
From the Hinomaru and Kimigayo to the Symbolic Emperor System

I. Introduction

Regarding the *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* legislation, Katō Norihiro has proposed that these two bills be separated: “I don’t mind the *Hinomaru* legislation, but the Japanese people should not accept the *Kimigayo* legislation in its present form. If one claims that the *Kimigayo* melody has already taken root as a custom, then let us at least replace the lyrics” (*Mainichi Shinbun*, June 28, 1999, morning edition, and elsewhere). Katō was not alone in proposing such a separation. The Japan Democratic party, wavering between support and opposition of this legislation, made a similar separation when it introduced as counterproposal only the *Hinomaru* bill. This was rejected, however. In the end, both the lower and upper houses of the Diet passed by overwhelming majority the combined National Flag-National Anthem bill as introduced by the government. From my own standpoint of opposition to the legislation of both the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo*, it is particularly impossible for me to overlook Katō’s proposal. This proposal is intimately bound up with his “After the Defeat” argument, the same argument that I have consistently criticized in recent debates.

For Katō, the “greatest problem” stirred up by this legislation is the “existence of an inflexible viewpoint that sees all feasible proposals regarding the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* issue”—as, for example, Katō’s own proposal—“only as a return to nationalism. Today the most powerful support for this viewpoint is the anti-nation-state sentiment based on postmodern thought.” Referring to my book *Derrida*, Katō

also points out the “reversal” in the French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s notion of justice, for moral issues are to be conceived not from the relation with the “absolute other’ excluded by the community,” but rather from the “plural ‘ordinary others’” who form the community (*Mainichi Shinbun*, May 11, 1999, evening edition).

Let me say in advance that this represents an elementary misreading of Derrida (or of my *Derrida* book ¹), but what this misreading makes clear is an opposition between Katō and myself in the “After the Defeat” debate regarding the memory of Japan’s invasion of Asia. In Katō’s claim that priority be given to the plural “ordinary others” rather than to the “absolute other” excluded by the community, one can perceive his response to my criticism regarding the impossibility of speaking of “we Japanese” without focus on the Asian victims. Katō’s position, which he has persistently defended, is that focus on the Asian victims can take place only after establishing “we Japanese” through mourning the war dead of our nation first. In the following, I would like to once again clarify the points of opposition between Katō and myself through a critique of his proposal that the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* be treated separately.

II. Violence Against the Disobedient

First, let me explain my own basic position on this *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* issue. I am against their legislation. Prior to this legislation, I opposed the raising of the *Hinomaru* and the singing of *Kimigayo* (as the *de facto* national flag and national anthem) at various functions, particularly in the schools and educational centers. I have been extremely critical of the enforcement of these activities in the schools, which dates back to the Ministry of Education’s 1985 “Notice of Thorough Implementation.” My opposition derives above all from the fact that both the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* were symbols of Japan’s war of invasion and colonial rule.

I am unable to yield this general principle. If Japan is to make use

1. Tetsuya Takahashi, *Derrida, Deconstruction*, Kodansha, 1998.

of a *de facto* national flag and national anthem, then it should have replaced these based on reflection on the past, just as the former Axis nations Germany and Italy immediately replaced their own national flags and national anthems after the war. Even now it is not too late, as such a replacement would be highly desirable.

Would the problem disappear if Japan were to make this change? Even if a different national flag and anthem were to be adopted, I would still oppose their obligatory use in such places as schools and educational centers. The history of national flags and national anthems is inseparable from that of the nationalism, overseas wars, and imperialism of the modern nation-state. As with the French Republic's *Tricolore* and *la Marseillaise* in their representation of liberty, equality, and fraternity, national flags and national anthems reveal their force in coercing people into national unity and mobilizing violence against disobedient people and others – and this not merely regardless of which “sublime” ideals they symbolize, but rather precisely to the extent of that “sublimity” itself. Opposing *Kimigayo* “because it is not the song the people can sing from their hearts as one” is valid to a certain degree, but we must not forget the horror of making the people as a whole “as one” to their very “hearts,” under one national flag and anthem, through the repetition of such collective bodily acts as worshipping the national flag and singing the national anthem.

