

Sakaguchi Ango's Conceptualizations of the Function of Literature in the
Postwar Era

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master
of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Yongfei Yi, B.A.

Graduate Program in East Asian Studies

The Ohio State University

2011

Thesis Committee:

Richard Edgar Torrance, Advisor

Philip C. Brown

Shelley Fenno Quinn

Copyright by

Yongfei Yi

2011

Abstract

Sakaguchi Ango is an important Japanese writer of the postwar era. His ideas are surprisingly resilient, anti-systematic, and fascinating, yet the original concepts formed by these ideas are difficult to apprehend. Despite his popularity in Japan and in light of his prominence in the canon of modern Japanese literature, research on his works in English language scholarship seems insufficient. This thesis examines Ango's conceptualizations of literature in the postwar period and describes their background in terms of Ango's personal history and the history of his time. It explores the ideas that motivated his works and examines the works he is most famous for, his literary and historical essays. It analyzes how Ango discovers the possibilities of literature through his writings in various genres.

Dedication

Dedicated to people who supported me

Vita

2004-2008.....B.A. Japanese, China Foreign Affairs University

2009-2011.....East Asian Studies MA Program, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: East Asian Studies

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Vita.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Biography of Sakaguchi Ango.....	5
Chapter 2: Reconstructing <i>furusato</i> – a Key Term in the Works of Sakaguchi Ango.....	19
Chapter 3: The Literary Exchanges between Sakaguchi Ango and Oda Sakunosuke about the Possibilities of Literature.....	37
Chapter 4: Ango’s Historical Essays – How are Ango’s historical views shown in his historical writings?	46
Conclusion	63
References.....	66

Introduction

Sakaguchi Ango is considered one of Japan's most important writers. He is a fascinating but not widely-studied writer in the English language scholarship concerning modern Japanese literature. He escapes easy classification because his works range from serious fiction to essays, even including travel journals and such popular genres as detective stories. There is considerable scholarship on his works in Japanese.

To what does his reputation in Japan owe? It is the argument here that his popularity especially in the 1950's and today is attributable to a radical aversion to abstraction that existed in tandem with an age that required conceptualizations, whether these be Marxism, Existentialism, Nationalism, or American Consumerism. In response to an untenable position, Ango, as he had done in the prewar period, invented his own abstractions. The originality of these concepts, based on key, emotive Japanese lexical items, seemed fresh and inventive, particularly in a period in which faith in the received ideologies outlined above, was fading.

This thesis examines Sakaguchi Ango's conceptualizations of literature in the postwar period and describes their background in terms of Ango's personal history and the history of his time. It is perhaps inevitable that absolutely original concepts formed by a person such as Ango with an aversion to abstraction must of necessity be impressionistic, contradictory, and difficult to apprehend. Yet his ideas have proved surprisingly resilient. For many young intellectuals from the mid-eighties on, when

totalizing systematic ideologies had clearly failed, it was the anti-systematic, non-totalizing, and even irrational aspects of Ango's "post-modern" ideas that held great appeal.

Despite his popularity in Japan and in light of his prominence in the canon of modern Japanese literature, research on his works in English language scholarship seems insufficient. This study will explore the ideas that motivated his works. It will examine the works he is most famous for, his literary and historical essays, and will analyze how Ango discovers the possibilities of literature in history.

Chapter 1 provides a biography of Sakaguchi Ango, discussing how he became a writer and what elements in his life influenced his works. We will see that Ango's upbringing and early youth was a series of contradictions, that his social position was as a unique outsider. He was born to a wealthy family of the local political elite, a family that lost its wealth. He was provided an elite education but expelled from middle school once. He felt hatred towards his mother, but he actually loved her from his very heart. He always discussed the same issue from different angles. The culmination of these experiences is expressed in two of Ango's essays, "Daraku-ron" and "Daraku-ron II," two of Ango's most influential essays, in which he advances the idea of "degeneracy" (*daraku*), in a dialectical process, as the means for Japan's regeneration after the war.

Chapter 2 discusses *furusato*, a key term in the Ango's works and how this key concept is shaped by Ango's understanding of human nature. As we will see, Ango

continually expanded this term from its original meaning “home region” or “birthplace,” a physical location, to the idea of a return to one’s true self, that one’s inner being is the source, the location of one’s “hometown.” By extension, then the *furusato* is the source of all individual creativity. This rather strained metaphorical association is difficult to follow, but I argue that in historical circumstances in which more and more young people were leaving the countryside for the city, in which war had destroyed the home regions and neighborhoods of the past, this association had great resonance (and retains such resonance today in the sense that fewer and fewer young people have a hometown to return to). In addition, the concept of *furusato* was appealing because free of associations with the West.

In Japanese literary histories, Sakaguchi Ango is classified as a writer of the *burai-ha*, translated by Donald Keene as the Libertine School. Chapter 3 will explore commonalities between Ango and another *burai-ha* writer, Oda Sakunosuke, in order to locate affinities between Ango’s ideas about the possibilities of literature in the context of the postwar period. This chapter illustrates that though the *burai-ha* writers were generally regarded as nihilists, Ango and Sakunosuke were in fact developing unique ideas that worked to remove the barrier between popular and pure literary forms.

In the latter part of his career, Ango turned more and more to history. Chapter 4 will analyze Ango’s historical essays and discover how his historical views are rooted in his understanding of literature and human nature. In this part of the study, we will

examine how Ango, with his aversion to abstraction, undercuts orthodox interpretations of history and attempts to radically re-vision history brought down to the level of narratives about human desire and appetite (*daraku*).

Chapter 1: Biography of Sakaguchi Ango

Sakaguchi Ango was one of the most important writers in Japan during and after World War Two, and his reputation was further enhanced with the “death of ideology” in the 1990s and today. He began his writing career in 1931. However, he came to prominence after Japan was defeated in the Pacific War. He became famous as an essayist in 1946 after he published his well-known essay “Daraku-ron.” To investigate and analyze his life is the first step in understanding Sakaguchi Ango’s literature and in clarifying his place in Japanese literature.

Childhood

Sakaguchi Ango had an unhappy childhood. He was born on October 20, 1906, in Niigata City, Japan. His legal given name was Heigo. His father was Sakaguchi Niichirō, who was a Diet member of the political party Kensei-kai. His mother was Yoshida Asa, who was the second wife of Nichirō. She gave birth to nine children and raised three daughters of Niichirō and his first wife, as well as another adopted daughter. Ango was the fifth son of the family and his birth endangered his mother’s life. Sakaguchi’s family had accumulated wealth from copper mines and rent from cultivated fields. However, when Nichirō took over the family, he spent much of his family’s wealth on his political activities due to his political ambitions.

There was not much of a father-son relationship between Niichirō and Ango. Because of Niichirō’s political activities in Tokyo, he did not have much time to concern

himself with the education of his children. Even when he was at home on rare occasions, he remained focused on political matters and did not pay much attention to his family. The only times he paid attention to Ango was when he wanted Ango to prepare ink for him (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 251).¹ Alienated from his father, Ango felt the lack of paternal love affected his attitude toward life.

At the same time, Ango did not have a good relationship with his mother, Asa. Since Asa had a difficult time taking care of thirteen children without the help of her husband, her life was hard and stressful. Despite that, Asa was also suffering from the somatization disorder. Because of her suffering, she became frustrated and extremely strict with the children. Two of her stepdaughters even tried to poison her. Asa disciplined Ango severely, which made Ango act out against her. However, she was very generous to people outside her family (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 258-259). She acted erratically in her daily behavior and was unpredictable. Ango's idiosyncrasy, later shown in his writings, may have been partly influenced by Asa (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 255). Asa maintained a distance from Ango, which made him more rebellious and uncontrollable. He learned how to steal in primary school and did a lot of things that enraged his mother. He even sold things stolen from his own home (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 259). Nevertheless, his fear of his mother always existed. These unhappy experiences stimulated Ango's

¹ Parenthetical page citations referencing Sakaguchi's works refer to volume and page number of Sakaguchi Ango, *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū*, 17 vols. (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1998-2000).

longing for maternal love. He used to strongly believe that his “real mother” existed elsewhere in the world and kept asking the old housekeeper about his “real mother” (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 254). He even thought about running away from home and committing suicide when he was eight-years old. Later, he realized that she loved him in her own way and that he loved her deeply. The image of a “mother” in Ango’s work was two-fold, cold but gentle. In his short story “Haha,” we can perceive his image of “mother” (Ikoma 9).

Ango entered the Niigata Primary School in the spring of 1913. Even though he was an intelligent child, he showed no interests in his studies, and he was never able to get the highest grades. He always called other children out and played with them until night after he returned home. They ran around in the streets and played at being soldiers. He was the leader of a gang of boys and other boys had to follow what he said. As a well-known troublemaker in his neighborhood, he spent much time fighting with the boys from other towns and always got his clothes tattered. His mother even blocked the door and would not let him in (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 253). Ango showed no talent of writing. He did not get good grades in *sakubun* (composition), and he did not have access to the new kind of children’s literature that was being created in Tokyo. However, he read popular tales about samurai practitioners of ninjutsu and heroic romances (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 252). From those early reading experiences, Ango created his own imaginary world. To immerse himself in the imaginary world he created was the best way to escape

from his real life. On rainy days, he sneaked into the attic in the house and focused on reading *kōdan* (transcribed oral tales) (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 263).

He started to look for his own home in nature. As he indicated, “I found a home and love in the sea, the sky, and the wind” (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 265). He considered nature as a second mother and expressed his feelings toward nature in his prose-poem “*Furusato ni yosuru sankā*” (In Praise of Home, 1931) (Ikoma 13).

Even though Ango had an unhappy childhood, it shaped his personality and built the basis for his idiosyncratic view of life, which influenced his style as a writer.

Youth

After graduating from the Niigata Primary School, Ango enrolled in Niigata Middle School in the spring of 1919. He already had started reading newspapers before he entered middle school. He liked reading *kōdan* stories and other interesting news (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 253). Due to near-sightedness caused by his habit of reading in dark places, he had difficulty seeing teachers’ writings on the blackboard, and he fell behind in the class. After he got his glasses, he began to study hard. However, his classmates made fun of his glasses and broke them one day. Ango was frustrated. He began to skip classes. In the spring of 1922, he failed to enter the next grade. After that, even though his parents hired a tutor to help him, he still continued skipping classes and spending his time outside (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 259-260). One thing that did interest

him was judo class. He founded a group Rokka-kai with two other boys. They skipped classes and played traditional Japanese card games all day. It was during this time that he got the name “Ango,” which became his pen name later (Sekii 284-285). In the autumn of 1922, Ango was permanently expelled from school. Before he was expelled from the Niigata Middle School, he carved in the back of a desk: “Someday I shall be viewed in history as a great failure (Ikoma 18).”

