Contradictions in Heritage

--- Pastoral Care & Counselling for the 21st Century ---

Keynote Address,
Asia-Pacific Congress on Pastoral Care and Counselling,
Perth, Australia 2001

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It is a great honour and pleasure for me, as a Japanese pastoral and spiritual care professional, to have this opportunity to address leaders of spiritual care from all over the world. The organizing committee of this congress gave me two guidelines for this paper: first, to give a perspective for pastoral care and counselling in the 21st century; and, second, to write from personal point of view, leaving another suitable person to present a paper from more institutional perspective.

A couple of years ago, some of us went to Ghana for the International Congress on Pastoral Care and Counselling and experienced rich and distinctive spirituality of that part of the Globe. Needless to say, we also enjoyed excellent papers and inspiring discussions. It gave us good insight that the Western model of spiritual care and therapy is not able to claim universality any more. We learned that it was one’s spiritual heritage that helped a person to be really oneself. One’s self has been developed within a certain cultural setting as well as with her/his particular life history. As one can express one’s thought most thoroughly with one’s mother tongue, one’s spirituality flourishes best in one’s own culture. Because each of us grows in different culture fostered not only by its geography but also by history, it was

Key words: spiritual care, counselling, Japanese psyche, Jomon
essential to listen to voices of one’s spirit in relation to one’s cultural and historical background. We became aware of the importance of what is now called “local knowledge” as a common basis for spiritual care in the 21st century. Interestingly, local knowledge of a particular people may have significant relevance to the therapy of another place and people. It is especially true in the therapy for the survivors of injustice. I recalled words of Kuno Osamu (久野 収), Japanese philosopher: “God resides in detail”.

But to be honest, in Ghana I did not feel at home with the vivid and rhythmic expression of spirituality in the area. I knew it was OK not feeling positive always. It was, nevertheless, a very rare experience to me who is usually very flexible to accept and enjoy the unknown. I had to admit, then, that I am from a different world. But where am I from? Then I started thinking: Have I ever tried to journey through my own spiritual heritage? I was educated in post-war Japanese public education system where ancient Japanese history, belief of our forefathers and foremothers and their mythology had never been taught. I did not have a clue how to approach my own indigenous spirituality. I went to a good college, which is bilingual, Japanese and English. So-called international way of thinking was the foundation of all aspects of college life. Then I went to England and USA for study. I worked for Anglican Parish Church in Japan, until I became full-time educator in a university. I had to confess that I have never been fully exposed to my own spiritual heritage. I can tell with pride and shame together that I know Old Testament creation story better than Japanese one. The first part of this paper is to share my quest for my cultural heritage. I am hopeful this knowledge of my locality has some relevance to other people.

I

After coming back from Ghana, I started my quest for Japanese heritage. But to my surprise, there were few precedents among Japanese theologians who have a positive quest for our cultural heritage. The reason of this unpopularity
among respected Japanese scholars soon became obvious. The reason is in our way of expressing spirituality in history. Just as I am preparing this paper, a typical example calls for international attention. Some leading Japanese historians and philosophers with nationalistic inclination wrote the history textbook for junior high school. The authors say that all other textbooks are written from the mind of internalised humiliation caused by the defeat at the World War II, and that we need a much more “objective” history. Their textbook, from my personal point of view that seems to be shared by Chinese, Korean and Japanese intellectuals, tries to justify Japanese colonialism and its ruling policies. The Ministry of Education and Science gave official permission for the use of that textbook. Korea and China responded strongly against it in the diplomatic discussions.