The significance of national flags can be reduced to their function of distinguishing nations from one another in the context of international society. Compared to this, it is difficult to fully remove from national anthems their function of creating both emotional identification with the state and a sense of national unity. On the other hand, one could say from a practical point of view that national flags are more necessary, since the absence of a national anthem would mean little.

I am not absolutely opposed to Japan having for the present a *de facto* national flag and national anthem within the system of nation-states that currently envelops the globe. My position differs from the one described by Katō, which contents itself with idealistically denying *in toto* the currently dominant nation-state system. But we must

be wary of the pressures of “nationalization” and the violence of identification as effected by all national flags and anthems; we must remain vigilant against the politics of the nation-state’s symbols. Ultimately, I would also wish to keep in sight the possibility of abandoning all national symbol politics, including national flags and anthems. The *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* legislation belongs in the very worst category of such national symbol politics.

III. Who Are “We”?

Distinguishing between these two, Katō Norihiro states that the *Hinomaru* legislation is fine whereas the *Kimigayo* legislation “in its current form” is not. Why is this? In effect, he seems to say that there is no reason to replace the *Hinomaru* insofar as Japan as a modern nation-state requires a national flag, but that *Kimigayo* violates the present Constitution’s principle of popular sovereignty in its reference to the “eternity of the emperor’s reign.” Yet there are a number of contradictions or confusions here.

As Katō writes of the *Hinomaru*, “Since we cannot deny that Japan is a modern nation, we can neither deny the existence of a national flag. Such denial would be irresponsible insofar as we presently accept as its premise this modern nation’s existence. Insofar as the nation Japan must possess a national flag, we have no reason to replace the *Hinomaru*, with its negative historical image” (*Kanōsei toshite no sengo igo* [*The post postwar as possibility*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), p. ix).

To repeat, I am of course not denying the present existence of a modern nation, nor am I even denying the practical utility of a national flag. But it is one thing to speak of modern nations having national flags and quite another to say that Japan’s national flag is the *Hinomaru*. Without any explanation whatsoever, Katō moves here from the necessity of a national flag for the modern nation Japan to the self-evidence of the *Hinomaru* as that flag. This leap of logic takes place in the context of two examples raised by Katō to illustrate the necessity of the national flag.

First, the American historian Otis Cary, surprised during the Gulf

War at seeing the minesweepers of Japan's self-defense forces hoisting the Rising Sun flag when calling at Manilla Bay, asked why the pre-war battle flag was being used instead of the *Hinomaru*. When his companion mentioned the Filipinos' probable dislike of that flag, Cary replied, "But they have to hoist some flag." Therefore, as Katō says, "We cannot and should not deny the national flag's existence."

The second example concerns passports. Anyone traveling abroad possesses a passport. This "means that one considers oneself a citizen of a nation." Those who carry a passport and yet claim that national flags are useless "must be described as presuming upon the nation-state's kindness." As a citizen of a nation, then, one cannot deny the national flag just as one cannot deny a passport.

This passport discussion is absurd, as it goes so far as to deprive all members of the nation-state of the right to claim that national flags are useless. Drawing forth the necessity of national flags from that of passports represents another leap of logic. At any rate, Katō's claim until this point is that one should accept the necessity of national flags. Yet from here he immediately makes the following connection: "What we thus have here is a situation that is rather difficult to explain, for while we regard the present national flag *called* *Hinomaru* as something negative, we nevertheless depend upon it" (emphasis Takahashi). But to say that we require a national flag is not the same thing as saying that we "depend" upon the "*Hinomaru*." What emerges from the statement that "they have to hoist some flag" is neither the necessity of that flag being the *Hinomaru* nor the appropriateness of the *Hinomaru*. Yet Katō writes that "insofar as the nation Japan must possess a national flag," "we have no reason to replace the *Hinomaru*," exactly as if the *Hinomaru*'s status as Japan's national flag were an indisputable premise.

