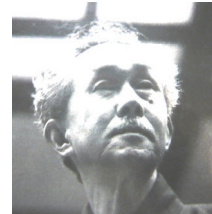


## CONSIDERING JAPANESE DESIGN INCLUDING ARCHITECTURE THROUGH BUDDHIST AESTHETIC BY MUNEYOSHI YANAGI

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**Keywords:** BUDDHIST-AESTHETICS, TARIKI (*ANTI-SELF-POWER*), MINGEI (*FOLK-CRAFTS*),  
 CHA-SITSU (*TEA-CEREMONY HOUSE*), ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT ARCHITECTS

### INTRODUCTIONS

Insisting the PURE -LAND OF BEAUTY (an ideal world for the human beings filled with beautiful things), MUNEYOSHI YANAGI (1889-1961) established the aesthetic theory based on BUDDHISM (BUDDHIST AESTHETICS) through understanding some of the his chosen words in the preaching by "AMIDA-NYORAI " (the ultimate existence of BUDDHISM who attained enlightenment). YANAGI's idea was clearly prefaced in his speeches and writings named THE DHARMA GATE OF BEAUTY (laws governing the path to beauty) in 1949. In this study, I would like to show how his ideas were brought out through his very unique and special way of observations for creative processes and results of the indigenous, vernacular, local and traditional Japanese folk-crafts, and to discuss about underlying its influences for design and expressions in historical and modern Japanese architecture.

### THE DAHMA GATE OF BEAUTY

Around 1920s, though intensive and energetic researches and studies about Japanese many kinds of existing traditional local folk-crafts disappearing because of modernization, and his increasing interests in BUDDHISM and BUDDHIST AESTHETICS, YANAGI imposed strong mission on him to contribute to the Japanese culture through theorizing BUDDHIST AESTHETICS. Severely criticizing Japan's excessive admiration of the Occident and the lack of Japanese awareness of its own culture after the war, he said, in order that Japan become a really independent nation, it had to impress the world with the significance of Japan as a culturally independent nation. He proposed that there were two things, Japanese art and its BUDDHIST ideas, that Japanese can contribute to world culture with confidence, and concluded that it was time to give a lot of gifts to the Occident, as we have been receiving many things from it. Combining these two things, Japanese art and its BUDDHIST ideas, YANAGI began to develop the idea of preaching his BUDDHIST AESTHETICS.

His objective was to clarify the interpretation of the ideal world filled with beauty is possible from a BUDDHIST point of view, and to explain the BUDDHIST basis on which the nature of beauty chiefly depends. Quoting a category of traditional folk-crafts as the most representing concrete creative phenomenon, he suggested that those made by unknown craftsmen had true beauty and were the most pure and ethical of all objects.

He found that true beauty through his observations on them by "JIKIGE" *BUDDHIST TERM* (he adapted into modern terms "CHOKKAN" meaning a direct insight) . Also, "ICHINYO" *BUDDHIST TERM* (oneness) was emphasized as undifferentiated ways of perceiving beauty instead of differentiated ways of perceiving beauty by intellect and logic. Emphasizing undifferentiated states of beauty itself, he called it "HUNI" *BUDDHIST TERM* (non-dual entirety) or "BISHUU MIBUN" (undifferentiated state of beauty and ugliness). This kind of true beauty exists in a realm called "JODO" (the pure-land : the enlightened world of AMIDA-NYORAI), where there is no dualism, and everything is one and eternal. There is no distinction between the beautiful and the ugly. He named it "THE DAHAMA GATE OF BEAUTY".  
*" When I come to attain Buddha-Hood, unless there is no beauty and ugliness among all the beings throughout my land, I will not attain highest enlightenment."*

(1) 經典・大無量壽經

In this fourth of AMIDA'S forty-eight great vows are YANAGI'S found words which could give him the basis upon which to erect an his BUDDHIST AESTHETICS. AMIDA'S declaration means that in the land of BUDDHA the duality of beauty and ugliness does not exist. In the land of BUDDHA no hint of beauty or ugliness is to be found in any corner of it. No dualism figure in our original nature, either. The forms of beauty and ugliness are but the provisional semblances of reality. Dwelling in this inborn nature that transcends the duality of beauty and ugliness is to dwell in a condition of salvation. There we should not immerse ourselves in profitless disputes over beauty and ugliness.

Return to your intrinsic BUDDHA-NATURE which is beyond beauty and ugliness, there is no real or true beauty. YANAGI claims, this ultimate beauty was to be found in medieval crafts and more generally in the Japanese folk-crafts that he researched and discovered. This undifferentiated beauty is to be created by unknown craftsmen who are in the state of non-dual entirety and don't differentiate beauty and ugliness, and are rather simply engaged in repetitive group-labor in the mass, hand-made production of objects for daily use, relying submissively on tradition. Tradition, the accumulation of the experience and wisdom of many generations, is what BUDDHIST calls the "GIVEN POWER" (an aggregate power that in all cases transcends the individuals). To the craftsman, tradition is both the savior and the benefactor. When he follows it, the distinction between talented and untalented disappears. Any craft-man can unfailingly produce a beautiful work of art.