We, Japanese, are people of pride who respect purity even to the level of obsession. No stain on our purity is permissible. When a Japanese formally express oneself, he or she (most often it is he) always risks their honour for their “purity” claim. If your opinion was accepted, that means your purity of spirit is approved. It is always an all-or-nothing question. It seems true in history as well as in personal therapy. No partial acceptance is possible because the issue at stake is always “purity” of one’s spirituality. Japanese society can be called suicidal because one has to face an all-or-nothing situation where one’s “purity” of spirit is in question. To accept what needs to be accepted is one of the main practical goals in personal therapy in this part of the world. Reinhold Niebuhr’s famous “Prayer of Serenity” is often the final gift from the pastoral counsellor to the client. People in Japan still have difficulty with facing its modern history. Invasion of the neighbouring countries; massacre; rape; and inhumane colonial policies. They distract the mind of the “purity” oriented Japanese. Most of the post-war generation intellectuals cannot free themselves from this difficulty, either because they themselves have this obsession or because their previous generations, often their gurus suffer from it. They were silenced. The problematic textbook is a challenge to this situation, though it goes against the desirable direction.
To study Japanese cultural heritage has the same difficulty, because it must deal with the issue of the Japanese Emperor system. The Japanese imperial family has the longest known lineage in human history. Do check the Guinness Book of Records. You will find that it is the recognized fact. Japanese idea of emperor is in confusion, because Emperor Hirohito was the supreme head of military Japan who then claimed himself as god and lost the war; because post-war Japan disarmed herself under the new peaceful constitution with revised Emperor system; and because we still maintain our "purity" orientation. The Emperor is seen as the symbolic remnant of military history. But at the very same time he still is the symbol of Japanese "pure" spirituality. For me, the emperor is the symbol of Japanese spiritual confusion.

The ancient history and religion entangle with the rise of imperial family and its regime. To study it could be seen as the effort of nostalgia for the lost imperial glory. Post-war Japanese have not developed the way to treat their country's damaged cultural heritage. If we can apply Elisabeth Küber-Ross's "theory of stages" to post-war Japanese history, it is on the stage of "denial". People are not able to talk about the loss of "purity" of spirit even after more than 50 years. In this sense, the textbook controversy can be understood as the expression of "anger", the second stage. I shall, therefore, say that such a controversy was psychologically inevitable, although historically unacceptable, morally wrong, and theoretically irrational.

From this analysis, I learned that it is difficult for a people with the history of perpetration of inhumanity to celebrate their cultural heritage. It is especially true for those who have a conscience. In Jungian terminology I see the "complex" in themselves. My analysis leads to the hypothesis that a people with the history of perpetration of inhumanity is in a state of spiritual numbness and confusion and tend to become spiritually rootless and be exceedingly secularised.

So far, I speak mainly with Japanese society in mind. But other societies with
history of perpetration of colonization and war may have been suffering similar spiritual confusion. In human history, the 20th century is indeed to be remembered as the era of great expansion of welfare. This century, however, must also be remembered as the era of massacre. If one is aware of the latter, spiritual numbness and confusion seem likely. People feel helpless. On the future landscape of pastoral care and counselling, therefore, we must maintain the following traditional keywords: guilt, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation. It is needless to say that care for the victims has priority. But at the same time, when we seek social justice, deeper understanding of the mechanism of the perpetrators should be sought, otherwise care for the confused spirit stays superficial. We, spiritual care givers need the serenity to care for the spirit of this age as well as the spirit of each person.

Building up that hypothesis could not stop the quest for my own spiritual heritage. I do not want to stay in the stage of “denial”. To accept my own history of perpetration is difficult spiritual work to do. I have to accept and live with my own vulnerability. As Japanese, I live with the sense of “impurity”. I felt the need for spiritual toughness to live with brokenness. And I was in serious need of spiritual support. Personally speaking, this particular opportunity to share my quest story is helping me to a great extent.

II

In addition, the most recent findings in cultural and natural anthropology helped me from the depth of despair by giving a fresh insight. But it also gave me a different kind of spiritual burden, as you will soon see.

So far, the standard understandings of Japanese history have said that the ancestors of present Japanese are the migrant people from the Eurasian continent with agricultural way of life. They came to our islands about 500BCE (Before the Common Era). They introduced agricultural civilization to those islands.
Land in valley bottoms and coastal plains was drained, leveled, irrigated in operations demanding communal effort. Similarly the planting, transplanting, and harvesting of rice demanded coordinated effort by a community. The new people and knowledge spread very quickly from west to east, and enabled a far denser population to live in one place. Permanent villages began to appear. In this way, in Japan as elsewhere, agriculture led people to make more efficient use of their environment.


