Dissertation Summary in English

Title of Dissertation: On Possibility of the Postwar Knowledge – Continuities and Discontinuities in the Thought of Katō Shuichi

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Post-war intellectual thought in Japan was grounded in the experience of the war and defeat. It emerged as a critique of the Pacific War and objective analyses of Japan’s half-feudal military capitalism, imperial system and communal body, and developed through emphasizing search for the subjectivity as an agent of change and establishing of the self.

Kato Shuichi was a representative of the early post-war liberal intellectuals who after the defeat inclined towards the Western-type modernity. Modernity was seen as a process of searching for national identity and forming a democratic subject which can carry on the process of catching-up with acquiring the values of European humanism that was hampered with the pre-war militarization in the late twenties and the Fifteen Years War. Kato was one of the first intellectuals after the defeat to criticize emperor-centered authoritarianism, as well as the newly emerged egoistic tendencies of some literary circles. Such a stance emerged as reaction against the irrationalism of the war regime and unforgivable cooperation with the regime of pro-war intellectuals who criticized Western democratization and advocated the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Kato’s search for “modernity” which for him was a strong individuality was actualized through his extensive travels and this dissertation will argue that those travels while providing Kato a “marginal” position and “a view from distance” at the same time were site of incomplete modernity reflected in the “in-between” (chukan) hybrid cultural theory. Trope of
hybridity was used to advocate the unique position of Japanese culture and Japan in its foreign relations.

Kato’s attitude towards Japan and Asia changed with the changes in domestic and international conditions (with the end of the 60s). Especially with the end of the Cold War, Kato’s stance towards the pillars of Japanese national identity has changed and he took a stance that Japan cannot be observed out of the Asian context. In 1956, a year after the establishing of the so-called 1955 System (Gojūgo nen Taisei), the rising trend of strengthening military alliance with the U.S. and time when the high-rate economic growth (kōdo keizai seichō) had already taken a momentum, Kato wrote his theory on Hybrid culture (Zasshu bunka). This theory was criticized to displace Japan from Asia as it surely did in the middle of the fifties when it was clear that the Cold War tensions (the Korean War) were growing and that Japan with its high-rate economic growth started moving away from its Asian neighbours. That course will have its culmination in 1960’s Anpo tōsō (the protests against renewal of Japan-US Security Treaty) and demonstrations in 1968.

Kato’s view of Japanese national identity has been determined by domestic and international conditions and most of all, by Japan’s relations to the “West”. His early postwar years (until Anpo-tosō) were marked by a flow from pro-Western sentiment and liberal progressive view to nationalistic (conservative) view (which can be seen in Hybrid culture theory). The continuation of such a trend is visible in the late ’60s in his Introduction to History of Japanese Literature where Kato does not pay attention to the literature (and thought) of Japanese minorities or “zainichi” (foreigners, mostly Koreans born and lived in Japan) writers. With the drastic change in international relations that came with the end of Cold War, historical revisionist tendencies and intensified pressure of the U.S. on Japan to engage in American international conflicts, Kato’s view of Japan’s national identity has transformed and he took a
pro-active stance for the first time in his life and against his long-life principle of a “bird’s view” (takami no kenbutsu). We argue that he was back to the early progressive line that this time had increasing pro-Asian sentiment instead of initial pro-West one (and anti-Asian).

Four years before his death he engaged in the preservation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution which he observed not as a utopian ideal separated from the reality but as a part of Japanese national identity and a matter of the survival of Japan. Kato’s way of observing Japan and its identity has transformed from observing it in contrast to the West to observing it in contrast to its Asian neighbours who suffered greatly from Imperial Japan. Kato observed Japan’s defeat and several postwar years as liberation (kaihō). Article 9 was a part of that liberation and in those terms Kato’s view has not changed. What Kato was pointing out was that survival of Japan lies in the preservation of Article 9.

This work followed Kato’s thought and attitudes ranging from complex relationship between modernity and traditional culture, the role of intellectuals and issues of the war responsibility, nationalism and the Cold War to the contemporary problems of terrorism, military intervention and nuclear weapon. Its intention was to show how Kato’s liberalism fluctuated from nationalism to internationalism and from anti- to pro-Asian sentiment varied with the changes in Japan’s relations to the West. This work will not try to give specific judgment of Kato’s thought – it will rather search for the meaning in its change that has occurred inside the specific historical context. It will also argue that in that very change of attitude and taking a pro-active stance today more than ever lies the possibility of the continuity of Kato’s thought and survival of basic human values which seemed to be so promising in the post-war epoch.