The Role of Language and the Significance of Primordialism in Nationalistic Rhetoric

A Case Study of National Identity Discourse in Contemporary Japan

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Abstract

Nihonjinron, the particularistic discourse on Japanese national identity, successfully dominates the Japanese panorama even now, thanks to the influence of academic and popular literature, mass media, Japan's powerful cultural industry, politics, and a widespread, genuine interest in "Japaneseness" among the Japanese themselves. The works of professor Watanabe Shōichi represent an outstanding example of *Nihonjinron* literature and of its temporal continuity. From the second half of the 1970s until well into the 2000s, Watanabe has been surprisingly prolific in the *nihonjinron* field, enthusiastically propagating the establishment's ideology. In this respect, his essays provide a significant insight into three main aspects of the *Nihonjinron*: the role of language as the highest expression of national identity; the existence of a widespread set of peculiar Japanese expressions conveying its ideological framework; its deep-rooted primordialist core. In the construction of a lexical and conceptual dichotomy between the stratum of the supposed "native lexicon" and that of "foreign loans" which compose the Japanese language and in the emphasis on the uniqueness of the Japanese language as a vehicle of Japanese primeval spirit, Watanabe shows the primordialist system of beliefs

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surrounding the concept of the "Japanese nation" (naturalness, organicity, continuity, timelessness, mythical-ness, sameness, perennial-ness) which firmly underlines the entire Japanese identity discourse.

Key words: nihonjinron, primordialism, nationalism studies, yamatokotoba

1 Introduction

In 1990, the well-known historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote: "The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism" (Hobsbawm 1990, 192). With this concluding statement of his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, he was hoping that in the post-1989 era the world was destined to experience a slow, but inexorable decline of nationalism: the mere fact that historians were making rapid and insightful progress in the study and analysis of the phenomenon meant that it already reached its peak and was prepared to dissolve itself (ibid). Hobsbawm thus argued for the inadequacy of the terms 'nation' and 'nationalism' to describe the political entities if not the sentiments once depicted by them (ibid).

Far from this legitimate expectation and desire, today's world seems, in some aspects, similar to the international scenario after the end of World War I, being characterised by a strong opposition against supranationalism, multinationalism, multiculturalism and especially globalism, and facing, on the contrary, the resilience, if not resurgence, of nationalism. This is clearly evident by the rise of (extreme) right wing political parties all over the world, especially in Europe, and the pre-eminence and emphasis given to nationalistic rhetoric in everyday political discourse. On the other hand, supranational entities such as the European Union, instead of fostering collective and interstate solidarity to take on common economic and political crises which their member states have had to grapple with in its recent history, seem to be enhancing and leaving space to the return of national egoisms by resurging the old national interests and stereotypes. As the leading figure of nationalism studies Umut Özkırımlı points out, nationalism is still alive in the contemporary panorama not only as the fundamental organising principle of interstate order and as the ultimate source of political legitimacy, but also as a natural, taken-for-granted context of everyday life and as a significant cognitive and discursive frame (Özkırımlı 2017, 5). It is so pervasive that it can dangerously impinge the analytical perspectives and shape academic conventions, by implementing the so-called "methodological nationalism", that is the tendency to equate the concepts of 'society'

with that of 'nation' and to presuppose that the nation is a given, natural and even necessary form of society in modernity (ibid). Nationalism has proven to be not only a persistent and constant feature of the recent political and social context, but also the most explored topic in social sciences over the past few decades: the result of the "explosion" of academic research in this direction has been the creation of a new field referred to as "nationalism studies" (Özkırımlı 2017, 7).

In the light of this revival of nationalistic rhetoric in every sense, it is necessary to enhance our comprehension of the phenomenon further and to reserve a more insightful and attentive look to the languages, narratives, and rhetoric of the myriad of forms through which nationalism can manifest and express itself, as well as their use of metaphors, images, and other devices of communication and expression. In accordance with Özkırımlı, it is likewise desirable to overcome the current debate on nationalism, with special reference to the "traditional" categorisation in the field which was mainly elaborated and proposed at the time by Anthony D. Smith in his influential work and which has been recently re-elaborated and re-presented in the "mildest" form of methodological approaches by the scholar Umut Özkırımlı (Smith 1998, 2001; Özkırımlı 2017). In particular, Özkırımlı has presented three main approaches which may be pointed out in the studies of nationalism, namely primordialism/perennialism, modernism and ethnosymbolism, by adding to them a set of research paths referred to as "contemporary approaches" (Özkırımlı 2017). The first is generally thought to claim the temporal and spatial recurrence in history of nations, their immemorial and natural character; the second argues that it is not legitimate to talk of nations before the modern era; ethnosymbolists hold that although nationalism is a modern phenomenon, nations have ethnic precedents; finally, contemporary approaches attempt to move beyond these "classical" positions, in particular to overcome "methodological nationalism" by arguing the social constructed nature of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. In fact, the first three labels received much criticism in the last few years because of their internal contradictions, ambiguities, and their arbitrariness (Özkırımlı 2017, 228–245). Especially the so-called "primordialism", which contends that nationality is a "natural" part of human beings and that nations have existed since time immemorial, has proved to be highly problematic, mainly due to the long-standing confusion in academia between the "analysts of naturalizers" and the "analytical naturalizers", namely that between categories of analysis and categories of practice, as Roger Brubaker has clearly depicted in his book (Brubaker 2004, 31–33, 83–87; Coakley 2017, 2; Özkırımlı 2017, 59). By 'category of practice' Brubaker means the categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, which are to (or should) be distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts (Brubaker 2004, 31). The problem on which Brubaker

