

I would like to begin this talk by discussing the structure of this symposium. Today, we had a morning session, *Global sprawl: Regionalism vs. Globalism*, with presenters from Europe and the U.S. And then in an afternoon session, *Global Vernacular* is being discussed here by a panel of almost entirely non-Western speakers, (all from Asia and Africa, except for Mr. Ignasi Sola-Morales from Spain). There is, I assume, an intention present in the structure of these panels which can hardly have been conscious. The same thing also happened when I was involved in the exhibition entitled "At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture", organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and currently travelling to locations throughout the world. I acted as an advisor for this exhibition. The composition of the advisory board for the exhibition reflected U.S. culture, and was quite politically correct; it consisted of three females and three males, from various continents. For the catalogue, we each wrote a brief essay, and the subject I was assigned by the museum was "regionalism". I have to tell you that I do not have any special interests in the issue, unlike Zeynep Selik from Turkey who is a specialist on colonialism, and it seemed more natural that colonialism was thus her assigned subject. Why was I asked to write on regionalism? The only possible reason was that I was the only other non-Westerner besides her.

One of my arguments in that text was that regionalism is a part of internationalism and complements it as such – especially when it is advocated as critical regionalism. That is, the advocates of this notion – be they Alexander Tzonis or Kenneth Frampton – conceived it in order to defend the "tradition of the new" (or a part of it at least), never to refute it totally. This they tried to achieve by adding the prefix "critical". They might have had no difficulty in discussing critical internationalism instead; there could be no serious difference between these two ideas. I believe I found many variations on critical regionalism in sessions yesterday and this morning. In the Los Angeles show, I felt I was asked to write on regionalism because I am Japanese, and the Japanese people are generally accepted as honorary Westerners. Similarly, for my contribution today I was asked to discuss a related subject, the vernacular, with other representatives from Asian or African countries. I wonder if it is fallacious to suggest that the Spanish in the West and the Japanese in the non-Western world are given specific positions between the two poles: between regionalism and vernacular, between the developed world and the developing world, and between the West and the East?

What we should remember is that the West has been assimilating, or (depending on your position) exploiting, so many things from non-Western areas in the course of history. Of course non-Western

areas as well have assimilated many things – even much more – from the West. But this traffic has never in any way been balanced.

Last year, in *Assemblage magazine*, a publication representing theories and ideas circulating in the East Coast of the United States and one which Michael Hays is deeply involved with, an interesting essay was published. It was written by a Turkish female researcher, Guelsuem Baydar Nalbantoglu. The piece was a post-colonial criticism of *A History of Architecture* by the British historian Sir Banister Fletcher. As you might know, Fletcher's book was published about a hundred years ago and is still being updated in new editions long after the author's death. Around the turn of the century, this book was most influential and widely distributed in Japan, as it was the only translated book available on the history of architecture. What this Turkish researcher found highly problematic is that Fletcher classified architecture into two different categories: "historical architecture" and "non-historical architecture". It goes without saying that the arena of her research, the vernacular architecture in Turkey and the Near East, fell into the latter category. She questioned the reason for the inclusion of "non-historical architecture" in a book called *A History of Architecture*, writing, "It seems strange that Fletcher valorizes and disqualifies non-European styles at the same time. 'A history of world architecture would be incomplete,' he says, if he did not review 'those other styles'."

Given the fact that the notion of history itself was a European invention in the 19th century, I believe that Fletcher's distinction had its own historical implications. Japanese architectural historians around 1900 also reacted in the same way as Dr. Nalbantoglu did almost a century later. This distinction between historical and non-historical architecture, based on British authority, classified traditional Japanese architecture as non-historical as well – not vernacular architecture, mind you, but such buildings as temples that had their own long history and are today evaluated as world treasures. However, as both methodology and the historical system were directly borrowed from the West, the Japanese reaction remained limited in scope. I can tell you when a Japanese historiography related to architecture first began. It began at the exact moment when the British architect, William Burges, asked a Japanese architecture student (who was studying Western architecture) about Japan's own ancient architecture, during a discussion in Burges' office in London. Burges was deeply captivated by Japanese traditional art, which was quite fashionable in Europe at that time. He was very knowledgeable on the subject of Japanese art. However, this student, named Kingo Tatsuno knew nothing about his own building traditions – and that caused him some embarrassment. After he returned home, he became dean of Tokyo Imperial University and initiated a course on the his-

tory of Japanese architecture, without any indigenous precedents. It was only fifteen years after that conversation between Burges and Tatsuno that Fletcher's book was published. At that time, there was no corresponding study of history in China or Korea. So I want to acknowledge a sense of debt to the British scholar.

However, in spite of the value of Fletcher's text, it must be acknowledged that Fletcher's famous tree of evolution gave the West the position as the tree's trunk to transmit architectural norms from the root and to the branches.

Further, it is hardly deniable that by treating Europe as the only region equipped with a notion of history, the book presents a Eurocentric view of architecture.

