

UDC 930.85(520)

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DISCOVERING FURUSATO: A JAPANESE ARCHETYPE IN WESTERN CULTURAL STUDIES

The article presents an overview of publications by Western scholars exploring the origin and essence of furusato — a unique Japanese cultural phenomenon characterized by a nostalgia for «the old home» left behind in the countryside. Much attention is given to the analysis of factors that led to the transformation of the notion of furusato from referring to an individual's place of birth to signifying «the home of the heart» — a symbol of Japanese cultural identity and national unity. Western researchers trace the origins of the present conceptualization of furusato back to the period of the Meiji Restoration with its processes of industrialization and mass migration from the countryside to the cities. The special role of an idealized, universal rural landscape («arche-landscape») in shaping the modern essence of furusato is emphasized.

Key words: *culture of Japan, furusato, cultural archetype, the Meiji Restoration, modernity, pre-modernity, cultural identity.*

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ВІДКРИТТЯ ФУРУСАТО: ЯПОНСЬКИЙ АРХЕТИП У ЗАХІДНИХ КУЛЬТУРОЛОГІЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯХ

Наведено огляд публікацій західних учених, де досліджуються походження та сутність фурусато — унікального явища японської культури, що характеризується ностальгією за «рідною домівкою» в сільській місцевості. Особливу увагу приділено аналізу факторів, що сприяли трансформації поняття фурусато від позначення місця народження конкретної людини до абстрактного «дому серця» — символу культурної ідентичності та національної єдності японців. Західні дослідники простежують походження сучасної концептуалізації фурусато від періоду Реставрації Мейдзі з характерними для нього процесами індустріалізації та масової міграції із сільської місцевості у великі міста. Наголошено на особливій ролі ідеалізованого, універсального сільського ландшафту («архі-ландшафту») у формуванні сучасного розуміння фурусато.

Ключові слова: *культура Японії, фурусато, архетип культури, Реставрація Мейдзі, сучасність, «до-сучасність», культурна ідентичність.*

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ОТКРЫТИЕ ФУРУСАТО: ЯПОНСКИЙ АРХЕТИП В ЗАПАДНЫХ КУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ

Приведен обзор публикаций западных ученых, исследующих происхождение и сущность фурусато — уникального явления японской культуры, отличительной чертой которого является ностальгия за «родным домом»

в сельской местности. Особое внимание уделено анализу факторов, способствовавших трансформации понятия *фурусато* от обозначения места рождения конкретного человека до абстрактного «дома сердца» — символа культурной идентичности и национального единства японцев. Западные исследователи относят происхождение современной концептуализации *фурусато* к периоду Реставрации Мэйдзи с характерными для него процессами индустриализации и массовой миграции из сельской местности в крупные города. Подчеркивается особая роль идеализированного, универсального сельского ландшафта («архи-ландшафта») в формировании современного понимания *фурусато*.

Ключевые слова: культура Японии, *фурусато*, архетип культуры, Реставрация Мэйдзи, современность, «до-современность», культурная идентичность.

The Japanese word *furusato* literally means «old village» and is also translated into English as «hometown», «homeland», «old home», «old town». The term is generally associated with a feeling of nostalgia for one's native place in the countryside. It is commonly assumed that *furusato* denotes the same as the English «home» or German «Heimat». However, Western researchers studying *furusato* in the context of the history of Japanese culture argue that this term means much more than just a 'birthplace' and possesses certain unique connotations. An inquiry into phenomena of a different culture from a different angle is a sort of discovery that can provide valuable material for cross-cultural comparisons. In this connection it would be interesting to have a closer look at the case of the discovery of *furusato* by Western scholars. Accordingly, the **purpose** of the article is to present an overview of American and European publications exploring the origin and essence of this concept. The overview is based, primarily, on the works by Jennifer Robertson [4], Marilyn Ivy [1], and Lindsay Morrison [2].

A serious study of *furusato* in Japan did not begin until 1985 when a research centre was founded in Tokyo to find out what *furusato* meant to the Japanese people. For the Japanese themselves it was a logical continuation of the process of searching for their own roots and identity from 1970s. Wishing to encourage internal travel between urban areas and the countryside, Japan Railways launched two advertising campaigns — «Discover Japan» and «Exotic Japan». The former was aimed at those who have experienced rural life but lost touch with their old home in the countryside, the latter targeting the people who had grown up in the cities. *Furusato* was thus defined as everything that does not belong to the city. As a result, a new image of Japan («undiscovered», «exotic», «unique») was intentionally constructed for internal use [4; 1]. The vague concept of *furusato* as a place where vanishing values are kept intact seemed to be an important component of this image.

