Inheritance and Characteristics of Bullfighting in Japan

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Key Words : bullfighting, traditional culture, social relationship, tourism, amusement

I  Introduction : History of Japanese Bullfighting

This paper has two purposes. One is to find the factors that Japanese bullfighting which originated as an amusement during the agricultural off–seasons has continued to exist as a traditional event until now. The other is to show the significance and characteristics of Japanese bullfighting in comparison to foreign, especially Spanish, bullfighting.

There are two kinds of bullfighting in the world. In one of them, a man fights a bull. It occurs in several European countries such as Spain, France, and Portugal, and some South American countries that were Spanish colonies, such as Mexico, Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru. In the other kind of bullfighting, two bulls fight. It is well–practiced in East Asian countries such as Japan, China, and South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam; it also occurs in Bangladesh and Turkey. In Spanish bullfighting, the bulls are inevitably killed. In bullfighting in Asian countries including Japan, however, the game is over when either bull betakes himself to flight. Therefore, the bull will never be killed. In Japan, the performance of a bullfight is compared to the traditional sport, sumo. Japanese bull fighting could be characterized as contest of strength rather than a fight. The people within the ring do not fight the bull but facilitate him to fight to win and, therefore, they are called facilitators (Figure 1).

“Chojugiga,” which was painted between the 12th and 13th century is the oldest record about Japanese bullfighting. It originated as a humble amusement for people in agricultural villages. People enjoyed seeing the draft bulls in their cattle camp measuring strength against each other with their horns, and they made their bulls do the same with the next–door neighbor’s bulls in order to increase their neck strength. Such practices developed into the event of bullfighting. During the Edo period, bullfighting became more and more popular and was most popular from the Meiji Era to the Taisho Period. After World War II, it experienced a ban by GHQ, but a resurrection followed. However, it declined in the 1970s—the high economic growth period—because agriculture and forestry were mechanized and draft oxen were no longer raised. Bullfighting died out completely in Amamioshima by the 1950s and in Hachijojima and Kamaishi.
City by the 1990s. At present, bullfighting occurs in only six districts in Japan: Kuji City of Iwate Prefecture, Chuetsu District of Niigata Prefecture, Oki of Shimane Prefecture, Nanyo District of Ehime Prefecture, Tokunoshima of Kagoshima Prefecture, and Okinawa Prefecture (Main Island, Ishigakijima, and Yonagunijima) (Figure 2). Draft oxen were used in bullfights. Now bulls are bred exclusively for bullfighting, without neutering them.

The author’s interest lies in discovering why people continue bullfighting and feeding bulls exclusively used for bullfighting at a time when draft oxen are no longer bred. In what way has bullfighting continued? What significance does it have in our time? Geertz studied cockfighting in Bali. He revealed that the cocks’ owners were fighting with each other through their fighting cocks, and he indicated that the social relationship between people was reflected in their cockfights. Hence, this paper also focuses on the actors of bullfighting, including the bull owners who are central to bullfighting, and shows the social relationships created by bullfighting. In this event, bull owners and actors play the most important roles. In addition to them, the author also focuses on the bull owners’ families and neighbors because he attaches a high value to the succession of this event to the next generation and the background of the districts where it is practiced.

This paper presents bullfighting in the Nanyo District of Ehime Prefecture, Oki of Shimane Prefecture, and Tokunosima of Kagoshima Prefecture as case examples, in which the key factors that keep up bullfighting in each district are indicated. Its relationship with sight–seeing, orientation as a traditional event, support from the local government, and aspect as an amusement event are specially highlighted. Next, this paper emphasizes on the difference in folkways connected to bullfighting in these districts and their nation–wide intercommunion through it. Subsequently, the characteristics of Japanese bullfighting are discussed through a
comparison with Spanish bullfighting. Last, the significance of Japanese bullfighting is considered.