In claiming that "we" have no reason to replace the *Hinomaru*, who is this "we"? I, for one, have a reason to replace this flag. To repeat, this is because the *Hinomaru* was a symbol of Japan's war of invasion and colonial rule. Even among Japanese citizens alone, there are certainly not a few who share this same "reason," even if we are not a majority. Why does Katō write that "we" have no reason to replace the *Hinomaru*, as if every Japanese citizen were in favor of this flag?

IV. The Way to Repay the War “Debt”

Katō prepares the following explanation in response to those who share this same reason as myself:

Some are of the opinion that the *Hinomaru* should be abandoned and replaced since it was a symbol of Japan’s past invasion. But... this flag drags along a negative image because postwar Japan has not yet fully repaid its war debt. The *Hinomaru* is a symbol of this. If this national flag is a defiled one with a negative image, then postwar Japan should be asked to hold itself liable, thereby transforming the flag’s image into something more positive. If the *Hinomaru* is simply abandoned, then at precisely that moment it becomes a source of distrust on the part of those conscientious people from the invaded nations. (*Mainichi Shinbun*, May 11, 1999)

According to Katō, “If Japan still drags along its war debt without having resolved the various problems of the postwar, then this is all the more reason why we must not replace the *Hinomaru*” (*Mainichi Shinbun*, June 28, 1999). Readers might be pleased to find here a clever paradox that “differs from the thinking of society’s intelligentsia.” Unfortunately, I can hear only sophistry in this remark.

First, given that the *Hinomaru* has remained throughout the postwar Japan’s (*de facto*) national flag as if nothing had ever happened, couldn’t this fact itself represent one of the nation’s “war debts” and unresolved “problems of the postwar”? When the government first raised this question in March 1999, it was again endorsed by the media response of China and Southeast Asia—although this went largely unreported in the Japanese media. Let me cite one example:

There can be no doubt that the Japanese people desire a national flag and anthem. Yet history still has not taught them that the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* must be excluded as unfit for these. If those nations of the world with imperial pasts continued to make use of the same

national war banners, then many more nations would lodge complaints against them than against Japan. (Singapore, *The Straits Times*, March 9 editorial, trans. Wani Yasuo)

The “source of distrust on the part of those conscientious people from the invaded nations” lies not in Japan’s “abandoning” of the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo*, but rather in their “continued use” and attempted legislation. Katō asks what would happen if these were “simply” abandoned, and yet Japan has continued to make use of the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* for the past half-century now. Italy promptly changed its national flag in 1946, and West Germany did so in 1949. There is no talk that this became a “source of distrust on the part of those conscientious people from the invaded nations.” Katō would admit that both Germany and Italy went on to reconcile with their surrounding nations and become important members of the European Union, and that Germany’s postwar dealings, which have gone farther than those of Japan, are acclaimed internationally. He even says that, unlike Japan, West Germany “immediately after the defeat” sought out its logic of “distortion” based on the awareness of its own “defilement,” and that its “post-defeat discourse” has been the nation’s “cornerstone of public opinion.” Although contrary to Katō’s argument, it is West Germany (which “simply” abandoned its national flag) that has repaid its war debt relatively well, whereas Japan (which has continued to make use of its “defiled flag” for the past half-century) cannot. If one highly esteems West Germany’s postwar, then far from arguing that Japan “must not replace” the symbols of its invasion, should one not rather demand that they be replaced at once, even now?

Second, if we accept the logic that the *Hinomaru* not be replaced “all the more” because Japan still drags along its war debt, then there is no reason to deny this logic in regard to *Kimigayo*. The emperor’s war responsibility yet remains one of the unresolved “problems of the postwar”; it is one of the highest “war debts.” As such, there is “all the more reason” that *Kimigayo* not be replaced,

This anthem drags along a negative image because postwar Japan has not yet fully resolved the issue of the Emperor’s war responsibility.

