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## Bruno Taut's Blueprint for Japanese Society

Paul Ziegler

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### I. Conflicting Opinions

One of the major problems in researching Bruno Taut is how to balance his persecution by the Nazi's for being a leftist against his obvious dislike of the masses and left-wing thought that he so often expresses in his writings on Japan. Moreover, the fact that his second wife Erica, who apparently gave him her unstinting support throughout all the tribulations of life in exile, seems to have been a firm enough believer in communism to have made a sincere effort to enter the Soviet Union after her husband's death. Unsuccessful in her attempt to do so, she apparently spent the rest of the war years in Shanghai and from 1946 on seems to have lived the rest of her days in East Germany. (On Taut, Vol I of *Nihon Taut Nikki*, p 25, Iwanami Shoten, 1975/On Bruno Taut's Art and Family, by Mizuhara Tokugen, in *Kenchiku-ka Bruno Taut no Subete*, p 38~41, Musashino Bijutsu Daigaku, 1985) Erica's passion for communism forces us to take into consideration Taut's political stance; the fact that he was viewed in Germany as left-wing conflicts with his statements after his arrival in Japan. While he may have been sincere in his support of the social democracy in Europe, one is hard pressed to explain Taut's support of a fascist form of culture at the expense of the masses with regard to Japan. Furthermore, the rancor with which Taut attacks American culture and the comparatively liberal form of democracy that it represents and his threatening warnings against any sympathy for the masses or for allowing them to organize internationally seems genuine; as does his promotion of a nationalistic brand of traditional spiritual culture for the Japanese. Yet another oddity may be found in *Mohitori no Bruno Taut*, in which Asahi Kunio's deliberately avoids all discussion of Taut's personal life prior to coming to Japan; the fact that Asahi refuses to even critically consider Taut from a real-

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istic perspective with regard to Taut's involvement in affirming, if not actually creating, that rabid form of nationalistic spirituality popularized by the fascists in power then; the fact that Asahi proposes Taut's essays as great 'literature' and the fact that he outright refuses to discuss Erica's life after Taut's death make it difficult to suppress suspicions that Asahi himself may be playing the same right-wing game currently popular among Japan's contemporary crop of ethno-nationalists such as Watanabe Shoichi, Nishibe Susumu and Ishihara Shintaro. Nowhere, in any of the many works I have read in the process of researching this paper has any writer considered the possibility that Taut, like so many of his Japanese contemporaries, merely played the game as it was supposed to be played in order to avoid prison, torture or death at the hands of Japan's fascists. Taut was certainly in no position to make ideologically liberal statements, however, the fact that no writer has taken this possibility into consideration may be an indication of the fact that other readers also feel that Taut was really speaking for and was supportive of Japan's nationalistic spirituality, or it may mean that until now only the right-wing element has shown real interest in Taut for the purpose of furthering their own platform of national morals. Indeed, the writings of the right-wing authors mentioned above seem to occasionally echo Taut, but those who promote him overlook an extremely important aspect in Taut's thought; that being that he, like Lord Evelyn Baring Cromer quoted in Edward Said's *Orientalism* feels the Japanese to be an inferior race. For the benefit of readers I will provide a comparison between Cromer and Taut. First, Said's paraphrase of Cromer:

“Orientals... are shown to be gullible, 'devoid of energy and initiative,' ...they are 'lethargic and suspicious,' ...” (1)

To the European, the Orient... is a land of quietude and cosmic-like meditation. Its energy springs from passivity—in other words, after serenely contemplating an object in its entirety and waiting til the time is ripe and finally, with great power, resolve wells up and energy is created. To the Orient, Europe is a land of activity; a land of organized analysis; a unified system of methodological thought; resolute action and a land in which individuals act on their own. (2)

2 In the above passage, Taut, a non-Oriental writing specifically for a Japanese audience, is basically telling the Japanese reader how Japanese people should be: meditative, passive, contemplating, indecisive and, of course, group oriented and non-thinking. It is interesting to note that later in this same chapter Taut describes two young men who come to meet him. While waiting for their interview one young man of aristocratic upbringing starts meditating; while the other, a merchant's son, curls up and falls asleep.(3)