II Bullfighting and Sight-seeing in the Nanyo District

Nowadays, bullfighting games are periodically held in three places: Uwajima City, former Tsushima Town, and Ainan Town. In this district, sight-seeing is a key factor for the inheritance of bullfighting. A number of governing bodies have competed and cooperated with each other to continue bullfighting by converting it into a sight-seeing event and relationships with the local governments. Uwajima City is a central city of wealth in the Nanyo district. In 1975, it constructed a municipal bullfighting arena, making it the first city across the country to convert bullfighting into a sight-seeing event, and therefore, bullfighting in Uwajima City is the most famous in Japan. However, since the 1970s, the number of bulls bred for bullfighting has decreased, and today, they borrow more than 90 percent of the bulls used in bullfights from other areas. At the same time, the local government of Ainan Town gave priority to counteract
low populations since they suffered from depopulation, rather than convert bullfighting into a sight–seeing event. Bull owners barely received support from the local government for the operation of bullfighting. However, they voluntarily built a governing body to continue to hold bullfights, displaying the fights in a conventional open–air bull ring to the local audience. The governing bodies of Uwajima City and Ainan Town rivaled each other some time ago. Nonetheless, the bull owners of Ainan Town now make their bulls enter bullfighting events in Uwajima City in support of its bullfighting. Uwajima City is famous for its bullfighting but does not have so many bulls, whereas bullfighting in Ainan Town is not so famous but popular among the local people and there are many bulls. The reason why bull owners in different areas can help each other is because they have operated their own bullfighting taking advantage of their respective characteristics. For the inheritance of a traditional event, sight–seeing is an important fact, and the priority lies in how its actors deal with its conversion into a sight–seeing show.

Each bullfighting–governing body consists of bull owners, facilitators, and their supporters. Among other things, the emotional ties between bull owners and facilitators strengthen their unity. The relationship between them is one of the closest contacts among actors. A bull owner only asks trustworthy persons to be facilitators for his bull because it is believed that the game depends on the skill of the facilitators. Facilitators volunteer to cheer their familiar bull owner’s bull heedless of the dangers of being injured. They have a deep confidential relationship. The cause to tie up them is not consideration such as money but their everyday association for years. Facilitators help their bull owners care for the bull. A bull owner invites his bull’s facilitators into his house to treat them after the bullfighting games are over. They have a drink together and a pleasant chat on bullfighting topics. They enhance their relationship of trust through the sharing of such time. A bull owner has many supporters in addition to his facilitators, for example, other familiar bull owners, friends, neighbors, etc. Because they go to bullfighting games, the bull owner enters to cheer him, the audience increases. Before the games, they give the bull owner a gratuity hoping that he will win. In return the bull owner gives a dinner to treat them after the bullfighting games ; many bull owners, facilitators, and supporters become acquainted and close at such dinners.

The factors for the continued existence of bullfighting in the Nanyo District are summarized below. Sight–seeing has had a great impact on the history of bullfighting in the two areas. It is true that converting bullfighting into a sight–seeing event has been useful for increasing the number of visitors to bullfighting games. However, just such conversion is not enough. The efforts made by bull owners who have operated bullfighting in their respective areas depending on the circumstances, results in the continued existence of bullfighting. The operation of bullfighting involves not only bull owners but also many people including facilitators, supporters, etc. They strengthen their unity through daily association. The human relationships they form through bullfighting are the most important for the inheritance of bullfighting.

III Bullfighting : a Traditional Event in Oki

Sightseeing has been an important factor in the preservation of bullfighting in the Nanyo district. However, the author has indicated that it is not the sole factor. What are the factors in addition to this ? This section studies the factors that keep bullfighting alive in Oki.

