a while, you can avoid such a trouble later on. The taste may be the same as when you eat little or eat in excess, but you cannot harm yourself by controlling the quantity of food you consume. Anything in excess is sure to invite trouble. Pay particular attention to avoid eating and drinking to full stomach. If everyone can refrain himself in the beginning, nothing evil would happen to him.”

NAKANO’s other comments on Ekiken’s idea: “Ekiken argues that overeating would invite trouble, rather than nourish the body, although foods are essential to the human body. We need to go back to this basic philosophy of Ekiken. People today should bear in mind his warning: ‘Anything in excess is sure to invite trouble.’ Also, overeating makes it difficult to truly appreciate the taste. Ekiken repeatedly said in the book that if you let the craving of mouth and stomach take over and eat whatever you want, you would go beyond the limits and damage your health and eventually suffer from various diseases and ruin your life.”

In a similar fashion, NAKANO introduces KAIBARA Ekiken’s *Rakukun (Principles of Enjoyment)* in modern speech: “Everyone is equipped with this intrinsic sense of enjoyment. Therefore, unless you are driven by personal greed, the enjoyment is always there, no matter what time or where you are. This enjoyment derives from essential human nature, and not from external sources. The five senses of touch, taste, hearing, eyesight and smell offer you enjoyment whatever you do when they come in touch with external sources, as long as you are not steeped in greed. This happens because your

enjoyment is not based on things outside yourself. The joy does not arise as a result of the mind coming in touch with external sources to draw joyous energy. Rather, the human mind is fundamentally endowed with inner, innate joy, and that joy is energized upon coming in contact with and help of the outside world.”

In reference to Ekiken’s description, NAKANO explained: “Personal greed mentioned in Ekiken’s book refers to overeating delicious food, drinking too much alcohol, overindulging in sexual desires and partying around until late at night. Ekiken considered that over-fulfilling one’s greed could be the worst culprit for draining one’s energy. Ekiken believed in controlling greed, liberating the physical and mental outlook and coming in contact with nature to attain true joy.”