

***Ten Essays on National Character***  
**by Haga Yaichi**

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**Abstract.** In the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries we see active search for the national characteristics of the Japanese people. This article analyzes the book by a famous expert on Japanese literature Haga Yaichi (1867-1927) *Ten Essays on National Character* (1907). This book was, to a large extent, a response to the work by Kishimoto Nobuta, *Five Features of the Japanese* (1902), who was a Christian. A number of similarities are observed in these works (they appreciate the cleanliness of the Japanese, their cheerfulness and activity, ability to adapt borrowings, their sense of beauty, politeness, and etiquette behavior). However, there are radical differences too. For Kishimoto, “the Japanese” was an independent entity, while Haga described the Japanese in their relation to the state and as its attachment. Kishimoto talked about the character of the Japanese in peaceful times, while Haga Yaichi interpreted the peculiarities of the national character primarily from the viewpoint of readiness for war and death for the emperor and the motherland. Kishimoto’s writing was not popular and was forgotten. But the views of Haga Yaichi were adopted by the propaganda machine and became one of the main sources for the *Kokutai no hongī*, the fundamental text of Japanese totalitarianism.

**Keywords:** Japan, Haga Yaichi, *Kokuminsei jūron*, Japanese national character, Kishimoto Nobuta, *Nihonjin no gotokushitsu*, Hisamatsu Sen’ichi, *Kokutai no hongī*.

Haga Yaichi (1867-1927) was an eminent philologist who contributed significantly to the creation of the literary canon of classical Japanese literature. He belonged to the pro-governmental intellectual elite and was involved in composing school textbooks on literature, exerting significant influence on the formation of the spiritual and ideological atmosphere. Haga became a member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in 1915, and, in 1918, he was appointed rector of the Kokugakuin University which was under the patronage of the Imperial family and which focused on studying classical literature, Shinto, and preparing patriotically minded cadres (including Shinto priests).

Haga was one of the first scholars to start excluding the numerous Chinese texts created in Japan from the history of Japanese literature which corresponded to the general policy of finding the “truly Japanese” in Japanese literature [Suzuki 2006, p. 195]. The historians of literature (especially those who worked in the Tokyo Imperial University) played a substantial role in forming the official ideology. The ancient times occupied an important place in this construction, as it was believed that they had not been tainted by foreign influences, and that early emperors wielded the entirety of power (later, shoguns pushed the emperors into the background). Because of this, special hopes were placed on specialists studying ancient history. The “ancient” texts are, first of all, the mythological-historical chronicles *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, as well as the poetical anthology *Man'yōshū*. Literary scholars who interpreted these monuments from “correct” positions belonged to the intellectual establishment. They treated Shinto myths as indisputable truth, and sometimes their “academic” discourse was more akin to theological speculations. In Europe, secular tendencies were growing, while Japan experienced the opposite process: the Tokugawa era state was less religious than that of the Meiji period.

Haga Yaichi studied the most ancient texts as well, but his greatest achievement is currently believed to be the introduction into scholarly study of the fundamental collection of Buddhist legends *Konjaku monogatari* (11<sup>th</sup> century). Earlier, it served as a religious text, but Haga Yaichi presented it to the public as a literary monument, and, since

then, no representative history of Japanese literature fails to analyze the *Konjaku* [Trubnikova, Babkova 2018].

What Haga did with the *Konjaku* was in line with the trends of his time. The elite were searching for national identity, first of all, on the basis of Shinto, and they were quite cautious about Buddhism for two key reasons: first, Buddhism was a “foreign” teaching, and, second, it fostered a “passive” attitude to life, which seemed unacceptable for the nation that was conducting large-scale reforms aimed at catching up with and surpassing the West [Meshcheryakov 2018]. In the first years after the Meiji Restoration, there even were attacks on Buddhist temples, and the traditional funerals (cremations) according to the Buddhist rite were banned for some time. However, it soon became clear that Buddhism had become firmly embedded into Japanese culture, and it would be impossible to get rid of it completely. As one of the measures to “integrate” Buddhism into the realities of the new Japan, Buddhist religious objects were declared “art” – these were the items requisitioned from Buddhist temples that became the basis of the collection of the Imperial Museum in Nara. Haga Yaichi’s thought followed the same direction, so he presented the *Konjaku* as a “literary” text, instead of a “religious” one. His attitude towards Buddhism remained rather skeptical: in an act of wishful thinking, in 1907, he claimed that the influence of Buddhism had declined substantively, that the function of Buddhist temples was now reduced to organizing funerals, and that only old people were visiting temples [Haga 1945, p. 45].

