

FORUM

“My Challenge, My Asia”

OGURA SADAQ: This year marks the 10th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes, the awards have now become well known throughout Asia. This year's laureates are highly individual people. Today, the laureates will be speaking about their youth, their current specialized field as well as subjects including the diversity of Asian culture.

~Experiences and Influences of Childhood~

HOU HSIAO HSIEN: (on plays, novels and films)

I was a mischievous child always running around outside, troublesome and a real handful. I started gambling when I was small and continued right until I was 21 and entered the army as a soldier. I was also constantly in fights.

Even so, from that time I managed to experience the plays, novels and films that I loved. When Southern Taiwan's Seven Prefectures and Municipalities' drama festival was held at a Taoist temple near our house for about two months, every day, I would go and watch a variety of plays such as the puppet play “Bu Dai Hi,” the shadow puppet play “Pui Kau Hi” and the popular play “Kau A Hi.”

When it came to novels, at first I was absorbed in historical action novels, novels with plenty of swordfights, and after that I read through other genres. I read books borrowed from the open-air lending library from cover to cover, I read earnestly until there was nothing left to read. When there was an author that looked interesting, I read the novel thoroughly. I still continue the practice today. It was during this time that I read classic Chinese works such as “Ji gong zhuan” (Story of Ji gong) and “Hsiyuchi” (The journey to the west). And so the written word had a great influence on me from the very beginning.

As for the films, I didn't have the money to go into the movie theatre so I would climb over the movie theatre's wall, cut through the barbed-wire, use fake admission tickets, each time there was a new release showing I would use whatever means possible to somehow get in and see it.

My father was sickly, every year he would be in and out of hospital repeatedly and he died when I was 13. The memory I have of my father is of him sitting in front of his desk either writing something or reading a book; he rarely had conversations with us. Later I understood that it was because he was afraid of passing his illness on to us children. My father was a teacher; originally he was the head of the education section in Guangdong. When one of his colleagues became the Mayor of the City of Taichung in Taiwan, my father was called to be the Managing Secretary, he went to Taiwan first and then later he called the family over. It was when I was 1 year old.

I was mischievous as a child, I was often in fights, gambled and played pranks but the figure of my father at home was very strong and so I did not go completely astray. During high school, my friend's mother, who was the principal of an elementary school, spoke once about my deceased father. She said that he was very honest, a good and noble man. That this person respected my father was something I felt along my skin. It really was a striking impression.

Later, I went into making films and became a film director but I think these experiences during my youth have a big influence on me. Already in my youth I was always experiencing plays, novels and films. There was no one to tell me what I should be studying but what one

※With Professor Ogura Sadao (Chubu University) as a coordinator, this Forum brought together the four laureates. The following (above) text summarizes remarks made by the laureates.

reads as a child, what one experiences must surely subconsciously be in some way useful in a child's growth. If I were asked what I'd want to be if I was born again, I'd probably still answer that I like my present situation. That is to say, as far as my youth is concerned, my feelings are full of gratitude.

OBAYASHI TARYO: (on interest in the origins of Japan and its people)

In my family, men were adopted as the husbands for daughters for two generations and, what is more, all my siblings were female so I was cherished as the only male and raised very carefully. I was not mischievous and, while I was spoiled, I was quiet, bossy at home but timid elsewhere.

I read a lot of books from the time I was small and, because of that, I learned to read and write earlier than others. During kindergarten, there was a magazine called "Shonen Club" (Boy's Club) and in books like that, even if you couldn't read Chinese characters one could read it all because phonetic symbols which showed the pronunciation used to be added throughout. And so I would read it and my friends would listen. And the books I read as a child that were influential were biographies of great men, Napoleon and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. I still like these 2 people today. Napoleon first attacked Russia, was defeated in the end and after that his power went into decline. I think that, in the mind of a child, this indirectly revealed the transient nature of things.