Before 1985, *furusato* was considered to embody a sense of belonging, motherly love, one's childhood home lost to intrusive forces such as westernization, industrialization and urbanization [4, p. 500]. The strong emotional component of *furusato* can be best illustrated by the lyrics of a well-known Japanese children's song with the same title composed in 1914 by Teiichi Okano and Tatsuyuki Takano:

Usagi oishi ka no yama	The mountain where I chased rabbits
Ko-buna tsurishi ka no kawa	The river where I fished carp
Yume wa ima mo megurite	I still dream of it, even now
Wasure-gataki furusato	My hometown, I cannot forget you
Ika ni imasu chichi-haha	How are you, mother and father?
Tsutsuganashi ya tomogaki	Friends, are you well?
Ame ni, kaze ni tsukete mo	In rain or in wind
Omoi-izuru furusato	I remember my home town
Kokorozashi wo hata shite	Once I have achieved my goals
Itsu no hi ni ka kaeran	I shall return one day
Yama wa aoki furusato	Home, where the mountains are green
Mizu wa ki-yoki furusato	Home, where the waters are pure

Today, when over 90% of Japanese people live in cities, this song retains its popularity. It is taught in all Japanese public schools and is regarded by many as Japan's second anthem. Analyzing the reasons for the amazing success of the songs like «Furusato», Morrison explains this phenomenon in the following way: «Their lyrics sing about the kind of scenery and sentiments associated with furusato today: the beauty of the countryside, the pain of separation from home, the wistful longing to return to the golden days of one's youth. Despite the absence of such scenery in the daily life of an average Japanese person, many still feel emotionally connected to and nostalgia for the kind of images presented in such lyrics, taking the scenery to represent the arche-landscape of Japan.» [2]

From the point of view of modern observers, the concept of furusato does not seem to refer to any particular place; moreover, it represents an idyllic, non-existent countryside home – a faraway place from the past. According to Morrison, emotional aspects of furusato are closely connected with its temporal and spatial dimensions. Any place that evokes feelings of nostalgia, even if it is not one's hometown, can be called furusato. It has no fixed location; it is actually located nowhere and everywhere. Stressing the highly emotional nature of this concept, Morrison quotes the well-known Japanese phrase «kokoro no furusato» (home of the heart) and remarks: «The phrase implies that places are called furusato because of the kinds of feelings they evoke, rather than because of any factual basis.» In Morrison's opinion, this phrase and similar Japanese idioms show that furusato is not just an individual's home; rather, it represents all the feelings that accompany the idea of home. Hence the title of his paper: «Home of the Heart: the Modern Origins of Furusato» [2].

On the whole, the notion of furusato is considered by Western culturologists as an antithesis to the city: «...it is everything that suburban and city area are not.» [4, p. 503]. Thus, the relation between 'the city' and 'old home' in the concept of furusato can be described in terms of binary oppositions such as «real home – desired home», «real life with pain and sorrow – imaginary happy life in

peace and harmony». As Morrison puts it, «...the city is ascribed a purely functional purpose — to achieve one's economic or material goals — while the home is given an emotional one. Consequently, the city is attributed negative qualities, such as being cold, artificial, and dehumanizing, while on the other hand, furusato is warm, natural, and humanizing.» Therefore, researchers tend to regard furusato and the city as a dual entity, forming two halves of a whole, each with a distinct role and function [2]. The semantic structure of this concept strikingly resembles the meaning of the Yin-Yang symbol denoting world harmony: Yin (the city) is dark and negative, Yang (old home or furusato proper) is light and positive, but both cannot exist without each other.

At the same time, the relationship between the two components of the spatial model of furusato can be characterized as an asymmetric opposition. In the lyrics of the Furusato song both parts of the model appear rather ambiguous. The city, representing the real, actual home of the singer, looks like a totally blank space, devoid of any topographic features, any definite description; it is a place without nature, without *kokoro* (heart, soul), a questionnaire sheet intentionally left blank for anybody to fill in.