During the early Meiji period, Japan felt a strong inferiority complex towards the West. But it was gradually decreasing. Of crucial importance in overcoming it were the victorious wars with China (1894-1895) and, in particular, with Russia (1904-1905). Nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments were growing in the country. The mood in universities of the time can be illustrated by the following fact. S.G. Eliseyev (one of the first professional Japanese studies scholars in Russia), who studied under Haga, ranked third in his year by academic achievements (he graduated from Tokyo University in 1912), but, in the official list of graduates, his

name was the last. Haga explained to him that “it was just impossible to place the name of a foreigner higher than the name of a Japanese” [Marakhonova 2016, p. 49].

The thinkers of the latter half of the Meiji period were concerned with the search for national identity. The nation of Japan had a relatively simple answer to that: proceeding from the Shinto myth, the Tokugawa era thinkers of the *National Learning* (*kokugaku*) school had long been talking about the “divinity” of Japan, headed by the continuous imperial dynasty which descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu. During the Tokugawa period, their ideas were not in high demand (the official ideology was based on Confucianism), but, under the Meiji emperor, such thinkers as Motoori Norinaga or Hirata Atsutane became cult figures. Therefore, the Meiji ideologues had at their disposal a ready language to describe the political system. But now they were facing the task of forming a nation state. This task was a new one – the governance structure of the Tokugawa Shogunate was based on the fragmentation of society into classes and feudal domains. The Meiji government spend colossal efforts to create a nation – it was justly believed that, without it, Japan was bound to remain inferior to the West, or even to become a colony. The creation of a vocabulary and language for describing “Japanese people” intensified in the 1890s.

One line of creating such a language linked the national character of the Japanese to geographical conditions [Meshcheryakov 2014]. In spring 1894, the magazine *Kokumin no tomo* (*The Nation's Friend*) published an article by a famed historian Kume Kunitake (1839-1931), titled *Island people's character*. According to Kume, there are two such “characters”. In the first case, the island people pursue a policy of isolationism, suffer from xenophobia, are not prone to borrowing the achievements of the world civilization and, as a consequence, become a backward country. The second type is open to the world. The people of such an “island character” conquer the seas, are prone to civilizational borrowings and expansion. The most vivid example is the island country of England. The Japanese belong to the second, active type, and the isolationist policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate was only an unfortunate

mistake contrary to the original Japanese character. To prove this argument, Kume analyzes the mythical-historical chronicles of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, the characters of which possess substantial mobility and creativity.

A well-known journalist and government official Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933) in his 1904 publication *The Island Nation Spirit* claimed that the *island nation spirit* (*shimaguni konjō*) of the Japanese had no relation to the natural conditions. It is characterized by narrow-mindedness, rigidity, self-conceit, suspiciousness, pathos, and excessive pride. The reason for the formation of such national characteristics lies, first of all, in history, that is, the policy of isolationism pursued by the Tokugawa Shogunate [Nitobe 1907, p. 37-38]. To overcome the narrow-mindedness, Nitobe recommended to pursue colonial expansion. In 1908, he became the first chair of the colonial studies department at Tokyo University.

One more direction of research was aimed at uncovering the national character as such, without the direct connection to the geographical or historical realities. For example, in 1902, Kishimoto Nobuta (1866-1928) published a brochure *Nihonjin no gotokushitsu* (*Five Characteristics of the Japanese*). The text of the brochure is the transcript of lectures delivered at the Iitsukan prayer house, belonging to the Unitarian Church, which, among other things, focused on educational and welfare activities among workers. Kishimoto himself played an active role in the Japanese Unitarian Church, which was known for its unorthodoxy. He penned several works on religious studies and English textbooks, and was teaching English at Waseda University.

Kishimoto named the following characteristics of the Japanese character:

1. Cleanliness;
2. A cheerful, active character and appreciation of beauty, which is the consequence of the beautiful Japanese nature;
3. Ability to perceive the new and to rework it to one's liking;
4. Politeness and etiquette behavior;
5. Non-greediness and justice.