While I was in the 5th grade of elementary school, it was the 2600th anniversary of the birth of the country (the 15th year of the reign of the Showa Emperor) and all kinds of commemorative events were held. My grandfather took me on trips to areas like Ise and Nara, places that have a connection with ancient Japan, and that was the start of my interest in the origins of Japan and its people. That interest has continued since then.

After that, I graduated from elementary school and, this was about the time I moved on to Tokyo Furitsu Yonchu junior high school, at the nearby house of an older child there were about 10 volumes of "Kikironkyu," a study book on the ancient anthologies the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon-shoki* written by Matsuoka Shizuo, the younger brother of Yanagita Kunio. I borrowed the books and read them one after another. I don't know how much I understood at the time. That I was able to read these difficult books was because I had read books like "Kojiki Monogatari" (Story of Kojiki) by Suzuki Miekichi, good quality books for children that retold the *Kojiki* in a way that was considerably faithful to the original text without pandering to children. Because I read them as a child I remembered the plot and so when I grew up and read the unabridged versions, I generally understood the text.

And I think it was good that I first read the books of people like Matsuoka Shizuo, people who were outside the academic establishment, outside the group of mainstream scholars. Even if it can't be said for everything, I was able to assess that most of what they were saying was good.

NIDHI EOSEEWONG: (encountering history)

My childhood was quite dull and colorless. I was born in Bangkok and later was sent to a boarding school about 150km from Bangkok.

I was perhaps fortunate that the boarding school I was sent to had very bad mathematics teacher and English teacher. They were always strict and punished students severely so I hated every subject they taught me. It was fortunate for me to spend my time reading a lot of books outside of the curriculum, such as novels, cartoons including history. I spent the mathematics class in reading the royal chronicle under the table. Even though the royal chronicle was quite boring, it was more interesting than the mathematics. So it was fortunate in that sense, that I became to like history and later, after graduating from that school, I entered university. I was a very, very normal child like most of the middle class families children.

TANG DA WU: (learning amidst nature)

Well, everybody else has read a lot. But I haven't read much. Even now I don't read much.

Talking about childhood I hated school. I enjoyed life after school. I enjoyed playing with the neighbour's boys and girls. We lived in places where there were a lot of trees, streams, greens and rivers. We played Tarzan, all kinds of things, you know. I was not mischievous. I fought, I can boast sure, but I don't think I was mischievous. I was normal.

My worst subject at school were English and mathematics. I don't blame myself. I think there were very bad teachers. Very bad. They didn't teach well, they didn't gain my interest. Especially I hated English so much. My lady English teacher beat me all the time when I couldn't say it right. Life was pretty normal, nothing dramatic to report to you.

I think I learned more from the neighbourhood children, and trees and rivers than books. One thing, though, I learned a lot of languages during my childhood. I learned Malay, and maybe four other Chinese dialects from the neighbourhood children. Amongst languages there are other things I learned. Survival techniques. So, I would say I played really a lot. And I still want to play.

OGURA: Please tell us about the people or things that influenced you as a child.

OBAYASHI: (grandfather's stories)

In summer we would always go to visit my grandfather on my mother's side in the country. And while I was in the lower grades of elementary school I always slept with my grandfather. My grandfather would tell me the story of *Kan-ei Sanbajutsu* from the beginning of the Tokugawa era and the story of *Ten-ichi Bo* from Tokugawa Yoshimune's era, stories of a historical nature. In other words, stories where good is rewarded and evil is punished. That while bad people might prosper for a while, it turns out bad in the end and that one must do good things properly were things that I gradually learned while sleeping with my grandfather and listening to interesting stories. I think that this had a huge influence on me. I learned that it wasn't just works such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon-shoki*, the world of the classics that was interesting but also the world of traditional storytelling too.

NIDHI: (following large influences)

Well, I cannot identify anyone that has a great influence on me in my childhood. I loved my mother very much, but I am not sure whether she influenced me so much or not. Like other ordinary students I followed those who can give me more power. So there's no single person who solely influenced me in my life. At certain age you follow that person because you know that you will be rewarded, you will gain more power, or you will be accepted by others. Things like that. Like ordinary people, my life is not like that of big, great man at all.