Niichirō took Ango to Tokyo and forced him to enroll in the Buzan Middle School. Ango did not enjoy his new life in Tokyo. The school was not interesting at all to him. He became more and more interested in creative writing. He even wrote to one of his friends in Niigata to express his hope of becoming a novelist. He began to compose plays and waka. In order to gain a better understanding of literature, he started reading novels during this period. The first novel he read in his life was Hirotsu Kazuo’s *Futari no fukō-mono* (Two Unhappy People, 1918) (Ikoma 20). Encouraged by his friend, he read works by Akutagawa Ryunosuke and Tanizaki Jun’ichiro. He also bought the English translations of Chekhov’s works and translated them into Japanese.

In addition to literature, Ango also became interested in religion, especially Buddhism. His father’s death on November 2, 1923, stimulated Ango to study religion. After Niichirō passed away, the family had to move to a tenement house at Oi, Tokyo in the spring of 1925. In order to support the family, Ango decided to become a substitute teacher when he graduated from middle school. He had no desire to go to college since he

disliked studying so much (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 308). In the spring of 1925, Ango became a substitute teacher in charge of the fifth grade at the Ebara Primary School at Shimokitazawa, Setagaya. The children were always fighting and acting rebellious. Ango believed that every rebellious child had an innocent and beautiful spirit within, and he tried to discover those concealed beautiful souls (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 311). Later in his autobiographical novel *Kaze to hikari to hatachi no watashi* (Wind and Light and Myself at Twenty, 1947), he recorded his experiences as a substitute teacher. Ango, for the first time in his life, felt happiness and satisfaction. However, he realized that he needed to look for the truth in life and discover the meaning of unhappiness and suffering in human beings (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 316-317, 320, 324). Therefore, he gave up his happy days as a teacher and became a student of Indian Philosophy at Tōyō University in the spring of 1926. His desire to search for truth in life motivated him to turn to Buddhism.

After enrolling as a student of Indian Philosophy, he studied very hard, reading books on Buddhism and philosophy. He slept only four hours a day, which helped bring about his mental depression. He was suffering from auditory hallucinations and could not concentrate on listening to lectures (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 467-468). Even though he returned to his hometown for a short time, his depression even worsened after he returned to Tokyo. Though Ango had a strong desire to create literature, he could not write a single line. He suffered so much that he wanted to follow Akutagawa Ryunosuke and commit suicide. He wrote that he understood Akutagawa's "vague anxiety" (Ikoma 28). Fortunately, he finally decided to create his own literature as a way to extricate himself

from mental torment. He began to learn foreign languages and read books in foreign languages, which helped him to overcome his mental illness (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 477).

Becoming a Writer

In the spring of 1928, Ango entered the Athenee Francais Private School to learn the French language as a way to cure his nervous depression. He was studying diligently at the French school and also studied Latin and Greek on his own. Gradually, his mental health improved. He almost gave up his dream of being a novelist, and he contemplated going to Paris with the support of his mother's family. However, due to an ominous premonition he had, he gave up going to Paris and graduated from Tōyō University in March, 1930 (Ikoma 31).

Ango started his career as a writer without being influenced by any literary movement (Ikoma 32). In November 1930, Ango began to participate in publishing a literary magazine, *Kotoba*, with some friends he met at middle school and the Athenee Francais. The main goal of this magazine was to translate and introduce French literature (Ikoma 33). Although he was not the originator, as one of the editors of *Kotoba*, Ango found it exciting to evaluate and translate works of other writers. In the first issue, Ango published his translation of Marie Scheikevitch's "Croquis on Proust." In January 1931, with the recommendation of Kuzumaki Yoshitoshi, Ango published his maiden work *Kogarashi no sakagura kara* (From a Wine Brewery Buffeted by Winter Winds) in the second issue. Without plot and conclusion, this "bizarre" story reflects Ango's

uncertainty and confusion in his mind toward both his literature and life. Through heated discussions at editorial meetings, Ango decided to devote himself to literary creation. He realized that literature was the only way that he could express his true feelings.

Kotaba was not continued after the second issue in January, 1931. Its successor, *Aoi Uma*, was published by the Iwanami Bookstore. In the first issue of *Aoi Uma*, Ango published a prose-poem, *Furusato ni yosuru sankā* (In Praise of My Hometown), an essay, *Piero dendōsha* (The Apostle Pierrot), and two translations. The prose-poem, *Furusato ni yosuru sankā* expresses Ango's emotional feelings during his visit to his birthplace, Niigata. He went to see his sister and reminisced about the past. This prose-poem vividly shows Ango's thoughts and emotional feelings with pathos. The essay *Piero dendōsha*, reflects Ango's attitude toward creative writing. Ango stated that farce is an important ingredient in his literature, and a person has the desire to express his feelings through laughter and farce. He showed his talents in both realistic works and unrealistic works. In June, 1931, Ango published a short story *Kaze hakase* (Professor Wind) in the second issue of *Aoi Uma*. *Kaze hakase* is a farcical story told from the perspective of admiring disciple, the voice of a narrator. Professor Wind is like the wind, he exists and does not exist, and he commits suicide or does not, disappearing in a rush of wind at his wedding ceremony. He finally gains revenge against his hated rival, Professor Tako, by infecting with the flu (*kaze*). In this story, Ango adopts an experimental stance in revealing the fictionality and indeterminacy of language in a humorous manner. The

writer and critic Makino Shin'ichi highly praised this work in a special issue of *Bungei Shunjū* (July, 1931), and he became one of Ango's early supporters (Ikoma 41).

After he published *Kaze hakase*, his literary style took a more realistic and serious direction. In September 1931, he published *Kurotani mura* (Kurotani Village) in the third issue of *Aoi Uma*. In this work, Ango depicts Yaguruma Bonta's visit to a friend deep in a mountainous village. There he is seduced by a young woman who is also sleeping with his friend. In his realization of the sex act, Bonta is overcome by a sense of vacuity and the pointlessness of human endeavor. The story reveals how hard it is to strike a balance between the pursuit of spirituality and indulgence in carnal desire. People become lost between truth and decadence. This work was also praised by Makino Shin'ichi, and this praise encouraged Ango a great deal.

Makino also introduced Ango's works to his literary friends. They met once after that and Makino suggested Ango to write a long novel for the new magazine. Although they had different literary styles, they respected each other and appreciated the talent of each other. Because of Makino's help and recommendation, Ango's social circle was widened. He started to write his first long novel, *Takeyabu no ie* for the new magazine *Bunka*. However, he did not finish it due to the discontinuance of the magazine. Later, because of differing views on literature, Ango and Makino stopped seeing each other to discussing literature. However, Makino still regarded Ango as a good friend (Ikoma 47).

During this early period of creative writing, Ango became interested in the famous American writer Edgar Allan Poe. Ango's short stories have been influenced by the style of Poe's works. Ango discovered the "farcial" existed in Poe's works and thought of writing absurd stories by himself (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 99). He published two works – *Gunshū no hito* (A Person in a Crowd, 1932) and *Nusumareta tegami no hanashi* (The Story of a Stolen Letter, 1939)—imitating Poe's writing style. From studying and imitating Poe's style, Ango learned to build a bridge between reality and imagination (Ikoma 55).

In March of 1932, Ango visited his friend Ōoka Shōhei in Kyoto. He met Yada Tsuseko there and fell in love with her. Tsuseko was a beautiful woman with literary talent. She published her short stories in local newspapers and won a prize in a literary competition in 1931. In 1933, Yada joined a literary magazine, *Sakura*, and wrote works for it. Ango was soon deeply hurt when learning of her love affair with another man. He became frustrated and involved with another woman Oyasu, although he was still in love with Yada. In September, 1933, Yada joined a new magazine *Nichireki*, concentrating on improving her own literature. Although Ango was living with Oyasu during that time, he still kept in touch with Yada and wrote letters to her. He decided to end his relationship with Yada in the summer of 1936. In November, 1936, he began writing *Fubuki monogatari* (Tale of a Snowstorm) as an "epitaph" for Yada. Later Ango decided to go to Kyoto and separate himself from Oyasu completely. He settled in Fushimi in 1937 and completed *Fubuki monogatari* in the summer of 1938. In this novel, Ango expressed his

feelings of losing his love. Ango's uncertainty and loneliness in life motivated him to devote himself more fully to his literature world (Ikoma 76).

After he published *Fubuki monogatari*, Ango turned to focusing on historical fiction. He began to write *Kanzan* and *Murasaki dainagon*, which contain humor, romance, and his personal sense of pathos. By exploring history in fiction, Ango was able to discover a certain universality among human beings of the present and past.

Ango moved to the town of Torida in Ibaragi Prefecture in May, 1939. Due to the cold winter in Torida, he moved to Odawara in January, 1940. With his limited productivity, Ango had to be industrious. As he explained in *Rohen yawa-shu* (A Collection of Night Stories Told by the Fireside), he tried to create works dealing with human nature but encountered frustration while doing so. However, on the other hand, he could easily write stories dealing with fantasy (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 247). After having settled in Tokyo again, Ango began to associate with Oi Hirosuke, who was a famous critic and who was in charge of a literary magazine *Gendai Bungaku*. As one of the members of this magazine, Ango contributed to *Gendai Bungaku*.

Associating with *Gendai Bungaku* can be considered as a turning point for Ango. In August 1941, he published one of his most important essays *Bungaku no furusato*, which he contributed to *Gendai Bungaku*. In this essay, Ango presents his understanding of the origin of literature. He claimed: "I would never trust those morals appearing in literature, including the social sense revealed therein, unless they grew in this soil"

(Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 269-270). He states that life is a world of “absolute solitude” (zettai no kodoku). This concept is also displayed in his later works. In *Seishun-ron* (Theory of Youth), Ango wrote: “I curse solitude with all my heart, mind, and strength. Yet, because I live by myself, body and soul, there is nothing other than solitude that saves and comforts me” (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 429).

In March, 1942, he published the essay *Nihon bunka shikan* (Personal View of Japanese Culture). In this essay, Ango opposed the typical idea about “Japanese tradition.” Ango’s pursuit of “convenience” prompts him to defend the Westernized lifestyle of his contemporaries, a lifestyle subjected to increasing suspicion during the war (Dorsey 349). He claimed that what people need is a more convenient way of living rather than traditional beauty and proper aspects. Ango demonstrated his improved skills in striking a balance between rationality and spirituality.

Daraku-ron

In April, 1946, Ango published his most famous and influential essay *Daraku-ron* (Decadence). This essay made him a household name. It is said to have restored power to the people of the postwar country. In *Daraku-ron*, Ango encourages people to be their true selves and find ways to live. Ango refuted the artificial social norms by emphasizing “corruption.” He was irritated by the people who still attempted to maintain the artificial social moral order after World War Two and frustrated by seeing many people’s failing to pursue their true selves. To Ango, the most important thing was human nature. As he

claims in *Daraku-ron*, people should not be afraid of sincerely “corrupting” themselves. This was necessary for a true return to human nature’s true desire (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 59).