This period of agricultural expansion, from c500BCE to c300CE, was called Yayoi Period named after the place where typical plain potteries were excavated. Tools, weapons and mirrors of bronze and iron were made in Japan. The development of this society led to the kingship, believed to be the first ancestors of the present imperial lineage. The ruling class produced two mythological history books, *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, which include the creation story as well as the story of war and victory. Here we have to face the issue of the Emperor that is at the center of these classical texts of Japan.

Contrary to the standard understanding of our origin, that has strong link with power and domination of the imperial lineage, there have been very interesting findings reported. Firstly, the similarity in religious and linguistic culture of Ainu people in Hokkaido, the northernmost island, and those in Okinawa to the south. Both people have been treated unfairly in history. Ainu people had been considered indigenous native people in Hokkaido Island whose ethnic origin was said to be different from "Japanese". They are believed to have come from northern Eurasia. They were severely discriminated against. In recent years, they have fought for human rights in alliance with native Americans. The government put down discriminatory and paternalising "Act to Support the Indigenous People" only in the last decade of the 20th century. A law respecting their cultural heritage was finally passed by the Diet, or Japanese parliament, 4 years ago. Likewise Okinawa was under discrimination. Those small islands had constituted an
independent kingdom with close relation to China and South East Asia. Japan militarily subjugated the kingdom in the 18th century. In recent history, Okinawa was occupied for decades by USA after the war and still hosts more than 75% of US military bases in Japan. GDP of Okinawa is lowest among Japanese prefectures. How is it possible to find the cultural similarity in those peoples of two extreme geographical areas? The second finding, which comes from natural anthropology, gave us the answer.

Professor Omoto Keiichi (尾本惠市), former professor of Natural Anthropology at University of Tokyo and professor of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, now the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at St. Andrew’s University where I teach, conducted the research on DNA in many parts of Asia. Following parts are his conclusions that concern us. (Please be reminded that the following summary is only within the limit of my understanding.) 1) Ainu and people in Okinawa share many genes; 2) people in some parts of main islands share some of those genes; and 3) people in main islands also share many common genes with people in Korean peninsula and the continent. Those findings suggest very strong possibility that the immigrated agricultural people had pushed away the native Japanese, namely Ainu and the people in Okinawa, to peripheral areas. The new knowledge leads us to different understandings of our heritage. Our cultural heritage can go back to pre-agricultural period; the tradition must also be sought in the culture of Ainu and Okinawa, which Japanese imperial history treated as peripheral and strange.

I have to admit that my heritage contains that of the oppressor as well as of the oppressed. If I wanted to identify myself on the line of victory and development, as Japanese psyche has always required, I could not continue my quest. But if I choose to move on to the heritage of the oppressed, I may gain new heritage, at the cost of “purity”. The move also means that I reject imperial history of the ruling class. My quest took me back to the pre-agricultural Japan.
We, by the way, have put very heavy emphasis on agricultural revolution in human history. The English word “culture” itself shows this preference for agriculture. What then was pre-agricultural life? How was the life of the losers in Japanese ancient history? To my delight and surprise, archaeological findings blessed my quest.

Picture 1 is of Jomon (“rope-marked”) pottery, from which the name of the period preceding the Yayoi agricultural society, the Jomon Period, is derived. Those pottery dated even 1,000 BCE and this date is the earliest in the world. People were gatherers, hunters, and fishers. This was the first blessing I received in my quest. The pot was used for boiling. Our defeated ancestors were the first cooks in human history who knew boiling.

What is boiling? It is the process of softening the food. And at the same time this process extracts the essence of the food. Then the essence was mixed with other essences. Jomon people knew, for the first time in human history, the mixture of tastes. Gathered nuts were ground and made into balls. They were cooked with meat or fish together with herbs and vegetables. Yes. It is a Hot Pot. Actually, cultural anthropology traces this Japanese dish Hot Pot, or Nabe (which literally means Pot), to Jomon culture. The Hot Pot image fits with the Japanese understanding of its own culture. Whatever comes to Japan, Japanese absorb them. The new ideas, new beliefs and new techniques. People enjoy the mixture of tastes. This is the positive side. Each one in Japan, however, must lose its original identity and blend together. If something does not blend, the Japanese do not know how to deal with it and so throw it out.