All these characteristics are claimed to be either unique, or more developed in the Japanese than in other peoples. Kishimoto urged to preserve these qualities in the future as well. Having defined the five positive characteristics of the Japanese people, Kishimoto believed that, in the near future they would help Japan to occupy leading positions in the world [Kishimoto 1902, p. 68]. At the same time, at the end of his work Kishimoto also defined the three negative qualities which should be rid of:

1. Impatience and inconsistency (for example: a university student who at one point becomes interested in English literature, but after a short time becomes interested in Japanese literature, and this is how such a person, unable to focus on the most important things, reaches nothing in life);
2. The tendency to live with the present day, not think about the future, indulge in luxury, and not make any savings. In this respect, the Japanese are inferior to the Europeans and the Chinese;
3. Physical weakness of the Japanese, their short height and sickliness. Not offering any concrete measures to improve the situation, the author recalls his distress about his short height when he was in America, and urges the Japanese not boast with their stature before the people who are inferior to them in this respect [Kishimoto 1902, p. 68-79].

As the text of the brochure is a transcript of a lecture, it notes some particularly “apt” places to which the audience reacted with laughter. These are, among other things, Kishimoto’s jabs at the Europeans: they seldom wash, and even if they do, they wash, first of all, the visible places – their hands and their faces, so their armpits stink; instead of washing regularly, they prefer to change their clothes more often; Americans rarely brush their teeth – that is why they had to improve their dentistry; Koreans live not in houses, but in some kind of pig pens. Nevertheless, one should also note the author’s critical attitude towards the Japanese themselves and his obvious lack of desire to stick to the official ideological line: not a single word is said about Shinto, the emperor, or the continuous dynasty, though at that time such references became almost mandatory.

Instead, these words were said by Haga Yaichi, who published a short book *Ten Essays on National Character* (*Kokuminsei no jūron*). Haga was obviously familiar with Kishimoto's work, as it was no accident that, in the preface, which was written by a scholar of literature Hisamatsu Sen'ichi (1894-1976), it is Kishimoto who is mentioned as a direct precursor of Haga in the field of studying the Japanese national character. Agreeing with Kishimoto in some points (though Kishimoto's name is never referred to directly), Haga uses a different approach: he considers the Japanese people not in themselves, but in their relation to the state. Waseda was a private university of a liberal direction, while the Tokyo Imperial University was a bulwark of official ideology. Kishimoto was a Christian, while Haga, a Shinto priest's son, urged to worship Shinto gods. In his book, Haga was in essence an opponent of Kishimoto.

Kishimoto's ideas were based primarily on personal observations. As for Haga, in line with his main specialization, he bases his work on the literary classics. He refers to the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, the *Man'yōshū*, the *norito* prayers, the *Taketori monogatari*, the *Konjaku monogatari*, the *Uji shūi monogatari*, *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon, the warrior epics (*gunki*), the *kyōgen* plays, writings of Ihara Saikaku, Motoori Norinaga, Rai San'yō, etc.

In the preface, Haga claims that, when considering an individual and nation, one should use two dimensions: external and internal. Every person has a certain appearance and his internal world, and every nation should be described in the same way, prioritizing the internal, for appearances are deceiving: all Europeans look the same, but every nation uses its own language and have its own culture. In Japan there are regional differences, but, when compared to Europeans, it turns out that, by their internal nature, all these regional people are Japanese. They are united by a common character (*seishitsu* 性質), which influences culture and produces the political system, laws, language, literature, customs, which, in turn, influence the national character [Haga 1945, p. 2]. In the modern world, there seems to be globalized, but, on the other hand, there is a tendency towards conflict. The Russian Tsar calls for peace, but there are Jewish pogroms in Russia. America supported the Anglo-Japanese

alliance, but was simultaneously oppressing the “yellows” in its Pacific Coast. Learning about others, we learn about ourselves. In ancient times, Japan borrowed Chinese and Indian culture, but nowadays all Oriental countries are passive, and only Japan became a world power. How did it manage to “domesticate” the borrowings and turn them into its own heritage?

Haga names the following ten key qualities of the Japanese people.