I have to consider that Fletcher's "Globalization" was quite close to the position of imperialistic international politics of the time – that is, the separation of those assimilating other cultures and those being assimilated.

Turning to a more recent situation, for example the Japanese architectural production by Kenzo Tange a few decades ago or Tadao Ando at the present, these architects are recognized as engaging in critical regionalism by both Tzonis and Frampton. This reflects the reality of contemporary international politics: Japan joined the imperialist sphere in the first part of this century and still occupies a prominent position as one of the most powerful centers of globalizing capitalism. This remains true, I believe, in spite of the fact that Ando is known as an architect resisting a capitalistic culture based on mass consumption.

Mind you, I am not complaining that I should have been put in the morning session. I only consider it worth noting that we continue to have a cultural boundary that is still determined politically, even in this age of Globalization.

The problem of an implied distinction between regionalism and vernacular is that it separates our discussion by a lunch break. And this provides us quite an interesting argument from my point of view; if we are to suppose there could be a critical regionalism for the moment, we can also, in a similar vein, suggest that there could be a critical vernacular (or "critical vernacularism"). But certainly, to suggest the idea of a "critical vernacular" would be silly. Although I am generally disparaging regarding the prefix "critical" anyway, everyone must agree that the proposition is inconsistent. I am not merely playing with words. I want to show that cultural politics subtly intervene regarding the possibility of associating this prefix with the two notions. If we would agree that Japanese architects could work and think in a critical regionalist way, isn't it also possible for the other architects called upon to speak on the subject of vernacular during the session *Global Vernacular* today? Surely, my Asian and African colleagues

might claim that they can indeed work in a "critical vernacularist" vein. However, we should be more careful of this, because the categorization of "critical" itself is, like that of "historical" by Fletcher, an invention of the West – the same West that also invented the notion of "Internationalism" which I will return to in a moment. To say "yes" to critical regionalism too immediately and too easily might lead us into a trap. This notion of "critical" might be critical only within a Western context, although this might be passed off as a global context. In claiming this notion of Globalism, we should take account of the possibility of acknowledging the present reality: Global capitalism is governed by industries from several so-called advanced countries, including Japan.

Consider, for example, the notion of the "International Style" which was the subject of a session yesterday. We should not forget the historical fact that this notion was invented to shift the cultural center of gravity within modern architecture from its "real" center in Europe to that relatively underdeveloped county, the U.S., and to capture a living movement in Europe as a style, so as to modify it into a commodity appropriate to the silent space of the museum. The "International Style" was an American rationale, although it was advocated as a global standard.

Let us turn here to our subject, that is, the vernacular. At the same time as the today commonly referred to as the "International Style" exhibition (officially, "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition") in New York, Bernard Rudofsky organized a show on vernacular architecture in Berlin. He proposed to have this show in the Museum of Modern Art in New York – but ultimately, ten years later it was rejected, based on the idea that these were not suitable materials for a space dedicated to modern art. It was only much later, in 1967, that the show was finally accepted by the museum and it achieved its great success as the well-known "Architecture without Architects" exhibition. It was only following this that the assimilation of vernacular things could be considered significant and, more straightforwardly, could be commodified by the West, in spite of much earlier individual efforts by architects such as Le Corbusier. We have no guaranty that this is only a story from the past and that it isn't being repeated today.

Do we have such thing as a global standard? It is a type of question that is quite hard to answer. This is not necessarily because individual regions hold their own differences. If I may offer one historical example, especially in East Asian countries historically influenced by Buddhist culture, we often see modern, concrete buildings with modified traditional roof shapes on top.

These shapes differ from region to region. But as a logical type, they are the same. In Japan, this type of design, normally called the "Imperial Crown Style"

was done throughout the thirties and early forties, and the buildings are thus often associated with an ideology of authoritative militarism. During this period, Japanese elites advanced the ideology of "the Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere". It was an extension into the whole territory of Asia, based on the earlier idea of unification and equality, held among five different nations in Far East Asia: Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China and Mongolia. This was advocated as an official ideology to liberate Asian colonial countries from the West. It was a limited form of Globalism, presented as a Pan-Asianism. However, the reality was that Japan compelled its own standard on its neighbors. Thus, buildings with a traditional roof seated on a Western frame were built not only in Japan, but also in the Northeast area of China (then called Manchuko), built by Japan. In the original, the roofs were of course Japanese. However, these were replaced with more "Manchurian-looking" forms in the transplanted version. The irony lies in that buildings of this type were also built in areas that were not invaded by Japan, to symbolize their national identity in resistance to Japan. The relations between Globalism as Pan-Asianism and Japan's regional hegemony is highly instructive as a historical lesson. Modern buildings reflected the circumstances of modern imperialism – that is, their style may look out-of-date, but they reflect a very modern political situation. In this sense, the buildings are perhaps similar to Western postmodernism, with its classical composition or details. And also in the West such buildings are associated with both Fascism and leftist populism. I am not sure if you like them or not, but we can come to some coherent conclusions regarding these buildings, regardless of local differences.