In Oki, pasturing cattle was well–practiced since the Kamakura period. According to legend, Oki’s bullfighting was introduced by the people of this island to comfort Gotoba, a retired
empire, who was exiled to Oki. At present, bullfighting is held in the three places of Saigo Town, Goka, and Tuma villages. Local government support toward bullfighting in Oki varies widely from that of the Nanyo district. The local governments in the latter deliver cash subsidies to the governing bodies and commit the operation of bullfighting to the care of the bull owners. In contrast to this, the local governments of Oki are more actively involved in the operation because bullfighting is highly appreciated as traditional culture by the people of this island and the local governments feel that bullfighting revitalizes local communities. Each local government provides a wide variety of support according to the characteristics of bullfighting in their respective territory. Bullfighting in these local towns and villages can be characterized by their dominant factor: tradition or sight-seeing. Saigo Town, the most populous in Oki, lays stress on sight-seeing. Its government constructed a dome-shaped bullfighting arena so that the audience can attend bullfights in all weather. For tourists, this arena periodically holds bullfights that are not fought to the finish. The audience in the dome pays to see bullfights; therefore, bull owners can receive performance fees. However, bullfighting games to which bull owners are attached are those that are held in the Tsuma and Goka villages. These bullfighting games are held without charging, and 80 to 90 percent of the spectators are people from this island. Therefore, bull owners enter their bulls in these games without receiving a performance fee. However, they are proud of the traditional folkways of bullfighting that is celebrated in these villages. Bullfighting in these two villages is dedicated to their shrines. The parade of all participating bulls walking in a
dignified manner around the ring before the fights is a sight to see (Figure 3). In Tsuma village in particular, the bull owners are to go to the sacred waterfall to purify themselves on the eve of the bullfighting games. They take home water of the fall and make their bulls drink it wishing that they will not get hurt. The local governments provide detailed assistance to preserve such folkways of bullfighting. It includes setting an environment in which bull owners can easily in raise their bulls. Specifically, the authorities subsidize part of the fund for purchasing calves to rear as bulls and construct public bull barns.

Elementary school children learn about their local culture as part of the integrated study program, and bullfighting is one of the subjects. Children of certain primary schools visit a bull shed to feed and sketch the bulls, while other primary schools take the children to bullfighting games.

Let us study the bull owners’ activity. There are 43 bull owners in Oki. Most of them are engaged in professions that have no relation to livestock raising such as public service, construction, manufacture, and working in the service sector. They care for their bulls for two to three hours every day. Not only feeding and shed cleaning but also bull-walking are important daily duties. They gather together with their bulls every weekend to exercise their fighters. After the exercise they enjoy exchanging information and dining together while watching their bulls.

The most important opportunity to establish close ties is during bull buying and selling. A bull owner who has found a good bull at a bullfighting game or exercise asks its owner to sell it to him. This trade features that a large heart in the way of being bull owners of the buyer and seller is valued more than the price of the bull. The buyer visits the seller’s house and persuades him to sell the bull by showing him how much he appreciates it.

Appreciating a bull leads to appreciating its owner. On the other hand, the seller examines the buyer’s experience and skills as a bull owner to determine if he deserves to own his dear bull. The conclusion of such a trade means that both the parties acknowledge each other as full-fledged bull owners. A bull owner says that selling his bull is very much like giving his daughter in marriage. Fighting bulls are traded not only within the same hamlet, village, or town but also across the whole island. There are two bull owners who had been on nodding terms with each other before they made a deal because they lived far from each other. However, after the trade they have become familiar with each other if they are brothers. Through bull trades, many bull owners on the island establish new relationships among themselves.

In bull fighting games, an important role is played by not only the bull owners but also their families and neighbors. The bull owners hand out leaflets before the bullfighting games. They list the names of the entry bulls and their owners’ names and addresses. The neighbors of these bull owners find that they are going to make their bulls fight and bring gratuities to the bull owners’ home. People who live in the same hamlet as the bull owner present sake, and those who live in different hamlet confer money. The bull owner holds a dinner on the eve of the bull fighting games and invites the people who have given him gratuities. Many of the banqueters are people who have presented sake to the bull owner. Presenting sake as a gratuity means that the visitors bring the sake they are to drink at the banquet in advance. The banqueters familiarize themselves with each other while holding a conversation predicting the winners of the bull fighting games. They become supporters of the bull owner. The bull fighting game opens with the ceremony of the bulls entering the ring. Bull owners followed by their supporters and the bulls then go round within the ring. They march while singing “Sumojinku,” a folk song from Oki. After the games, regardless of winning or losing, the bull owners hold a banquet for their
supporters to thank them for their cheer.

A bull owner’s wife and neighboring women prepare the banquet. They make a wonderful dinner while having a nice chat. The people who appear on the center stage as bull owners and facilitators are male. However, without the women who prepare for the banquet, a bullfighting event cannot be held. The cooperation of women is indispensable for keeping bullfighting alive. Entering a bull into a game requires lots of money and the cooperation of many people. If a bull owner makes his bull enter a game frequently, he would impose a strain on his family and neighbors. Thus, bull owners in Oki have organized bullfighting clubs. A bullfighting club consists of a number of bull owners, facilitators, and supporters. They raise bulls and make them enter games on a conjoint basis. A bullfighting club has various members of different habitations and ages including high school students and people in their 20s. New bull owners and facilitators come into existence through the activity of such clubs.