HOU: (the "atmosphere" at home)

In my case, I think my home life had a big influence on me. My father was ill for many years; my mother always had a gloomy face. In this atmosphere, there were several things that left a very deep impression on me. During elementary school I once voluntarily washed the dishes. This made my mother very happy and she praised me in front of my father while holding me in her arms. However, I hadn't experienced much physical contact with my parents until that time and, embarrassed, I soon ran off. It's something that is very difficult to forget and that has left a strong impression on me.

There were five children, I had one older brother, an older sister and two younger brothers, but I was my grandmother's favorite. When I was born, I had my fortune told by a fortune-teller who apparently said that when I grew up I would become a government official and would surely be a success in life. At the time my grandmother was at the elderly age of more than eighty and was already senile so that she was under the illusion that if she took a short walk from her house, she could return to her hometown in Guangdong on the mainland. And there were many times

when she took me with her and we tried to return to Guangdong together. I would mostly go along with her but that was because I would get to eat pomegranates at the house of my grandmother's acquaintance along the way and because she would let me eat an ice-cream or a snack when I got tired of walking.

It was precisely this atmosphere at home and the surrounding environment that I grew up in that for me, as a child, became my future viewpoint, that is to say, became my viewpoint in making films. I'm told that one can feel a certain type of loneliness and sadness in the climax of the films I make but at first I didn't even understand why my work is like this myself. However things such as the viewpoint you have when it comes to making films and the way you feel in relation to human society are actually things that have already been formed from the time you are a child.

TANG DA WU: (surrounding people)

Well, during childhood, I can't really point somebody that influenced me. There were various people. I learned a lot from my neighbour children and of course from my mum and dad. They both influenced me in certain ways. Still I say my childhood was pretty normal, not so dramatic.

Later, I learned about Mahatma Gandhi. The man influenced me, but it was much, much later. Probably not so much in my childhood.

~Particular Concerns in one's Present Specialized Field~

OGURA: Mr. Tang Da Wu, in your life as an artist, what first gave you confidence? Was it paintings or images? And I wonder that led to your becoming a performance artist?

TANG DA WU: (drawing pictures)

I enjoyed drawing. I drew a lot, all the time, I just enjoyed things surrounding me, things happening, and I drew them. I did send in my painting in the open exhibitions when I was about the 4th year of the secondary school. It was accepted and it was an encouragement to me.

I started my performance around 1979-80. Before that it was all drawings and make things.

OGURA: Professor Nidhi, you've lived in Chiang Mai for a long time, haven't you? Did the idea to move away from the capital of Bangkok emerge when you started out as a historian? Does living in Chiang Mai, with its long history, enable you to see the flow of Thailand's large and rich history? Moreover, you have written a great number of books that have changed Thailand's modern historiography. What was the motive for that?

NIDHI: (viewpoint of a new history)

The reason why I left Bangkok was because, as you know, Bangkok is a very bad city, not suitable for anyone to live at all. So, as a Bangkokian, I tried to avoid living in Bangkok. I thought if there is any place in a position outside Bangkok which I can take, then I can leave Bangkok. No noble cause at all. As a matter of fact, my field of interest is still the central part of Thailand which was under the control of Bangkok in the past. Even now I know quite little about Chiang Mai history. You know, I left Bangkok, and live in Chiang Mai, just because of my personal favor living in the country.

I write journalistic articles about contemporary Thailand rather than history of Thailand. To me, I think that it is important for academician to get involved in the modern society, in the contemporary society. I think it's proper for academician to do.

Also I have to say that it is not only me who have done any change to Thai historiography. I'm just one among many. The traditional historiography is stories of the deeds of great men, and

we tried to change it, in order to understand the historical change through the actions of several groups of people and also through the happenings or occurrence of inhuman occurrence. Inhuman is that occurrence which is not written by human beings, like economic situation, things like that. This is perhaps the major changes that I can think of.