The concept of *Daraku-ron* is consistent with *Nihon bunka shikan* and *Seishun-ron*. It had a huge impact on postwar Japanese society. Ango doubted the real meaning of emperor system and denied all established authorities because he believed that it was necessary to rebuild the social order after the war. In Ango’s mind, Japan’s defeat was caused by people’s lack of rationality. As an iconoclast, Ango hoped that Japan could reborn as a new country without the meaningless emperor system. *Daraku-ron* shows the realization of human existence and individualism. During the postwar period from 1946 to 1950, the name *Burai-ha* was given to a group of writers including Ango. They were also called as *Shin-gesaku-ha*. They all shared the belief that the defeat in the war meant a new start for the Japanese people.

In June, 1946, Ango published his most famous short story *Hakuchi* (The Idiot) two months after he published *Daraku-ron*. This short story can be considered as an embodiment of *Daraku-ron*. It deals with the protagonist, Izawa, and a mentally retarded woman who happen to come together during the U.S. fire bombings of Tokyo. In their desperate efforts to survive, Izawa comes to the realization of shared humanity with the woman. The story reveals the importance of people’s self-salvation (both physical and spiritual) during wartime. Human nature, once again is emphasized in this work. After

that, Ango published a series of short stories discussing sexual desire as innate in human nature and the solitude behind it. *Sakura no mori no mankai no shita* (Under the forest of cherry trees in full blossom) and *Ishi no omoi* (Memories of a stone) are two representative works of this period. In August, 1947, he began to write his detective story *Furenzoku satsujin jiken* (The Non-serial Murder Incident) and published the first serial. In October, he married Kaji Michio.

Last Years

Ango started suffering from mental depression from June 1948, after Dazai Osamu committed suicide. In January 1949, Ango was admitted to hospital in Tokyo due to his serious addiction to barbiturates and mental depression. In April 1949, Ango moved to Ito with his wife. He published a series of essays, such as *Ango shin Nihon chiri* (Ango's New Japanese Geography) and *Ango shidan* (Ango's Tales of History), reflecting Ango's individual thoughts on Japanese history. He was active as an essayist and critic during these days. In terms of short stories, Ango published *Yonagahime to Mimio* in June, 1952, his exploration of the history of Hida. In October, 1952, he began writing the serialized novel, *Nobunaga*, stemming from his studies of the Warring States Period. He died from a brain aneurysm at age 48 on February 17, 1955. His posthumous work *Kyōjin isho* (Last Testament of a Mad Man) was published in *Chūō Kōron* in January 1955.

Chapter 2: Reconstructing *furusato* – a Key Term in the Works of Sakaguchi Ango

As can be seen from Ango's life experience, the range of his works is broad, which makes his works escape easy classification. However, there can be no doubt that he was a fascinating spokesman for his time since his process of writing was involved in the social transformations of pre- and postwar Japan. Ever since the publication of his famous essay "Bungaku no *furusato*" (The birthplace of literature) in 1941, *furusato* (birthplace, hometown) has been considered a key term in Sakaguchi Ango's works. As a significant writer of wartime and postwar Japan, Ango reconstructed the concept of *furusato*. Ango's reconstruction of the term is rooted in his understanding of the paradoxical nature of complex human life. This chapter briefly examines the characteristics of Ango's *furusato*, which is a key concept shaped by wartime and postwar Japanese culture.

Scholars analyze Ango's representative works including his essays and his fiction from different points of view. In the recent book on Ango, *Literary Mischief: Sakaguchi Ango, Culture, and the War*. James Dorsey, for instance, compares Ango with Kobayashi Hideo in several respects. Although both of them believed that literature was "the ultimate vehicle for the exploration of our humanity" and saw literature as a deeply-rooted human drive to *furusato*, their understandings of *furusato* are different. As Dorsey indicates in his essay, Ango's *furusato* was, like human life itself, a "harsh and

unpredictable place where man continually confronts the world without the consolation of his reasoning mind” while to his friend, Kobayashi Hideo, *furusato* was a place for rest (Dorsey and Slaymaker 17). In the following paragraphs, I will examine Ango’s interpretation of *furusato* with regard to several issues: wartime experience and after-war-effects, literature, and the relocation of Japanese culture. For Ango, each of these three issues was essentially linked to human nature. In other words, Ango’s understanding of *furusato* reflected his understanding of human life itself because to him, *bungaku* was an “all-encompassing enterprise” (Dorsey and Slaymaker 9).

Historical background: the impact of war on Japanese people’s lives and the need for the reconstruction of *furusato*

In terms of Ango’s conceptualization of literature, the need for the reconstruction of *furusato* arose as a need to rediscover the very nature of human life in wartime and postwar Japan.

The war changed the social psychology of the Japanese people to a great extent. During the war, approximately 6.5 million Japanese were dispersed throughout Asia, Siberia, and the Pacific Ocean area. Roughly 3.5 million of them were soldiers and sailors. Many of the rest were women and children. By the end of the war, approximately 2.6 million Japanese were in China, 1.1 million were scattered throughout Manchuria (Dower 49). In addition, almost six hundred thousand Japanese were in Taiwan and nine hundred thousand in Korea. The number in Southeast Asia and the Philippines was close

to nine hundred thousand at the war's end, most of whom were military personnel. Thousands of other members of the empire's army were scattered in various islands in the Pacific. All of these Japanese people naturally looked forward to ending the war and returning home quickly, and their families and friends anxiously awaited their return. For these millions of Japanese people, the war had brought unimaginable uncertainty and brutality, and millions of them perished in confusion during the war.

Therefore, postwar Japanese society called for the reconstruction of a new cultural and moral system. After Japan was defeated, so-called "repatriation" did not bring about a swift and safe return for those who were displaced. Diseases ravaged many groups of returnees. And exhaustion and despair overwhelmed many Japanese. The persistence of this widespread exhaustion and despair was rooted in material conditions, such as unemployment and economic inflation. In addition to harsh material conditions, emotional despair also emerged among those shattered lives (Dower 50-52). Under these circumstances, new ideas of "culture" emerged in response to the new pattern of "morals." To live and to free themselves from exhaustion and despair become the most important task for people in postwar Japan. Ango's notion of to "fall (decadence)" itself emerged as a provocative challenge to old orthodoxies.

Wartime and the postwar period were periods of uncertainty and unknown possibilities in which new patterns of culture and new norms of social ideology were in the process of forming. During this period, people behaved differently, thought

differently, and routinely encountered circumstances that differed from anything they had experienced before. As spokesmen of postwar Japanese society, many writers were acutely aware of the necessity of people being able to reinvent their own lives. *Panpan*² prostitution, black market and so-called *kasutori* culture³ flourished during the 1950s. It was a period marked by postwar escapism, titillation, and a commercial world dominated by sexually oriented entertainments and the newly-emerged *kasutori* literature (Dower 148). It was a period dominated by a sense of a culture that was “lost”. All the Japanese people needed to rediscover their *furusato* by rethinking the very nature of human life. Ango’s insight into the tumultuousness of wartime and postwar Japan may very well have influenced him to stress the nature of *furusato* as a “harsh, unpredictable place.”

Ango’s personal experience and its impacts on his understanding of *furusato*

Ango’s understanding of *furusato* as a “harsh, unpredictable place” would also have been shaped and influenced by his childhood experience. As Dorsey argues in his essay “The Scribbler and the Sage”, the *furusato* was, for Ango, a stark and lonely place where man continually confronts the world without the consolation of his reasoning mind (Dorsey and Slaymaker 9). As what discussed in Chapter One, the understanding of *furusato* can be traced to Ango’s experiences in his actual hometown, Niigata. Niigata is everywhere in his writings. Ango describes the inhabitants of Niigata as people who

² A popular word in postwar era, which refers to streetwalkers (women of the street).

³ Pulp literature, a rough-and-tumble milieu named after the potent popular homebrew made from the dregs of the sake brewing process (Dorsey and Slaymaker 6).

spend most time fighting the cold and imagining a life where it is warm and sunny. Ango did not have a good relationship with his parents. He was eventually expelled from the local school and forced to leave home to attend what was considered to be a more suitable institution for him. Given this context, it is not difficult to understand why the *furusato* that Ango returned to metaphorically in his writing was a harsh, unpredictable place.

Ango's complicated relationship with his mother is important in understanding his view of *furusato*. His mother's depression and unstable mental condition contributed to his feelings of fear and hatred toward his home and mother. He had to "turn to the sea in search of love and his *furusato*." At the same time, however, in *Ishi no omoi*, Ango reveals that his feelings toward his mother were conflicted. He writes, "There is no kid like me who loved his/her mother so much (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 254)." These contradictions exist in Ango's personality, like two sides of the same coin. Ango's idea of *furusato* is therefore colored by these conflicting feelings. *Furusato* contains a particular interpretation of the mother (*boseiai*) (Robertson 20). For Ango, it was a space of profound ambivalence and contradictions that provided the original point for literature.

War and its aftermath: a mirror of real humanity

War has always been considered a mirror of real human nature. Ango's ambivalent attitude towards war, which appears in his essays, can also help us to understand his conception of *furusato* as the real human nature. He also examined human

spirits reflected in the process of confronting the war and after-effects of war. In *Daraku-ron*, Ango discusses the ambivalence and contradictions that existed in postwar Japanese society with candor. On the one hand, people were attracted by the mesmerizing grandeur of massive destruction and the “strange beauty” of having to submit to fate (Dower 156). On the other hand, Japanese people detested the war intensely. Ango exhibits similar contradictions in his other essays, in which he would often revisit topics he had already written about, but from a different angle (Dorsey and Slaymaker 45). Although in *Daraku-ron*, Ango calls for “decadence,” arguing that it is the right way to live, in *Gogatsu no shi* (Death in the Fifth Month), Ango fully extols the purity of the ritual suicide of the old warrior. Clearly, when it comes to war, there are at least two sides to Ango. One side, the aesthetic side, considers war as a universal destiny and longing for an absolute beauty framed by death. The other side, the moral side, considers the war a product of history, fails to see any kind of beauty of death, and enjoins the people “to live.” The antagonism between these two modes generates the dynamism and the contradictions in his writing (Dorsey and Slaymaker 54). In *Tokkōtai ni sasagu* (An Offering to the Kamikaze Youth, 1947), Ango rethinks the phenomenon of the Special Attack Forces. Ango considers Tokkōtai’s special attacks in light of “Bidan”, which is a truly beautiful story. This essay reveals a side of Ango that does not appear in *Daraku-ron*. In this essay, Ango writes with admiration about the valiant honor code of the warrior, something that remains repressed in *Daraku-ron*. Even though he admits that the war was reprehensible because it forced people to surrender their lives for the sake of the

state, he considers the idea of using the kamikaze as a military tactic innovative. As he puts it himself in the essay, “I curse war above all things. Still, I will forever sing the praises of the kamikaze (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 16: 743).” Ango embraces both dynamism and contradiction to generate a concrete synthesis of aesthetics and morals.