focuses his attention lies in the uncontrolled conflation of social/practical and sociological/analytical understandings of terms such as 'nation', 'race' and 'identity' which are used analytically a good deal of the time more or less as they are used in practice, in an implicitly or explicitly reifying manner (Brubaker 2004, 32–33). The same goes for 'primordialism': the term has been used to depict at the same time the intellectual position of either those nationalists of the past who claimed the naturalness or primordiality of concepts such those of 'nations', 'national sentiments or attachments', 'national soul', 'shared blood' and alike or those more contemporary scholars such as Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz who, far from insisting that these "primordial attachments" did factually exist, suggested that a perception about the primordiality, about the ontological reality of these assumed "givens" of social existence, by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself, was actually visible among social actors (Geertz 1963; Shils 1957; Grosby 2016; Smith 2003; Özkırımlı 2017; Coakley 2017).

This contribution will attempt to tackle both the "national question" and the problem surrounding "primordialism". It will focus on the mainstream national identity discourse in contemporary Japan known as *nihonjinron*, in particular on the role of language in vehiculating and imposing the ideology that dominates Japanese society. 'Ideology' is here understood as "a combination between discourse and power", characterising the wholeness of a particular social or political system and its operations by every member or actor in that system (Blommaert 2005, 158). In this sense, it results in normalised, naturalised patterns of thought and behaviour and is interpreted as the common sense of a given society, encompassing not only materially mediated ideational phenomena – sets of ideas, perceptions, received wisdom – but also ideas produced by particular material conditions or instruments performed in certain ways, that is either consciously planned, creative activity or the unintentional reproduction of "determined" meanings (Blommaert 2005, 159, 161, 174). The article is divided into three parts. First, I will outline the theoretical context for my argumentation in order to attempt to provide a framework of analysis, by depicting *nihonjinron*'s main features and assumptions. Second, I will present the case study I chose to select, that is a concrete example of meta-linguistic analysis of *nihonjinron* in the context of its ever-lasting literature, by investigating the sort of language deployed by the scholar Watanabe Shōichi in his amateur essay *Nihongo no kokoro* (*The Spirit of Japanese Language*), centred on the enhancement of Japanese linguistic uniqueness. Third, I will attempt to draw a number of conclusions: in particular, in line with the proposal by John Coakley (Coakley 2017: 2–3), it will be suggested to remove "primordialism" as a category of analysis and to restrict it to its original, nationalistic significance, namely to interpret it as a specific ingredient or moulding component of the nationalistic discourse, that is the sentiment or be-

lief in the perceived genetically-transmitted, natural character of a national community, conceived as a mythic/historical "organic whole" located in a specific and symbolical territory and characterised by continuity, timelessness, perennialness and monolithicity – in short, in its primordiality. It will be claimed that primordialism is precisely the core of nationalistic discourse. In this sense, a broad and comparative perspective which should encompass various fields of research and exemplary, particular case studies in different contexts is all the more imperative in today's fragmented, splintered and tattered world: by inquiring the "universal" – socially perceived existence of nationalism – through the "particular" – the plethora of forms of nationalistic narratives – reserving special attention to the primordial element, it might be possible to grasp the scope of this persistent and recurrent phenomenon.

This contribution is thus aimed at facing the question: where and how is the nation? Or better, where and how is a nationalistic discourse? In other words, the purposes are to a) show the capital importance of language in the definition of national identity, b) shed light on the functioning of nationalist narratives from a linguistic point of view and c) show the contradictions of this kind of rhetoric. The intent is to try to depict a sort of recurring model of nationalistic rhetoric by deducing it from the linguistic and conceptual analysis of a particular case study, that is an outstanding example of Japanese mainstream national discourse. Here 'nation' as a category of analysis is interpreted as "a symbol with multiple meanings, competed over by different groups manoeuvring to capture [its] definition and its legitimating effects" (Özkırımlı 2017, 218); while 'nationalism' is interpreted as a "discourse", that is defined by Blommaert as "a meaningful symbolic behaviour", "language-in-action", which "comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use" (Blommaert 2005, 2–3). In this sense, language is but one manifestation of nationalism and it is precisely to the linguistic phenomenon on which I intend focus here. In fact, as environments are linguistically classified in different ways, both culturally and cognitively, understanding the various experiences that influence these classifications is crucial to be able to account for the different modes of the human condition expressed by language that socially constructs us. In particular, as Michael Billig put it: "routinely familiar habits of language will be continually acting as reminders of nationhood. In this way, the world of nations will be reproduced as the world, the natural environment of today"; "nationalism is not confined to the florid language of blood-myths. Banal nationalism operates with prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted, and which, in so doing, enhabit them. Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases, offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making 'our' national identity unforgettable" (Billig 1995, 93). It is to these "banal"

