
CAC 13

Political Uses of 'Culture': *Nihonjinron*

OUTLINE

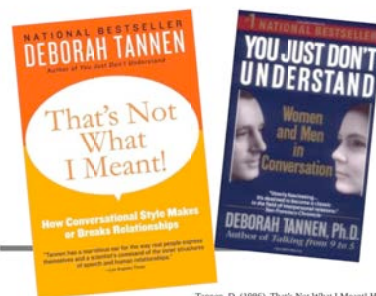
- Why study cross-cultural communication?
 - Culture as an explanation
 - Two views of *nihonjin-ron* (Dale & Sugimoto)
 - Effects and repercussions
 - Hamaguchi's *kanjin-shugi* theory
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Why study XCC?

- Being able to communicate across cultural boundaries is a good thing
 - More communication is better
 - If we can only communicate more then we will understand each other better
 - **World Peace!**
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Going too far?

- “The fate of the earth depends on cross-cultural communication.”



Deborah Tannen

Tannen, D. (1986). *That's Not What I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships*. Ballantine, New York. p43

Questions asked...

- How does group X communicate?
- What are the *differences* between how group A and group B communicate?



Ingrid Piller's question...

“Who makes culture relevant to whom in what context for what purpose?”

Japan and the UK

Let's **Google** national cultures

Japan and the UK

Search term	2016	2015	2014
British Culture	7050	7480	2920
<i>Nihon bunka</i>	80800	64900	84300
<i>Nihon no bunka</i>	29200	33800	117000

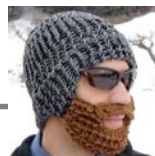
from 日本文化への理解と関心を高めるための文化発信の取組 ... 文...
www.bunka.go.jp/honkoku/pdf/... Translate this page
そのため、海外において日本の文化発信を、紹介する展覧会 ... アジアをはじめとする
諸外国に対し、魅力ある日本の文化発信の機会や情報をも、継続的に提供 ... 各機関
のホームページ等において、当該国々からの日本人紹介、日本の文化発信に関する。

Japan and the UK (2018/12)

Japan and the UK (2018/12)

Hats and 'culture'

Her: Do you always wear a hat in winter?
Me: Well, yes, I suppose so, it help keep you warm...
Her: I just can't wear hats. Do a lot of English people wear hats?
Me: Er, well, when it's cold in Winter wearing a hat helps...
Her: Hmm, it's a **cultural difference**? (文化の違いかなー)
Me (thinks): Well, I just like hats...



Cultural Nationalism

- What is *Nihonjin-ron* / *Nihon-ron* / *NihonShakai-ron* / *NihonBunka-ron* etc?
- A **genre of writing** in books / magazines etc



A definition...

- “works of cultural nationalism concerned with the ostensible 'uniqueness' of Japan in any aspect, and which are hostile to both individual experience and the notion of internal socio-historical diversity.”
- Dale identifies 5 important assumptions...

Dale, P. N. (1986). *The myth of Japanese uniqueness*. Nissan Institute/Croom Helm Japanese Studies Series. Croom Helm, London; Sydney.

Assumptions of the genre: 1

1. The *only valid basis* from which to study Japanese society is using native informants' judgements (**emic**), as opposed to external or foreign analysis (**etic**).
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Emic & Etic

- **EMIC**: accounts indigenous to a language or social situation, seen from an internal perspective
 - **ETIC**: accounts made from an external perspective, includes sociological observers viewpoints
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Assumptions of the genre: 2

2. The Japanese people can be treated as a culturally and socially homogeneous racial entity, whose **essence** is virtually unchanged through time.



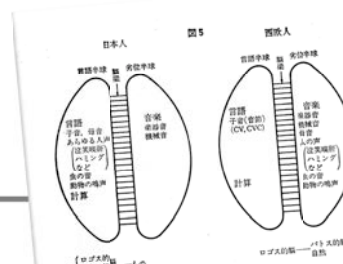
Assumptions of the genre: 3 + 4

3. The Japanese people **differ radically** from all other known peoples in terms of society, culture, and language.
4. Foreigners are incapable of completely understanding Japanese culture and language.