1. Loyalty to the sovereign and love for the country (*chūkun aikoku* 忠君愛国).
2. Worshipping ancestors and maintaining the honor of one’s house (*sosen wo tattobi, kamei wo omonzu* 祖先を尊び、家名を重んず).
3. This-worldliness and practicality (*genseiteki jissaiteki* 現世的實際的).
4. Love for grasses and trees, joy of observing nature (*kusaki wo aishi, shizen wo yorokobu* 草木を愛し、自然を喜ぶ).
5. Optimism and cheerfulness (*rakuten sharaku* 楽天洒落).
6. Simplicity and unsophistication (*tampaku shōsha* 淡泊瀟洒).
7. Love of the small, ability to make the small (*senrei senkō* 繊麗繊巧).
8. Cleanliness (*shōjō keppaku* 清浄潔白).
9. Ceremoniousness (*reishetsu sahō* 礼節作法).
10. Softness and love of peace (*onwa kanjō* 温和寛恕).

The main goal of the work consisted in uncovering the moral foundations of the Japanese people. The Tokugawa era thinkers and writers believed that the care for morals to be the most important task. Haga inherited this belief. It is no accident that *The Tale of Genji* caused in him such irritation: “It is rather regrettable that we have to value as a masterpiece of our literature a work that describes such a decadent society. It is terrible that students are forced to read it as a learning material” [Haga 1899, p. 117]. The writers of the Tokugawa period were bound to have a limited audience, as no such thing as “the Japanese people” existed at the time. But Haga spoke to the entire nation. Taking up the literature, he hoped to show the nation its literary reflection.



Haga believed that the loyalty to the sovereign and patriotism were the key qualities of the Japanese and repeated the claims which had already become conventional by that time that Imperial dynasty did not have a single break in history (the claim that was written down in the constitution) and that the Emperor was a father and Japanese people were his infants (such a metaphor was used in Imperial decrees). What is the secret of such unity? There are foreigners who explain the strength of Japanese soldiers by the fact that every day they eat the “national flag” (an *onigiri* rice ball with *umeboshi* pickled red plum), and this is how they raise their battle spirit, but this is a lowly materialistic explanation. The real reason is the ancient spirit of loyalty to the emperor [Haga 1945, p. 18]. Loyalty to the emperor is loyalty to the country, and, unlike the West, the two are not separated. There, only Louis XIV understood how it should be, which is proven by his words: “I am the state” [Haga 1945, p. 19].

In the second essay [Haga 1945, p. 20-34] the author claims that the preservation of the Imperial system became possible because in Japan despite the attributes of a modern state (democracy and the Diet), ancestor worship has been preserved to this day, which secures the transmission of tradition. In Japanese Christian families there is no altar of ancestor worship, and Christians refuse to pray at Shinto shrines. They claim that they should worship only their own God (this is a jab against Kishimoto). This happens because they do not understand the foundations of our state (*kokutai*). But it's only natural to bow to your parents. In the West there are monuments to famous people everywhere, and people bring flowers to them as a sign of respect. Shinto shrine performs the same function. In the Yasukuni Shrine the memory of dead heroes is honored but it has no relation to religion.

In the third essay [Haga 1945, p. 35-48] which is devoted to the “this-worldliness” the author says that the Shinto myth does not pose the question about the other world because the Japanese did not think about the afterlife, and were not afraid of death. That is why all their thoughts are about life in this world. Even the proliferation of Buddhism could not alter the situation (the author politely ignores the most popular

sect of Japanese Buddhism, Amidaism, which puts heavy emphasis upon retribution in paradise or in hell). This is the reason why the samurai said goodbye to his life so easily for the sake of his lord. The story of the 47 *rōnin* and the life of Kusunoki Masashige serve as inspiring examples for present-day subjects who willingly die for the emperor and the motherland, which was brilliantly demonstrated by them during the Russo-Japanese war.

Our focus on “this” life is expressed in the pragmatism which the Japanese demonstrate in the process of borrowings from abroad: the bad is removed and only the good is taken, while the latter is reworked according to native world view. For instance, taking Confucianism from China, we, the Japanese, rejected the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, for it implied dynastic change. In China filial duty is put in the first place, while in Japan it is the duty to the emperor. Vulgar borrowing is apishness, and we always imbue the borrowings with our spirit. Borrowing from England, France, and Germany, we improved the technical aspects of the army and the navy, but we imbued them with the Japanese spirit.