words, expressions or metaphors, it is to these splinters of language that I would like to turn the attention, because, as Geertz once cautiously reminded us, "if the general is to be grasped at all, and new units uncovered, it must, it seems, be grasped not directly, all at once, but via instances, differences, variations, particulars – piecemeal, case by case" (Geertz 2000, 221).

2 The Nihonjinron Discourse

'Nihonjinron' 日本人論 literally means "theories[1] on the Japanese" and designates an identity discourse that flourished between the 1960s and 1980s, expressed mainly by academic and amateur essays, scientific and popular literature, radio and TV programmes and fostering the alleged uniqueness of the Japanese people. As Yoshino Kōsaku and Peter Dale point out, there are various ways of saying that certain features are "unique", or better "distinctive" to Japan in Japanese, such as *dokuji* 独自 (*sui generis*), *dokutoku* 独特 (autochthonous), *tokushitsu* 特質 (special quality), *tokuchō* 特徴 (distinctive characteristic), *tokushoku* 特色 (singular), *tokuyū* 特有 (idiosyncratic), *tokushu* 特殊 (peculiar), *tokusei* 特性 (peculiar) and *koyū* 固有 (original) (Yoshino 1992, 8; Dale 1986, 25) – just to mention the most popular words denoting this concept, by leaving aside a countless number of expressions referring to it such as *sekai de mo rui no nai* 世界でも類のない (unparalleled), *takoku ni nai* 他国にない (not in other countries), *rei wo minai* 例を見ない (no other examples of), etc. Actually, none of these expressions corresponds exactly to the English word 'unique' which precisely means 'the only one of its kind' (Yoshino 1992, 8) and for which the specific loanword *yuniiku* ユニーク is used instead. These Japanese words run the range of connotation from "very different" to "unparalleled": in fact, the English word 'unique' actually assumes in Japanese the connotation of referring to the unusual, unparalleled, different in its essence from other similar things (ibid; Dale 1986, 25). Similarly, a number of adjectives or adjectival nouns exist which refer to the "quality of being Japanese": *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ, *nihonsei* 日本性 (Japaneseness), *nihonsei* 日本製 (Japanese-made), *nihonjin toshite* 日本人とし

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[1] The term could be also translated as "discussions", "interpretations", "visions" or generically as "discourse". As Befu Harumi notes, the ambiguity of the word *ron* 論 expresses the multiform character of *nihonjinron*, which could include either those theories based on amateurism and, thus, without scientific rigor and intended for popular consumption, or those scholarly theories of some intellectuals who attempt to scientifically discover legitimate sources to claim the existence of a hidden essence in Japanese culture (Befu 2001, 2–3). Other commentators instead prefer to limit the meaning of 'nihonjinron' solely to the amateur manifestations, by recognizing nevertheless an influence of the ideas of national distinctiveness in some academic writings (Yoshino 1992, 7).

て (as a person of Japanese nationality), *nihonteki* 日本的 (typically Japanese), *nihonfū* 日本風 (Japanese style), plus many nominal compounds consisting of the character *wa* 和 (lit. "harmony" which stands for "Japan") such as *washi* 和紙 (Japanese paper), wagashi 和菓子 (traditional Japanese confectionery), *washoku* 和食 (Japanese cuisine), *wafuku* 和服 (Japanese clothes), *wadō* 和道 (Japanese way), *waka* 和歌 (Japanese poetry) etc. As a tangible demonstration of this, the *raison d'être* of *nihonjinron* is to demonstrate or simply to highlight the particularism of Japanese culture and people, namely the existence of unbridgeable cultural and genetical differences which are supposed to distinguish the so-called "Japanese" from the "Other" (i.e. the West and, occasionally, China) and reveal the naturalness of "Japaneseness".[2] As several scholars have already pointed out, *nihonjinron* discourse is underscored by some implicit assumptions: a) the belief in or the perception of the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the Japanese people (*tan'itsu minzoku* 単一民族, *dōshitsu* 同質), that is a vision of Japan as an isolated, remote and peaceful island nation, inhabited from immemorial times by a homogeneous and harmonious agricultural people with no skill for war and no experience in interacting with alien people (Befu 2001, 68–71; Yoshino 1992, 18; Dale 1986, i, 42; Sugimoto 2010, 2–4; Oguma 2002, 319); b) the belief in the existence of attachments or ties – such as nation, ethnicity, genotypic and phenotypic features, language, culture, territory, religion, customs – interpreted as conceptually overlapping, perceived as monolithic, natural or primordial and objective characteristics and considered to be shared by all the proper "Japanese" (that is what I intend to assume for primordialism) (Befu 2001, 71; Sugimoto 1999, 83); c) a "race thinking" or racialism, that is the belief in the existence of distinctive biological human groups characterised by perceived unchangeable genotypic and phenotypic characteristics, or human races[3] (Yoshino 1992, 191, 1997; Sugimoto 1999, 82; Befu 2001, 69, 75–76); d) the belief in the validity of