OGURA: There is an opinion that Mr. Hou's works place importance on lyricism. I feel that the present era is one which discards such emotion and I think Mr. Hou heads straight for the importance of the human heart, the soul. What's the motive for that?

HOU: (reflecting the truth)

I don't think in such an abstract way. I merely express life as it is, humans as they are. When I'm filming I hardly use any sets; I use the actual background. Moreover, there are few actors in Taiwan so sometimes I am forced to use amateurs. While coming into contact with them I realized that I understand them well. In the environment one lives in and the environment with other people, each person is entirely different. Each is the main subject, independent and affecting. There are a great number of things that can become the material for a film and what one wishes to express in that. And so by using a technique in which, as much as possible, I don't interfere with them or force them, I objectively express what is seen and what is felt through them. For me, film is the best means of learning and for one's growth. One film becomes an opportunity for reflection and also a good opportunity to put oneself in order. And so basically I merely objectively reflect a certain person, a certain situation. It's not that I decide on an aim and then try to express something. Things such as forcing a person to act out my intentions are not something I want to do. What I have learned while making films is to respect people and not to interfere.

As director Obayashi Nobuhiko said during the "Asian Film Seminar" held before this forum, a director is the same as a catcher in baseball in that for us, whatever the ball is that the pitcher throws, it is one angle, one situation, one touching image.

OGURA: Professor Obayashi, I think that mythology represents tales that are rich in abundant creativity but, in these last 50 years, it is something that has not been taken up much in school education. What are your thoughts on incorporating mythology into education?

OBAYASHI: (1 plus 1 is not 2)

I think that Japanese mythology is wonderful. For example, even while young people know stories from the Old Testament, they don't know stories from the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon-shoki*. And there is a trend to look at things by thinking of Greek mythology as the standard mythology. However, in Japan there is Japanese mythology. It is said that the first male and female gods, Izanaki and Izanami, got married and gave birth to the country. The male god and the female god joined forces to give birth to the country. I think this is a very good way of thinking. In the Old Testament, a male god creates the world alone. In the future, when we think of the problem of gender, it is whichever indicates the right direction.

Moreover, when we think of "mythology" and "history," if we look at the history of the study of mythology, for a certain time there was one pattern in mythology. If we take the example of Norse mythology, there were two tribes of gods, "Vanir" and "Aesir." It is said that Vanir existed first and that Aesir came along later and destroyed the former. The interpretation that this reflects a historical incident has existed for a very long time. In contrast, there was a time that stressed that this is one form of mythology and that it is not based on historical events. However if we think about it now, ancient people used the form of mythology to relate historical events. Therefore that there was no historical fact is something which cannot be said. Even if there is no direct link between "mythology" and "history," I think we must not remove the

possibility of the interpretation that says mythology might reflect some kind of historical incident.

One of the reasons I want people to read mythology is that in mythology several interpretations are possible. One cannot necessarily say that one interpretation is right and that another interpretation is no good. That is to say, for people who have received the sort of school education where there is only one right answer, just like 1 plus 1 is 2, might it not be an antidote to the manner of thinking that says the way of the world is as in one case, so in all?

Moreover, when mythology is incorporated into school education, if Japanese mythology alone is introduced in isolation there is the danger of it becoming absolute so it should be taught as one of the many mythologies that exist around the world. That is, Japanese mythology contains similarities to the mythology of other regions; it is not an isolated and independently absolute subject. By teaching it in relation to other mythologies, I think it would provide children with one lead in making them think about the connections in the extremely ancient and deep aspects of culture that exist even when the country is different.

OGURA: How is history taught in Thailand?

NIDHI: (Thailand's history education)

The curriculum of the history during the time when I was a student has been changed for long time. During my time, they covered all the history of Thailand from the origin of the Thai race down to about 1932. They stopped teaching the story at change of the Thai political system at the end of monarchy and the beginning of constitutional monarchy. But at present time, like other country in the world, history is not regarded as important, so they mixed history base with Thai geography and so on, you can't distinguish Thai history from other subject. It has become part of social studies.