In contrast to the featureless chaos of the city, the space of the «desired home» [4], looks fairly well structured. An imaginary place with no definite bearings, furusato is filled with a standard set of landmarks — green hills, blue lakes, rivers with clear water. With these constant attributes of the scenery, furusato paradoxically appears as vague and impersonal as its opposite — the city. In Japanese and Western literature this phenomenon is interpreted as «...nostalgia for an abstract, universal idea of home, rather than a concrete place» [2]. Explaining the meaning of the term «arche-landscape» with regard to furusato, Morrison cites Kiyonaga, a Japanese researcher: «...the word furusato has a mysterious ability to revive a forgotten «something» in our hearts. Normally, that «something» stays dormant, but when we are lonely, sad, or upset, it awakens and «quenches our thirsty hearts» by resuscitating memories of our childhood landscape» [2]. Interestingly, for many people of Japanese descent who live outside of Japan it is the country of their ancestors that is their «furusato» [3].

Along with the spatial aspect, furusato has a temporal dimension as well. Comparing the semantic content of the English word 'home' with that of 'furusato', Morrison notes that a Japanese home may be called furusato only after it has been left behind: «Whereas the English «home» may denote a person's residence in the past, present or future, the word furusato indicates a place from the past — suggested by its etymology, «old village.» Consequently, if a person presently resides in his or her place of birth, that place is typically not referred to as furusato because it continues to be a part of the present.» It does not mean, however, that the old place once left behind is irrevocably lost. The longing for the past is experienced at present and transposed to the future. Quoting a line from Furusato song («itsu no hi ni ka kaeran — I shall return home one day»), Morrison further remarks that «... furusato is not only the place that one returns to periodically as an escape from the chaos and clamor of the city, but it is also the place to which a person will ultimately return». In the concept of furusato, one is expected to return home in the future with a success, with pride. Thus,

the nature of furusato is circular as it is both the starting point and terminus of a person's life [2].

It seems appropriate here to draw a parallel with the motif of the wonder tale journey from the hero's birthplace (furusato) to the 'promised land' (the city) and back to the point of departure after accomplishing his task. Ivy designates furusato as «...a vanishing 'home' to which the journey would always return» [1, p. 58]. There is a close interaction and interdependence between the two apparently opposite aspects of furusato (furusato proper and the city): «The modern longing for something new and exotic, by means of which Japan has itself been reinscribed as worthy of (re)discovery, is merged with the nostalgic longing to return to the way things once were, a longing that can only be experienced through their loss» [1]. As we can see, the cyclic nature of the journey in the concept of furusato (native place – the city – furusato) has both spatial and temporal dimensions: the return to furusato is a journey in space and time – to a faraway place left behind in the golden days of one's childhood. Time and space in furusato are inseparable.

Inquiring into the deep meaning of furusato, observers turn to the origins of its present interpretation. They agree that the shift from signifying the concrete birthplace to symbolizing an abstract «home of the heart» occurred during the first two or three decades of the Meiji period, i.e. around 1868-1900 [1; 2; 4]. This change was caused by great economic, social and political changes in Japan of that time. Morrison describes three interrelated factors that led to the emergence of a «generalized» furusato. First, the industrialization of the country brought about mass migration from the countryside to urban areas. Second, as a result of this process, former village dwellers learned to «discover» the pre-industrial Japanese landscape of the countryside. Third, it was at that time that the modern Japanese nation-state began to arise, accompanied by an acute need for a national myth.

The Meiji Restoration (1868) is commonly described as the watershed between pre-modernity, «...a time before the West, before the catastrophic imprint of westernization» [1, p. 241], and modernity with its double-structured (westernized and traditional) economy, culture, everyday life. The same opposition (pre-modern vs. modern) is applied to the perception of the concept of furusato.

Prior to the Meiji period, only a very small number of Japanese moved during their lifetimes; the majority of people lived out their lives in the countryside. Starting from the latter half of the 1870s, ambitious young people from the countryside poured into cities which grew dramatically in size. The city offered more opportunity to get a job; only in the city one could pursue higher education. Besides, the rural community had imposed rigorous restrictions on human relations, whereas in the city one could feel comparatively free and enjoy a more interesting cultural life. In contrast to the rapid expansion of its cities, Japan's rural areas were quickly falling into a decline.

Another driving force behind this massive population shift from rural to urban areas was a new ideology of «individual personal advancement» supported by the Meiji reformers. The new state doctrine encouraged education, self-advancement, personal success. Big cities were the only places where such aims

could be achieved. As a result, ambitious youths left their home towns for the big city in hopes of rising up in the world. These youths did not completely abandon their old homes, however; they dreamed of them from afar, and longed to return to them after their goals had been achieved. In this way, Japan's success story model is unique, because it combines a universal competition principle with a strong attachment towards the home [2].