Assumptions of the genre: 5

5. Japanese "blood" is essential in order to understand Japanese society, culture, and language.



History of NHJR

- **1945-1954:** many authors negative towards Japan. Japan's 'culture' had led to defeat in the war and the deaths of many people.
- **1955-1963:** look back beyond defeat in WW2 and rediscover historical roots of 'Japanese culture'

Nakamura, S. 1992. Nihonbunkagaku [The study of Japanese culture]. In *Nihongo kyoiku* [Japanese language education], ed. by K. Okuda, 164-179. Tokyo: Fukamura.

History of NHJR

- **1964-1983:** works were characterized by affirmation of the special characteristics of Japanese culture and language.
- **1984-** : shift of emphasis in *Nihonjinron* from discussing unique characteristics to more universal perspectives on Japanese culture and language.

Nakamura, S. 1992. Nihonbunkagaku [The study of Japanese culture]. In *Nihongo kyoiku* [Japanese language education], ed. by K. Okuda, 164-179. Tokyo: Fukamura.

“National Sport”

- **Yoshio Sugimoto**

“Stereotyping Japanese culture and personality has been the *national sport* of Japan's reading public for many decades. Books and articles which claim to identify the essence of 'Japaneseness' have flooded the market, with some selling millions of copies”

Sugimoto, Y. (1999). Making sense of *nihonjinron*. Thesis Eleven, 57(1):81-96.

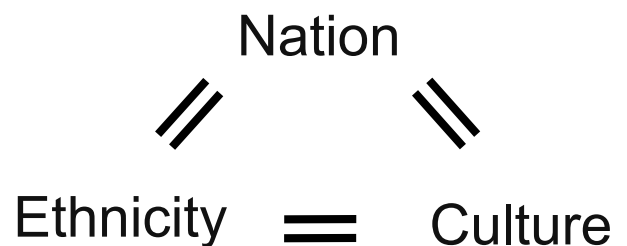
Sugimoto's 'core ideas': 1

- At the heart of NHJR is 'Japanese-ness'
 - This has always existed
 - It is fundamentally different from 'western-ness'
 - It **determines all aspects of Japanese life**

Sugimoto's 'core ideas': 2

- The 'nihonjin' in NHJR excludes Ainu and Okinawan people: they are 'administratively' Japanese but not 'really' Japanese.
- The 'real' (ethnic) Japanese are the sole 'owners' of Japanese culture

NHJR built on conflation of...



Sugimoto's assessment of NHJR

- Based on 'racial' classification
 - “State ideology of national integration”
 - Obscures division and (natural?) variations within Japanese society...
 - Class, social strata, employment status, educational background, gender, age
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Sugimoto: Variations *in* NHJR

- NHJR authors share no overtly *political* agenda
 - Three broad discursive divisions:
 - Ethno-centric / ethno-nationalist
 - Ethno-critical
 - Isolation-hegemony
-

1. Ethno-centric / ethno-nationalist

- Japan is 'unique'
- Japanese culture is 'unique' and so...
- Japanese people are 'unique'
- (...and superior!!)



<http://www.japantoday.com/category/arts-culture/view/why-the-japanese-are-superior-people>

2. Ethno-critical

- Japanese people have certain unique traits and features...
 - These have persisted throughout history
 - They have **negative effects**
 - Japanese people are 'unique' but *suffer* because of this
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3. Isolation-Hegemony

- Japan's culture is 'unique'
 - It needs protecting from 'hegemonic' powers (usually either the US or China)
 - Therefore Japan should **isolate** itself...
 - ...otherwise it's 'uniqueness' may be diluted
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Internationalisation/Japanisation

- “Yasuma Takada (1883-1972) is the greatest sociologist Japan ever had.” Ken’ichi Tominaga
 - “Our Japanese sociology is a discipline which formulates the practical guiding principles not for the internationalization of Japan but for the Japanization of the world and we must take an initiatives to present concrete methods to achieve this goal”
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Globalisation



• How to deal with

- Expat residents
- immigrant workers
- naturalized foreigners
- returnee children educated abroad and perhaps not fluent in Japanese
- children of mixed marriages

Practical uses of NHJR...

- “Protect the national interest” (as perceived by national leadership)
 - Consensuality → slow decision-making
 - Lack of understanding of J culture → few local managers in branches of J companies
 - Culture of *keiretsu* → unfair trade practises

Existence ≠ importance

• Ideas like:

- *amae* 甘え
- *enryo* 遠慮
- *tatemae/honne* 建前 / 本音
- *wa* 和
- *giri* 義理 etc. seem to be **EMIC**

• What about *amae* in Germany?