OGURA: Singapore has a complex history, I heard that Mr. Tang Da Wu at one time held Japanese nationality. Incidentally, Mr. Tang Da Wu, you are continuing a project where you think about the meaning that exists in banana leaves, talk about bananas and get children to think about them. Can you make a connection between banana leaves and the diversity of Asian culture?

TANG DA WU: (diversity and banana trees)

When I was born in 1943, I was given birth certificate as Japanese because Singapore was occupied by Japanese army then. It was a period of war in Asia. Then, after the war, the British came back, and they changed my birth certificate into British subject. Then later Malaysia and Singapore has bump race always, they became independent from British so I was Malaysian. Then later in 1965 Singapore became independent from Malaysia and I became Singaporean. So that's how I've got four nationalities. I think a lot about British came to Singapore and all that, and Japanese invaded. I wish all these things didn't happen. I wonder if we didn't have a British, governors, we would have a peace, a lot of our own things. And of course, they constructed many things, that's fine, but they also took away a lot of our original things. That was what colonization was all about.

I've been around a few countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos and Thailand. I found one thing that these countries share in common is the banana trees and banana leaves. In everyday rituals, cerebation, prayers, also in a dinner table, there are a lot of them. And there are many many stories and legends behind these banana trees. Both very blessing type and very fearful type. When I say blessings and celebrations, they make offering with flowers and things and put banana leaves decorations on an alter, and at the same time people believe that banana tree always associate with spirit, like a spirit tend to stay with banana tree. And there is a fear in it. So I found that both respectful and prayer and fear happen in the same tree. The tree never change, the people change. This is a very interesting thing. It happened in a few of Southeast countries.

So as I move along among these countries I discover more and more story. And I need a lot of people to join in to respond to it. And people contribute more and more and I'm collecting them and putting together, so this time I came to Japan and I introduce this banana tree mythology to Japan and want to see the responses from the people here.

~Answering Questions from the Audience:

“The Image of Asia and Asian Culture”~

From the audience to Mr. Hou:

In Taiwan the impact of the earthquake resulted in a terrible situation. Mr. Hou, were your family home and other reminiscent places all right?

And, films include romances and comedies but what is your genre Mr. Hou? Moreover, what kind of film would you next like to make? Where does the first image in making a film come from?

HOU: (the earthquake in Taiwan, his film's genre, next work)

First of all, about the recent earthquake* in Taiwan, I was sleeping and awoke with the severity of the shaking. At first I didn't understand what was happening and didn't know what I should do. Outside, a great number of people had rushed out onto the street. I told my wife to wake our son and go outside but my wife asked if I was stupid, returned to the room and went to sleep. I realized that in times like this, women are after all stronger than men. Earthquakes rarely occur in Taiwan. An earthquake of that magnitude was a first. When we woke up, we gradually realized that the seriousness of the earthquake had exceeded estimations. One of the things I felt was that the general public was very active in donating blood and contributing money. A great number of private individuals loaded their cars with relief supplies and rushed to the rescue. However, even if the supplies reached the affected areas, they weren't always successfully delivered to places where they were necessary. After several days what the people were most angry about was that the government did nothing. They didn't even establish emergency headquarters. Emergency orders were not issued either. The safety and order of disaster areas were not managed in the least. I have rebelled against the Taiwanese government for a long time and have started opposition activities. I hope this earthquake will open the Taiwanese people's eyes. I hope that through elections, people will choose a person who they really think is good and that reforms will be made. In one sense I think that in terms of the Taiwanese government and all quarters, the recent earthquake is the best warning.

Now, when it comes to which genre my work falls into, I don't really know myself. At any rate, they are films. I agree with the assertion that films do not have a fixed form or genre. It's enough to film as you want to. I think there are several factors in making a film: the viewpoint of the director, the imagination of the director, the viewpoint of the actor, the imagination of the actor. The images on the screen consist of these four factors.