Taut praises the meditative fellow as an excellent example of traditional Japanese cultural values and a few pages later states that Japanese can only understand European

spirituality if they hold within themselves the essence of Japanese spirituality and vice-versa. The problem is that, that which is passive, meditative and indecisive would obviously be eaten alive by the aggressive, organized, methodological corporate war-machine of the imperialistic European powers. Taut, however, insists that the two cultures would, if things were done his way, greatly benefit each other. Furthermore, Taut claims that to do otherwise is to invite “non-culture” or the “opposite side of the Tokonoma (the scatological)” into cultural dominance in Japan; he then states that he hopes that Japan will follow the dictates of “logos”, which supposedly means following his advice on becoming a spiritual nation based on a hierarchical structure, and that to oppose the dictates of logos would invite an awful form of retribution from logos. He then claims, in order to justify his position, that he writes his advice to the Japanese from the standpoint of one who loves Japan, and of course from the standpoint of one who holds the spiritual essence of European culture.

Spirituality is then the immediate problem. As such, it would serve us well to review Taut’s personal opinions with regard to the spirituality he strove to imbue in his architectural designs.

...the architect must control the whole purpose of the architecture; to do so he must have depth both emotionally and in his view of architecture. Of course, what is meant here by “whole” is not merely the temporary spirit of the age, but the entirety of the sleeping, latent spiritual energy of the masses; wrapped in beliefs and hopes which seeks light and sublime meaning in architecture....that which creates architecture is not functional necessity, but the realization of illusion only. Thus, it is understood that the determining factor for the architect-artist is something completely different from the purpose of the architecture itself. Hence the determining factor is not functionality, but the will which transcends functionality. Indeed, the will of the architect strives to achieve the sublime through an architecture in which functionality exists rarely, if at all.(4)

Obviously, Taut believed that architecture was art and that the architect had to be primarily an artist. In order to insure that the spirit with which the artist meant to imbue his works were properly depicted Taut felt it necessary to place the artist/architect in full control from conception to completion of the monument in question, and while such works were to be monuments to the “latent spiritual energy of the masses”, their unrealized dreams, hopes and beliefs, its interpretation and design are controlled to make this “realization of an illusion only” artistically acceptable to the artists. But what does this really mean? Because the architect alone controls the concept and interpretation of the plan we must assume that Taut felt the masses incapable of representing themselves; just as the orientalist in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* deny’s the right of cultural interpretation and representation to the Oriental; so too does Taut deny the same to the Occidental masses and Japan’s masses as well.

What authority is it that gives the architect as artist this power to exercise this “will which transcends functionality” and what is its justification for existence? According to Terry Eagleton in *The Ideology Of The Aesthetic*:

The ‘law’ regulating the work of art is not of the kind that could be abstracted from it, even provisionally, to become the subject of argument and analysis; it evaporates without trace into the stuff of the artwork as a whole, and so must be intuited rather than debated. Just the same is true of the Nietzschean will, which is at once the inward shape of all there is, yet nothing but local, strategic variations of force. As such, it can provide an absolute principle of judgement or ontological foundation while being nothing of the sort, as fleeting and quicksilver as the Fichtean process of becoming. The Kantian ‘law’ of taste, similarly, is at once universal and particular to the object. (5)

Here then, we find an interesting parallel between Nietzsche and Taut. Taut’s passage contains a sufficient amount of passion in describing the supremacy of the will of the artist over functional necessity for us to understand the basis of his ideology with regard to what the masses would call architecture, but what he calls “monuments”. Some readers may disagree with my comparing Taut with Nietzsche, however, it is this standpoint of aesthetic ideology from which Taut worked and it is Taut’s belief in this philosophy that gave 20th century German architecture some of its most inspiring works of architecture such as Taut’s famed Glass House.