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[2]   I would like to point out from the beginning that I will consciously avoid deploying the term "race" in sake of clarity of my own thought. As it will be discussed, one of the assumptions on which *nihonjinron* is based is the belief in the existence of human races – biologically distinct groups – and then, of a Japanese race, also referred to as "Yamato race". Hence, I will use this term only in order to depict the usage and the special meaning conferred by *nihonjinron* writers to the ambiguous Japanese term *minzoku* 民族, which could equally be translated as "nation", "race", "ethnic group". *Nihon minzoku* 日本民族 denotes the "Japanese" as a biologically distinct group, but also as a culturally defined ethnic group. In all the other cases, when depicting "objectively" the characteristics of *nihonjinron* as in the above sentence, other more "neutral" terms will be used, such as 'people' or the adjective 'genetic', 'ethnic' instead of 'racial'.

[3]   It is worth noting that, according to Yoshino, racialism does not always imply racism, the latter consisting in the belief of the existence of a hierarchy between alleged human races, i.e. the existence of superior and inferior races, on the basis of which a discrimination is put in place: according to this interpretation, propagators of *nihonjinron* ideas thus tend to highlight more the distinctive character than the alleged genetic determinism of the Japanese (Yoshino 1992, 102). However, Befu seems not to be of the same idea about this (Befu 2001: 75–76).

emic judgments only over etic analysis on the Japaneseness (Befu 2001, 56–60; Haugh 1998, 28; Dale 1986, i); e) a strong ethnocentric perspective (Befu 2001, 67–68).

Although the term 'nihonjinron' is usually deployed to refer to a specific genre of literary essays very popular between the 1960s and the 1980s, encompassing a wide range of epistemological fields whose common claim is the alleged Japanese uniqueness, it primarily denotes an ideological construction of Japanese national identity which heavily influences the way the Japanese perceive themselves (Dale 1986, 9, 15, 21; Yoshino 1992, 141–144, 191; Befu 2001, 64, 76–83), which pervades Japanese society in its entirety and affects several social groups to different degrees (Yoshino 1992, 3). In order to grasp thoroughly the scope and the complex, versatile nature of the *nihonjinron*, it ought to be first considered as a hegemonic system of either conscious or unconscious behaviour (Befu 2001, 76–77). On the one hand, it has been conceived by elites to protect their own interests through the central role played by the intellectuals, through domestic and foreign policies, economic and industrial plans and the strategy of internationalisation of the powerful cultural industry; on the other, it has been passively accepted by the ordinary people like a "ready-made clothing" (Befu 2001, 8–9, 64, 76–82; Yoshino 1992, 29; Dale 1986, 18–19). According to Befu and Yoshino, this identity discourse can be traced back to the *Kokugaku* 国学 intellectual movement[4], which flourished during the Edo period (1603–1868) and became important, in turn, as a nativist reaction to the adoption of neo-Confucianist philosophy, as the official ideology by the Tokugawa government, and as an affirmation of the indigenous culture (Befu 2001, 124–141; Yoshino 1992, 34). Later, proto-*nihonjinron* is thought to have matured through the shocking encounter or, better, the clash against the 'West' during the Meiji period (1868–1912), and since then to have been continuously redefined in the light of economic and historical changes and according to Japan's geopolitical place in the world (Befu 2001, 124–141). However, it was only since the post-war period that the *nihonjinron* started to diffuse systematically as a hegemonic and normative cultural model and mass product, as a result of the "spiritual vacuum" in the wake of the dramatic defeat in the Pacific War in 1945, by becoming the hegemonic identity paradigm between the 1960s and 1980s and continuing today to adjust itself according to geopolitical and domestic changes and through the medium of cultural capitalism (Befu 2001, 86, 100; Oguma 2002).