Fundamentally my films have a close relationship with the lives of the Taiwanese people. Apart from that there are those that incorporate the modern history of Taiwan and touch on the background of days gone past. When I filmed “Flowers of Shanghai” it was related to the problem with the Chinese mainland. However, for me, aside from some technical difficulties, there wasn't that great a difference. This is because I have experienced China since the time I was small. The textbooks we learned from were also about China's long history and its

* The Taiwan Earthquake

The earthquake occurred on September 21st, 1999 at around 1:47 am in the central district of Taiwan. It registered a magnitude of 7.6 on the Richter scale. The earthquake caused serious damage leaving 2,333 people dead and 10,002 people injured. (Statistics according to Taiwanese authorities as of October 13th, 1999.)

geography. At that time, Taiwan's consciousness of the mainland wasn't that clear. Now it's changing a little due to the political relationship.

Then, about my next work, the filming method is different and unique. I spent more than 6 months with people who are amateurs but with an interest in film production. They are amateurs and so they can't act at all. During that time they spoke to me about things like their loves, their work and their experiences. It was very interesting so I thought about making a film about them. Not a documentary and not a film about their past. I'm trying to make a film about their future. As it's the future, I'll work my powers of imagination and film it in "real-time." In short, "real-time" is, for example if we start filming on October 1st then that date of October 1st will be, namely, October 1st in Taiwan and around the world and so if something happens it will actually be happening in reality. I will perceive that feeling and the scene the characters find themselves in. In other words, I will provide them with several suggestions and themes. It's not important whether or not we're successful in filming. They might give a good performance on one of the themes I supply. I will leave the acting up to them, even if they spoil a scene, there will be no set up for a retake because time rapidly moves forward. The filming is scheduled for 5 months. It's a job I'll be starting when I return to Taiwan after this.

From the audience to Professor Obayashi:

What are your thoughts concerning the situation that mythology is not well known due to the fact that it is not learnt in places like schools? And, please tell us about common points between Japanese mythology and mythology around the world.

OBAYASHI: (books other than textbooks are interesting)

If you don't learn it at school you should read books about it yourself. Generally school textbooks are boring. Wouldn't it be good for people to know that books other than textbooks are interesting?

And, concerning common points between Japanese mythology and mythology around the world, it is something that I am researching and there are others who are researching it too. There is an accumulation of materials, particularly in the form of the genealogical theory of Japanese mythology. For example subjects such as the similarity between the mythology of Tenson Korin, a descendant of the gods, and the mythology of the establishment of the countries of the Korean Peninsula. It might be a good idea to read these kinds of materials.

From the audience to the four laureates: (the image of Asia, Asian culture is?)

What kind of meaning do you think there is concerning the way Asian cultures are grouped together? What is the image of Asia or rather, the concept of Asian culture? Please tell us how it has differed with the changes from your childhood to the present, in particular from the point of involving each of the laureates' special fields, science and art.

NIDHI: I think there are two streams of thinking about Asia. If you ask whether the concept of Asia has changed since my childhood, I think it has been changed in one stream of thinking. Asia nowadays, I think in one stream, becomes only a geographical area, you have no sense of commonality at all. The other stream of thinking is trying to find a special identity of Asia. Whether this stream is successful or not, I am not sure, but there is such kind of thinking of trying to find a commonality of Asia.

TANG DA WU: I see not much changes all these many years of Asia. There is still war, there is still killing people. There's still military power that even gets stronger and stronger. I hope in future democracy can happen and people could think more about human life and all those things. In that sense, I would say, there is no change.

I really don't know how to express the concept of Asian culture. I don't think a lot about what Asian is.

OBAYASHI: I don't think Asian culture can be grouped together. I have come to think that Asia is by nature a geographical concept.