In Oki, various people have relationships with each other through bullfighting. Bull owners find friends through the trade of bulls. Their families and neighbors become even closer than ever by supporting them. In Oki, bullfighting creates social relationships among the people of the island, in addition to their blood and local ties.

IV  Tokunoshima: Where Bullfighting as an Amusement, Takes Root in its Soil

The important factors for the inheritance of bullfighting are sight–seeing in the Nanyo district and traditions in Oki. The local governments in these districts have actively supported bullfighting in order to promote their territories. Bullfighting in Tokunoshima is more thriving than any area in Japan, even though its government gives it very little support. Let us study the factors that support bullfighting in Tokunoshima.

In Tokunoshima, sugarcane has been cultivated since around 1600. Even now, the main industries in this island are sugar cane cultivation and sugar manufacturing. On this island, people began using cattle for farming and sugar milling around 1000 years ago. They suffered rule by the Satsuma Clan rule that collected a massive amount of brown sugar lump as customs from them. Bullfighting was their sole amusement for them.

At present, there are about 500 fighting bulls in Tokunoshima. No municipality in Japan has more than that. Differing from the authorities of the Nanyo district and Oki, the government in this island does not provide economic aid to bullfighting. The first reason is that sightseeing is not the principal industry in this island. Tokunoshima receives a fewer tourists compared to other southern islands such as Okinawa and Amamioshima. Therefore, supporting bullfighting does not bring in big economical advantages. The second reason is that this island has people who bet money on bullfighting. Therefore, some islanders do not appreciate bullfighting as their traditional culture to be proud of. Opinions of the islanders are divided on whether bullfighting is a good or ugly culture. In such circumstances, it is difficult for the local government to provide public support to bullfighting by using taxpayers’ money.

Then how do they operate bullfighting? Since bullfighting games attract 2,000 to 3,000 spectators every bullfighting games, a lot of gate money is obtained. The islanders account for more than 90 percent of the audience. The tourists are less than 10 percent. The islanders have a passion for bullfighting as a familiar amusement. Bullfighting in Tokunoshima is performed not for tourists but the islanders (Figure 4).

One of the characteristics of bullfighting in Tokunoshima is that it is popular with not only
adults but also children and the young people. They help their parents and neighborhood bull owners care for their bulls while having fancies of owning their own bulls. A bull shed is high and junior school students’ gathering spot. They care for bulls while deepening exchanges among the same generation. According to them, boys who are good in handling a bull are popular with girls at school. Some high school students say that caring for a bull is their date. However, public high schools forbid their students to raise a bull or engage in bullfighting as a facilitator with their school regulations. These high schools say “Bullfighting is an amusement for adults. Their students should give it their all in study and club activity rather than bullfighting.” In contrast, a private high school has formed a bullfighting club. Students belonging to this club actually raise bulls and make them enter bullfighting games. The schoolmaster insists “Bullfighting serves as a source of encouragement for our students. It should be incorporated into our education as local traditional culture.” The public and private schools are contrasting in the attitude of thinking of bullfighting in education. One can argue that this reflects the islanders’ perspectives on bullfighting.

Whether or not the schools appreciate bullfighting, many children help their parents and neighborhood bull owners care for their bulls. They learn good manners, doing best for others, loving their home town, etc., from bull owners through how to handle bulls. Raising a bull is an experience that they cannot obtain at home or school. A bull shed is also a ground for area education. Many high school graduates leave the island for proceeding to higher education or

Figure 4. A bullfighting game in Tokunoshima.
getting employed. However, many of them return to the island to engage in bullfighting work. They say that they are drawn to bullfighting in the island rather than to the city life. They resume their life in the island and pass down bullfighting to children as they inherit it.

