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Japanese culture as a basis for civilization in the 21st century

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Judo can be counted as a culture that was transferred from Japan to the world. Although Judo came from Jujutsu, which is a martial art (*budo*) it has disseminated all over the world by the introduction of rules, and through classification as a sport. After becoming an Olympic game, there are few people who do not know judo all over the world. But I have to mention that judo has lost its intrinsic character whilst it has succeeded as a sport. After Judo became a sport, players do a standing bow when they salute each other at the beginning and the end of a match. Considering that *budo* is a practice that begins and ends with a bow, judo should have at least left the tradition that players salute whilst sitting straight (*seiza*) at the beginning and the end of a match. To be sure, because Westerners are poor at *seiza*, judo might not have spread all over the world if it continued to maintain the tradition of *seiza*. *Budo* is said to be the technique that people forbidden to have weapons in the feudal age devised for self-defense. Therefore, if you master a secret of *budo*, you can acquire the power and courage to deal with any emergency, such as being attacked by a rogue. Moreover, you will be capable of avoiding the surprise attack of an assailant who has a weapon, and even can take away his weapon. The important thing in the training process of *budo* is to be able to train your mental strength. In fact, many of *budo*, such as judo, kendo, and aikido, emphasize the spiritual aspect in the training process. On the other hand, as for judo, it is said that its repertoire of skills decreased because many rules restricted judo after becoming a sport. Now I point out a particularly important crux. *Budo* usually hypothesizes several people as enemies. In short, there is no assurance that one will always be facing the same number of opponents, and of the same size (height or weight). Yet you have to fight, regardless of numbers and size. For example, the episode in the Old Testament where David defeated Goliath shows the essence of *budo*: a small person controls a big person. Here is the difference between *budo* and sports. While introducing weight division played a big role in the process by which judo became a sport, it diminished *budo*'s proper goal. The open-weight division alone seems to maintain judo's original spirit, but most players participating in this division are tall and weighty. That is to say, although there is no weight restriction in this division, in truth, there are few scenes

that a small person competes with a big person. It is surely a good thing for the world that judo became a sport. However, it cannot be denied that judo as a sport is different from original judo.

Aikido also puts a special emphasis on spiritual training in the same way as other *budo*. Its technique has the same origin as judo, but it places greater emphasis on spiritual training and there are no rigid restrictions on moves because it is not a sport. It is said that there are similarities between judo and kendo. Karate's movement is linear, but the skill of aikido draws circular movement. Furthermore, unlike karate, aikido does not have a technique of striking; the heart of aikido's technique is in joint locks, although aikido has various techniques like throwing or holding. Since aikido does not hurt the opponents, its technique is often used for arrest by police throughout the world. As a further characteristic of aikido, you will attack your opponent only after the opponent attacks you. That is to say, aikido is the *budo* for self-defense that truly emphasizes defense. Some developing countries have noticed that aikido is the art that does not hurt an opponent. Due to the request for the Papua New Guinean government, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) has sent those members who have mastered aikido to Papua New Guinea (PNG) since about 20 years ago. Because PNG is a multiracial nation, if a police officer hurt or killed a criminal belonging to the other race, the situation will develop to a further complicated political issue. Therefore, aikido, a technique by which a police officer can arrest a criminal without injuring, is useful for PNG police officers. Aikido has been welcomed by the armies and police of developing countries, and has contributed to the reconciliation of domestic problems as a tool of love and peace. Aikido is useful not only for police officers, but also in daily life as a technique of self-defense, and its essence is to have a deterrent effect on would be aggressors. However, it is important that the deterrent effect is not exercised. Thus, a rank holder of aikido (e.g. a master or a teacher) is going to avoid fighting when somebody picks a fight with him or her. That is to say that, namely, "A wise man never courts danger." Sensing and evading danger is the philosophy of *budo*. Only when you cannot possibly avoid danger, would you use your skill. That is to say, in the training of *budo*, learning how to protect oneself against danger and how to avoid danger is important. In considering world peace, an idea of aikido is useful not a little. Japan should make an effort to sublimate the spirit of *budo* into culture that has the character of civilization.

The tea ceremony has also spread around in the world. Because it is mainly women that learn the tea ceremony, many people mistakenly consider it to be a something only for women. First of all, the tea ceremony was established in the 16th century, the Warring States period. In Japan, during this period, national control had collapsed and war was an everyday occurrence. Under this unstable social situation, the tea ceremony became established as an art. The then soldiers got mental stability

by enjoying tea before battles. Thus, since the tea ceremony is an aspect of culture that was created by soldiers, the belief that the tea ceremony is a culture exclusively for women is inaccurate. Although today we do not have such an immediate fear of death as they had, we also feel stress every day because we have to live in hollow human relations and do not know how we should live. Therefore, it remains meaningful to get mental stability by enjoying tea for us living in the present, peaceful days. In this respect, pursuing mental peace through the tea ceremony is a culture that can be adapted for the 21st century. In fact, when I invited well-known teachers of tea ceremony from Rome and entertained about three hundred Tunisians for tea in January 2002 and May 2003, many guests came to be interested in the tea ceremony, and some wanted to learn it. Thus, the tea ceremony has the likelihood that it will develop in the future to be a part of culture showing the characteristics of civilization.