In the fourth essay [Haga 1945, p. 49-62] the author discusses the beautiful Japanese nature, the clear-cut of four seasons, due to which the Japanese have a bright and cheerful character. Because the environment is so good, it causes attraction to life, facilitates the development of arts and poetry. Unlike the European art, our art and way of life has a more pronounced plant element (plant dyes, ornamentations, food; dishes are shaped as plants and flowers; and there are flower-based names of women in the *Tale of Genji*). Ikebana, tiny interior gardens (*hakoniwa*), bonsai – only we have it all. What can the Europeans put up against it? Only a bunch of cut flowers. The samurai appreciated flowers, and the European knights – their fair ladies. There is no such other poetic people as the Japanese. Even criminals sentenced to death make poems before their execution.

The fifth essay [Haga 1945, p. 62-75] tells about the optimism and cheerfulness of the Japanese, who, the author believes, are of sanguine temperament and are similar to Italians by their character. This is facilitated by the excellent climate and abundance of sunlight. The

Japanese can easily be imagined with wreaths on their heads and with a drum; they are like butterflies fluttering among flowers. Their cheerful nature is expressed in love of an inspiring drink. Ōtomo Tabito praised wine-drinking in the *Man'yōshū*. In a similar fashion, the Japanese enjoy the blossoming of beautiful sakura. It is only natural because the words *sakura* and *sake* are of the same root word (in fact, the word *sakura* comes from *saku*, “to blossom”). Sakura is not only our national flower, it is also the symbol of our army. The sakura flowers blossom all at once, and their petals fall down beautifully in the wind. A Japanese warrior is the same: he fights beautifully (literally, “in a flower-like manner”, *hanabanashiku*) and falls down (dies) beautifully (fearlessly). The Japanese live in agreement with nature, joyfully and fully. Buddhism fosters disgust towards life but the Japanese are different. They live here and now, not thinking about the afterlife. The Japanese do not like to mourn for too long, they are always active. That is why they bravely go to the battlefield, bravely fight, and bravely die.

The sixth essay [Haga 1945, p. 76-86] praises the simplicity and the unsophistication of the Japanese way of life, which also originates from the natural environment. The Japanese tobacco is neither strong nor bitter. The Japanese flowers are beautiful but not too fragrant. The birds are beautiful but few of them are noisy. The Japanese have always eaten a lot of fish and only a little meat. Fish is a food with little fat, and, compared to Chinese and European cuisine, Japanese dishes have an unobtrusive and light taste. Sashimi, broths (*suimono*), tea-poured rice (*chazuke*) are the strong points of Japanese cuisine. European cuisine uses meat and butter, its taste is intense and strong. The Europeans put sugar and milk even to tea and coffee. Meanwhile, in Japan, the “Zen taste” is dominant (Haga obviously does not count Zen as Buddhism and calls it *Zenshū* – the *Zen school*). Borrowing Buddhism, Japan borrowed the luxury of gold, but it also kept the unsophisticatedness of Shinto (we see that in the Ise Shrine). Zen matches such an aesthetic. The Zen taste is expressed in humbleness, simplicity, unsophistication, lack of pretentiousness. Zen is a communication from heart to heart, it abhors wordiness, and it is from Zen that the *Way of the Warrior* (*Bushidō*), was

born. The characteristics of Japanese poetry are brevity and simplicity. European interiors are filled with furniture, while the Japanese ones are not; our houses are hidden in semi-darkness. The ideal is a humble tea room sized by four and a half tatami. A Western woman is covered in lacework, her hat is decorated with artificial flowers, her dress is frilled, which distinguishes her from a Japanese woman whose kimono has clear, simple and pleasant line. Western opera is pompousness, while the Noh theater is simplicity.

The seventh essay [Haga 1945, p. 87-96] is dedicated to the love for the small and the ability to create the small, which is based on the peculiarities of the natural environment. The Japanese mountains are low and beautiful, their good point is not their height but their tree-covered slopes. The rivers are short, shallow, and clear. The gigantic Nile urges to build huge pyramids, but in Japan there are no such grandiose objects made by man. Under the Indo-Chinese influence, we created the magnificent temples and the Great Buddha statue in Tōdaiji (in Nara), but one should remember that the height of the tallest Japanese temple, Tōji (in Kyoto), is ten times smaller than that of the Eiffel Tower. One should consider as representative such things as a tiny tea room, short haiku, miniature gardens, bonsai, ikebana, and praising of small objects in poetry (mulberries, shells, pebbles, small flowers). The Europeans use large plates and cups, while the Japanese use small ones. European food is huge pieces, while ours is small bits. European toothpicks are 4-5 *sun* long, while ours are one *sun* long. Even our horses and dogs are smaller than the European ones.