Kimigayo is a symbol of this. If this national anthem is a defiled one with a negative image, then postwar Japan should be asked to hold itself liable, thereby transforming the anthem's image into something more positive. If *Kimigayo* is simply abandoned...

The Shōwa emperor's death rendered his war debt forever unpayable. As a "symbol of this," should Japan forever continue to make use of *Kimigayo* as its national anthem?

V. If Popular Sovereignty Were Also "Enforced"

Here Katō's argument takes a surprising turn. He opposes the legislation of the present *Kimigayo* as Japan's national anthem, claiming that its lyrics of imperial sovereignty violate the postwar Constitution's principle of popular sovereignty.

Certainly this is true. It is clear that these lyrics violate popular sovereignty, and this is the most obvious reason for opposing the *Kimigayo* legislation. Since the current National Flag-National Anthem bill combines the *Hinomaru* and the present *Kimigayo*, this in and of itself is sufficient reason to oppose it. As an intellectual issue, however, I must admit to having certain reservations about Katō's argument.

First, doesn't Katō here contradict his own intellectual position as set forth most centrally in his book *Haisengo ron* [*After the defeat*]? There he showed an undisguised aversion to the many antiwar declarations at the time of the Gulf War that sought support in the Peace Constitution: "So then, people would not oppose the Gulf War if there were no Peace Constitution?" Given that the Constitution's renunciation-of-war article was "enforced" by the Occupation army, as Katō writes, it is a matter of "self-deception" to oppose war based on the "Peace Constitution." How then do his actions here differ from this? If the renunciation of war was "enforced," then popular sovereignty was also "enforced." Rather than asking, "So then, people would not oppose *Kimigayo* if there were no Constitution with its principle of popular sovereignty?" he says, "The Japanese people must

accept popular sovereignty as set forth in the present Constitution.” Katō even writes that the Japanese people “*won* popular sovereignty through the defeat.” He does not describe such claims of enforced popular sovereignty as “self-deception.”

Of course it is not my aim to make an issue of these contradictions. Rather I would like to say that even if the present Constitution was originally “enforced,” there is still sufficient ground for the Japanese people now to oppose the *Kimigayo* legislation on the basis of popular sovereignty, and this would be equivalent to opposing the nation’s war assistance through appeal to the war-renunciation article. This also bears upon the current problem of coping with the related “New Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation” law. I would hope that Katō does not discourage those trying to reject Japan’s war collaboration with the U.S. based on the war renunciation article through such charges as “self-deception.”

VI. *The Problem of the Symbolic Emperor System*

Second, since Katō’s *Kimigayo* proposal represents a halfway measure to “keep the melody but change the lyrics,” after the Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintarō, the relation to the symbolic emperor system remains ambiguous. First, “I actually wanted someone who symbolizes postwar Japan, like Takemitsu Tōru, to write the song for postwar Japan,” but since this was “unfeasible,” Katō made the counterproposal to change the lyrics. However, it is extremely unclear why it was “unfeasible” to replace the song, including the melody. If the lyrics can be replaced, then so can the melody. There are many people who find the *Kimigayo* melody unappealing. There are also not a few Asian victims who remember only the melody. I would like to counter-propose not that we “at least replace the lyrics,” but that we at least replace the song itself.