## **II . Taut's Discovery of the Sacred and the Profane: An Interpretation of Japan's Cultural Paradigm**

4 Taut essentially discovered two cultures during his stay in Japan; the traditional culture reflecting Japan's imperial legacy which he actively explored and the culture of the masses which he refused to acknowledge as having any validity. The discovery of these two contrasting cultures resulted in the development of his most important cultural theme that focuses on that which is spiritual and therefore sacred and that which is common and therefore scatological. Some readers may wish to challenge my use of the term ‘scatological’, however, I feel that not only is it justified, but that it is the ONLY term to use due to the fact that Taut makes numerous oblique references to the ‘scatological’ throughout his famous essay. The initial discovery of the sacred and what Taut implies to be the ‘scatological’ elements in Japan’s culture seems to have occurred at the Senshin-tei villa, which is located inside the grounds of the Shorinzan Temple near Takasaki in Gunma Prefecture. He describes this experience as follows:

I lit the lantern and examined the toilet.....and here made an important and culturally significant discovery. Here, on the toilet side of the wall, was a place where the necessities of nature could be taken care of, while on the other side of the same wall was the

center of this home's spirituality—the Tokonoma, where art pieces, incense burners and Ikebana arrangements are displayed. To me, this seemed to be the most wonderful symbol; a symbol created by the two conflicting worlds unique to Japan—one a world of necessity and one a world of the purest spirituality. (6)

After making this discovery, Taut decides to pursue this theme of the sacred and the profane. Later, as we see in the following quote, he uses these two conflicting symbols as the basis for dividing all aspects of Japanese culture and society into that which is “sacred” and that which is “scatological”. Although Taut never directly applies these terms, he is obviously conscious of them and they are clearly and consistently implied throughout his thesis.

In the following quote, we see one of the first examples of how Taut applies his discovery of the contrast between the Tokonoma and the toilet in a discussion of social, cultural and political contrasts.

No better contrast can possibly be achieved by the division of a single wall! Nor the difference between the two worlds indicated by this contrast....Not that I at all take lightly the world of utility, or more exactly, that which is a necessity of daily life. Merely I wish to call the reader's attention to the status given to culture and the arts by the great, old culture of Japan—and the status afforded technically useful things....No matter if it be a toilet or whatever it is that may be behind the wall of the Tokonoma, if this extremely well tended part (the Tokonoma) of the Japanese home were to disappear, that which exists on the opposite side of this wall will change into something so filthy that one cannot bear to look upon it. Included in this (filth) will be all aspects of human life, including the very lowest; all human interaction and absolutely all political phenomenon too will be included and it will manifest its power in one single form. (7)

Admittedly, this passage is vague. However, after giving Taut's thesis a thorough reading, the meaning and intent of this passage becomes obvious; throughout the rest of his essay, Taut uses the Tokonoma as a symbol of all that is sacred and worthy of continuation in Japanese culture: the Emperor, Shinto, Kyoto, Kimono and Zen. The opposite side of the Tokonoma, which he associates with the scatological, symbolizes those forces threatening his blueprint for the ideal Japanese society: communism, democracy, capitalist industry that feeds and strengthens a consumer society necessarily based on the masses, and (non-Zen) Buddhism with its sympathy for the poor and the weak. Put more succinctly, the relationship between these two aspects of Japan is as follows: “Although one (the scatological) is a precondition for living.....it is purified and refined only by that culture which transcends it and is preserved at a high level. (8) Although none of this is immediately apparent, it will, at this point, suffice to say that from the first chapter, Taut reveals that his essay is no mere paen to traditional Japanese culture, but a political manifesto carefully crafted to achieve a specific political purpose; a pur-

pose that will be clarified and discussed at length later in this paper.

Ultimately, for Taut, the role of the Tokonoma in Japan was to “radiate” beauty and culture in homes, thus providing a desirable influence on the “emotional and spiritual lives of the inhabitants”(9), while the role of the Emperor system—the grandest of all Tokonoma in Japan, was to act as the guiding light for all aspects of Japanese culture and society.

### III . Influencing Social Dynamics through Aesthetics

#### The Psychological Influence of the Kimono

For Taut, the Kimono held the pride of place in his ideal of Japanese culture. His argument for preferring the Kimono over Western clothing focuses on the psychological effect that the Kimono has on all Japanese people. An effect caused by the fact that each social class was required to wear Kimono that would make their class and their rank in that class immediately discernable.