In addition to revealing this literary dynamism and contradiction in his writing, as an iconoclast, Ango dramatically linked decadence and carnal desires to the rediscovery of individuality through the eroticism of *kasutori* culture. In his short essay “*Daraku-ron*,” published in April 1946, Ango examined the nature of the wartime experience in an impassioned tone, contrasting it to the intensely human and truthful decadence of postwar society. Ango’s essays on wartime experience and postwar “decadence” are famous for brilliantly capturing the essence of those periods, “*Daraku-ron*,” according to a later commentary, “freed people from the possession of war, returned to them their rightful selves, and gave them the confidence to live (Rubin 77).” In “*Daraku-ron*,” Ango describes how the former kamikaze pilots who had intended to die artistically, like scattered cherry blossoms, were now working in the black market, while the women who had been proud of their husbands’ sacrifices for the state had already begun searching for other men to replace them. Ango declared, “the look of the nation since defeat is one of pure and simple decadence (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 57).”

For Ango, realizing and admitting this truth was the beginning of a return to genuine humanity, the soul of *furusato*. Facing the truth and confronting reality, he

thought, was essential to reconstructing people's spiritual selves in postwar Japan.

“Decadence” may have negative connotations, but according to Ango's philosophy, only by starting with a humble attitude toward decadence could people begin to imagine a new, more genuine morality (Dower 157). As he writes in *Daraku-ron*:

To live is actually the only marvelous thing. . . . Japan at war was a utopia of lies. Only void beauty was blooming. This is not the true beauty of human beings. . . . People do not change. They just returned to what people need to be. People corrupt. Even royal retainers and holy women corrupt. This kind of decadence cannot be prevented. By preventing it, there is no way to rescue people. People live. People fall. Outside it there is no convenient shortcut to save people (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 58-59).

After the ravages of the war, the entire Japanese society was morbidly sick spiritually. Furthermore, to be decadent and immoral was truthful, realistic – and supremely human. As Ango concluded, “We fall not because we were defeated. We fall because we are human beings. We fall because we want to live. . . . We must discover ourselves, and save ourselves, by falling to the best of our ability (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 59-60).” Each individual would have to create his or her own “samurai ethic,” his or her own “empowerment system.” In other words, every Japanese individual in postwar Japanese society would have to find his or her own way to “live,” no matter how seemingly immoral it might be. This, according to Ango, was the way that people would save themselves from the “lack of *furusato*” postwar effect.

In *Daraku-ron*, in all of these examinations of the emperor system, Ango sought to encourage his readers to see the absurdity of continuing to pin their hopes on

something eternal in the emperor system, particularly now that it had been revealed to be nothing more than a by-product of historical contingencies (Dorsey and Slaymaker 51). Ango stressed individuality. During the war, every person's individuality was sacrificed to the indoctrinating power of the state. According to Ango, to "fall" meant resisting this indoctrinating power, which he saw as the start of the rediscovery of the Japanese people's lost individualities. Only by feeling free to "fall" could people begin to reconstruct their lost *furusato*. Nevertheless, Ango's seemingly rebellious and radical statement made him an iconoclast in postwar Japan.

Ango's perspective on "heroes" and "ordinary people" is also firmly planted in his *furusato*. In his essay-like short story "Shinju" (The Pearl), which focuses primarily on the war, Ango discusses both the ill-fated submarine component of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and his own activities in the homeland at that same time. He portrays the war heroes as perceiving their mission in almost plebeian terms, extracting the men themselves from heroic exaltation (Dorsey and Slaymaker 13). Ango portrays those men as individuals facing their harsh reality without thinking about their heroic sacrifice for the Japanese empire's sacred destiny. At the same time, the descriptions of Ango and his friend Garando, are similarly rooted in the *furusato*. In their unrelenting quest for drink and fresh fish, they are embodiments of "those who live true to their desires" (decadence). Without trying to depict a single type of human in a beautiful, idealized portrait, Ango's work accurately depicts the essence of human life, with all its harsh and unpredictable

conditions. The only way to overcome the insecurity brought on by this harsh and unpredictable human life is to “fall” and to live in a way that is true to one’s own desires.

To embrace reality is the only way to be saved. In *Daraku-ron, Part II*, Ango continues to encourage Japan and its people to succumb to decadence. He describes the situation Japanese people had to accept after the war in this essay:

What is the real face of human beings? Say “yes” to things they like and say “no” to things they hate. It is just like this... We must stand naked on the vast plains of truth. It is by falling away from the ‘wholesome morals’ that we must recover our true humanity (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 274).

Ango states that to honestly acknowledge our desires and dislikes is the only way to avoid losing sight of what it means to be truly and authentically human. In addition, although to Ango, decadence itself is a bad thing, it also reveals a fundamental truth about the human condition: loneliness is man’s origin, his rightful place (*furusato*) (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 141). The Japanese people, who had experienced wartime and postwar effects, had to face a truth that they had been abandoned by others. The key to returning to their *furusato* without feeling lost was to accept the destiny that they have to “stand on their own two feet.” This is the only road that may lead to salvation.

Ango’s call for us to “fall” is always linked to his attitude towards death. As noted above, at some level, Ango expressed a sense of longing, or at least appreciation, for the beauty framed by death. However, he repressed this side in his other works by enjoining us to live. In *Inochigake* (*Wagering One’s Life*, 1940), for instance, Ango argues that,

only by rejecting the monastic life is one able to be a true monk (Dorsey and Slaymaker 26). For Ango, desires are all motivations that drive us to live. He feels no sympathy for the missionaries who continued to arrive when they were fully aware that death awaited them, because Ango did not approve of resisting the fundamental human desire to “live.” In another short essay, *Shi to hanauta* (To Hum a Song of Death, 1941), Ango discusses how people were confronted with death during the war. Here he considered death without romanticizing or idealizing it, presenting it as being as harsh and unpredictable as human life itself. No matter how “sacred” the war may be, to Japanese individuals, the only thing that matters was “death”.

Literature: encompassing and embracing the entirety of the human experience

As a writer who lived through a period of modern Japanese history that was socially, politically and culturally unstable, Ango had a strong passion for literature (*bungaku*) and naturally linked it to *furusato*. During the postwar occupation period, Ango stayed close to the center of all the social changes. He was familiar with the activities of the black market, *panpan* prostitutes, and the carnal-desire-based *kasutori* culture. Without embracing any specific literary school, style or philosophy, Ango created literature from what seemed to originate only from itself. For Ango literature was all encompassing, indiscriminately embracing the entirety of human experience simply because it was human. As he wrote in *Nihon bunka shikan* (A Personal View of Japanese Culture, 1942), “For me literature is omnipotent (the ultimate vehicle for the exploration

of our humanity) ...Literature is so deeply rooted in this point of origin that, should I somehow lose faith in literature, I will have lost faith in humanity itself (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 374).”

Ango’s understanding of literature as a deeply-rooted human drive made it easy for him to discover *furusato*, an emotional word referring to the very place where people are born, the hometowns that so many people have to abandon due to the unpredictable future they want to pursue. In the 1930s, *furusato* came to become the mark of all points of origin, a pristine place unpolluted by the confusion and harshness of the modern age. The uncertainty and confusion that people experienced in the city caused many to nostalgically long to return to their hometowns. *Furusato*, is generally considered as a refuge to return to and to take shelter from chaos (Robertson 20-22).

In Ango’s writing, however, *furusato* takes on a strikingly different meaning. In *Bungaku no furusato* (The Birthplace of Literature, 1941), *furusato* emerges as a key term and concept for Ango. Since literature is seen as encompassing and embracing the entirety of human experience, it reflects the very origin of humanity, the absolute loneliness that exists in our spiritual selves:

Eventually, the cruelty of no salvation is the only salvation. The situation of no moral itself equals to the existence of moral. The denial of salvation itself is the way of saving. I see the birthplace of literature or humanity from it. I think literature begins in this very place (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 269).

Truly great literature, according to Ango, should be created by the denial of salvation, without any morals. In the end, however, this cruel fate, this denial of salvation, is for Ango the one thing that can save us (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 3: 269). He sees in this the necessary condition for the origin of literature, the *furusato* of man. He believes that literature begins in this very place. Ango discusses several examples drawing from different types of literature, including fairy tales, Akutagawa's encounter with a peasant writer, classical Japanese tales, and traditional Japanese performance, to demonstrate his definition of "real" literature. Most importantly, however, he also points out that the real humanity people seek to return to is rooted in absolute loneliness. Ultimately, it is only a place with harsh and unpredictable situations that we have to confront by ourselves. Ango saw inferior literature as being used to indoctrinate its readers. He believed that run-of-the-mill writers set out to write with a moral of the story already decided beforehand. In other words, morality is something that can be predicted beforehand. By arguing that real literature should be devoid of morality, Ango implies the origin of literature is a place where nothing can be predicted. For him, anything that can be predicted is unnatural to humanity. According to Ango's discussion, to write without morals and without seeking to provide salvation for readers equals to "fall." Being without morals and not seeking salvation is for him the way to save ourselves in both literature and humanity. This perspective corresponds to what Ango discusses and encourages in *Daraku-ron*.

Literature is an act of rebellion against the establishment and politics. In *Atarashiki bungaku* (The New Literature, 1933), for instance, Ango calls literature a

rebellious artistic form that provides the power of invention and creativity. It reveals the destructive conflicts that exist in humanity:

The function of literature is usually rebellious, bellicose and destructive... The core of contemporary creativity is shown in the form of rebellious and destructive literature. Individuals usually show anti-social, in other words destructive bellicose form in the process of evolution (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 1: 351).

For that reason, Ango explains, the function of literature is rooted in its destructive and creative power by showing conflicts in the real “harsh and unpredictable” world. However, Ango emphasizes that literature only raises the questions and reveals the problems without providing the answers and solutions. This point of view corresponds with what he argues in *Bungaku no furusato*, where he presents the *furusato* of literature as a place without salvation. The function of literature for him was to reveal conflicts and to be rebellious, not to moralize. Literature should depict the harsh and unpredictable nature of human life as a way to show “reality.” At its most successful, then, to write without providing solutions is to “fall.”

