

***Featured Articles: Deconstructing Japanese Culture***

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**Imperial Nationalism and the Comparative Perspective**

by Naoki Sakai

This essay discusses Area Studies on Japan in American academia and its furtive commitment to imperial nationalism.

Modern imperialism is different from those of pre-modern empires because it is viable only in the nation-state. It recognizes itself as nationalism, defends its expansionist policies in terms of national security, and justifies its violence by appealing to the nation's patriotism. Therefore, modern imperialisms are always imperial nationalisms, and they are bound to resemble each other in this respect.

Area Studies on Japan and Northeast Asia that grew in the United States after the defeat of the Japanese Empire took upon itself the mission of producing knowledge to show how unique the American Empire and its theory of modernization were while denying the apparent resemblances in the ideological justification between the United States in the post WWII world and the Japanese multi-ethnic Empire of the 1930's.

The essay analyzes the gradual ossification of some themes by following scholarships of three generations: Robert Bellah in the 1960's; James Heisig and John Maraldo in the 1980's, and Kevin Doak in the early 2000's. The implicit mission of Area Studies was to sanction the exceptionalism of US imperial nationalism by manipulating the dichotomy of universalism and particularism. In this endeavor, it was necessary for American Area Specialists to deny the universalistic rhetoric adopted by Japanese imperial nationalism, and the central issue became how to refute the Japanese claim of universality while endorsing the American claim of it. In terms of the dichotomies of universalism (capitalist modernization) and particularism (traditionalism), the West (the US) and the East (Japan), of Christianity and Non-Christian (Buddhism or Shintoism), and finally citizenship and ethnicity, the US

imperial nationalism was represented as if it had been entirely severed from the legacy of Japanese imperial nationalism.

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## **Imaging Migrations: Literary Texts and the Discourse of Meiji-Era Emigration Guides to America**

by Yoshitaka Hibi

From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, dozens of guides for emigrating to the United States were published in Japan. These books and magazines provided detailed instructions on how to emigrate to America and ideological frameworks of why we, the Japanese, need emigration. The boom of the emigration guide was directly caused by growing Japanese emigration to the US, but it had close ties with other trends in the discourse of colonial policies, the “success-boom,” and “self-education (*kugaku*).”

This paper offers an analysis on the discourses of emigration to America by focusing upon the imagination toward the emigrants represented in the narratives of literary texts in the middle and the late Meiji novels such as *Traveling to North America without Money* (Risshi Boken, Hokubei Musen Toko) by Tengai-kikyaku, *A Stranger in a Different Land* (*Kugaku Doppo, Ikyou no Kyaku*) by HOSHINO Tokuji, “December 28<sup>th</sup> (*Kure no Niju-hachi nichi*)” by UCHIDA Roan, *Shadow of a Bird* (*Cho-ei*) by ISHIKAWA Takuboku, “Horse Stealer (*Uma Nusubito*)” by MAYAMA Seika and “Night Talk in a Cabin (*Kyabin Yawa*)” by NAGAI Kafu. By analyzing these narratives and imagination about the emigrants, we can explore not only overlooked parts of Japanese emigration which historical, sociological or anthropological approaches have not treated but also complex processes between territorialization and deterritorialization that emerged in marginal areas of nation-state-building of the Meiji period.

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## **Laziness and Cocu: Yi Sang's Modernism**

by Hideto Tsuboi

This article examines the themes of laziness and *cocu* (cuckoldry) in the works, especially the novel *Wings*, of the Korean poet, Yi Sang. Yi can

be said to have lived a linguistic duplicity as well as a spatial duplicity of Keijo (Seoul) and Tokyo. The motif of laziness in Yi Sang's works departed from the genealogy of "necessity" as seen in the works of Kawakami Hajime and Ishikawa Takuboku. His narrative also shared the move towards the isolation of the "here and now" with the modernist movement. But the laziness of his works' narrator/protagonist caused them to lag behind in the constant renewal of the modernistic "here and now," leading to a disengagement from the synchronous world system. Furthermore, the figure of the protagonist as a *cocu* (cuckolded husband) represented a new landscape for both men and women revealed by the age's gender-struggle discourse. In order to clarify the unique themes of laziness and *cocu* in Yi Sang's works, I have also compared them to works by Takebayasi Musouan and Kaneko Mitsuharu.

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### **From Reportage to History: Tomiyama Taeko and the Limits of "Art" and "Japan" in the Postwar Period**

**by Shinobu Ikeda**

This paper focuses on the art of Tomiyama Taeko, from the 1950s until today. Tomiyama, a painter, was born in Kobe in 1921, and spent her childhood in the Japanese puppet-state of Manchuria. Her works address mainly social and political issues such as oppression and violence towards the weak under the global hegemony of capitalism. Starting in 1976, she started collaborating with the musician Takahashi Yūji in artworks using slides. In 1982, she participated in a film by Tsuchimoto Noriaki titled *Pop Out, Balsam Seeds!* Through her involvement in these various media, she was breaking free from the modern fine arts framework.

Tomiyama began her artistic career when she met the coalminers and miners of Kyushu's Chikuhō region for the first time. As is well known, cultural production in the 1950s has been enshrined in cultural history, because of its reportage art and literature movements, that represented a unified avant-garde that promoted progressive political and artistic values. Nevertheless, Tomiyama, who shared the ideals of her contemporaries, has been persistently ignored in the history of art, while she herself has not always valued the importance of these earlier works.

Since the 1960s, after becoming involved in the international struggles for democracy and the women's liberation movement, Tomiyama began to incorporate in her work the history of what she,

who had been born in the Japanese Empire, considered to be the most extreme expression of the violence of Japanese colonial exploitation: the twin histories of forced labor and comfort women. Tomiyama clearly continued the tradition of the 1950s reportage painting movement, in their confrontation, and occasionally, its interruption of reality within artistic expression. Tomiyama excavated the depths of history, using images from folk culture to dislocate time and space, actively deploying the methods of surrealism, which sought to construct deep images that cut through the divide between conscious and unconscious. These were all techniques that grew out from the 1950s, and which she would mature and thoroughly utilize in order to expand her own artistic vision. It is because of these elements that Tomiyama's work disrupts the canonized cultural and art historical view of 1950s avant-gardism. The aim of this paper is to examine the trajectory of one woman artist who was marginalized within the context of the 1950s avant-garde, tracing how she reached the project of deconstructing and reconstructing the "history" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by closely analyzing her works in relation to that of other artists and the critical discourse of the time.

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## **How Can We Intervene in the Institutional System?: Studies of Japanese Culture and the Planned National Center for Media Arts**

**by Hideaki Fujiki**

On 29 May, 2009, Japan's National Diet approved the first supplemental budget that included 11.66 billion yen for the construction of the National Center for Media Arts, a facility planned by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs. This unleashed a remarkable controversy, initiated by Hatoyama Ichiro, the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the largest opposition party at that time. Hatoyama harshly criticized the approval as a wasteful use of the national budget. Although the plan was eventually cancelled after the accession to power of the DPJ in October 2009, it has raised many significant issues for the critical study of Japanese culture. These include issues around the relationship between global society and the nation-state, subculture and "legitimate" culture, economics and culture, as well as culture and everyday life. In this essay, I discuss the highly complex ways these dyads relate to each other within institutional constraints. In so doing, I hope to provide an opportunity

to reconsider how we as critical scholars of Japanese culture—also inevitably constrained by academic and administrative institutions such as universities and academic disciplines—can more effectively approach institutional and social change, so that cultural and material resources like the National Center can more effectively benefit both scholarship and the greater public.