To him:

All Japanese without exception, no matter how well they may wear Western attire, look far more harmonious in the Kimono. In this day and age, the Kimono is the embodiment of the Emperor's spirit. (10)

While the social rank of important figures would, in the past, be immediately recognized by the Kimono they wore, the dignity of these individuals is lost when they kneel on a Tatami mat in Western clothing, which Taut notes, makes these important persons seem quite “Chaplinesque”.(11)

Regarding the popularity of Western attire, Taut recognizes that:

From the Meiji restoration, Western-style clothing (worn by Japanese) has meant the emancipation of the Japanese people from the rigid feudal system of the past. Western-style clothing is a symbol of democracy and modern thought as well as an expression of freedom and equality. (12)

Here, Taut seems understanding as to the reasons why Japanese prefer not to wear their traditional dress. Nonetheless, on the page following the above quote he points out that wearing Western-style clothing makes Japanese forget their traditional forms of extreme politeness to one another and in the following quote Taut seems quite upset.

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To the Japanese, wearing Western-style clothing immediately removes the (physically visible) differences between each social class. Thinking that the Western attire promises them the same thing (democracy) as the masses in Europe and America, both the educated and the non-educated adopt Western attire according to their taste and economic capacity. Some wear Western attire in accordance to the rules and traditions of that

attire and some, out of ignorance of these rules and traditions, wear them anyway. The vast majority of the masses are, of course, ignorant of such rules. (13)

The above quote is based on the first edition of Taut's *Nihon Bunka Shikan*, first published in 1936. However, Volume III (p 146) of the *Taut Zenshu*, first published in 1943, was also referenced and certain additions were made for the sake of clarification.

Taut is clearly worried that the masses wear Western dress as a means of destroying the psychological mechanisms that enabled the vertically structured feudal society of Japan to exist. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, for Taut, the Kimono represented the essence of the Emperor, whom he considered the only living embodiment of the Japanese spirit and traditional culture. Taut rightly realized that the adoption of Western dress had a liberalizing effect on Japan's social psychology and that this effect did not bode well for the traditionally rigid social structure that, as I shall discuss later, he wanted to re-create.

#### IV. The Dangers of Internationalizing the Masses

In Taut's *A Personal View of Japanese Culture*, the extremely vague chapter that immediately precedes 'Painting' is "Aji" or "Taste". Because of its brevity and content, it seems to have been designed as a prologue to the "Painting" chapter. "Taste" is an odd chapter that gives warning of the consequences of allowing international relationships, or perhaps more succinctly a united identity among the masses discussed in 'Painting'.

In "Taste", Taut begins with his usual praise of the grandeur of Japan's traditional culture and then warns of the dangers to it posed by a modern form of creative activity which Taut felt was overwhelming it. He never states what this dangerous form of creative activity is, which is why this chapter must be read as a prologue to the next chapter. In any event, the characteristics of this dangerous form of creative activity becoming a popular trend in the arts were: It is based on a part of the Japanese life style that previous generations of the elite had determined to be of no value; the trend is what any cultured Japanese person fears due to the psychological oppression that it causes; it is a trend dreaded by most countries in the world; and it symbolizes the exact opposite of what Taut loved in Japanese culture.

Taut insists that the best defense against this creative threat is the Japanese language, which, he felt, was useful in critiquing that which is foreign.

The special critical terms he emphasizes are "Aji", which, he notes, evolved through Japan's cultural traditions to describe that which is culturally valuable; "Ikamono" (kitsch), which he values as a word useful in criticizing the artistically vulgar and "Inchiki" (trickery) to criticize that which is purposely vulgar in the arts.