Ango seems to have had a negative view of traditional Japanese aesthetic terms, such as *kotan* (simple but refined) and *sabi* (elegant simplicity). In *Kotan no fukaku o haisu* (Reject the Revitalization of the Traditional Concept of Simple, Frugal Beauty, 1935), he argues that to adopt a style of *kotan* is to engage in literary escapism, which Ango did not accept. To Ango, *kotan* or *sabi* meant escaping from reality, avoiding the truth about the harshness and unpredictability of life. Seeking to avoid the conflicts in the real world, however, is not the way to save our souls. Ango also points out that vexation

is a natural feeling when people face reality and that refusing to accept this feeling of vexation only further contributes to more vexation. Being true to our human desires, even those that we might consider negative, is essential for people to be able to live under the inevitable shadow of vexation. Ango strongly believed a new literature should abandon the style of *kotan* and confront the real harsh human condition. Although this approach may not seem sage, it is his call for “decadence,” a road that will lead us to our true selves, the *furusato*. As he writes in another short essay, *Nikutai jishin ga shikō suru* (To Aspire to Confidence in the Flesh, 1946), from now on, literature should become the words of our “thinking flesh,” and become a natural discovery of our true humanity.

For Ango, literature is an entirety embracing all the human experience. The origin of literature is the very *furusato* of humanity. Therefore, Ango’s view on the “new literature” is his literary rebellion against the old conventions, as well as a tool to enlighten the new Japan and the millions of people who needed to recover their souls, their hometown.

Rethinking Japanese culture: a response to quotidian necessities

As one of the most significant writers in wartime and postwar Japan, Ango often expressed his concerns about Japanese culture in his writings. About the location of culture, Ango believed that Japanese culture was not located in the things that were created but within the individuals who constituted that society and that particular culture (Dorsey and Slaymaker 80). Necessity is a quality that Ango appreciates above all else.

Consequently, he strongly believes that the Japanese should start to adapt to necessity instead of living according to ossified forms of culture. His call for *daraku* is a call to return to the starting point of the individual, focusing on how the individual helps constitute culture by living a life that responds to quotidian necessities (Dorsey and Slaymaker 93).

In *Nihon bunka shikan*, Ango claims that “beauty” is not simply that which appears beautiful to the eye, nor is it a conscious concern. Instead, he argues that it rests in structures wherein the necessary is placed precisely where it is needed (Dorsey and Slaymaker 29). With this statement, Ango is actually criticizing other Japanese intellectuals’ high praise of things such as a notion of a unique Japanese beauty or the cultural identity of the state. For Ango, a country’s culture or tradition could only really be discovered by a foreigner or a native separated from his homeland. Those who were already immersed and living in Japanese culture had no need to “discover” the culture itself; what they needed to discover was necessity because it is necessity that provides the motivation for constructing a new culture.

In *Nihon bunka shikan*, Ango’s iconoclastic and humorous representation of Japanese cultural icons (Kimono, samurai, Zen, traditional architecture) is intended to return the traditional Japanese culture to the “forsaken wilderness” of the *furusato*, the place that offers no refuge for Japanese culture (Dorsey and Slaymaker 11). The new norm of Japanese culture is in the process of being formed. The focus is on the

necessities discovered in people's everyday life in postwar Japan. Our plebeian desires, Ango argues, are well worth pursuing as a spiritual goal. Ango innovatively transformed the former lofty goals into goals that came closer to people's actual lives, such as food, alcohol, or sexual titillation. These desires, he argues, should be pursued without providing abstract rationalizations. This essay can be considered a subversive work that undermined the wartime regime by transforming the so-called national identity into the all-encompassing hometown, a home for the soul where everything is unpredictable.

In *Daraku-ron, Part II*, Ango also dealt with the relocation of Japanese culture. Necessity, he argues, is the mother of invention. Decadence, for Ango, is being true to our desires, and only then, falling away from so-called morality, can we discover the real necessity. In other words, being decadent is a process of understanding the true human condition and learning what we need. Thus, in the case of postwar Japan, which was much in need of a cultural transformation, a more advanced culture meant greater tolerance towards embracing decadence. As Ango states at the end of this essay, "Decadence is the mother of conventions. A good long hard look at the sad fact of human condition is all we need (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 278)."

For Ango, "necessity" was crucial to the renewal of Japanese culture. To return to *Kotan no fukaku o haisu* for a moment, Ango's negative attitude towards *kotan* or *sabi* was clear. As Ango indicated, a decent postwar Japanese culture would be firmly planted in necessity. It may not be as "wholesome" as people had imagined, but it would be the

only culture to be created by ordinary Japanese people. Thus, literature that failed to depict the true human condition was not acceptable and, a culture that refused to recognize its own needs, could never be a more “advanced culture”.

Ango’s reconstruction of the term *furusato* calls for a return to the very nature of human life, which is the starting point of literature. As a key concept of Ango’s complex literary world, *furusato* corresponds to the harsh, unpredictable and complex living condition of postwar Japan. Since the wartime experience and its aftermath had dramatically influenced Japanese people’s ways of thinking, a far freer cultural and intellectual atmosphere emerged and the gradual erosion of traditional attitudes was reflected in literature. Ango wrote as a tough, searching and well-informed intellect and raised numerous complex questions about the nature of literature, the nature of Japanese culture, and even of human nature itself. He believed that since we cannot escape from the paradoxes and imperfections of our lives, at least we can find a way to confront them, and accept them, and to be true to what we really need. As he declares in *Seishun-ron* (Youth, 1942), to fall is the only way to live and to live is everything. Escapism is only an expression of the weakness in human nature. To confront our true complex human nature is the only way to be strong.

Chapter 3: The Literary Exchanges between Sakaguchi Ango and Oda Sakunosuke about the Possibilities of Literature

Sakaguchi Ango's understanding of *furusato* influenced his interpretations of literature's function and the significance of creating a new literature in different ways. To understand Ango's conceptualization of literature, it is necessary to analyze his contemporaries' views on literature. Ango is categorized as a *burai-ha* writer. He and Oda Sakunosuke are both considered representative *burai-ha* (*shin gesaku-ha*⁴) writers. They were friends privately. As friends and peers, they shared some of the same views on the development of literature and Japanese culture. However, Oda Sakunosuke was also a typical Osaka writer, while Sakaguchi Ango was active mainly inside Tokyo's literary circles. The differences of their background result in a divergence of views on some literary issues. Among the literary exchanges between them, Ango responded to Sakunosuke's views on the possibilities of literature in his essays. This chapter will discuss the similarities of their attitude toward literature and the differences of their opinions on the same issue by examining the points they made in their essays.

⁴ Refers to writers who adopted a style combining a facetious tone with elaborate structure (which is a continued tradition from Edo period to Meiji period) in a new era. The term *gesaku* originally mean "written for fun".

Oda Sakunosuke and the Possibilities of Literature:

Oda Sakunosuke discusses his views on literature in several of his essays, but they are most clearly expressed in his essay *Kanōsei no bungaku* (The Possibilities of Literature, 1946). As did most *burai-ha* writers, Sakunosuke held negative attitude towards the “I-Novel” (shi-shōsetsu). He believed that shi-shōsetsu was not suitable for the postwar period because a new style of literature was needed. Also, the purpose of the shi-shōsetsu as he defined it did not match his understanding of literature. Sakunosuke’s views stated that literature is a combination of all the possibilities. And to discover new possibilities is the requirement of a new literature. Moreover, as an Osaka writer, Sakunosuke connected his philosophy of literature with his hometown, Osaka. He tended to appreciate the possibilities that existed in the life of Osaka people, and he emphasized the significance of the usage of Osaka dialect in Japanese literature.

Sakunosuke explains his views on traditional Japanese novels in *Kanōsei no bungaku*. He argues that though the traditional practitioners of literature were highly valued as authoritative voices, they had never pursued the possibilities of literature. He also points out that modern foreign novels are different from traditional Japanese novels because their authors are trying to discover possibilities of being human. To this end, new literary styles are created in these novels. Traditional Japanese novels, on the other hand, could not be considered “new literature” because they do not explore possibilities (Oda 8: 117). In terms of a literature of possibilities, Sakunosuke raises an issue about

“uso tsuki no kanōsei (the possibilities in telling lies)” in the same essay. He believes that telling lies is instinctual in novelists. It is interesting to notice that he even raises Sakaguchi Ango as an example here. Ango enjoyed telling lies in both his real life and his literature. However, at the same time, he was also looking for the truth (Oda 8: 120).

In the case of the modern Japanese novel, Sakunosuke states that the development of “ideas” in Japanese novels has retrogressed. The emergence of “I-Novel” seems to be one of the main causes of this. Shi-shosetsu was a literary genre founded based on the influence of Naturalism during the Meiji period. Most shi-shosetsu were written from the first person perspective and they were supposed to expose every side of the author’s private life, no matter how dark. Shiga Naoya, who was considered “bungaku no kami-sama” (the god of the novel), was one of the representative writers of “the I-Novel”.

Sakunosuke did not deny the beauty of Shiga Naoya’s literature. His writing style is so graceful that it reminds the reader of a work of art. However, Sakunosuke states that, it is wrong to enshrine Naoya’s novels as icons of Japanese literature. This is because his “I-Novels” limited literary possibilities. Although Naoya’s novels include all the factors of fiction needed, they do not expand on the possibilities of the novel (Oda 8: 122).

Literature is not an artistic product. According to Kuwabara Takeo, novels are supposed to depict how people can survive in this world. This is the “possibilities of being human.” Sakunosuke makes an important point that the genre of “I-Novel” focuses on depicting the “self” of the author, and his/her surroundings. “I-Novel” writers were not interested in depicting people outside their “circle” (Oda 8: 124). Sakunosuke indicates that the power

of literature itself had been undermined by the absence of love and passion for human beings in the “I-Novel” works.

Sakunosuke suggests that to “modernize” Japanese literature it is necessary to create a new literature (Oda 8: 117-118). In order to achieve this goal, literature should return to its point of origin and start with a sketch of the naked body (true human nature). Through this exercise, one could discover the possibilities of creativity. Furthermore, according to Sakunosuke, in “modernizing” Japanese literature, it is also important to maintain fiction’s true feature of being entertaining. This view corresponds with Ango’s view on *Gesaku-ha*, which will be discussed.

As an Osaka writer, Sakunosuke considered Osaka a stage on which all the possible stories could be performed. In his essay of *Osaka no kanōsei* (The Possibilities of Osaka, 1947), Sakunosuke discusses the literary possibilities of Osaka from the eyes of a writer. He admits the difficulty of writing conversations in Osaka dialect. However, compared with Kyoto dialect which has a fixed pattern, Osaka dialect is more subject to change (Oda 8: 266). Different writers could employ it in different ways. Sakunosuke believed that it is a kind of dialect that could reflect every individual person’s personality. It is rooted in Osaka and easily breaks all the fixed patterns and divides them into different possibilities (Oda 8: 270).

Ango's Responses, Shared Views:

Ango responded to Sakunosuke's views on the possibilities of literature directly in two of his essays, *Osaka no hangyaku* (The Rebellion of Osaka, 1947) and *Mirai no tame ni* (For the Future, 1947). Clearly, Ango shared some views with Sakunosuke on literature, the "I-Novel," and Osaka culture. Moreover, Ango's discussion on these topics can be considered both his own literary thoughts, and also supplements of Sakunosuke's philosophy.