Children can get involved in bullfighting in other ways. One way is to participate in the cheering group of a bull owner. Cheering groups are formed toward bullfighting games. A number of people often have a single bull in partnership. And their families, friends, and neighbors root for them. So, a cheering group sometimes has more than 100 members. Figure 5 shows a cheering group for a bull named “Totsugeki Chiwawa” (Dashing Chihuahua). The member of a cheering group all wear towels printed with the name of a bull they cheer. A cheering group usually includes many women and children. Wives of bull co-owners get acquainted through their husbands’ cheering group. After the bullfighting games they rooted for, they associate with each other in everyday life other than bullfighting, talking with each other about their family matter and having gossip. The ties between these wives are as strong as those between their husbands. A daughter of a bull owner said, “Bullfighting is part of my everyday life since my father has raised bulls from when I was a child. Bullfighting is cute. I’d like to marry a bull owner in the future.” Children and women belonging to a cheering group will increase actors of bullfighting in the future.

What significance does winning or losing in bullfighting in Tokunoshima have? The moment a bull wins, the member of his cheering group run in the ring to dance and sing. At the same time, the people of the loser’s cheering group leave the arena with their bull drooping their heads. When a bull wins, the islanders praise its owner for his effort and luck. However, even the strongest bull bought at a dear price by a bull owner sometimes loses. In contrast, a no-name bull reared from when he was a calf sometimes wins. A bull owner receives respect if his bull wins even if he is poor. A victory in a bullfighting game has social values. Tokunoshima is famous for ferocious election races. Although hostile relationships in an election and bullfighting are analogous, they differ vastly. Since an election touches people’s interest, relatives, and friends sometimes must contest with each other. However, a bull owner can select freely his opponent. Therefore, he does not contest with his familiar persons. And when the fighting is over, he becomes friends with the opponent. Bullfighting increases not enemies but friends. Bullfighting in Tokunoshima has almost nothing to do with sightseeing. In addition, it is not given assistance for a traditional event from the local government. However, its actors love and are proud of it. Affection for bullfighting is also that for the island. Young people return from the city to get involved in bullfighting and live permanently in the island. Bullfighting in Tokunoshima is a traditional culture that is deeply rooted in the hometown.

Figure 5. A cheering group for a bull named “Totsugeki Chiwawa”.
V  Differences among Bullfighting in the above Districts and Intercommunion among them

In the above, bullfighting in the three districts has been discussed. Although bullfighting in these districts is similar, their actors supporting it differently from district to district. The factors to keep bullfighting alive are also different. Part of the amusement aspect of bullfighting is summarized below. It relates to gambling connected to bullfighting. It is less well known that there are people who gamble on bullfighting. The reason is that it is illegal. However, it is true that gambling is a factor that booms bullfighting. The relationship between bullfighting and gambling differs by district. Some people in the Nanyo District, Tokunoshima, and Okinawa gamble on bullfighting. A few people are engrossed in such gambling. Since they bet borrowed money, they could not pay back their debt if their bulls lose. In the past, there were people who fled by night and lost their houses due to their tens of debt. Thus, some people in these districts hate bullfighting. It is difficult for the local government in a district where some people gamble on bullfighting to support it. It is also difficult for school to teach its pupils bullfighting. It is true that gambling booms bullfighting. But it prevents many residents from getting familiar with bullfighting. Gambling on bullfighting cuts both ways for its inheritance. Compared with this, people in Oki, Kuji City, and Chuetsu District do not gamble on bullfighting. Oki’s people regard bullfighting as a sacred rite. And they are proud of bullfighting free from gambling. In the first place, bull owners in Chuetsu do not make their bulls fight to the finish. They pull both bulls by using ropes before either bull flees (Figure 6). The reason why they draw the game is to honor both the bull owners. Since they end without a winner, nobody can gamble on it.

The folkways of bullfighting in these districts are so largely different. Therefore, bull owners in these districts have to exchange information with each other. And they began to deal with bulls between the districts since 1970s when nationwide means of transportation developed. They recently use Internet to intensify the exchange of information. They inaugurated large-scale annual events, National Bullfighting Summit and National Bullfighting Games, which promote nationwide intercommunion. The summit was proposed by Oki in 1998 and is held once a year. Officials of the local governments and representatives of governing bodies of all the districts
staging bullfighting attend the summit to exchange opinions on bullfighting preservation measures. Each staging district rotates to organize the summit. The function of the summit is to promote not only information exchange at the local government level but also interactions among actors of bullfighting. For example, the 2006 summit in the Chuetsu district was conducted as follows: this summit was followed by nation-wide bullfighting games in which bulls of Tokunoshima fought those of Chuetsu. Whereas bulls fight to the last in Tokunoshima, the game is drawn in Chuetsu. How to work out the difference of the rules of the two districts? Eventually, the ring entering ceremony of bulls was performed in the Tokunoshima style in which trumpets and drums are actively played, and the games were drawn in accordance with the Chuetsu rule.