The Japanese eat with chopsticks, which develops manual dexterity, thanks to which we are good at making small items. Everybody can see that in sword guards (*tsuba*), stamps, woodcut blocks, carvings upon rice seeds, *origami*, *netsuke*. And a European cannot even sharpen a pencil properly. As we are good at miniature work, the glory of our excellent matches has reached foreign lands.

The eighth essay begins with the description of the cleanliness of the Japanese. We are people who love clean straw mats and cleanliness in general, which distinguishes us sharply from the Chinese. Nobody in

the world loves bathing as much as we do. In Tokyo there are more than 800 public bathhouses. There are many *furo* baths in private houses as well. Out of 1.3 million residents of Tokyo, one third takes a bath every day. The habit of bathing has a long history – partly because there are so many hot springs in Japan. And even emperors visited hot springs (for example, Empress Suiko, reigned 592-628). Europeans always note the cleanliness of the Japanese, especially when they come here after having visited China. In the Shinto myth some gods give birth after a ritual ablution (*misogi*). Bodily pollution is spiritual pollution – so believed the ancient Japanese. The ritual of the great cleansing (*ooharae*), which used to be performed in ancient Japan, proves it. From the scientific point of view, the ancient Japanese got rid of bacteria and illness due to washing.

The notion of cleanliness is linked to the concept of physical and ritual pollution (*kegare*). This is why seclusion was practiced after death of people or pet animals, giving birth (of humans and domestic animals), miscarriages, menstruation. Most types of pollution are connected to women, so it is no surprise that a man is considered a higher being compared to a woman, and women are not permitted to participate in various rituals, they are forbidden from climbing Mount Fuji, and until recently they were forbidden from making pilgrimage to Ise. In ancient times, the Greeks and the Romans also loved cleanliness. But eventually they abandoned this, while the Japanese kept their ancient customs which originate from the gods. After childbirth mother does not visit shrine for 30 days. A newborn child also may not be brought there. Having returned from the funeral, one casts salt before the gates so as to get rid of the taint. Cleaning rituals express our love of life in this world. The shrine territory must be clean. One must never take number one there (however, the text says nothing about number two), and before entering the sacred territory one must wash one's hands. But Europeans (the text goes like this, without any transition) have a habit of keeping shoes and hats in one box, they do not wash their hands after going to the toilet. The Japanese wash their whole body before going outside or participating in some ritual, while Europeans do nothing but shave before going out.

Because the Japanese keep their bodies and the space near their bodies clean their thoughts are also pure. We value honor more than money. In China, bribes are taken without shame, while in Japan bribery has always been infrequent. And when there are public corruption-related scandals, all Japanese are outraged. For any service in Europe one must pay a “commission” but this is unthinkable in Japan. Before entering the Sanssouci palace in Potsdam one can even see a plaque saying that one should not tip the guides, and this attests to how widespread this corrupt practice is. If you give a coin to a palace attendant in Naples he will take out of the show-case the item that is prohibited to touch. In the Goethe Museum in Weimar a guide was begging a high-ranking official for a tip. I saw all of that with my own eyes! A German judge named Prost told how he tried to tip a Japanese rail conductor and a policeman, but they refused, which caused his sincere surprise. Will we be able to preserve our beautiful customs forever?

In the ninth essay [Haga 1945, p. 108-120], the author speaks about the etiquette of Japanese behavior, which is so surprising to foreigners. Even pedestrians in the street bow to each other, and, depending on circumstance, the bows can be deep and multiple. At a European theater I once saw a play where courtiers did not bow properly even to the king. All greetings in Europe are standing. They nod to each other, shake hands, but do not prostrate on the floor. They do not revere their parents, and a younger brother does not show reverence to the older brother. In Japan the grades of politeness are the heritage of feudalism and complicated vassal relations. The hierarchy of society dates back to the era of gods, when they were ranked according to their importance. In the future the language will simplify, but the politeness of speech must not disappear as it is not merely the heritage of feudalism. Manners are not just for other people, they are for oneself, so that one can feel cultured. Therefore, there are strict rules even for *harakiri*. In China there also used to be etiquette. Confucius claimed that, if somebody lacks manners and etiquette, he cannot have the right heart. But in China ruling dynasties changed many times, while we have an ancient and unchanged dynasty, and that is why we managed to preserve our etiquette throughout the centuries.

In ancient times it was expressed by worshipping gods and ancestors, and later it expanded to daily life.