But the spirituality of Nabe, or Hot Pot, needs to be addressed at the symbolic level. We can recall alchemy whose symbolism has been thoroughly studied by Carl Gustav Jung. Nabe involves fire and change, as alchemy does. People in Jomon period knew the fact that things change. They knew that nothing has permanent life. And they respected the power of the fire that causes the change. This explanation is not the mere reading-in by modern idealists.
Picture 2 of Jomon pottery, which also predated to agricultural revolution in Japan, clearly show extraordinary passion and sense of life that Jomon people had. When Claude Levi-Strauss, anthropologist, first saw the pottery, he was breathless and whispered “Amazingly expressive!”

Dr. Machida Soho (町田宗鳳), of Singapore National University, gives us an excellent perspective to understand the spirituality of Jomon people in his book, From Jomon to Ainu: Lineage of Sensual Wisdom (『縄文からアイヌへ： 感覚的叡智の系譜』せりか書房, 2000). He started with two Greek ideas of Life: zoe and bios. Bios is the life of each living creature, whereas zoe is life beyond the life-and-death of each creature. Hence we have Biology and Zoology. Zoe does not know death. It corresponds, in a sense, to a very recent idea of genetic biology, “the selfish gene”, that says that each life is merely a vehicle for the gene to survive. A gene’s zoe lasts beyond the death of bios.

Jomon people believed in zoe. When the loved one dies, they broke the valuables and cremated or buried them. They knew that there is zoe beyond bios. I have no time to go deep into Ainu culture and belief, but all religious ceremonies of Ainu, who are most likely direct descendants of Jomon people, make sense from their firm faith in zoe. Fire is the mediator between the world of bios and the world of zoe. People respected fire. Archeologists and researchers in religion believe that extraordinary style of Jomon pottery (Picture 2) is their depiction of fire so that they are named “Flame Pottery”.

I have received one more blessing from my second stage of spiritual quest. That is the mobility that was enjoyed by Jomon people, who were the losers in the cultural battle, if not physical battle, with agricultural people and therefore the ancestors of all oppressed Japanese. They are people of the ocean. Even now on a Japanese seashore, we can sometimes see a coconut traveled from tropical sea of thousands of miles away. I cannot tell how people of South East Asia see the ocean, but Japanese historians tended to see oceans as a great barrier to human mobility. But the ocean can be and actually has been the field of great traffic. We are almost certain that Jomon
people engaged in trans-ocean travels. Some scholars claim the evidence of Jomon peoples' exchange with South East Asia and even with America.

2 years of my spiritual quest since Ghana Congress have been very fruitful and promising.

First: I was able to identify the complex psychological state of people with the memory of perpetration of inhumanity. I should confess that this issue is still alive within myself. Spiritual numbness and exceeding secularization may come out. As I have introduced, the themes of reasonable guilt, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation call for our attention.

Second: In this quest, I became acquainted with the Jomon people, presumably the direct ancestors of Japanese. Their spiritual heritage is deep and dynamic and is an important guide to me. And they are the oppressed people. I also had to learn that it is another part of my own heritage that oppressed the Jomon people. Our power orientation tendency caused this second tradition to become the main stream. Through this quest I gained double and contradicting identity. This fact leads me to a new understanding. That is: We all have layers of spiritual heritage. Which one do you identify with? This can be a therapeutic question. But it could be a political question.

Third: The Jomon spiritual heritage centered around their trust in zoe. People therefore were able to celebrate transition. They accepted inevitable change in life. Trust in change requires accepting one's vulnerability. This spirituality is very different from modern spirituality. But we who live in the present world inescapably have to learn how to cope with life's changes. Recovered Jomon spirituality might be the source of new insight.