Japanese food can also become such a kind of culture. A feature of Japanese food is that it not only has a subtle and profound taste, but also uses fresh ingredients. In fact, freshness is the essence of Japanese food. Since Japanese food is varied, light, and healthy, it is prized throughout the world. In fact, you can eat Japanese food even if you visit a tiny rural town in the United States.

The reason why Chinese food spreads throughout the world is because it has a cosmopolitan flavor and does not always require fresh ingredients. With Chinese food, heat, in the sense of temperature rather than spice, is the most important factor; namely, that ingredients are heated enough. In other words, low freshness in Chinese food is made up for by heat-treatment. Therefore, you can make Chinese fish dishes deliciously even if you are in a place faraway from the sea. Exceptionally, there is the case that raw fish, called *sheng-yu-pian*, are eaten in Chaozhou, Guangdong province. Of course, *sheng-yu-pian* must be fresh.

Can Japanese food become a part of culture with the characteristics of civilization by spreading throughout the world like Italian and French food have? To become such a type of culture, Japanese food needs some modifications, such as a reduced menu, increased *teppanyaki* cuisine that does not demand freshness and is attractive to young people, and selling *udon* and *soba* in fast-food style like McDonald's.

Although Italian opera is primarily a part of culture, it is accepted as the type of culture displaying the characteristics of civilization because it includes universal factors. Likewise, *budo*, tea ceremony, and Japanese food also have been gradually accepted by people in the world. The spirit of *Budo* aims to mitigate friction among us and eventually make our relations peaceful. This does not mean utopian or ideal peace. This is a way of thinking that it should be possible to live alongside people peacefully if you have the deterrent that they can not take advantage of you easily and not scorn you. However, a deterrent cannot maintain its function as a deterrent after using it. If a deterrent were exercised, a catastrophic outcome may be brought

about.

Deterrent power at a national level must include broader contents than at a personal level. While military power is a part of deterrent power at a national level in the same way as at a personal level, a country's proficiency at politics and the strength of its economy also form major components of a deterrent effect. In short, comprehensive national power creates a deterrent. Japan is said to be the second largest nation in the world in terms of economic power. Nevertheless, Japan's political influence in international society does not balance with its economic power. Given that political power reflects past historical achievements as well as the present, the reason why Japan does not have strong political leverage in international society may be attributed to the fact that Japan has never created systems of thought, religion, and philosophy that can lead the human race. In fact, there are some countries that have influence in international society through their political power even if they are not equal to Japan in terms of economic power. Thus, from now on, Japan has to display its political influence in international society. Furthermore, it is indispensable to have many friendly nations in international society to strengthen Japan's political position. Japan needs countries that understand its viewpoint and support it.

For example, at the International Olympic Committee (IOC) meeting to decide the Olympic 2008 host city, Japan only got six votes. The fact that only six countries out of one hundred countries supported Japan when it needed their help extremely disappointed Japanese people. In reality, only five countries supported Japan, considering that Japan must have voted for itself. Some complained that although it was said that Japan was always appreciated by developing countries due to its enormous Official Development Assistance (ODA), Japanese efforts were not reflected at all in this election. Most Japanese people can share this feeling. According to people who were involved in the campaign, when they started to campaign, they found that Japan had unexpectedly few friends in the world. Hence, they recognized from the beginning that the election would become an uphill struggle for Japan. Paris acquired 15 votes, probably supported by the European countries. Similarly, Turkey got 17 votes by the support of Middle Eastern countries. By contrast, even if bearing in mind the circumstances that China, which is also an Asian country, was a candidate, there was surprisingly little support for Japan.

As this case shows, if there are no countries that help Japan sincerely when Japan needs it, Japan's everyday efforts are meaningless. It is an urgent task that Japan acquires countries that support Japan. However, it is difficult to attract people only by financial support. As I pointed out before, Japan should establish not only economic power but also a comprehensive deterrent effect and political leverage. Additionally, Japan should acquire reverence based on the view that it is an indispensable country to all countries.

Again, it is necessary to have a friendly country in the world. In this respect, religion plays an especially big role. Since Tunisia is far away from Indonesia geographically, Japanese people are apt to think that relations between the two countries are not close, but in fact, they are familiar with each other through Islam. Furthermore, amongst East Asian countries, only Japan, China, South Korea, and Indonesia have an Embassy in Tunisia. The Tunisian ambassador to Indonesia is a kind of VIP.

Similarly, the importance of religious connections can be seen in the Vatican. The Vatican is the head temple of Christianity, and European Christian countries dispatch VIPs to there as their ambassadors. In fact, the Director-General for Political Affairs at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was once appointed the Ambassador to the Vatican, which demonstrates the solid relationship between the Vatican and Christian countries.

China and Korea are important partners for Japan in every respect. Interdependence among these countries is extremely strong. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether those countries regard each other as genuinely friendly countries. In fact, Japan is watchful of increasing Chinese economic influence and its military power in Southeast Asia. Likewise, China has been nervous of the Yasukuni Shrine issue recently, and South Korea has not completely liberalized the import of Japanese culture yet.

On the other hand, some positive signs have begun to show up. For example, China has acted as an intercessor in the North Korean issue, especially in the six party talks. Moreover, there is a small trend towards Japan, China, and Korea trying to enhance their trilateral cooperation. What Japan has to do now is to reduce frictions between China and Korea, and make an effort to develop a relationship with them.