Among all the instruments used by dominating groups of power to propagate the above-depicted assumptions of cultural exceptionalism, literature, in particular the am-

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[4] Literally meaning "National Studies", it was an academic movement, a school of Japanese philology and philosophy originating during the Tokugawa or Edo period. *Kokugaku* scholars worked to refocus Japanese scholarship away from the then-dominant study of Chinese, Confucian, and Buddhist texts in favour of research into the early Japanese classics.

ateur essay, plays a key role to justify the existence of a specific genre of identity literature which could be labelled as "*nihonjinron* literature", for dealing with the discussion over the characteristics supposed to be peculiar to the Japanese nationals only. The crucial role played by literature is such by virtue of the prestige enjoyed by academic scholars in Japanese culture and society (Befu 2001, 8, Yoshino 1992, 7). According to Peter Dale, especially certain upper echelon scholars in the Japanese academy have chosen to elect themselves as "proxy spokesmen for the inarticulate soul of the national essence": this is thanks to Japanese social and educational ethics which strongly favour those who could secure their intellectual credentials from élite centres such Tōkyō and Kyōto universities (Dale 1986, 15). As Yoshino points out, the writers of *nihonjinron* literature are actually not limited to the academic environment alone, but they encompass thinkers of various professional backgrounds, such as journalists, critics, writers and even business people and diplomats (Yoshino 1992, 7, 37). The writers of the *nihonjinron* are broadly defined as "popular sociologists", who, by experience or expertise, are interested in theorising contemporary Japanese society and culture and in formulating ideas of Japanese national uniqueness: they have little to do with academic sociology in the sense that, although sociologists participated in the discussion around Japanese national identity as individual writers, the *nihonjinron* literature did not become a subfield of academic sociology (Yoshino 1992, 37). The importance of literature in the propagation and assertion of ideas on Japanese uniqueness is verifiable also from a "quantitative" point of view: many are the publications attributable to the field of *nihonjinron* written by emeritus Japanese scholars and wide is the range of epistemological fields covered by *nihonjinron* literature – from linguistics to archaeology, from psychology to anthropology, from biology to ecology etc. – explored to investigate and sustain the alleged Japanese cultural specificity.[5] Indeed, according to the domain, it is possible to divide nihonjinron literature into the subfields of *nihonbunkaron* 日本文化論 (theories on Japanese culture), *nihonkeizairon* 日本経済論 (theories on the Japanese economy), *nihonshakairon*

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[5] According to a survey carried out by the Nomura Institute (1978), around 700 titles on *nihonjinron* were published between 1945 and 1978. However, it is likely that the number was underestimated (Dale 1986, 15), considering the vagueness and ambiguity of the meaning of 'nihonjinron'. In order to give an idea of the epistemological variety and of the temporal continuity of the phenomenon, it will be sufficient to mention the titles of some of *nihonjinron* bestsellers: *Tateshakai no ningen kankei* (*Human Relations in the Vertical Society*, 1967), *Fūdo: ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (*Climate: An Anthropological Study*, [1935] 1967), *Nihonjin to yūdayajin* (*The Japanese and the Jews*, 1970), *Amae no kōzō* (*The Anatomy of Dependence*, 1971), *Tozasareta gengo: nihongo no sekai* (*A Closed Language: The World of Japanese*, 1975), *"Nihonrashisa" no saihakken* (*The Rediscovery of "Japaneseness"*, 1977), *Nihonjin no nō* (*The Japanese Brain*, 1978), *Nihonteki keiei to bunka* (*Japanese Culture and Management*, 1983), *Nihonjin wa doko kara kita ka* (*Where Do the Japanese Come From?*, 1984), *Nihonjin no tanjō* (*The Birth of the Japanese*, 1996), *Kokka no hinkaku* (*The National Character*, 2005), *Nihonjin no kokoro no kotoba* (*The Words of the Japanese Spirit*, 2011), etc.

日本社会論 (theories on Japanese society) and so forth. In this respect, the so-called "theories on the Japanese language" (*nihongoron* 日本語論), claiming the specificity of the idiom, are particularly relevant because the Japanese language is considered to be the most evident medium through which the cultural particularism of the Japanese and their national character or "soul" can manifest themselves, by virtue of some particular aesthetic concepts intrinsic to the language (*iki* 粋, *mono no aware* もののあわれ, *wabi* わび, *sabi* さび, *ma* 間, *ukiyo* 浮世, ...)[6] and of the existence of a primitive and native stratum of words, considered to be difficult or impossible to be translated into other idioms (Befu 2001, 34–35; Miller 1977; Miller 1982; Dale 1986, 57).

All the above depicted features of the *nihonjinron* phenomenon have already been widely discussed and they have become the object of various critiques regarding different aspects and beliefs incorporated in this discourse, such as the myth of homogeneity (Befu 2001; Yoshino 1992; Dale 1986; Sugimoto 2010; Oguma 2002), the myth of Japanese cultural and linguistic uniqueness (Miller 1977; Miller 1982; Dale 1986; Yoshino 1992; Sugimoto 2010), the belief in the existence of human races on the basis of which human beings are supposed to be genetically divided (Yoshino 1992, 1997; Befu 2001) and so on. Criticisms arose mainly from an anthropological (Befu), sociological (Yoshino, Sugimoto), sociolinguistic (Miller, Dale), psycho-analytic (Dale) approach – just to mention some of the most prevalent academic's names in this line of research. Not only have *nihonjinron* writings been criticised regarding their content or their claims but also in their use of sources and methods of "sociological" inquiry (Befu 2001; Sugimoto 2010; Dale 1986). In particular, Roy Andrew Miller analysed the myths and the ideology underlying *nihongoron*, a set of theories presented in the form of academic and/or populariser essays intended to demonstrate Japanese language's uniqueness, which are of special relevance in Japanese national identity discourse (Miller 1977a, 1977b, 1982) and which help to shed light on the nature of the "primordialist element", considered here to be the core feature shaping the nationalistic rhetoric of *nihonjinron*.