Concerning Asian culture, when I was young I mainly studied Southeast Asia and after that North Asia. As my knowledge on various regions gradually increased, my image of Asia was formed little by little. What I felt during that process was that from India to the west and to the east, even if it is called Asia, there are considerable differences. Moreover, the nature of Oceania as an extension of Asia is extremely strong, surely it bears far more of a cultural similarity to East Asia than the world west of India? And in another sense, it also has points in common with the culture of native peoples of the American Continent. In the same way that East Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania are linked, I think Europe is linked with the world west of India.

In this way, I think the concept of Asia is of that on a map bound by the sense of one continent, that it is a geographical concept not a cultural concept.

OGURA: The thoughts of Professor Nidhi, Mr. Tang Da Wu and Professor Obayashi are that the way of grouping Asian culture together is not appropriate. However, I think that this is connected with the fact that Asian culture has diversity.

Now, Mr. Hou, you send messages from Taiwan to the world but whoever are the people that these messages are aimed at? And, do you possess the collective term Asian culture?

HOU: I send messages to people, people around the world.

I think that the word Asian culture is no more than a geographical concept. To group culture under a concept like Asian culture or something culture is not important. I think what is important is to recognize the differences between each culture. Culture should be respected; it is only natural that culture has diversity.

For example, in the case of films, Hollywood movies have become the current mainstream and this huge commercialism is trying to make films around the world the same. Because of this, the ideas behind films have become simple messages and the emotion too has become simplified. This is so that, around the world, whoever watches the film will understand it. However, if one gets used to such a structure or form, one won't be able to understand a film expressed in a different way. This would be a great loss for all people. If things continue this way, in the end we will be completely ruled by this system and, perhaps, will no longer be able to afford to look back at the place where we were born and raised and what is around us. The relationship between a film and the audience is one of an exchange of communication.

Concerning what Asian culture is, I don't think it's a problem we should be that concerned about. I think that rather, we should endeavor to understand a great deal more. Taking film as an example, if you watch a film from India, you get to know about the class system there and the worries and the way of life of the people who live there. Through things like this you can get to know yourself and to reflect on yourself. I think it is precisely by looking hard at yourself that you gain more and more confidence and respect others which, moreover, leads to respecting yourself. I think this is something that is useful for everyone. However currently, everywhere is competing economically and, what is more, it's a reality that the influence of the force of the masses is becoming extremely strong. For example, McDonalds in Taiwan is giving away Hello Kitty and two hundred thousand people are lining up daily to get one. I'm worried about how this kind of force can be stopped.

OGURA: In the field of culture, that which is inherent, that which is native, regional characteristics are rapidly being destroyed and are vanishing due to words such as globalization

and urbanization. What are your thoughts on such a situation?

NIDHI: Anytime when we hear about globalization, I have the feeling of the big business dealing with the other big business in other countries. We have no boundary any longer. We have never thought about the contact of small people, with other small people in other countries. The small people can do a lot of things across the border. Whenever we talk about globalization we almost completely ignore the people and think only about the profit of the big business all the time. I think this kind of globalization will end up in Americanization, rather than real globalization.

~Summary~

OGURA: We live on the levels of state, region and individual and our environment, the conditions under which we live are under restrictions. I think that culture exceeds borders and that the word culture contains the meaning "exchange." Isolated culture will gradually disappear. However, people of long ago developed culture in a basin area, traversed ridges and spread their skills to people in the neighboring basin. A state has the role of a state. I think the role of private citizens is to carefully develop the culture in the regional community. For this, it is necessary to have an energy that includes everyone. Nothing can be achieved by the power of an individual alone. I think that it is in precisely this that the single framework of the regional community comes to life. An inherent indigency: that which is to be lost will be lost. That is history. I think that what created native culture, what destroys it is entirely mankind. Whatever kind of era awaits us, the constant relay of information on culture or exchange between regional communities is the most fundamental energy. Our communicating together: I'm sure there can be nothing more powerful than the mutual exchange of information. Mr. Hou, Professor Obayashi, Professor Nidhi, Mr. Tang Da Wu, if you could please become wonderful friends of Fukuoka and if we could form a network, we would be extremely grateful.