He said. "Even a person not blessed with talent can be saved just as he is. There is no overlooking the fact that many exceptional works of art have been made by nameless and illiterate craftsman. The medieval IDO-BOWL so highly praised by the great tea-masters is the best illustrations. We do not know the people who made them, but they were not the work of only one potter, or even several. Whoever they were, they could only have been poor artisans. We can hardly suppose that each one of them was a man of genius. They are workmen of the most ordinary kind. They were making low-priced articles. They certainly were not giving any thought to making each piece beautiful. They threw them off simply and effortlessly. If the bowls are described as graceful, that was surely not sought with their makers. The bowls were allowed to follow their own ways into existence, naturally and inevitably. This accounts for the air of elegance with which they are so richly endowed. They are woks untroubled by either beauty or ugliness. This freedom was gained by virtue of their ordinariness and low cost. The overall environment, the received traditions, the selfless work, the simple way of life, natural materials and unsophisticated techniques were combined in the flowering of bowls. When potters were making their wares, they were merely doing matter of fact what was expected of them." (2) 工芸の道

At the end he wrote. "Thus we can see that beauty belongs to the DHARMA-world. If a person dwells in the truth of this DHARMA NATURE, he cannot help dwelling in beauty. Even simple or stupid men are affiliated to beauty just as they are. That is how it is for everyone. This is the significance of AMIDA'S declaration of the transcendence of the opposition of beauty and ugliness. To tell others about such a world of beauty and to let them know of the salvation in that DAHARMA-world is the DAHARMA GATE OF BEAUTY." (3) 美の法門

Unlike other craft-theorists such as JOHN RUSKIN and WILLIAM MORRIS who emphasized the humanity of craftsman, freedom in creativity or pleasure in labor as the principle of making beautiful things, YANAGI stressed discipline and the law of submissive reliance on tradition which he calls the surrender to the "OTHER-POWER" or "TARIKI" (reliance on an external power or grace) instead of relying on the "SELF-POWER" or "JIRIKI" (self reliance). He said. "Craftsman maybe unlettered, uneducated and lacking any particular force of personality, but it is not from these causes that beauty is produced. He rests in the protecting hand of nature. The beauty of folk-craft is the kind that comes from dependence on the "Other Power". Natural materials, natural processes, and accepting hearts, these are the ingredients necessary at the birth of folk-crafts." (4) 工芸の道

YANAGI made a chart contrasting Occidental aesthetics with Buddhist aesthetics.

Occidental aesthetics

[Individual person]

[genius person]

Buddhist aesthetics

vs [collective people]

vs [ordinary people]

[way of self-power]	vs [way of other-power]
[hard practice]	vs [easy practice]
[signed]	vs [unsigned]
[fine art]	vs [craft]
[appreciation]	vs [functional use in daily life]
[individual creation]	vs [tradition]
[distinction between beauty and ugly]	vs [no distinction between beauty and ugly]
[leisure]	vs [labor]
[small quantity]	vs [big quantity]
[eccentric]	vs [normal]



In other words, YANAGI summarized MINGEI folk-crafts wear criterion of beauty such as, handicraft 手工芸, intimacy 親, use/function 機能, health 健康, naturalness 自然 [spontaneous] simplicity 簡素, tradition 伝統 [rural] 地方 irregularity 奔放 [vernacular] 固有 inexpensiveness 廉価, plurality 多数 sincerity/honest of toil 誠実正直な労働 [Indigenous] 土着 selflessness/anonymity 無心, 無銘 [anonymous] 無名

Here, I find the quite similarity of these elements forming the beauty of things suggested by YANAGI to ones forming beautiful architectures by BERNARD RUDOLFSKI who proposed to evaluate those charmed architectures, which have been neglected for long time and introduced by him based on the concept "architecture without architect". He summarized its five criterion of charm as [vernacular] [anonymous] [spontaneous] [indigenous] and [rural], that I found accord with MINGEI criterion above.

In 1974 architect-historian B. RUDOLFSKI'S "architectures without architects" was exhibited at MOMA and published. It showed us beautiful, interesting and attractive architectures and landscapes all over the world. It was one of the important keys to open architects' and architectural researchers' eyes for those architectures, which lead the new architectural subjects such as urban-design, design-survey, conservation and restoration, and also lead the publishing of progressive and suggestive books like ROBERT VENTURI'S " Learning from Las Vegas" or "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" which had quite impacts on contemporary architectural movements as the post-modernism and so on.

## BUDDHIST AESTHETIC AND ARCHITECTURE

When we try to find the similarity of MINGEI criterion in Japanese architecture, we can find a typical category for traditional "TEA-HOUSE". YANAGI wrote about TEA CEREMONY-AESTHETIC that established by tea-masters especially SEN RIKYUU in 16<sup>th</sup> century. RIKYUU adopted such design vocabularies for the place of the tea ceremony (TEA-HOUSE), as [natural], [vernacular], [unknown] and [humble] that exactly fit to criterion for beauty of "MINGEI" proposed by YANAGI.