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[6] Reductively translated or denoting respectively "the chic, sophisticated", "the pathos of things", "the refined simplicity of quasi-rusticity", "interval, space, emptiness", "the ephemeral world".

3 Case study: *The Spirit of the Japanese Language* by Watanabe Shōichi

In this article, I hence propose a contribution to the study of *nihonjinron*, namely an outstanding and concrete example of meta-linguistic analysis of Japanese identity discourse in the context of its ever-lasting literature, by investigating the language employed by the scholar Watanabe Shōichi in his amateur essay Nihongo no kokoro (The Spirit of Japanese Language). This piece of *nihongoron* literature was first published in 1974, while its central ideas were summarised and appeared in the same year on Japan Echo in the English-written article "On the Japanese Language", intended to reach an international audience. Their main thrust is the uniqueness of "Japan" (*nihon dokuji* 日本独自, *nihon dokutoku* 日本独特, *nihon rekishi to nihonjin no yuniikusa* 日本歴史 と日本人のユニークさ), conceived as a culturally, linguistically, politically, historically, and ethnically homogenous entity, inhabited by a single, hegemonic, pure-blooded race, namely the Yamato race (*tan'itsu bunka/bunmei, gengo, rekishi, minzoku kokka* 単一文化・文明・言語・歴史・民族・国家); in particular, the Japanese language is the focus of the discussion, because Japanese particularism is deemed to be deriving from the supposed linguistic uniqueness of its people, that is its phylogenetic independence. Watanabe (1930–2017) was a leading scholar of English literature, but also a political and cultural critic, surprisingly prolific in the *nihonjinron* field throughout his life by enthusiastically and consciously propagating the establishment's ideology. He has all the necessary credentials to serve as influential spokesman of the government's orthodox vision of the exclusivist nature of the Japanese language: he was professor emeritus at Sophia university of Tōkyō with a specialisation in English philology, he obtained a PhD degree in Western philosophy at Münster university, and he was also a dynamic literary and media populariser, and a critic and commentator of historical, political, and social matters regarding Japan's domestic affairs. Moreover, he was ambiguously known in the domestic intellectual and media panorama for his keen historical revisionism and negationism, for his ultra-nationalistic, conservative positions in relation to certain controversial facts of Japanese recent history and he was known among several American scholars for his extremist assertions on Japanese "racial purity". Although the essay I will consider dates back more than forty years, I chose to revisit it for four main reasons. First, *nihonjinron*'s claims and assumptions have continuously and tenaciously been proposed again and again over the last decades by Japanese governments and continue to be popular among the general public even today. This is especially the case of the focus given to the linguistic dimension (*nihongoron*), as one can see by the recent re-publication of several *nihonjinron* "classical" pieces of literature or the continuous lit-

erary activity of authors such as Watanabe himself.[7] Second, notwithstanding the fact that either the essay at issue or Watanabe's personality have been already partially mentioned and criticised by both Miller and Dale from mainly a conceptual point of view, I strongly believe that more emphasis should be placed on the kind of language pregnant with ideology which has been used by the author in order to convey his nationalistic credo of cultural essentialism. Generally speaking, I suggest that while the role played by language in defining and enhancing Japanese national identity has been studied, only little space has been consecrated to the systematic analysis of the words and expressions used to achieve it and to convey the nationalistic rhetoric behind them. Similarly, and thirdly, as I noted before, *nihonjinron* has been "traditionally" investigated from an anthropological, sociological, sociolinguistic, psycho-analytical perspective, but it seems to me that an interpretation from the strict point of view of nationalism studies is still lacking. It is true that especially Befu (1993; 2001, 33, 83–85, 102, 125) and Yoshino (1992) refer to *nihonjinron* in terms of cultural nationalism and nationalistic ideology and that Yoshino dedicates a whole chapter to an overview and assessment of the main theories on ethnicity until 1992, that he makes a cursory reference to some nationalism studies and tries to compare *nihonjinron* to other examples of cultural nationalism in different contexts (Yoshino 1992). However, none of them makes explicit or specific reference to the ongoing debate on nationalism by trying to bring their work in accordance with it: this may be because the categorisation of the field is quite recent (Smith 1998) as well as the debate on nationalism intended as an independent field of research separated from anthropology, sociology and the like. In particular, it will be urged, as a way of conclusion, that it is necessary to reinterpret *nihonjinron* in this sense in order to achieve a deeper understanding of its mechanisms and their reproduction in everyday language and discourses and, in particular, it will be proposed to reconsider the category of primordialism and to interpret it as category of practice, i.e. as a fundamental component of nationalist discourse – in this case, as the essence itself of nihonjiinron discourse. I think that this shift of awareness about "primordialism" from a category possibly useful for analytical purposes to a sole category of social and political practice is crucial as well as the focus on and the deep analysis of this component of nationalist discourse. Fourth, since Watanabe was a fervent and passionate supporter of the establishment's ideology, his essay represents one of the most extreme and consciously structured manifestations of the many-sided phenomenon of the *nihonjinron*. Thanks to his deep linguistic and conceptual awareness in the context of *nihonjinron*'s discussions, his essay provides a useful insight into three aspects of Japanese contemporary society: a) the role of lan-