When Ango analyzes Sakunosuke's thoughts in *Osaka no hangyaku*, he discusses Sakunosuke's *Gesakusha konjō* (The Tenacity of Popular Writers). Ango agrees with Sakunosuke that good fiction needs to be entertaining. He states that literature is not only a vehicle for ideas, but must also be entertaining. This is the fundamental difference between literature and philosophy (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 151). Literature interprets thoughts through the form of telling stories. Therefore, all the writers should have the nature of talented entertainers. The characteristic of *gesaku* (being entertaining) is necessary for literature (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 151). Ango points out that there are two sides of writers. They are thinkers who discover the philosophy of human nature. On the other hand, they are entertainers who have mastered the skills of telling stories. The two sides coexist with each other. As a result, literature is the product of balancing these two tendencies: it is a combination of entertainment and penetrating thoughts about human nature. Traditional views of literature may think the concept of *gesakusha* offended the

dignity of literature. However, Ango states that the truth is the reverse (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 151). Like Sakunosuke, Ango also criticized the lack of entertainment in Shiga Naoya's novels. In the same essay, Ango considers Naoya a writer without the self-consciousness of the gesaku-sha konjō. Obviously, Ango was opposed to the traditional way of thinking that masterpieces could be created by suffering and making a grimace.

Ango also explains why gesaku-sha konjō was not recognized by Japanese literature. It was the result of the lack of fundamental ideas. Without ideas about human nature, self-consciousness and self-confidence is lost. Therefore, the importance of gesaku-sha konjō will not be understood (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 156). In terms of the significance of literature, Ango agreed with Sakunosuke that the purpose of literature was to depict how people should live and survive. To communicate this purpose with the masses was the task of gesaku-sha.

Ango shared the same views with Sakunosuke on the possibilities of literature. He suggests that the prior condition of literature's development is the inherent possibilities of the human condition. Literature should expose these possibilities through the stories of individuals. These possibilities are based on the depth of ideas about human nature itself. As he wrote in *The Rebellion of Osaka*:

Of course the interesting part of reading materials alone does not count as literature. The depth of the reflection upon human nature and the thoughts is the core essence which decides literature... There are so much reading materials which have no thoughts around us. Reading materials are not literature (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 151).

In terms of the current situation of Japanese literature (postwar period, late 1940s), Ango noticed that there was a significant degradation in the level of literature at that time. Suddenly all the novels and essays become adult compositions (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 152). The nature of gesaku is lacking while the ideas concerning human nature are also lost. The “I-Novel,” as Ango indicates, depicts a world of simple reality without ideas. Therefore, the foundation of “I-Novel” is different from that of real literature. In the essay *Mirai no tame ni*, Ango develops Sakunosuke’s idea of the possibilities of literature into an insightful literary theory. He states that the original life of literature is rooted in the possibilities. It discovers human nature and looks for the possibilities of a better life. From this point of view, to merely copy the experience of the past contradicts the purpose of literature (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 439). Ango argues that literature is created for the benefit of the future and he argues that the “I-Novel” is too limited to the real life experience of the individual and lacks the means to discover possibilities in the future. Ango believes that writers who appreciate the spirit of the gesaku-sha can be expected to fix their eyes on the future and create literature for the future. He agrees that “lies” should also be accepted as integral to the portrayal of possibilities because they are inseparable from the truth from the perspective of the future (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 4: 440). For postwar Japanese literature, focusing on the future is important for the rebirth of a new literature.

Although Ango was not an Osaka writer, he was interested in Osaka culture and literature and portrayed the city in his works many times. In response to Sakunosuke’s

views, Ango discusses the significance of Osaka in Japanese culture and literature in his essay *The Rebellion of Osaka*. Ango had a negative attitude towards the “superstition” which indicates that masterpieces could only be created under the conditions of poverty and hard life. Therefore, Ango appreciated the spirit of rebellion in Osaka culture. People in Osaka did not believe in the traditional Edo-centered value system (*Edo shumi*). Because of Osaka’s rebellious spirit, hedonism, obsession with money, love of decadence—concepts not accepted according to Edo tastes—were praised in Osaka. In other words, the darkness and vulgarity of human nature were permitted in Osaka (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 150). As a result, Ango states in his essay about Dotonbori (Marching through *Dotonbori*, 1951) that Osaka is the perfect place for the creation of farce (gesaku) (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 141). Since the culture of Osaka has a high level of tolerance and it embraces the possibilities of life, it definitely deserves being highly valued by those writers who devote themselves to the creation of new literature.

Ango’s Responses: Divergent Opinions

As discussed above, Ango shared most of Sakunosuke’s views on literature. Nevertheless, he also criticized the limitations of Sakunosuke’s literary theory. In his essays, Ango encourages all writers to learn the nature of gesaku-sha from Sakunosuke. However, he points out that Sakunosuke’s sense of Osaka exceeded the normal level (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 155). Sakunosuke was considered a talented writer. Nevertheless, his literature was too limited to Osaka itself.

On the other hand, although Ango admits the significance of possibilities in Osaka, he seems to disagree with the idea of antagonism between Osaka culture and the Tokyo-centered value system. In other words, he states that self-consciousness should not be built on cultural antagonism. It undermines the significance of Osaka literature and limits the development of all kinds of possibilities. Ango argues that Sakunosuke was making use of Osaka to spread his literary theory. However, Ango realizes Sakunosuke's literary theory of possibilities was probably limited to Osaka originally (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 154-155). These two cities have totally opposite cultural patterns. Tokyo is a city of introspection and orthodoxy, while Osaka is a new business-based city culture which emphasizes the spirit of substance. The rebellion of Osaka was actually the rebellion against conventional culture. Therefore, Sakunosuke's theory is based on cultural antagonism. If this antagonism disappears, the possibilities of Osaka literature will be reduced (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 5: 154). This dilemma is conflict inherent in the literary exchanges between these two *burai-ha* writers. In general, however, this kind of paradox exposes the very nature of literature, which is a place with unpredictable situations and different possibilities, and depicts the nature of human beings.

Chapter 4: Ango's Historical Essays – How are Ango's historical views shown in his historical writings?

In addition to discussions on the possibilities of literature, Ango also tried to discover the possibilities in Japanese history in his historical essays. The topics of his writings range from historical facts to myths. His attitude toward history shows his understanding of *furusato* as well as the importance of “possibilities” in both history and literature. As a writer, he sees historical stories with a writer's eye. For Ango, history is created by people. Therefore, the most fascinating part of history is the rediscovery of human nature in historical possibilities. Possibilities in history actually equal possibilities in human nature, which reflects Ango's understandings of *furusato* – a place consisting of unpredictable situations. To clarify Ango the writer's view of history, this chapter will examine essays from his three representative collections of historical essays, *Ango Shitan* (Ango's Talk of History, 1952), *Ango no Shin-Nihon Chiri* (Ango's New Japanese Geography, 1951) and *Ango Shin-Nihon Fudoki* (Ango's New Japanese Gazetteer, 1955).

Another Side of History:

In these three volumes of historical essays, all of which were serialized, Ango's interpretations discover another side of history. The truth of history may not be what we can observe on the surface. For Ango, history has two sides, and he was obviously more interested in the side concealed in “possibilities.” In the essay *Amakusa Shirō*, Ango expresses his doubts about the description of Amakusa Shirō's appearance as a good-

looking young man in the imaginations of Christian scholars. His appearance is not depicted in this way in actual historical records. However, Christian scholars tended to depict him as a good-looking young man because a good-looking young boy's face has a connection with the innocence of the Virgin Mary. This may have been influenced by Christian religious doctrines. In other words, it is entirely possible that Shirō was not that good-looking; his image of “*Bishonen*” (good-looking boy) was “created” by scholars for certain reasons (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 12: 300-301). Another noteworthy point Ango made in this essay is that Shirō was only a persuasive actor who was used, trained, and controlled by puppet-masters, the rōnin⁵ who were behind the uprising, even though Shirō was considered the leader of the Shimabara Rebellion. Shirō was just a 16-year old passionate young boy with a strong faith in Christianity. His destiny was a tragedy because his true nature was distorted by the history. This other side, or this “other possibility”—that he was little more than a puppet—is obviously more acceptable to Ango because it is closer to true human nature.

In terms of historical facts, Ango continues to regard positively those historical facts that are commonly regarded negatively. In *Takachiho ni fuyuame fureri* (Winter Rain falls in Takachiho, 1955), Ango analyzes the facts that people who lived in Takachiho lost the meanings of a part of words in their native language during the process of becoming real “Japanese.” Those words with unknown meanings only partly

⁵ Rōnin: literally means “floating men”, is mostly familiar as a label for the masterless samurai of the Edo period (1600-1868). For the detailed definition of rōnin, see Encyclopedia of Japan.

remained in lyrics of kagura uta⁶. Based on these clues, Ango argues that those words could have once been a part of their native language (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 15: 181-182). Although the basic style of their native language was not retained, the image of their native language still exists in their performance tradition. Ango believes that those words were used on the occasions that they needed to perform obscene music and dances in front of noble people. This possibility generates a reasonable explanation of why the meanings of these words remain unknown. Although scholars tend to show regret about the loss of meaning in Takachiho's native vocabulary, Ango made an effort to discover the positive meanings behind the known facts. In *Nagasaki chanpon* (Nagasaki Hotchpotch, 1951), Ango retells the story of Kintsuba Jihyoe, who sacrificed his life for his faith during Tokugawa's prohibition against Christianity. *Shingo no kuji* (Nine words of truth in ninja skills) was usually considered the product of imagination. However, Ango believes that there is a connection between ninja skills and Christianity. Nine words of truth in ninja skills had been influenced by the cross in Christianity. In other words, the cross may be the original form of *shingon no kuji* (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 211-212). Here Ango makes an interesting point that even though Christianity was banned during the Tokugawa period, the interaction between Christian culture and Japanese tradition continued. As Ango states, whatever the ideas and whatever the age, the suppression of ideas from foreign countries always seems like a natural thing to do (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu*

⁶ Kagura uta: Originally, the songs (uta) of Shintō ritual dance. More specifically, a fixed body of ancient court songs in the musical style of gagaku. For detailed explanation of kagura uta, see Encyclopedia of Japan.

11: 207). Nevertheless, history itself includes all the possibilities, one of which is that the original form of nine words of truth represents the invisible interactions between different cultures in Tokugawa period. It survived somehow under the suppression of Christianity. Based on Ango's interpretation of *furusato*, human nature is a place with all the possibilities, even unpredictable situations. Therefore, no matter how hard the bakufu tried to suppress Christianity, the true human desire for new thoughts could not be eradicated completely.