The Europeans express their emotions in public, but we do not like to show our sorrows to others. We cry with our hearts, not with our eyes. The Japanese do not hug or kiss each other in public. That is why the Europeans think that we have “cold” relations in families. The Europeans also have complicated etiquette rules – the courteous attitude to women, which is very strange to us.

In the final essay Haga Yaichi discusses the peacefulness and kindness of the Japanese [Haga 1945, p. 121-133]. After the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars the Europeans started talking about the belligerence of the Japanese and the “yellow peril” coming from them, fearing that the Japanese army might invade Europe. Yes, from ancient times, we were valiant and courageous people, and we had the *Bushidō* code. But the Japanese have never been aggressive people and we showed our warlike spirit only for defensive purposes. A samurai sword is not a weapon of murder, but an instrument of self-defense. A true samurai never unsheathed his sword without a valid reason. Lately, a martial art named *jūjūtsu* (jiu-jitsu, jūdō) invented by Kanō Jigorō (1860-1938) has become popular. In Japan he has seven thousand disciples, and *jūjūtsu* became popular in Europe and America. *Jūjūtsu* transmits a true samurai spirit, it is the art of softness, and not of hardness. It is meant for self-defense and is in line with the spirit of the famous swordsman Tsukahara Bokuden (1489-1571). Ancient Empress Jingū-kōgō attacked Silla not without reason, but because they disobeyed our orders. The battles with the Mongol invaders, the movement to subjugate Korea in the first years of the Meiji era, the Russo-Japanese war were the consequences of insults inflicted upon us. Japan was always generous with other peoples. When the *hayato* and the *kumaso* (the ancient “barbarian” tribes living in the territory of Japan) showed obedience, this was how they were treated.

The same is true for other peoples conquered by the first Emperor Jimmu. When in ancient times Koreans were coming to Japan they were given estates. Many Korean families are listed in the *Shinsen shōjiroku* (genealogical lists of noble houses). In our history there are no examples

of brutal murder of succumbing foreigners. But the Chinese history knows such examples, and there were even cases of the Chinese eating the corpses of their enemies. Our soldiers never violate foreign women, while in 1900 Russian soldiers and cossacks drowned in the Amur river and murdered several thousand Manchurians. The brutality of the Spanish during the conquest of South America is well known. The white people are racists, they treat negroes as non-humans. The Europeans turned foreigners into slaves and sold them. In Japan slavery also existed in ancient times but we never sold people. Unlike the European myths and fairy tales, which often speak of cruelty and violence, Japanese literature describes very few such cases. And even if they can be found, these are stories borrowed from China. As for the samurai, they had the spirit of duty and compassion. That is why the activities of the Japanese Red Cross turned out to be so effective.

The Japanese do not like killing animals. In ancient times, they ate the meat of deer and hares, but they never ate the meat of domestic animals. Even now very few Japanese kill the chickens they keep. And this is not the influence of Buddhism, as one might think, but the original nature of the Japanese. That is why animal husbandry was not developed here. In the West where slavery has been abolished only recently, now there are societies for animal protection, but in Japan animals have always been treated well. Not only do peasants treat well their cows and horses but there are also plenty of examples when a soldier weeps when parting with his war horse. The samurai also loved their horses.

The Japanese are religiously tolerant. It is true that under the Shogunate, Christianity was forbidden, and the believers were prosecuted because they posed a threat to the state, but the cases of extreme violence were rare. The Japanese were forced to trample an icon to determine whether that person was a Christian, but how could one compare this to religious prosecution in Europe! There are also fewer tortures and executions in the history of Japan than in the history of Europe. The climate of Japan is mild, it lacks extremes, and the character of the Japanese is the same. The Japanese are agricultural people, they were peacefully farming their fields and were not going to conquer anyone.



But the Europeans need to remember that the Japanese, as well as other “colored” peoples, must not be insulted or subjugated – otherwise, even the peaceful sun goddess Amaterasu may show her warlike side.

Haga Yaichi and Kishimoto Nobuta more or less overlap concerning the cleanliness of the Japanese, their cheerfulness and activity, ability to adapt the borrowings, the feeling of the beautiful, the etiquette of behavior. However, Kishimoto talked about the Japanese character in peaceful times, while Haga Yaichi interpreted the characteristics of the Japanese national character, first of all, from the point of view of readiness for war and death for the emperor and the motherland. This type of death is seen as a doubtless merit. Your personal death will serve the country, that is, all Japanese people. At the same time Haga repeats several times that suicide due to personal reasons, suicide as such has no right to exist because the beautiful life of a Japanese gives no reason for it.