Taut closes this very odd chapter by noting that:

It is possible for words to kill human beings, particularly so when the words are backed by a concept that is completely alive. Words can also create life. Thus, we should place our hopes in Aji and its (critical) weapon Ikamono. (14)

Til now, Taut's thoughts on the art, society and traditional culture of Japan have been fairly lucid. The vagaries and tortured logic in *Taste*, however, can only be understood by analyzing the following chapter *Painting*; which immediately reveals Taut's political intent in *Taste*. Nonetheless, if "Taste" is considered with Taut's quote of Nietzsche's "Shopenhauer as Educator" (15) in which Nietzsche states "In a state in which people other than politicians must be concerned with politics the state will have an ineffective framework. Because of the multitude of politicians the state will inevitably face ruin." The quote is used as a criticism of the masses that feel they have a right to participate actively in politics. What is important here is that Taut is opposing participation in politics by the masses and when this is considered with the "Taste" and "Painting" chapters, I have reached the conclusion that Taut is promoting—through thinly veiled hints, the necessity of the kind of thought control and draconian oppression of the masses that Japan was so noted for.

'Painting' begins with Taut criticizing those who would "by political means attempt in the future to regulate the relationships among peoples of all nations and through this attempt to achieve world peace."

As well, he criticizes the newspapers for supporting international understanding through cultural exchanges. Although the goals of such hopes include a desire to achieve world peace and international understanding through art, for Taut, this is problematical; not because he disliked peace, but because of the socio-political implications involved in the the masses creating any kind of an internationally unified identity. Superficially, it would appear that Taut is a devoted multi-culturalist who is rightly ranting against the homogenization of valuable cultural diversity. However, a more careful reading reveals that Taut, although a true lover of traditional Japanese arts, has intentions far more dangerous than multiculturalism. As Taut himself notes, he disagrees with the international movements of the masses because the masses in foreign countries would then take a serious interest in the social conditions (oppression) of the masses in Japan. (16) The obvious implication is that the result of any international relationship among the masses would be a strengthening of the international movements for communism, socialism and democracy, all of which posed a serious threat to the traditional culture of Japan. A popular artistic theme of the time was glorification of the farmer and the working classes in the arts and although this will be discussed in detail later, here, it is sufficient to note that the movements to internationalize the masses adds a heavy political tone to his discussion, a tone that implied a danger to the very soul of traditional culture—the Emperor system itself.

Taut includes a lengthy chapter on *Geijutsu* (The Arts) that has a subchapter titled *Kogei* or Industrial Arts. Thus far, he has largely restricted his discussions to praising



traditional culture, here, however, he laments the fact that the masses imitate the aristocrats. Though not specifically stated, there is an implication of the political dangers that popular culture may pose (through socialist ideas) to the ruling aristocracy.

The lower classes imitate the actions of the upper classes. More precisely, laborers imitate the urban class, poor girls imitate the upper class women and this is a universal law, a characteristic of today's modern world. The greatest example of this is the Soviet Union. (17)

Considering the domestic and international political climate at the time, the remark of the masses imitating the wealthy concluding with the implication about the Soviet Union would have been enough to stimulate worries in the minds of the upper class readership that Taut was writing for. The implication is that if the aristocracy is not careful, they could, like the Russian Czar and his aristocracy, wind up deposed or dead in a communist revolution. Furthermore, although Russia is mentioned many times in Taut's writings, the far more politically nuanced 'Soviet Union' I find mentioned but twice, once irrelevantly. It therefore seems probable that Taut made a conscious decision to use the term here in order to achieve a politically nuanced context.

Later, in the same chapter, Taut warns:

Daily utensils commonly used by laborers and farmers are displayed (as art) in even the luxurious rooms of the petty bourgeoisie.....and this is something that is to be avoided at all costs.....This movement (to achieve world peace through art) is becoming popular. Its basic trend, if not emotional is romantic and subjective. The result is that the artists involved in this movement, in their desire to realize a better future, block their own road (to success as artists) and the movement becomes helpful to the reactionary elements and this creates a great danger. These artists must consider the fact that the politically reactionary elements are always trying to use their ideas.(18)

Here, at last, Taut reveals, in most politically loaded language, that this is not so much a book about Japanese culture as it is about the politics of Japanese culture. For Taut, any form of modern social progress and any artistic movement identifying with or showing sympathy for labor had to be condemned before it evolved into a political threat to the social elite. Thus, the ultimate goal of Taut's book is to urge the elite to prevent any kind political thought or movement that could endanger their control of Japanese society.