Chuetsu and Tokunoshima largely differ in opinion about bullfighting. About winning or losing, they say “No fun without winning or losing (Tokunoshima)” or “Winning or losing is a simple binary world. A draw makes us deeply amuse ourselves with bullfighting. (Chuetsu)” About victory they say “Expressing sweets of victory with the whole body is our highest pleasure. We can become friends with the opponent through the game. We never perform bullfighting if we felt the bitterness when defeated (Tokunoshima)” or “If one accidentally wins, we feel unhappy with each other. If we win, we feel happy on the inside but choke back our happy faces considering the opponent (Chuetsu).” Whereas Tokunoshima creates a winner and loser, Chuetsu makes both sides look good. The bullfighting summit gives them a chance to understand each other. After the bullfighting games, Tokunoshima’s bull owners were entertained in a Chuetsu’s bull owner’s home (Figure 7). Drinking and holding a conversation, one of the former said, “I have understood that we share burning love for bulls though our bullfighting styles differ.” Another bull owner from Tokunoshima said, “I feel that Chuetsu’s people are more strongly concerned over winning or losing than Tokunoshima’s.” If the future bullfighting summits provide actors of bullfighting in various districts staging it with an opportunity to understand each other instead of a ritual meeting, the intercommunion among these districts will develop further.

VI Comparison with Spanish Bullfighting

In the above, many kinds of bullfighting in Japan have been presented. Next, we indicate the
characteristics of Japanese bullfighting through a comparison with Spanish bullfighting. Bullfighting in a certain country reflects the relationship between humans and nature in that country. When people broke in the European continent, nature was very terrible. They had to conquer it. They secured food by hunting animals. They think that they are given animals to be used by them. Garry Marvin said that Spanish bullfighting is emblematic of the struggle between humans and nature. Bulls in bullfighting represent fierce nature. Therefore, humans must kill fighting bulls. In many cases, bullfighting occurs in the city. Fighting bulls are raised in country pastures and brought into the city. Humans bring bulls grown in the world of nature into the world of humans and kill them there. It is a rite that symbolizes that humans conquer nature. Spanish bullfighting is a culture of the city.

Compared to this, Japan was an agrarian society. People plowed a rice field using oxen and horses. The government forbade its people to eat meat. Cattle were valuable assets of peasants and companions working together with them. Therefore, they treated them gently as if they were their family. Japanese bullfighting is a contest of strength by bulls. Bulls represent people's wealth and might. Bull owners contest in the strength of their bulls. Japanese bullfighting symbolizes an interhuman struggle.

Bullfighting in these two countries symbolizes different things. Recently, some animal rights associations argue against bullfighting of either country. They affirm that bullfighting is cruel to the animals, saying that people kill bulls not to eat them but to amuse themselves or force bull to amuse themselves. However, important at this point is not to discuss which culture is cruel. We can learn the difference in thinking of animals through various styles of bullfighting.

Then let us study humans' attitude of mind to animals in each culture. Animals that are the most familiar to humans are pets such as dogs and cats. If one sees a bull being a pet, bullfighting would seem very cruel. However, Japanese bull owners do not see their bulls as pets. Their bulls are their companions working together with them. This is a reminder of the age in which people plowed a rice field by using cattle. Bull owners treat their bulls very kindly. They must fight in return. Bull owners insist that their fighting bulls are happier than beef cattle. The latter are raised solely for being eaten by people. They are fattened up forcefully in a small space and killed at the end. They have no names. They have no opportunity to demonstrate their individualities. Compared to this, all the Japanese fighting bulls have their names. Bull owners raise their bulls developing their individualities. People not only raise bulls but learn about life through raising them. Strong bulls are respected by people and will also be lauded after their death.