Fourth: The mobility of Jomon people helps me to avoid narrowing down our perspective. Their mobility opens us to the possibility of solidarity with people in other parts of the world. I felt uneasy with the hidden agenda of ethnocentrism behind the quest for spiritual heritage. Though it is extremely important to foster and cherish one's cultural heritage, we must also be extremely careful about its political consequences as well as therapeutic ones. One's depth should not lead to a narrow dead-end. The image of openness to
unlimited others, such as the Jungian concept of the collective unconsciousness, should be an essential element in one’s spirituality quest.

In the following pages of this paper, I will try to relate those fruits of my spiritual journey to our role in pastoral care and counselling for 21st century society.

III

1.

In many areas in psychotherapy and spiritual care, care for the victimized soul has the obvious priority. But the development of a care program for the perpetrators is also very important. There is a trend of understanding that sees the perpetrators themselves as the victims of trauma. We can, thus, approach this phenomenon of abuse socio-psychologically. But psychotherapy and/or counselling should be the core of the care. What I want to propose here is the spiritual care for the perpetrators. Quite often their image of self, especially in relation to God(s), is severely damaged. Maybe prison chaplains need to be resource persons. The spiritual care for the perpetrator is one area where we can contribute significantly to the development of social justice.

Reconciliation is not an isolated issue. Theologically speaking, it is God who reconciles. It is neither the apology of the perpetrator nor the forgiveness of the victim that enables reconciliation, although both of them, I think, are vital components. What is substantial is not the moral quality of either party. Morality, at its best, has facilitating power for reconciliation. It is only spiritual care professionals who can proclaim the possibility of the mysterious phenomenon called reconciliation. Reconciliation is not the logical outcome of anything. We need prayer, hope and trust for this.
2.

Dr. Emmanuel Larkey quoted Walter Brueggemann's phrase "texts under negotiation" and Paul Ricour's "conflict of interpretations" in order to describe our post-modern situation. I would like to add "contradictions in heritage" from my spiritual journey. All of them show that conformity can never be a valid excuse for one's standpoint. Post modernity isolates each person. No grouping principle, such as family, church, local community, ethnicity, nation, ideology, or belief system, assures one's identity. Spirituality, in post-modern world, should not be understood as the extraordinary power that can assure identity. This misunderstanding is just an anachronism.

Spirituality for the 21st century is the source of existential toughness for survival in the age of non-conformity. I recall Paul Tillich's idea of "Protestant Principle". Spirituality fosters the ability to engage in the unending quest for inter-personal understanding; the ability to live with one's own uncertainty and vulnerability.

3.

We live in a time of change. Every change requires sacrifice. We lose something when we gain something. What characterizes the coming era most is its gigantic pressure to move and change in all aspects of our lives. We do not even have an understanding of what is going on around ourselves. I can never over-emphasize the need for wisdom to guide the direction of change. There are changes we should be willing to accept. But there are changes that we have to resist. Here we find the realm of social justice guided by our effort to follow "God's principle of giving preferential option to the oppressed". Intent listening, backed by empathy and the will of compassion (namely suffering together) is essential.

We, modern people, become defensive to any change in our life. This might
have been caused by the trauma of violent change we have been experiencing in modern history. This trauma-built defense mechanism needs to be healed for spiritual welfare. We have to accept some essential changes in life as a blessing. I think we need to recover the perspective on stages of life with the image of continuous growth. For sure, we have to free ourselves from the modern efficiency- and productivity-oriented view of human potentiality.

With the presence of our compassionate God, if I can use Christian image, the changes in life have been, and will be blessed. This message should be at the core of spiritual care in daily life. The Christian image of almighty and victorious God that leads us to believe in the unchangeable truth and the superiority of stability needs to be given up. Jesus did not have that kind of God image anyway, according to most recent (post-modern!) Biblical scholarship. Vulnerability seems for me to be the most helpful personal image of Jesus of Nazareth. As we all know very well, the task of spiritual care is not to defend the assumed Will of God that we can never know, nor to fix something for others. Rather, it is to journey together in shared vulnerability and trust. I learned this from the Jomon people’s trust in zoe and respect for fire of change.