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At the beginning of this paper, I noted that Taut was particularly concerned with attaching scatological imagery to what he considered belonged on the opposite side of the Tokonoma; progressive political philosophy and consumerism. Here, we see in a more concrete form of implication what he meant when he wrote:

No matter if it be a toilet or whatever it is that may be behind the wall of the Tokonoma, if this extremely well tended part (the Tokonoma) of the Japanese home were to disappear, that which exists on the opposite side of this wall will change into something so filthy that one cannot bear to look upon it. Included in this (filth) will be all aspects of human life, including the very lowest; all human interaction and absolutely all political phenomenon too will be included and it will manifest its power in one single form. (19)

Thus, from the first chapter, the political cant of his thesis is quite clear.

## **V. The Ginza---Hotbed of American-Style Capitalist Democracy and High Collar Influence**

Taut viewed the Ginza district as a kind of shrine to the Japanese /American goodwill that evolved from American contributions to help rebuild Tokyo in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923.

Regarding the inharmonious character of the Ginza architecture and the warmth with which the Japanese masses felt towards the Americans, Taut notes:

...considering the economic aid given from the standpoint of America's great feeling of friendship immediately after the great earthquake, it is extremely logical that an American influence appear (in the Ginza district). However, along with this aid, understandably, were transplanted to Japan some American mannerisms and opinions that cannot be considered quite so progressive. (20)

Because this discussion continues in Nippon in the same vein, but in rather vague language, I have, for the sake of clarity, taken the second quote from the same discussion in the Taut Zenshu .

10 From Taut's standpoint, the influence of the American-style of capitalist democracy undermined traditional culture by weakening the socio-psychological link between the masses and the aristocratic elite. Taut clearly viewed the oppression of the masses as vital for reviving Japan's traditional value system based upon a strict social hierarchy in which rights were inherited and the concepts of democratic freedom and social equality nonexistent. As such, the so-called 'high collar' group of Japanese people representing an educated group of politically and socially progressive people subscribing to the ideals of capitalist democracy and those avante-guard artists interested in art representing the masses became the objects of Taut's most emotional invective.

To be sure, Tokyo is not part of Japan...yet, it is the modern representative of Japan and that inexplicably weird and ugly area between Ginza and Ueno is the real Tokyo.....The Japanese who go to Ginza change into Western clothes to do so. Indeed, Kimono should not be worn in the Ginza district. The problem is that when these people

shed their Kimono and don Western dress, they also shed everything else. (21)

As seen in the previous quotes, Taut viewed the kimono as the only mode of dress suitably representative of the “spirit of the Emperor” and we may therefore surmise that he approved of visibly marking the Japanese population so as to ascertain, in a discriminatory manner, everyone’s place in society. However, he does realize that, for Japanese, wearing Western clothing quickly removes the social stigma associated with kimono and that by donning Western garb, the Japanese feel that they are assured of an “American style of social equality”. This was problematical, for it meant a drastic change in the national psyche that could only mean the ‘modernization’ of the national character that would mean the death of the traditional culture he so loved.

#### VI. Taut’s Dislike of the Masses

Taut’s attitude toward the desire of the common Japanese people to improve their economic lot through honest labor is cynical to an extreme. He notes that “In Tokyo, the little man’s desire for material success has become a tradition” (22) and later states with great disdain “all the newspaper boys expect to become rich” (23) and that:

In accordance with the American style of thought they (the masses) will come to feel that they can make all cultural things themselves. In Japan, it is the masses that are most representative of Western culture and everyone knows what kind of culture and taste they have. (24)

The last sentence of the above quote is an allusion to the world behind the Tokonoma; an allusion that clarifies the fact that Taut considered the masses, their dreams for material success and consumer instincts to be the scatological opposite of his aristocratic cultural ideal. Obviously, Taut is anxious that the masses, in their desire for equality, be restricted from succeeding economically to the extent that they could influence the social mechanisms that oppressed them. It is to this end that Taut wanted to restrict the masses not only from enjoying the liberty to choose their apparel, but also to prevent them from determining their own lifestyles and particularly from participating in American-style entrepreneurship that would create a society based on capitalist democracy, competition and political and social freedom.