What is the ambiguity surrounding the symbolic emperor system? Let us examine Katō’s proposal more closely. As he writes,

In the government’s unified opinion of June 11, the *kimi* of *Kimigayo*

is interpreted to mean the symbolic emperor as opposed to the prewar “emperor as sovereign.” The crucial point here, according to the government, is that the meaning of *kimi* changes from the former prewar Constitution to the present Constitution. *If that is the case*, however, then *those* lyrics must be changed. If they are not, *that difference in meaning* will go unnoticed internationally, regardless of how much the government and bureaucracy subjectively twist its interpretation of this term. The intention behind the present legislation will then be reversed. In which case, international opinion will hold that despite the Japanese people’s winning of popular sovereignty through the defeat, fifty-four years later *they still chose a relation to the same prewar “emperor.”* (*Mainichi Shinbun*, June 28, 1999; italics Takahashi)

To be exact, Katō’s proposal here is that the *Kimigayo* lyrics be *changed to something befitting the symbolic emperor system* as opposed to the absolutist emperor system, as based on popular sovereignty. The *kimi* of *Kimigayo* “changes in meaning” from the former Constitution to that of the present, and “if that is the case,” the lyrics must be changed so as to reveal “that difference in meaning” “internationally.” Hence these lyrics must be changed into something that clarifies the relation to the symbolic emperor of the present Constitution rather than the “relation to the same prewar ‘emperor.’”

What is being questioned here: only the stance on prewar-like imperial sovereignty or also that of the present Constitution’s symbolic emperor system? Katō continues, “This matter has great significance for postwar Japan in that, following the Era Name law of 1979, it represents an even more decisive opportunity for us as Japanese citizens to legally reveal our clear intentions *to the symbolic emperor system*” (*ibid.*).

I agree that the present legislation can become a “decisive opportunity” for the Japanese people to reveal their clear intentions to the symbolic emperor system. For the past half-century since the war, both *Kimigayo* and the *Hinomaru* have been deeply bound up with the symbolic emperor system, all the while ambiguously dragging along the prewar memories of their status as symbols of the sacred and inviolable emperor and his “empire.” (As with the “imperial pag-

eants” of the past, observe the waving miniature *Hinomaru* flags in recent imperial visits). What is really being questioned through this issue of the *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* legislation is what to do with the symbolic emperor system: should it be maintained or discarded as Japan moves into the twenty-first century?

When Katō speaks of “legally revealing our clear intentions to the symbolic emperor system,” his choice is ambiguous. He proposes that, since the meaning of the term *kimi* has changed from the prewar to the postwar, the *Kimigayo* lyrics should be replaced so as to clarify “that difference in meaning.” But this represents a choice to newly approve of—or, as Katō is wont to say, “re-choose”—the present Constitution’s symbolic emperor system. This is perhaps why he repeats that the problem is whether a song of prewar imperial sovereignty is appropriate: “The legislation involving the present *Kimigayo* lyrics reveals that postwar Japanese intend to re-choose as their own postwar national anthem a song that praises prewar imperial sovereignty. What is being questioned through this legislation is whether we Japanese people should do this.”

In other words, what Katō’s proposal boils down to here is that the *Hinomaru* legislation is fine, that this flag should rather be kept, and that the *Kimigayo* legislation would also be fine if the lyrics were replaced by something befitting the symbolic emperor system. If this is true, then it is wrong to complain that “all feasible proposals regarding the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* issue, including my own proposal to separate these two, are seen only as a return to nationalism.” In what sense is Katō’s proposal “feasible”? It is “feasible” in view of what? Like the proposal of the Tokyo governor, Ishihara Shintarō, which he cites, Katō’s proposal bears a strong affinity with neo-nationalism. If this proposal were really “feasible,” then it should problematize the symbolic emperor system itself. Article One of the present Constitution clearly states that the principle of popular sovereignty takes priority over the symbolic emperor system. The “status” of the emperor as “symbol of Japan and the unity of the Japanese people” can be changed by the “will of the sovereign Japanese people.”

I believe that this problem, emerging now a half-century after the war and with the twenty-first century in view, must become a “dec-

sive opportunity” to seriously consider Japan’s choice of breaking away not only from the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo*, but also from the symbolic emperor system, from which these two are inseparable.

VII. Pressures for a New “Imperialization”

Katō writes, “It is well known that the nation-state now has a great many problems. But this does not demand that we now deny its existence and see the national flag and national anthem as useless. What is demanded is that the nation-state become more open, that it continue trying to overcome its own closure.”