He wrote. " I have inexhaustible respect to TEA-MASTERS for their discovery of beauty in folk-crafts, their recognition of exceptional and supreme beauty in the normal world, their creation of law and philosophy in its beauty, and their complete devotion to beautifying life. All these things are the reasons why I call the early TEA-MASTERS the great predecessors regarding the beauty of crafts. Their greatness is in the freedom of their creative intuitions to see and seize upon the astonishing beauty lying latent and waiting them in the world of miscellaneous articles that nobody particular noticed. No one ever has as sharp eyes as they had to see the aesthetic value of folk-crafts. They chose nothing but naive handy-crafts called GETEMONO (MINGEI crafts) for their tea-ceremony. Those great masterpieces chosen by them were no more than common GETEMONO costing a few pennies. And the place for it (TEA-HOUSE ) was based upon simple peasant cottages." (5)工芸美論の先駆者について

The design of TEA-HOUSE was followed for Korean and Japanese local old peasant's houses. TEA-MASTERS digested them and refined them by their own ways. And since then, the law of the design of TEA-HOUSE became the very basic principle "SUKIYA" for various styles of traditional and modern Japanese architectures. And YANAGI'S MINGEI theory suggests us not only the true value of underestimated and neglected genre of designs, but also the importance of spiritual and religious factors that lies behind actual, technical and intellectual way of design. From this point of view, considering of

architectures today, I would like to propose that one of those which are the significant, important and excellent works reflecting YANAGI'S suggestion might be TERUNOBU FUJIMORI(藤森照信)'S works. Majoring modern history of architecture and city planning and taught at Tokyo University, he designed several interesting architectures, designing processes of which are quite unique.

He wrote. "RIKYUU was active in the time when in Europe it was the later part of renaissance. Then architectural theory was lead by REONARD da VINCI. He drew that famous human scale graphic to show the basic factor for architecture should be human scale not scale of god or the society. And at the same time RIKYUU designed the new TEA HOUSE which have only one-room of two-TATAMI-mats (二畳台目) called TAIAN(待庵). The scale of two-TATAMI-mats is just the same to DAVINCI'S scale of drawing. If ultimate architectural asset of western world might be ST. PETERS CATHEDRAL designed by da VINCI (realized by MICHAELANGELO), RIKYUU'S TAIAN should be ultimate one of eastern world."

(6) 人類と建築の歴史

He wrote. "Today the world of architecture in Japan is without doubt is directed toward white and transparent . The degree of abstraction is accelerating. As an architecture-historian, I do recognize this fact. However, the trouble is that, when I want to make architecture, if I have earth, wood and stone in front of me, my blood becomes excited. I have strong sympathy for cultures peculiar to various regions and indigenous architectural structures."

(7) 野蛮ギヤルド建築

About his excellent work "JINCHOUKAN MORIYA HISTORICAL MUSEUM"(神長官守矢資料館) he wrote. "About materials: these natural materials blended in well with the surroundings of earth, wood, stone, plants, and water. Moreover, even though natural materials deteriorate when they are exposed to wind and rain, they do not end up appearing dirty like industrial materials. Instead, they take on an attractively weathered look."

(8) 野蛮ギヤルド建築

In discussion with art-critic KENJIROU OKAZAKI, FUJIMORI showed his sympathy to ALVA ALTO and SUTEMI HORIGUCHI. Both successfully tried to extract basic indigenous into their famous architectures. Agreeing to FUJIMORI, OKAZAKI said, "Architectural history has to be the manifest of their anonymous productive and underlying construction by many kinds of workers. But after all, it is apt to be talked just as an appearing personal expressions. It's a lie. You (FUJIMORI) know it because you are architecture-historian like BERNARD RUDOFSKI."

(9) 野蛮ギヤルド建築

## EPILOGUE

Anonymous craftsmen always understand the limit of their ability and also the limit of their field as folk-crafts or architecture. They never sacrifice people's happiness to seek profits or progress. In this point, they are sharing the brief with professional philosophers. J. HUIZINGA said. " New discovery and renovations of existing measures will not always bring higher values and larger happiness. . . . . The culture could be destroyed with the real and concrete progress."

(10) *Architecture Without Architect*

THE DHARMA GATE OF BEAUTY foretold anonymous and humble craftsman's existence would give good things and spirits to the human beings in this industrialized society. Intelligence and wisdom we can get through this stays not only in the range of aesthetic or social thoughts. It has a significant relationship with how we should live, how we can let others live, and far more, and how we can keep peacefulness in the world.

(1) *The Larger Sutra of Eternal Life* :BC6C (2) *The Road to Crafts: Yanagi* 1929

(3) *The Dharma Gate of Beauty* 1949 (4) *The Road to Crafts :Yanagi* 1929

(5) *About The Pioneers for Crafts-Aesthetics Articles: M.Yanagi* 1981 (6) *The History of The human and Architecture: T.Fujimori* 2005

(7)(8)(9) *Barbarian Architecture: Fujimori* 1998 (10) *Architecture without Architects: B Rudofsky* 1964

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