Taut’s level of disdain for the masses is nowhere more evident than in the following quote.

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Horatio notes in a poem that ‘I hate and despise the ignorant masses’ and according to Japan’s great painter Tekkan ‘There are few in the world who understand taste, which is why I do not wish to receive visitors.’ These opinions are correct and quite understandable.”(25)

Taut’s agreement with the opinions of those he quotes is an undeniable admission that

he too despises the masses. Obviously, Taut identifies with the cultured elite who prefer to live their lives in aesthetic seclusion, far removed from the impoverished reality of the masses who are forced, through the social inequalities inherent in the Japanese society of the time, to limit their concerns to more mundane problems. Taut so despised commercialism that he deplored the way that advertisement posters for theatrical presentations were posted by businessmen "for the sake of increasing the profit of corporate stock by utilizing the vulgar instincts of the masses" and that even Kabuki and all the arts "....must now be sacrificed on the altar of the money worshipping high-collar religion.(26)

## **VII. Taut as Chief Architect of the Future Japan**

Taut despised the American style of capitalist democracy for its focus on profit through mass consumption and he feared it for its politically enlightening influence over the masses. To Taut, the consumer-based capitalist society meant the death knell for the traditional culture of Japan he loved. To preserve the traditions of Imperial Japan Taut proposed the following.

He (Kobori Enshu) was a Daimyo and the most sublime and greatest of artists. His most representative work, still preserved today, is the Katsura Detached Palace and its garden. Unlike the architects of today, it was, of course, unnecessary for him to bow down to businessmen because he was born into a higher class than they. Of course, he never

had to discuss money nor was it ever necessary for him to demand payment....To accomplish today what Kobori Enshu did in his time would require that architects belong to the highest of the aristocratic class—that they be scions of the vastly wealthy. However, supposing a young person of great talent were to be born into such a family; would it be possible for this young person to develop naturally in today's cultural environment without spoiling such talent? ....The value in architecture lies in the fact that it is the mother of all the arts. In fact, it is my impression that the emancipation of the arts in Japan can only begin from architecture. The reason is that, putting aside the problem of pride as a cultured nation, from the standpoint of national economic interest, there is, in fact, no more pressing a problem in Japan than architecture.

- Ancestor worship has played an important role in Japan. Thus, for Japan, Kobori Enshu is the ancestor of all modern architects. He provided a standard for all things.
- 12 All of today's architects must be as Daimyo to all businessmen. The law must clearly place the architects in a superior position over the average merchants. To avoid a relationship of slave-like dependency, (in which architects are subordinate to businessmen) they (the businessmen) must be made to fulfill their duties as well. As for the architects, Kobori Enshu gives them an example of pure architectural thought. They must weigh all modern phenomenae against the examples of the Tokonoma and that which lies behind it; against the historical standard of Katsura as well as Nikko, which was built in

the same age. (27)

As we can see, Taut essentially proposed the re-ordering of Japanese society and with the social structure supported by laws affording the aristocracy vast powers in all aspects of society. Based on Taut's opinion of the Emperor as the spiritual essence of Japan, it seems safe to assume that this re-ordering would include placing the Emperor at the social and spiritual center of society. In effect, he wanted to recreate the class-based society of old Japan with two important changes: He would have all architects be granted, by law, the rank of Daimyo, or Lord and the Emperor would, supposedly, retain the newer status given him with the inception of the Meiji Restoration. His purpose in proposing this was to insure that all architects would hold absolute authority over contractors, individuals and organizations that owned the land and the buildings to insure unquestioning obedience to the demands of the architect-lords. He reasons that the historical precedent for this may be found in Kobori Enshu, the architect of Taut's beloved Katsura Detached Palace. Kobori was a nobleman. Because Japanese culture emphasizes ancestor worship, it follows, Taut claims, that Kobori becomes automatically the father of all Japanese architects because the Katsura Detached Palace that Kobori designed represents the highest possible ideal in all of Japanese architecture; therefore, all architects have a right, indeed a duty, to hold the rank of Daimyo. (28) He further claimed that architects must be born into the highest aristocratic class, because only the children of the most privileged class could possibly be raised with the values needed to realize his ideal of culture. (29)