• How important is *tatemae* in Ethiopia?

Kanjin-shugi (間人主義)

• Eshun Hamaguchi

Prof Emeritus, International Research Center for Japanese Studies etc etc...

• West = 個人 *kojin*

• Japan (East?) = 間人 *kanjin* (reversing kanji of *ningen* 人間)



日本研究原論 関係体としての日本人と日本社会 1998 etc

Yoshitaka Kashima's research...

• Surveys in Australia, Hawaii, US, Korea, Japan

- I am prepared to do things for my group at any time, even though I have to sacrifice my own interest
- I don't support my group when they are wrong
- I do things in my way regardless of what my group members expect me to do
- I often pretend to agree with the majority opinion in my group
- I don't want to stand out in my group.... etc etc

Kashima, Y., Yamaguchi, S., Kim, U., Choi, S.-C., Gelfand, M. J., and Yuki, M. (1995). Culture, gender, and self: a perspective from individualism-collectivism research. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(5):925.

Results

• ...were complex but overall:

- Lowest *kanjin-shugi* orientation was amongst Japanese males (very individualistic!!)
- Overall, *kanjin-shugi* orientation is comparatively **low** in Japan.

Kashima, Y., Yamaguchi, S., Kim, U., Choi, S.-C., Gelfand, M. J., and Yuki, M. (1995). Culture, gender, and self: a perspective from individualism-collectivism research. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(5):925.

But...

Critique of NHJR

- **NHJR-bashing is a dead-end**
 - Are all difference socially and discursively constructed? **There are real 'cultural' differences!**
- Use discourse, invented tradition, imagined communities, etc to re-evaluate the myth vs. reality binary
 - Acknowledgement of *diversity* in Japan is an important development.
 - Henshall (1999: x) points out, by claiming that Japanese society is really no different from any other society we move to the other extreme.
 - Works from late '80s - '90s have tended to dilute the particularity of Japan by *overly* stressing elements of universality in their cause of proving that Japan is really not so different.
- **The problem is how to reconcile unease towards a NHJR-style holistic account of Japan with the recognition that Japanese society is (and its members are) in many ways different to (those in) other societies.**

Henshall, K. G. (1999) *Dimensions of Japanese Society: Gender, Margins and Mainstream*. Macmillan: St. Martin's Press, Basingstoke; New York.

Discursive Formation

- The modern nation-state relies for its very existence on the construction of a coherent set of national traits, traits that allow countries to function as 'imagined communities'.
- Challenge the use of 'myth' in the **pejorative** sense (no basis in fact)
- Look at how, over time, various discourses have contributed to the construction of a Japanese world view, a view that is not 'false' or 'illusory', but rooted in everyday, lived social reality and which holds significance and meaning for many Japanese.

NR as Discourse

- A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – *i.e.* a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way and limits the other ways.
- Importantly, discourses are neither 'true' nor 'false'; rather, historically, 'effects of truth are produced within discourse', with the dominant discourse defining the 'truth' of the situation at any particular moment (Foucault 1980: 118).
- As Stuart Hall points out, statements are rarely ever simply 'true' or 'false'; moreover, because people act on discourse, descriptions – definitions of reality – can **become 'true': they have a self-fulfilling potency**. Discourses are not only descriptive but **prescriptive**, providing a model or 'identity kit' for people in terms of how they say they (ought to) act and often how they do in fact act.

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge*. Pantheon Books, New York.

Evidence of Discursive Formation

- **'Samuraisation'**: loyalty, perseverance, and diligence said to be held by a small (but elite) segment of the population – the samurai – were gradually extended through propaganda, education, and regulation to cover the whole of the population
- highlights loyalty and obedience
 - Becomes a 'model of behavior' – a discourse – on peasants and workers that, in the name of national unity, made control and coercion easier. This sometimes had terrible consequences, as with the compulsory mass suicides (*shūdan jiketsu*) of 1945, something that earlier would have been *expected only of samurai*.

Next Week

- **Identity and Stereotyping**
 - Amartya Sen
Identity and Violence (Ch1)
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