In addition to discovering positive meaning in historical possibilities, Ango also points out the lessons we should learn from "possibilities." For example, in *Toyama no kusuri to Echigo no dokukeshi* (Toyama medicines and Echigo antidotes, 1955), he discusses the issue of striking a balance between modernization and tradition. Ango analyzes Echigo's antitoxin (*doku-keshi*) industry in 1950s by examining the village of Dokukeshi, Kakuda-mura. According to Ango's observations, the village was in great poverty. Selling antitoxins was the traditional industry and, it was supported largely by women in this village. It is telling that Ango was impressed by those women's self-created "antitoxin" songs. Ango suggests that those songs could become a kind of "advertisement" and an effective way to promote sales. However, it is to be regretted that the significance of those songs were not realized by these women. Those songs were kept as a tradition but never used as a tool of "advertisement." In terms of Toyama's medicine industry, Ango questions the effectiveness of modern advertisement. Being influenced by modernization, Toyama's medicine industry began to use modern advertisement in the

1950s. However, Ango argues that using salespeople to build connections with every family in a district is the distinguishing feature of Toyama's medicine industry, and it was a most effective sales method. Here Ango expresses doubts about the concept that "modernization" equals "anti-tradition." People in Toyama's medicine industry failed to see the significance of this traditional way of advertisement. It was not "modern," but it still had a positive effect. In this essay, Ango does not give an answer to the question of "how to strike a balance between modernization and tradition," but he does express his concerns for the gradual disappearance of traditions in Japanese culture and history. Although the trend toward modernization is unstoppable, there are still abundant positive "possibilities" that exist in tradition.

For Ango, all historical events are products of human nature. Since human nature is unpredictable, history is also hard to be predicted. Complicated explanations are given for significant events, but people tend to ignore that the true causes of historical events may come down to a simple reason which springs from the nature of human beings. In *Nagasaki chanpon*, Ango tells the story of visiting a chanpon-ya in Nagasaki and finding out the possible main reason for the mass abandonment of the Christian faith in Urakami in 1867. Ango found out that people in Nagasaki all ate large amounts of food. They had "especially large stomachs (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 225)." In 1867, about three thousand Christians were arrested and sent to prison in Urakami. They were interrogated with torture to force them to give up their faith. Although they were considered very strong people with a firm belief in their faith, they could not help but abandon Christianity.

Ango thought that the Christians could endure the interrogation and torture, but they could not endure the hunger due to the small amounts of food given to them. This “secret” may not be revealed in history as a main factor. However, this simple cause may be the key to understanding this historical event thoroughly. Desire for food is a part of human nature. For Ango, this basic human desire should be considered a reasonable cause of an historical event. It is possible that Christians in Urakami gave up their faith because they needed more food to eat, even though this seems like a too simple reason for such a significant historical event. In other words, any possibility from human nature can change history, no matter how insignificant it seems to be.

Ango believes that all the tragedies spring from the paradox which exists in human nature. In *Ango, Ise jingo ni yuku* (Ango Goes to the Ise Shrine, 1951), Ango discusses Japanese folk religions and myth. After the Yamato clan conquered Japan and established the Tennō system, it was not able to deny the power of folk religions. Therefore, they tried to assimilate them into their “camp” by creating the system of Japanese myth. Because of the assimilation, folk religions lost their original meanings. Nevertheless, the basic form remained in the system of Japanese myth. Ango retells the story of Sarutahiko Ōkami and shows sympathy for his destiny. Unlike other gods in folk religions, he was not offered sacrifices in local major Shinto shrines. The reason is that in Japanese myths (*Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*), he paid allegiance to Ninigi no mikoto and acted as Ninigi’s guide when Ninigi is sent by his grandmother, Amaterasu, to conquer the terrestrial realm. He was Ninigi no mikoto’s meritorious retainer. However,

unfortunately, his behavior was considered betrayal by local people, not enamored of the Imperial family, and he lost his popularity. Due to the lack of popularity among local people, his image was depicted as a clown in myth. However, other gods who were rivals of Ninigi no mikoto were offered sacrifices in major shrines because they did not lose popularity. Ango argues that it was unfair for Sarutahiko to have a destiny like this. As the guide for Ninigi no mikoto, he deserves a good reputation in the system of Japanese myth.

In *Asuka no maboroshi* (The Phantoms of Asuka, 1951), Ango tries to solve the problem of to what extent these records can be believed and why they are hiding certain historical facts by further examining the two earliest historical records, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. In Ango's discussion, one of the most important reasons that Tenmu Tennō decided to order the creation of the narratives that would ultimately become the *Nihon shoki* was to deny the legitimacy of the exterminated Soga clan and establish the orthodoxy of the Imperial family's predominance. The *Kokki*, which was compiled by Soga perished with Soga's regime, therefore, for Tenmu, it was necessary to create a new "Kokki (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 189)." Ango raises the important issue that historical records are easily influenced by the politically powerful. These records were created largely for the sake of the ruling class, instead of for the faithful recording of historical facts. Ango shrewdly realized that the "history" in those historical records was trying to hide the truth instead of telling the truth. By discovering the existence of this possibility, Ango displayed his doubts about the reliability of historical records.

Ango also discovered the existence of the possibility of historians' "mischief" by examining the descriptions of Takeuchi no Sukune in the *Kojiki*. According to the records, Takeuchi no Sukune was much respected by common people. However, there is little evidence to prove that this is true. His so-called "tomb" was extremely small and there are not any major shrines that offer sacrifices for him. Ango thought that those descriptions about Takeuchi's good reputation were fabricated by historians. The real Takeuchi (also in folktales) probably was not a historical figure, and even if he existed, he was probably not concerned about the common people. Ango analyzed the possible reasons for the mischief that the historians performed to fabricate the truth. It is possible that, in the views of historians, the fabrication of Takeuchi's good reputation and respect from the people was useful. The historians at that time found they could create a good story that was popular. Apparently, historical records should not be read as real history. However, to discover all the possibilities concealed beneath the surface of "official" approved records is an effective way to get closer to the truth.

One of Ango's essays in *Ango no Shin-Nihon chiri, Hida, Takayama no massatsu* (The Massacre at Hida, Takayama), deals with the system of Japanese myth and its function of serving the Tennō's control over the country. As discussed before, the officially approved historical records were created to serve the Imperial court by combining historical facts with Japanese myth. The power of the Tennō is given by the gods, therefore, all the stories from the system of Japanese myth are supposed to support the Imperial house. For this reason, figures from local powerful clans become different

kinds of gods and relatives of the Tennō's clan as meritorious retainers (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 230). Moreover, local folktales and native history in local places were skillfully connected with the history and myth of the Tennō's clan. In addition, historical investigators from local places in Japan tended to connect local legends with parts of ancient history. As a result, stories from local legends become consistent with native history and place names (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 231). This possibility further lessens the reliability of historical records.

It seems that Ango was a qualified detective of history. He crossed the barriers concealed in historical texts successfully and discovered the possible forms of history. Clearly, Ango realized that the crux of the problem of ancient Japanese historical records lies deep in the Emperor system. After discussing official approved historical records and the system of Japanese myth, Ango points out that the historical view that the power of Emperor is given by the gods is already out of date. He strongly suggests that this deep-rooted viewpoint has to be eliminated from both Japanese common sense and historical common sense.

Evaluations of Historical Figures and Events:

Ango's historical views and his discussion of historical records have shaped his evaluations of significant historical figures and events to a large extent. First, he insists that official historical records should not be trusted completely for the reasons discussed

above. Second, respect for all the possibilities of human nature is the foundation of Ango's evaluations of historical figures and events.

In Ango's essay on Amakusa Shirō, he argues that Shirō was not actually the leader of the Shimabara Rebellion. Instead of following what the historical records depicted, he believes that Shirō was a warm-hearted and innocent young boy with a lack of knowledge about the dark side in human nature. As a result, his innocence was used by *rōnin* and led to his tragic end. For Ango, Shirō was not a charismatic, powerful boy who was blessed by gods. He was just a common soul who had strong faith in villagers.

Unlike historians who always evaluate historical figures based on their contributions or popularity among people, Ango admired ones who lived truly as themselves. In the essay on Konishi Yukinaga, Ango still considers Yukinaga an optimistic, open-minded diplomat with a sincere heart, even though his withholding information led to the failure of negotiations with Korea. He was a devout Christian who did his best to protect his faith and other believers, and he was familiar with all the shifts in politics, as well as the art of mediating with eccentric figures. These characteristics make him a qualified diplomat (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 12: 381). On the other hand, in his essay on Minamoto no Yoritomo, Ango refuses to compare Yoritomo to Yoshitsune because he argues that these two figures cannot be compared. Although Ango does not deny the enormous romantic appeal of Yoshitsune, he does not think Yoshitsune had the ability to administer a country. Yoritomo was not loved as much as Yoshitsune, but he

was definitely a politician of great originality, and his private life never betrayed his political views. Ango's evaluations of these historical figures are not based on their historical contributions or popularity among common people. He tended to depict them as common people displaying possible characteristics in human nature.

In addition to evaluations of historical figures, Ango also discusses related historical issues and events by discovering the bright side of disaster or tragedy. In the essay on Date Masamune, Ango shows a positive attitude towards the postwar city reconstruction of Sendai (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 159). The postwar period was considered a good opportunity for Japanese cities to reconstruct themselves and pursue rapid development. Ango suggests that Tokyo should have also made use of this opportunity to construct broad roads and divide land into different areas. War is certainly a disaster. Nevertheless, Ango believes that to use this opportunity to reconstruct our home probably is the only merit that war has. Relying on the power of human beings, even disaster can become a blessing. Ango also points out that to learn a lesson from the disaster and not to make the same mistake again is important (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 160). In *Nagasaki chanpon*, Ango values the significance of Christian activities in Nagasaki in a different way compared to historians. According to Ango, the story of Kintsuba Jihyoe, his destiny of being arrested and killed is not tragic. It is a pastoral story, like a Christian western movie with depictions of adventures (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 215). Here Ango speaks as a writer who has been captivated by a beautiful and sentimental story.

History and Literature:

Although Ango considered himself a detective of history and he showed a very strong interest in Japanese history in his works, he was a writer after all. In his essays which discuss historical issues, he tended to connect some points he made with his viewpoints of literature. For Ango, history provides inexhaustible materials for his literature. On the other hand, the function of literature helps history to be understood at a deeper level. They serve each other in a myriad of ways.

Ango's understanding of literature's function is shown in his views on creation of historical fiction. In the essay about Amakusa Shirō, Ango discusses two possible forms of historical fiction. One is created based on historical facts, while the other is based on the author's subjective ideas. Ango suggests that he would like to write a novel to retell Shirō's story through the eyes of his sister, Reshiina, whose story of praying for her brother greatly touched Ango. The recreation of the same story may vary depending on the viewpoint. Therefore, a writer could definitely discover different possible ways to interpret his story from historical facts. Ango indicates that Shirō sympathized with the tragic plights of the villagers. However, Shirō was unable to find salvation for them. Furthermore, he realized the impurity of the rōnin intriguers' schemes, although he could not find a way to change the situation (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 12: 306). This part of Ango's discussion was largely influenced by the points he made in *Bungaku no furusato*. As Ango states, there is no absolute salvation. The only salvation is no salvation. One of the purposes of literature is

to display paradox without providing solutions. According to Ango, the delineation of Shirō's situation of "no salvation" is the writer's task. In terms of the god Sarutahiko, according to historical records, he was not appreciated in his time and lost popularity among people. Under the burden of people's criticism, Sarutahiko is a weeping god (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 113). However, Ango believes that the mission of literature is to speak for such miserable souls.