Spanish bullfighting seems cruel in the eyes of Japanese bull owners because bulls are intentionally hurt and killed. However, as described above, Spanish bullfighting is a show reproducing a do—or—die struggle between humans and nature. Humans have fought with nature to live. In this world, bulls are not humans’ companions. They are deadly foes to be overcome. But people do not enjoy killing them slowly. A matador fights a bull with reverence. Bulls are honored for their bravery and nobleness as collaborators for bullfighting. From the bulls’ standpoint, their agony is immeasurable. However, the author does not want to simply conclude that Spanish bullfighting is cruel because it shows part of a European's thoughts about nature.

One can never know bulls’ true feelings. Therefore, whatever treatment of bulls or whatever thinking of bulls may be complacency after all. However, bullfighting shows us the diversity of people’s attitude toward animals. It provides us with a clue to considering the diversity of the relationships between humans and nature. Through studying two styles bullfighting, we can
compare the histories and cultures that have established these traditional events. The Europeans’ outlook on animals brings down untraversable discontinuity between humans and animals. Compared to this, the Japanese have not been liable to see animals as being inferior to humans. Illuminating the background of the ways of performing bullfighting in such a way will permit the Eastern and Western outlooks on animals and nature to be compared.

VII Conclusion: Inheritance and Characteristics of Bullfighting in Japan

This paper discusses the factors that Japanese bullfighting has continued to exist as a traditional event until now. In the Nanyo district, one of the important factors is the incorporation of sightseeing by its governing bodies. In Oki, the appreciation of bullfighting as a traditional event has kept it alive. In Tokunoshima, bullfighting takes root in the islanders as a local amusement. The main factors differ by district. However, there is the most important common factor. It is the social relationship among actors of bullfighting that keep it alive.

At the end of this paper, bullfighting in Spain is compared to that in Japan. Bulls in Spanish bullfighting symbolize nature. Bulls in it are an enemy of humans. Compared to this, bulls in Japanese bullfighting symbolize humans. A strong bull symbolizes its owner’s power. A battle between bulls is that between people. Therefore, people and bulls make up a team and fight together.

Japanese bullfighting has a characteristic that the Spanish one does not have. It is a social relationship of people centered on their bulls. It is established by a fact that people and bulls live together. They form various social relationships in everyday life through bullfighting. Bullfighting plays a role to connect people. Bull owners get acquainted and familiar with each other through trading bulls. Bull owners and facilitators are tied with a deep confidential relationship. Bull owners, their families and neighbors strengthen the ties among them through cheering their bulls together. Their relationships are not limited within a single district. Intercommunion through bullfighting goes nationwide more than ever. Networks of bullfighting actors will increasingly become widespread across the country. Such a social relationship created through bullfighting is named “Ushi-En.” “Ushi” means a bull and “En,” a relationship. The presence of cattle, which are one of the largest domestic animals and have existed with the Japanese people as companions farming together, and their family deeply gets into people’s life as ever and connects those who use it in the form of bullfighting.

Notes

3) Hiroi, T., Nihon no togyu, Koshi shoin, 1998. (J)
This paper has two purposes. One is to identify the features of Japanese bullfighting, which originated as an amusement during agricultural off-seasons, and has continued to exist as a traditional event up to the present time. The other is to show the significance and characteristics of Japanese bullfighting as compared to foreign, especially Spanish, bullfighting.

The main factors that tend to support the tradition vary by district, for example, as a tourist event, as an appreciation of a traditional event, and as a local amusement. However, there is one overriding common factor. It is the social relationships among the actors engaged in bullfighting that keep it alive. Bull owners get acquainted and become familiar with each other through trading bulls. Bull owners and facilitators are tied together through a deep confidential relationship. Bull owners, their families, and neighbors strengthen the ties among them through cheering on their bulls together.

Bulls in Spanish bullfighting symbolize nature. There, bulls are regarded as an enemy of humans. Compared with this, bulls in Japanese bullfighting symbolize humans. A strong bull symbolizes its owner’s power. A battle between bulls is like that between people. Therefore, people and bulls make up a team and fight together. Japanese bullfighting has a characteristic that the Spanish version does not have, which is a social relationship between people centered on their bulls. Networks of bullfighting actors are increasingly becoming widespread across the country. Such a social relationship created through bullfighting is called ushi-en.

**Key Words**: bullfighting, traditional culture, social relationship, tourism, amusement