Interestingly, Taut states in a letter to a friend that:

The Japanese people have two strengths; one combines the political power with military force, while the other is the power of the masses to create culture while under threat of those who wield power. (30)

Here, Taut is praising the ability of the masses, under force of violent threat, to produce cultural objects of high aesthetic value. Although noting the oppression the masses faced, he is undeniably affirmative about the beauty of the culture produced and the system that forced its production. Furthermore, his demand for appointment of all architects to the post of Daimyo proves that he wanted social and legal measures introduced to insure that high aesthetic standards were maintained no matter what the cost to the individual who had to pay for Taut's ideals.

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Thus, for Taut, the oppression of the masses was not only necessary, but justified because of the uniquely exquisite character of the material culture thereby produced. Taut reveals here the inescapable fact that his previously mentioned leftwing writings, for which he was forced to flee Nazi Germany, were nothing more than the emptiest of gestures. Social democracy was fine for the European, but, for Taut, unthinkable for the Japanese.

Ironically, although this magnificent culture was wrought by the masses under the constant threat of violence by the ruling class and 'filtered' and 'purified' by the aristocracy, it was, as Taut admits, easier for a foreigner to enjoy than even the 'cultured' Japanese citizen. (31) Indeed, Taut's life in Japan seems to fit perfectly the model European that Edward Said so succinctly gives us in *Orientalism*, according to which: ...to reside in the Orient is to live the privileged life, not of an ordinary citizen, but of a representative European whose empire...contains the Orient in its military, economic, and above all, cultural arms. (32)

## Notes

- (1) Edward Said, *Orientalism* pg 38~9, Vintage Books, 1979
- (2) Taut *Zenshu*, Vol. I, pg, 203, Ikuseisha Koudoukan, 1943
- (3) *Ibid*, Vol. I, pg, 210
- (4) *Ibid*, Vol. 5, pg. 8~9
- (5) Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology Of The Aesthetic*, pg. 248, Blackwell, 1990
- (6) Taut *Zenshu*, Vol II, pg. 35-36
- (7) Taut *Nihon Bunka Shikan*, pg. 16-17, Meiji Shobo, 1936
- (8) Taut *Zenshu*, vol.2 pg. 36
- (9) Taut, *Nihon Bunka Shikan* pg. 13-14
- (10) Taut, *Nippon*, pg. 129, Meiji Shobo, 1941
- (11) Taut *Zenshu*, vol 3, pg. 375-376
- (12) *Ibid*. vol. 3 pg. 368)
- (13) Taut, *Nihon Bunka Shikan*, pg. 207-208
- (14) *Ibid*, pg. 96
- (15) Taut *Zenshu*, Vol 5, pg. 23~24
- (16) Taut, *Nihon Bunka Shikan* pg. 98
- (17) *Ibid*, pg. 200-201
- (18) *Ibid*, pg. 228
- (19) *Ibid*, pg. 17
- (20) Taut *Zenshu*, Vol. pg. 264
- (21) Taut, *Nihon Bunka Shikan*, pg. 235-238
- (22) *Ibid*, pg. 43
- (23) *Ibid*,pg. 277
- (24) *Ibid*, pg. 255
- (25) *Ibid*, pg.108
- (26) *Ibid*, pg. 246
- (27) *Ibid*, pg. 288-289
- (28) *Ibid*, pg. 289
- 14 (29) *Ibid*, pg. 288)
- (30) Taut *Zenshu*, vol 3, pg. 434 )
- (31) Taut, *Nihon Bunka Shikan*, pg. 264
- (32) Said, *Orientalism* pg 156)

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