As for the faults that Kishimoto points out in the Japanese, Haga Yaichi either does not notice them, or presents them in a positive light. Responding to Kishimoto's argument about the weak physical development of the Japanese, Haga argued that the rickshaws have strong bodies and are excellent soldiers [Haga 1945, p. 73]. Kishimoto scolded the Japanese for being prodigal spenders and living with the present day, while Haga said: yes, the Japanese do not like to make savings, like the Jews (his negative attitude to the Jews was probably influenced during his study in Germany), which attests to the broadness of Japanese character. Meanwhile, the changeability of the Japanese permits them to easily undertake reforms [Haga 1945, p. 72-73]. As for focusing on the present day and ignoring the future, Haga constantly repeats: this is precisely the quality that enables the Japanese to easily sacrifice their lives for the motherland and the emperor. Kishimoto claimed that glorious were the people who could make their contribution to the world civilization [Kishimoto 1902, p. 4], while Haga stated that recently cosmopolitanism (*sekaishugi*) gained undesirable growing [Haga 1945, p. 135].

After praising the Japanese to a full extent Haga concluded that Japan had become “the prime power of the East”. And here he permits himself

to provide some criticism [Haga 1945, p. 134-136]. He claimed that not all Japanese had the qualities described by Haga as exemplary, and which the ancient Japanese possessed. The author says that nowadays there are some people who do not respond with pious gratitude to the grace of the gods, and who do not have a Shinto altar (*kamidana*) in their homes. There also are those who, due to financial quarrels, sue their parents. There are husbands who treat their wives as equals and who address them using *-san*. Individualism, cosmopolitanism, socialism have spread. Fight for survival and competition are present on all levels. Modern-day literature must “awake the people’s spirit that is hidden in the ancient civilization”. Modern musical concerts deprive people’s taste of old music. Brick buildings are built, modest Japanese food is replaced by fatty Western one. The samurai spirit is replaced by the spirit of mercantilism. Theater and *waka* poetry are being reformed in a worse direction. Under the influence of modern education old language customs disappear. One should know that there are such negative tendencies in Japan. One must know our past well, so as to eliminate them. This is our duty before our ancestors.

In other words, what is meant here is “freezing” the “centuries-old” values of the Japanese people, which implies a fight against the problems accompanying modernization: the conflict between generations, gender equality, the primacy of the personal interests over national, class struggle, the devaluation of the concept of “motherland”, the dying out of the past world view.

Haga Yaichi was concerned about the “decay” of mores of his contemporary Japan and urged not to remain idle. He was heard, and the eventual development of the Japanese state and society, generally speaking, followed Haga’s ideals, and not those of people like Kishimoto. Haga’s book enjoyed broad popularity, it was in line with the official ideology, and it was often re-printed by one of the largest publishing houses of the time, *Fuzambō*. The preface by Hisamatsu Sen’ichi, which was written in 1938, gave the book even more weight and official backing. From 1938 to 1945, the book was re-printed 16 times. Hisamatsu Sen’ichi is now most known for his research of ancient Japanese literature

(in particular, the *Man'yōshū*), and his public activities have become forgotten, but in the heyday of totalitarianism he headed the group of authors creating the *Kokutai no hongī* (*The Foundations of Our Nation*, 1937) – one of the key propaganda documents of the time, composed under the guidance of the Ministry of Education. Hisamatsu believed that Haga had managed to describe the national character so completely that future researchers would only have to repeat after him [Haga 1945, p. 4]. Indeed, all key ideas of the *Ten Essays* were in some way or another expressed in the *Kokutai no hongī*. Therefore, the work by Haga was recognized as exemplary and canonical. Put into action and brought to absurd, Haga's ideas lead to the creation of the ultra-nationalistic Japanese version of totalitarianism, which was utterly defeated in 1945.

It is often believed that in the 1920s Japan was moving along a “right”, “democratic” way (the so called *Taishō democracy*) but abandoned it in the 1930s, transforming into an aggressive, militaristic nation. This is only partially true. The analysis of the *Ten Essays on National Character* shows that all key principles of the Japanese totalitarianism had been formulated much earlier.

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