Exploring psychological motives for the emergence of modern perception of furusato in the period after 1868, Ivy interprets the binary nature of this phenomenon as a coexistence of two opposite desires in a Japanese person. On the one hand, it is the desire to encounter the unexpected, the peripheral unknown, even the frightening (the city). On the other hand, there is a countervailing desire to return to that stable point of origin (old home), to discover an authentically Japanese Japan that is disappearing yet still present [1, p.105]. Similarly, Morrison describes the relationship between the city and the country in Japan in the period following the Meiji Restoration as one of complements (both/and). As the Japanese people grew more and more removed from the countryside, they began to look at the country with curiosity and wonder. For many reasons it became more difficult to people to return home; they lost their countryside roots, and so the role of furusato was relegated to one of the heart [2]. Ivy comes to the same conclusion: «As the majority of Japanese grew further away from their rural roots, the furusato ideal expanded to become a more capacious metaphor, ... and thus there is now a proliferation of national, generalized furusato» (1, p. 104).

In the pre-modern times the beautiful and idyllic Japanese landscape of the countryside with its hills, old farmhouses, rice fields, pagodas, cedar trees was regarded as «unrefined and uncivilized». Farmers themselves took little notice of the surrounding nature: for them it was only a place to work in. In contrast, city-dwellers view the rural environment in a completely different way than farmers: to them, the countryside is nothing more than a landscape. The sentimental, emotional feelings towards the landscape of one's birthplace could only become possible after a separation from it. In order to see a place as a landscape, there must first be a break between the observer and the observed. Referring to Japanese sources, Morrison argues that the period in which landscape was «discovered» in Japan, i.e. the second or third decade of the Meiji period, coincides with the period that people began to leave the rural areas for the city. «As furusato is not a home at present, but rather a home left behind, mass migration to the city triggered a general awareness of furusato as a separate space outside of the self. By becoming de-familiarized with the nature and lifestyle of rural areas, a space opened up between the individuals who had left home and their hometowns in the country. A landscape can only be «discovered» by people who are indifferent, or unattached, to their physical surroundings.» [2]. Thus, the emerging notion of furusato came to be associated with the landscape left behind.

As memory by nature is selective and tends to reshape the images of the past, the rural landscape in the imagination of former villagers seemed to retain only some abstract, generalized features gradually transforming into «a nameless, decontextualized landscape». In this connection, Ivy remarks that in Japan tradition is not so much invented as it is preserved in phantasmagoric images [1].

In terms of Jungian psychology, furusato came to be conceived as a kind of arche-landscape, the archetypal home for millions of the Japanese people, an image of cultural homogeneity. As a true archetype, the arche-landscape is deeply rooted in the Japanese psyche; it is a sort of collective memory accompanied by some degree of nostalgia or sentimentalism [2].

With the rise of a nation-state following the Meiji Restoration the Japanese authorities began to use the theme of furusato in public education and cultural policy. School songbooks including songs like «Furusato» were published; the songs were used for both musical and patriotic education, as a tool to help create a unified Japanese community. (By the way, modern photograph collections depicting Japanese rural scenery seem to serve the same purpose). The Meiji state «...deliberately used the theme of landscape to base national unity on nature» [2]. In the early twentieth-century Japanese folklore studies were established; the state encouraged efforts by remote communities to promote themselves as nostalgic sites of authenticity; the furusato theme became prominent in story-telling practices and populist theatre [1], in war veteran campaigns [5]; in domestic tourism [6] and in organized leisure activities [7].

Concluding remarks

In the view of Western researchers, furusato is a unique phenomenon of Japanese tradition and culture. It became a nation-wide symbol of a «vanishing but not yet vanished home» [Ivy] as a result of mass migration of village dwellers to the city following the Meiji Restoration and the subsequent anxieties about the potential loss of national identity. The modern concept of furusato is based on the notion of «arche-landscape» (idealized, abstract rural landscape); it is associated with nature and is built on the «modernity – pre-modernity» opposition. Evoking strong nostalgic sentiments, this symbol is widely commercialized and used for fostering Japanese cultural nationalism.

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Надійшла до редколегії 13.01.2016 р.