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[7] Cf. references.

guage considered as the major epiphany of Japanese ethnic identity; b) the existence of a widespread set of peculiar Japanese linguistic expressions, (un)consciously conveying the underlying ideology and c) the importance of out-groups as reference groups for comparative and normative purposes. In the case in question, the analysis which follows focuses on the lexical and conceptual dichotomies that supposedly exist between the two main lexical strata of modern Japanese – Japanese words (*yamatokotoba* 大和言葉) and Sino-Japanese words (*kango* 漢語) –, pointed out and stressed by Watanabe in his essay. The purpose is precisely to offer a meaningful case study and a hint for reflection on the kind of ideologically imbibed language typical of *nihonjinron* discourse and literature and to re-interpret the long-discussed category of "primordialism" in the light of this analysis.

Thus, to begin with, the core argument of *Nihongo no kokoro* is that Japanese culture is to be considered unique by virtue of the particularism and phylogenetical independence of the Japanese language, due to the existence in modern Japanese of a primitive, native lexical stratum called *yamatokotoba* 大和言 (lit. "words of Yamato/Japan") apparently correlated with no other language and supposed to vehiculate the true "Japanese spirit" (*yamatodamashii* 大和魂). Yamato words are believed to trace back directly (*massugu ni* まっすぐに) to prehistorical times (*yūshiizen kara* 有史以前から) when they were first uttered by a primitive, ape-like Japanese ancestor (*nihonjin no senzo* 日本人の先祖) and since then have been handed down (*tsukaitsuzukete kita kotoba* 使い続けてきた言葉) by the Japanese race (*nihon minzoku* 日本民族) from generation to generation. They are lexically supposed to correspond to those words of Japanese etymological origin (*kun'yomi* 訓読み), thus vehiculating the "authentic Japanese soul" (*nihonjin no tamashii* 日本人の魂) or Japaneseness (*nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ). Definitely, they are believed to have their roots (*ne o oroshite iru* 根を下ろしている) set down directly (*chokusetsu ni* 直接に) in the spiritual origin of the Japanese nation (*minzoku no tamashii no minamoto* 民族の魂の源), to be "as old as our [Japanese] blood" (*ware ware no chi to onajiku furui* われわれの血と同じく古い) and so to be inseparably tied (*wakachikataku musubitsuiteite* 分かち難く結びついていて) to it for being born simultaneously with the Japanese race itself (*nihon minzoku no hassei to tomo ni* 日本民族の発生とともに) and for being used continuously (*renzokushitekita* 連続してきた) without interruption (*taeru koto naku* 絶えることなく) until the present.

I quote here a few relevant excerpts through which Watanabe starts to present his central ideas:

日本民族が有史以前から口伝えに使い続けてきた言葉なのである。

[Yamato words] are lexical items handed down orally and continuously by the Japanese race since prehistorical times. (Watanabe 1974a, 11)

われわれの血と同じく古いのである。

[Yamato words] are as old as our blood. (Watanabe 1974a, 8)

進化論的な言い方するならば―私は進化論を信じていないのだが―サルみたいな動物が、最初に日本人の先祖として、何か口からまとまった音を出した時代にまで、まっすぐにさかのぼるのである。別の言い方をすれば、大和言葉は民族の魂の源に直接に根を下している言葉だと言ってようであろう。

According to an evolutionist perspective – though I do not believe in evolution myself – [Yamato words] trace back directly to an era when an ape-like Japanese ancestor uttered, for the first time, articulated sounds. In other words, it is legitimate to state that Yamato words set their roots directly in the spiritual origins of the Japanese race. (Watanabe 1974a, 11–12)

大和言葉は日本民族の発生とともに発生して絶えることなく連続してきたので、日本人の魂と分ち難く結びついていて、知的に思想を積み上げていくには不適当なところがあるのだ。特に思考内容が外来思想のときはそうである。