Let me confirm that while I do have criticisms of the nation-state’s way of being, I do not “deny” its “existence.” (The nation-state’s “existence” is a fact that cannot be “denied.”) Nor do I claim that the national flag and anthem are immediately useless. I seek possibilities of doing away with the politics of national symbols, but at present I believe we should at least find another national flag and anthem. Now does Katō really think that his proposal to accept the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* (provided that the latter’s lyrics reveal “that difference in meaning” of the term for emperor) is the way to overcome the “closure” of the nation-state Japan and make it “open”? *Won’t this proposal have precisely the opposite effect?*

The *Hinomaru*, *Kimigayo*, and symbolic emperor system are major factors that prevent contemporary Japan from becoming an “open” nation. For example, the Korean residents of Japan (both North and South Korean nationals) consist of people and their descendants who were in the prewar period appropriated into the Japanese empire and “imperialized”; yet in the postwar period they were deprived of Japanese citizenship, as unlike most cases of colonial independence they were denied the right to choose their nationality. For them, the *Hinomaru*, *Kimigayo*, and symbolic emperor system not only recall the history of prewar colonial rule, they are also the symbols of the “nation-state” Japan’s postwar discrimination. If these Korean residents try to acquire Japanese citizenship in order to escape this discrimination, the *Hinomaru*, *Kimigayo*, and symbolic emperor system stand in their

way as tests of allegiance. This is the structure of “naturalization” as a new “imperialization.” Approximately 90 percent of the Korean resident children attend Japanese schools, in part because national universities and graduate schools in Japan refuse admittance to graduates of ethnic schools. The raising of the *Hinomaru* and singing of *Kimigayo* in the schools function as a constant pressure of “imperialization.” The present legislation will aggravate this pressure even further.

Katō seems to think that even with the *Hinomaru* legislation, there should be no obligation to raise the flag at graduation ceremonies and festivals, for “these practices” should be made “more open.” But he misses the point here. Even the government holds that it won’t demand respect for this rule, that there will be “direction” rather than enforcement, but legislation is nothing other than giving legal justification to what is already obligatory. In past hearings and opposition movements, those who argued against the compulsory use of the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* did so on the major grounds that “these had no legal basis as the national flag and national anthem.” The present legislation robs us of this important authority.

As goes without saying, I do not speak for the Korean residents, nor am I using the other as an excuse for opposition so as to avoid my own judgment. The *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* are not only symbols of invasions for Korean residents and “those conscientious people from the invaded nations.” They are also symbols of invasion for such Japanese people as myself. They are inseparable from the memory and history of the emperor system and the war. Scholars speak of the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* as not simply “used” in Japan’s war of invasion, but as having “brought it forth” (Komagome Takeshi). As a Japanese person of today, I oppose their legislation as national symbols. Replacing the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* is one solution to the “various problems of the postwar,” it is part of making the nation-state Japan “become more open, overcoming its own closure.”

VIII. What “Popular Consensus” Excludes

Finally, let us examine what Katō calls the “greatest problem.”

Katō refers to the “anti-nation-state sentiment based on postmodern thought,” and the French thinker Jacques Derrida as one “example” thereof, as the reason that such proposals as his own are “all seen only as a return to nationalism.” According to Katō, Derrida’s notion of justice is “reversed.” For whereas justice and morals were built originally upon the relation with the plural “ordinary others,” “those others right next to oneself,” Derrida approaches these from the single “absolute other” excluded by this community of plural “ordinary others.” What is worse, Katō links Derrida’s thought to that of “the 1970s anti-Japanese-armaments front” and the “series of industry explosion incidents”!

Doubtless there are readers who are puzzled by this sudden shift from the *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo* to abstract philosophical discussion. Now what if we were to replace what is here called the community of “ordinary others” with the nation-state Japan, and the excluded “absolute other” with, say, the Korean residents?