As many spiritual care professionals are also religious leaders, I want to emphasize on this occasion the importance of liturgy, especially those that mark one’s transition in life. Although some changes are inevitable or desirable, there is always something lost. The loss must be acknowledged and sufficiently grieved. Thanks must be given for the blessing conferred upon the things, relationships or persons one has to leave. To guarantee plenty of time for memory and for expression of feelings is very important ministry. You may be called to present and listen or you may be expected to be absent. Hope is important but must not be imposed at any level. Liturgy needs to be carefully arranged or composed with dignity and respect, so that one’s transition is celebrated and God’s presence is assured. We must be aware that most liturgies are a rite of passage, in one way or another. And it is important to know that transitions are small deaths. Because they are
deaths, we can have hope of resurrection. This is a Christian paradox.

4.

We need to seek spiritual vision of human communion in this overly complex and diverse society. Aristotle has the following image of natural hierarchy.

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        Human
       (reason)
         /
   Animal
   (sense, movement)
 /
Plant
(procreation)
 /
Fire/Earth/Wind/Water
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He tried to express human superiority over the rest of nature in this image. We, however, can have different interpretations. Only humans kill each other on the basis of differences we created among ourselves. An ecological focus that expands our sympathy, our innate ability to empathize even down to the bottom rung of this triangle could be one way to recover the commonness of human beings. We humans can be the fellow listeners of the cries and songs of nature. Oriental spiritual tradition dealt with the issue better by developing the meditative way to listen even to the "non-animated" part of nature.

This may be a rather naïve image, in this very industrialized world. If so, let us, at least, try to listen to the cries and songs of fellow human beings. I trust that spirituality can overcome the boundary drawn by human reasoning. We spiritual care professionals can be supporters and peacemakers, at both
the micro and macro level, throughout the world in this 21st century. Our responsibility is great and difficult. Our unique approach to all of this should be our vulnerability, which is itself God’s blessing, and which is rooted in a supportive spiritual community.

Picture 1
Katsusaka-Type Earthenware, excavated from Ubayama Shell Mound (Anthropological Museum, Nanzan University)

Picture 2
Flame Earthenware (National Treasure), excavated from Sasayama Relic, Nigata Prefecture
(Tokamachi-City Museum)
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—— Pastoral Care & Counselling for the 21st Century ——

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This is the Keynote Address read at the 7th Asia-Pacific Congress on Pastoral Care and Counselling, held in Perth, Australia in 2001, with the main theme of "Pastoral Care and Counselling for the 21st Century". In 1999, at the 6th International Congresss on Pastoral Care and Counselling held in Accra, Ghana, the community of spiritual care professionals had come to understand that cultural heritage is an important factor for spiritual well-being. This address in Perth, 2001, was in the style of the author's spiritual quest for his cultural heritage as a Japanese.

Japanese culture showed its brutal side in the 20th century. The emperor, who is the core symbol of Japanese heritage, also came to symbolize Japanese military expansion. It is difficult for a people with the history of perpetration of inhumanity to celebrate their cultural heritage. The nation has been in a state of spiritual numbness and confusion since the war, and tends to become spiritually rootless and be exceedingly secularized. Japan is not a special case. The 20th century is to be remembered as the era of massacre. Spiritual numbness and confusion are prevalent. 21st century humanity inherits this spiritual problem. Key words for spiritual care in the coming era are: guilt, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Pre-agricultural Japanese are known as Jomon people. They are, probably, the direct ancestors of the present Ainu people in Hokkaido and people in Okinawa. These are two most neglected areas in Japanese history, because the Jomon people were later subjugated by agricultural people who migrated
from China and Korean peninsula and came to dominate the nation in history. Thus, Japanese cultural heritage can be traced through both the oppressors' line and that of the oppressed. There is a contradiction in our heritage with which we must come to terms in order for us Japanese to find spiritual peace. We have to make a spiritual as well as political decision in order to confirm our solidarity with the oppressed people, which is the basic stance required for spiritual care in the 21st century.