Ango's interpretations of history result from his understanding of human nature. As an important source of literature, the flexibility of interpreting history makes creation of new literature possible. In his essay about Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, Ango explains why he was so interested in history:

Unless one grasps the particular emotions of an age, one cannot understand the movement of history. The fact that the emotions of an age can govern reality is no less true today than it was in the past.... This is the reason I have an interest in history. The history that starts now cannot be distinguished from our present reality and is nothing other than the actions of human beings in the present (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 12: 328).

What is current is controlled by "feelings of the time (*jidai kanjō*)". This self-evident truth applies to all the historical changes in human society. "Feelings of the time" vary because human nature is unpredictable. Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret history in different ways. For Ango, this is the most fascinating part of history and it embraces all the possibilities of creating new literature.

Significance of Human nature/Power of human being in the trend of modernization :

Ango valued the ultimate significance of human nature in his fiction and essays. When he discusses the trend of modernization in postwar Japanese society in his historical essays, he shows a strong belief in the power of human beings. Although modernization is equal to mechanization to some extent, the human will and intentions are still indispensable and irreplaceable.

Ango admired the power of common people. In the essay about Takachiho, Ango describes those traveling performers' attitude towards the lineage of the Emperor. They performed for the Emperor for centuries. However, they never considered themselves blood-related with the lineage of the Emperor. Unlike those local historians who connected local history with the system of Japanese myth, they accepted myth as myth itself, without trying to connect themselves with the noble lineage. In the essay about the medicine industry in Toyama, Ango emphasizes the importance of the training of salespeople. He states that the direct connections with families all over Japan is the most effective way to promote the sales of medicine, and it is also the distinguishing feature of the medicine industry in Toyama. Although modern advertisement started to be used gradually at that time, Ango still believed in the effectiveness of traveling salespeople. In the essay about Takachiho, Ango mentions the "spirit of Kagura songs." In Takachiho, gods exist in people's ordinary life (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 15: 183). Local people in Takachiho love gods and consider this place their hometown where the gods could be seen.

Nevertheless, they built public toilets on the hills of this “sacred place” and did not regard it as inappropriate. Ango thought that not sticking to trivial conventions was the origin of the spirit of those innocent people in Takachiho. Although they live in a “sacred place” where they had to propitiate bellicose gods, Iwado Kagura, which was performed by these local people for peasant families in villages, was rarely performed in Shinto shrines. For local people, kagura is a necessary entertainment. It seems that they never considered their performance as a way to serve the gods, and they never tried to change this convention. Because of it, Ango believes that the emergence of “sacred place” here is from a simple and natural reason, not from intentional connection with kami. People in Takachiho created kagura, and they performed it mainly for themselves. They performed from their very heart, and they enjoyed it as a way to entertain themselves, express their emotional feelings. According to Ango, this is the spirit of substance.

The spirit of valuing material substance (*jishitsu seishin*) is discussed further in the essay about Dōtonbori. Ango discovered an interesting phenomenon that the magazines about automobile racing in Tokyo all had a lot of misprints, while the same types of magazines in the Kansai area had almost no misprints and provided more useful, well-organized information (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 126). Osaka people’s pursuit of fine food also reflects the importance of substance in their values. In the essay *Akita inu hōmonki* (Chronicle of a Journey to the Akita Dogs, 1951), Ango further discusses the pursuit of fine food. He thought it is unnatural that the spirit of enjoying life has never been accepted by Japanese common people (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 292). Ango also states that in peace time,

if a politician encourages people to endure a hard life and not spend money on entertainment, he is absolutely disqualified. According to Ango, how to enable people to enjoy life with the spirit of material substance needs to be debated in postwar Japan (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 291). Obviously, Ango respected and valued natural human desires.

In addition to natural human desires for material substance, Ango also discusses natural human emotions when he describes the changes in the Takarazuka theatrical troupe in the postwar period. During the prewar period, twords (such as “kiss”) and performances which aimed to depict the relationship between sexes were prohibited. Sexual relations were often depicted in a unisexual way, which suppressed real human emotions (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 264). In fact, Ango thought that the Takarazuka of the prewar period committed the crime of distorting the true, the good, and the beautiful because the all-female troupe was not acting out real human emotions. The postwar period was a turning point for Takarazuka. In the same essay, Ango describes the problems concerning scripts that Takarazuka faced. The scripts of traditional Takarazuka musicals displayed a kind of “Takarazuka pattern,” which was devoid of all the human characteristics and created an asexual fairytale. However, in the early 1950s, actresses who naturally displayed human characteristics in their performance emerged, such as in Minami Yuko in *Gubijin*. This change made Takarazuka musicals more realistic, but they lost their traditional “Takarazuka pattern (Sakaguchi, *Zenshu* 11: 265).” The tone of the asexual fairytale seems to have disappeared. To solve the problem, Ango suggests that

students of Takarazuka should expand their horizon by exploring more passion for life and art. Clearly, traditional methods of training limited students' vision and their potential originality. For Ango, traditions should be respected. However, in order to display natural human nature, new possibilities need to be discovered based on traditions.

Conclusion

Sakaguchi Ango had a genius for understanding his contemporary society, existing at a point of the breakdown of barriers between traditional and modern societies, between an emperor system and the debunking of that system, between popular literature and pure literature, and personally between the status of a former provincial elite ne'er do well and a prophet. In the end, Sakaguchi Ango negotiated the breakdown of these barriers by inventing his own critical vocabulary. His voice continues to be heard because of his honesty and lack of pretension.

Ango is usually considered a representative essayist who focused on Japanese wartime experience and postwar cultural transformation. Nevertheless, his fiction is equally worthy of careful examination. How Ango's perspective on the complexity of human nature is represented in his fiction is a question that needs to be explored. It is also important to consider to what extent Ango's wartime experience may have influenced his fiction. Although *Hakuchi* and several other short stories are directly related to Ango's personal wartime experience, it is not clear to what extent the central concept of his fiction was shaped by his experience of war. Another question worthy of inquiry is whether there are any differences between the human nature (*furusato*) Ango discussed in his essays and the one he depicted in his fiction. A thorough examination of his works of fiction will provide a more complete study of Ango's examination of the complexities of

humanity. To truly get at the heart of Ango's *furusato*, therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to both his essays and fictions.

As was shown above, Ango was a writer of paradoxes. He always gravitated towards the same sorts of subjects and analyzed them from different angles. Since he dealt with wide-ranging issues during the war and the postwar period, such as war itself, the emperor system, the transformation of Japanese culture and the function of literature, numerous questions were raised and debated heatedly by him through the postwar period. In the same postwar period, other writers may have discussed the same subjects, but Ango is respected for addressing these controversial topics with an uncompromising honesty, realism, and wit that seemed to speak to the disillusionment of the immediate postwar period in a particularly trenchant manner. Other writers' point of views on the same topics and their literary exchanges with Ango are avenues for further research that will provide supplementary documentation of Ango's influence on the transformation of postwar Japanese literature.

Literary transformation emerges with social transformation. Since the Meiji period, modern Japanese literature has experienced several transformations. After the Meiji Restoration, with the development and influence of Western thought, naturalism which was based on the idea of "no purpose, no ideology, and no solutions" became a main trend in Japanese literature. To be true to our desires and always to emphasize importance of "reality" became a key aspect of naturalism. Although other literary

schools emerged later, they were more often than not influenced by naturalism. Wartime experience also caused another important transformation in Japanese literature as different literary schools and genres represented different voices in postwar Japanese society. Judging from this examination of Ango's ideas about literature, it is clear that he espoused the central idea of naturalism in his emphasis on portraying "reality." We have also observed that there were similarities between the realism of Sakaguchi Ango and Oda Sakunosuke. A promising field for further research concerns the extent to which this iconoclastic realism extended to other writers of the *burai-ha* and whether there is a relationship with the earlier literary movement of naturalism. Further research on the literature of Ango and his contemporaries of this period will lead to a deeper and broader understanding of the development of modern Japanese literature.

References

- Dorsey, James. "Culture, Nationalism, and Sakaguchi Ango." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 27. 2 (Summer 2001): 347-379. Print.
- Dorsey, James and Doug Slaymaker (Eds.). *Literary Mischief: Sakaguchi Ango, culture, and the war*. Lanham, Md. : Lexington Books, 2010. Print.
- Dower, John. W. *Embracing defeat : Japan in the wake of World War II*. New York : W.W. Norton & Co. / The New Press, 1999. Print.
- Handō Kazutoshi. *Sakaguchi Ango to Taiheiyō Sensō*. Tōkyō: PHP Kenkyūjo, 2009. Print.
- Hyōdō Masanosuke. *Sakaguchi Ango ron*. Tōkyō: Tōjusha, 1972. Print.
- Ikoma, Albert Ryue. "Sakaguchi Ango: His Life and Work." Diss. U of Hawaii, 1979. Print.
- Oda Sakunosuke. *Teihon Oda Sakunosuke zenshū*. Tōkyō: Bunsendō Shoten, 1976. Print.
- Rimer, J. Thomas and Van C. Gessel (Edit.). *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature: From restoration to occupation, 1868-1945*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print.

- Robertson, Jennifer. *Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. Print.
- Rubin, Jay. "From Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature under the Allied Occupation." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 11: 1 (Winter 1985): 71-103. Print.
- Sakaguchi Ango, *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū*, 17 vols. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1998-2000.
- . *Sakaguchi Ango hyōron zenshū*. Tōkyō: Tōjusha, 1974. Print.
- Sekii Mitsuo. *Sakaguchi Ango kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Tōjusha, 1973. Print.
- Steen, Robert. Adam. "To live and to Fall: Sakaguchi Ango and the Question of Literature." Diss. Cornell University, 1995. Print.
- "Tokushū: Rekishika Sakaguchi Ango – sekai shisutemu to ajia." *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Gakutōsha, 12 (2005): 6-127. Print.
- "Tokushū: Sakaguchi Ango no sekai." *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō*. Tōkyō: Shibundō, 2 (1993): 5-190. Print.
- "Tokushū: Sakaguchi Ango no miryoku." *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō*. Tōkyō: Shibundō, 11 (2006): 5-174. Print.

Uno Kōji. *Dokudan-teki sakka-ron*. Tōkyō: Bungei Shunjū Shinsha, 1958. Print.