The *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* legislation is first of all an internal issue for “we Japanese,” i.e., the community of “those others right next to oneself.” Although decisions made by one’s fellow Japanese “must invariably exclude the other,” issues of justice and morals become an “anti-Japanese-armaments front” when seen from the relation with these excluded “absolutely other” Korean residents. It is important to think of these issues not from the relation to the excluded other, but rather from the advantage of “we Japanese.”

Readers familiar with the “After the Defeat” debate will notice that this argument is of the same type as Katō’s claim that the Japanese war dead be mourned first by “we Japanese” so as to apologize to the Asian victims.

Yet there is first of all here a misreading of Derrida. In reading Derrida, it is clear that the point of his notion of justice and responsibility is far from the opposition between the single “absolute other” and the plural “ordinary others;” rather, it is the deconstruction of that opposition (see my *Derrida*, chapter 5). In contrast to Kierkegaard’s absolutizing of the relation with God as the one “absolute other,” which sacrifices responsibility to such ethical communities as the

nation and family, Derrida problematizes such dual analysis by claiming that “every other is the absolute other.” “Every other is the absolute other.” That is to say, the “absolute other” is not only that other excluded from the community. Every other, including the plural “ordinary others” and “those others right next to oneself” that make up the community, is the “absolute other” who has something unknown and unknowable to me. In this argument, Derrida parts ways with all thinking that privileges a specific other, as for example Levinas’s philosophy in its tendency to see only “Jews” as the privileged other.

For “me,” “every other” – the Japanese citizen others *A* and *B* and the Korean resident others *C* and *D* – is the “absolute other.” Nevertheless, a stark legal borderline is drawn between *A*, *B* and *C*, *D*, such that the community of Japanese citizens to which “I” and *A* and *B* belong excludes *C* and *D* outside itself. If we do not ask if such exclusion is violent, and, if so, how violent, then the “nation-state” Japan will never “become more open.”

To evoke the relation with others *C* and *D* is not to privilege the relation with the single other, and even less can it be to sacrifice in terror other others for the sake of such single other. Rather it is to focus on and re-question the violence of exclusion and difference that, although already present, is frequently forgotten and ignored.

The *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* issue precisely requires such an approach. Even when considered solely in terms of the relation with the Korean residents, it is clear that this issue must not be decided only by what is advantageous to the Japanese people. In particular, every foreign resident making a living in Japan is involved here. In deferring the relation with the excluded other *of* the nation-state while prioritizing the relation with its internal other, Katō’s approach simply repeats the “people’s” violence of exclusion. If the national flag-national anthem issue is one of symbolizing “we Japanese,” then here as well we cannot speak of “we Japanese” without dialogue with the other *of* the nation-state.

The *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* issue has thus led us to a re-questioning of the right of “popular sovereignty” itself. Katō said that the reason for replacing the *Hinomaru* does not lie “in us.” But even in the

unlikely event that the Japanese people as a whole were to agree with this, should this issue be decided by “us” alone? It is certainly valid to oppose the *Kimigayo* legislation based on popular sovereignty. Yet what if such “sovereign” decision by the “people” itself were to go hand in hand with the exclusion of the voices of those “others” involved in this issue?

Those in favor of this legislation claim to be “anchored in the people,” whereas those against it claim that “there is no popular consensus.” Regardless of which survey one reads, there is no doubt that national opinion is divided here. Furthermore, even if a fixed “popular consensus” regarding this issue were a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient one. Those who speak of an anchoring in the people fail to see that such “anchoring” is the result of force. They ignore the fact that, even assuming that this anchoring exists, it can itself become a threat to those parties outside of the “people.”

The *Hinomaru-Kimigayo* issue is not simply an issue of the national flag and national anthem. It is an issue of the symbolic emperor system, one that questions the very framework of the “nation-state” Japan. A Japanese-styled “communality” is legally guaranteed by Article One of the Japanese Constitution, i.e., the symbolic emperor system article. Insofar as this is not changed, Japanese society will be unable to realize a true “public sphere.”