However, in rare cases, we still witness something that is totally beyond our capacity to judge. In Japan, communication with other Asian countries is growing considerably, and this includes architectural exchanges and research on Asian buildings or settlements of vernacular structures. Once, I happened to find the work of an Indian architect in an exhibition on Asian architects. They looked like Hindu buildings or vernacular buildings, never modern ones, but were yet different from traditional structures. They seemed obviously separate from postmodern designs. The work appeared somehow attractive, but it might have been mere exoticism that moved me. I was not sure. I simply realized I was not equipped with any standard to judge those works. I could not even judge whether they absorbed tradition in a "critical" way. Such buildings might be disappearing; that they didn't look modern might imply that. They might be close to vernacular buildings in this sense. I could not make a judgement even on this point. I still cannot say if their loss is something to be missed.

We Japanese are much too accustomed to hearing Westerners with good will expressing regret

regarding the loss of ancient and beautiful Japan. But this case, where I looked at a culture I had no context to understand was very much beyond me. For this reason, I should repeat my question as to whether a global standard really exists, even while recognizing that it is very hard to answer.

One of the most influential architects in the world who would definitely say "yes" to this question of a global standard is Rem Koolhaas. He is far from a critical regionalist. He is probably not even a critical internationalist. He is very intelligent in this respect, like Mephistopheles. It goes without saying that he is one of the most ardent advocates of the notion of "Globalism". His text, titled *Generic City* provides us with an interesting argument. Interestingly, he rejects judgment of good or evil, following or parodying Nietzsche. What he calls a "generic city" also exists today in Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa, mostly around the equator. We, architects from these territories outside the West, should we be pleased and flattered by this observation? Actually, one of the most fashionable things among young Japanese architects is to follow Robert Venturi's early ideas, and to learn from existing contemporary vernacular environments in, for example, Tokyo. These vernacular structures are, according to some architects, "the result of an honest division of urban situational needs" and "proceed from purely practical matters". Among them are the products of large industries and individual decisions by private clients without any consideration of harmonious scale, aesthetics, or social relevancy. Only the economy is in command. These are something that would have been totally rejected as foci of the city a few decades ago. But critical positions today are completely altered, even without any drastic operations on the city such as by the architects Kenzo Tange or the Metabolists of 60s. Apparently there is no critical judgment among young people; they simply affirm reality. Both the charm and danger of vernacular architecture, unlike what is seen with regionalism, resides here.

Of course their's is nothing other than a Japanese version of the Generic City noted by Koolhaas. However, we might have to add that the interest of Japanese architects in what was then called industrial vernacular and the assimilation of its flavor into architecture had been almost a tradition since the 1960s. This might have been a way to be free from the political and nationalistic associations that accompany the adoption of more authentic – shall we say "historical", following Fletcher? – styles of the past. It was a sort of criticism towards modern architecture which was deeply involved with the mechanics of capitalism. The work of Professor Osamu Ishiyama is among these. But in Japan, he is usually classified as vernacular and an Asian-oriented architect and I am categorized as a Western-oriented architect. Of course this is just a label, nothing more than that.

Returning to the subject of Koolhaas, I myself have no intention of denying the fact that his argument is very powerful and this offer from our contemporary Mephistopheles looks quite attractive. But while some are enchanted with this new fascination, still I have witnessed local resistance to the impacts of global capitalism on contemporary vernacular. In a symposium held in Tokyo on the subject of Asian urbanism, Mr. Koolhaas acted as a moderator and invited influential persons from other Asian countries. Many of the presentations manifested an anxiety about the new reality of globalization and the regions possible futures. These presentations formed a striking contrast with Koolhaas remarks, regarding what he recognized as fantastic in Asia. Fascination in local issues does not necessarily guarantee an interest in the positions held by local people. It still remains uncertain whether an interest in vernacular things, even when totally genuine, does not eventually form part of the strategies of global capitalism, establishing a new kind of commodity for the West. This suggests that we do not yet have a unanimous global standard.

Actually, interest in the existing townscape held by young Japanese architects looks like some sort of perverse tourism. And whenever Japanese cities are

featured in the Western architectural press recently, they always publish photos of this reality, or a part of reality, devoid of any sense of a classically harmonious townscape. The enthusiasm towards "small Koolhaas" seen in Japan might be no more than a reflection of the view from the outside. Exoticism, which used to be attracted to old, serene and aestheticized Japan, is now inverted towards a contemporary scene of chaos. Vernacular structures have become theme park variations.

Finally, I am reminded of the arguments Edward Said put forth in *Orientalism*. What he called "Orientalism" was generated by what the Oriental people did not have. They were deprived of the capacity to represent themselves; Westerners did it instead. Of course to think of architecture and to design it or talk of it is a kind of cultural representation. We should overcome the fallacies of *Orientalism* when discussing Globalism in architecture and urbanism. But it is hard, very hard, either in the West or elsewhere.

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