Since Yamato words have continued to be used without interruption after being generated simultaneously with the Japanese race, they are inseparably tied with the Japanese soul and are not suitable for building intellectual thought. This is all the more true when the content of thought is foreign. (Watanabe 1974a, 20)

From the beginning, Watanabe intentionally develops an ideological distinction from a lexical and conceptual point of view in the form of a dichotomic opposition between the "native stratum" and that of Sino-Japanese words, the most ancient lexical stratum of foreign origin composing the Japanese lexicon. The concept of foreignness is key to explain and understand the ideological foundation of Watanabe's argument about

Japanese uniqueness: the definition of *yamatokotoba* as the essence of Japaneseness functions through their contrastive and polarising comparison with the so-called "alien elements" (*ibutsu* 異物) of the Japanese lexicon, represented by *kango* (Watanabe 1974a, 20). It is worth noting from the outset that by 'kango' Watanabe specifically refers to those words which penetrated ancient Japanese since the second half of the VIII century AD, by means of the prestigious Chinese tradition represented by the ideographic writing system and Buddhism, whose introduction in the archipelago had already begun since the second half of the VI century AD. Thus, all the neologisms subsequently created by the Japanese themselves from Sino-Japanese elements and called *wasei kango* 和製漢語 are apparently excluded from his discussion. In addition to this, he includes kango in the third lexical category depicted in Japanese linguistics, that of *gairaigo* 外来語, usually used separately to designate those loanwords coming from European languages and introduced in Japanese since the XVI century onwards: this choice mirrors his particular conception of kango as alien elements only partially incorporated and assimilated into the Japanese language for ideological purposes.[8]

The first pair of antithetic concepts outlined by Watanabe to shed light on the nature of his compatriots is represented by the dualism between indigenous "purity" (*tanjun* 単純) versus alien "corruption" (*konnyū* 混入), characterised in turn by primitivity (*genshi* 原始) and historicity (*rekishisei* 歴史性) and qualified with the attributes of continuity (*renzokusei* 連続性) and rupture or change (*kawatte iru* 変わっている) (Watanabe 1974a, 18, 20–21). While *yamatokotoba* are considered to be original Japanese words which can be traced back to the so-called Yamato period, a prehistorical era supposedly characterised by primeval integrity and preceding the "corrupting" influence from the continent, when only Yamato culture and language were supposed to exist, *kango* are lexical items of Chinese origin and, as such, they are considered as vehicles of a foreign thought, stranger to the spiritual and cultural tradition of the Japanese people expressed instead by pre-existing Yamato words. *Kango* are thus supposed to be characterised by historicity by virtue of the fact that Japanese history properly begins with the Nara period (710–794 AD), namely with the introduction of Buddhism and a sophisticated written system coming from the Chinese mainland through the Korean peninsula. It was only at that time that the complex process of adoption and adaptation of the Chinese lexicon to the Japanese phonological system started and led to the creation of a

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[8] According to Kageyama & Saito (2016) and Frellesvig (2010), the modern Japanese language consists of three main lexical strata: 1) native words (*wago* 和語 or *yamato kotoba* 大和言葉; since prehistory or before the VIII century AD); 2) Sino-Japanese words (*kango* 漢語; from the VIII century AD); 3) foreign words (*gairaigo* 外来語; from the XVI century AD). There exists a fourth, less relevant lexical stratum, that of 4) mimetic words (*giseigo* 擬声語, *gitaigo* 擬態語; since prehistory or before the VIII century AD), which is not mentioned here for the purpose and the scope of article.

number of neologisms referred to as *kango*. Therefore, while Yamato words are marked with continuity because they are supposed to be orally and passively transmitted since times immemorial by the Japanese "race", Chinese words are labelled as "interrupted" and "corrupting" or "infective" because they started to flow into ancient Japanese later and they are thus not connected with the well-springs of the Japanese.

In this respect, what Watanabe emphasises as an unsurpassable barrier between the "Japanese soul" (*yamatodamashii* 大和魂) and "foreign thought" (*gairaishisō* 外来思想) is represented by another dichotomic pair of opposite concepts expressing two different cognitive processes expressed respectively by the two lexical strata: intuition or emotionality/irrationality on the one hand, and logics or rationality on the other. Yamato words are thought to be authentic because they carry a hidden spirit (*kokoro* こころ, *ganrai jōshotekina kokoro* 元来情緒的な「こころ」) emerging from the deepest part (*oku* 奥, *uchi* 内, *uchiwa* 内輪, *uchigawa* 内側, *tamashii no oku no oku kara kuru* 魂の奥の奥からくる) of the Japanese soul and provoking an emotional and spontaneous involvement called *kandō* 感動 in native speakers' minds (Watanabe 1974a, 21). Kandō properly refers to a sort of mystic inebriation (*chiisana shizukana kōkotsukan* 小さな静かな恍惚感) caused by the utterance of a combination of significative sounds (i.e. *yamatokotoba*) which can activate a sort of primordial "ethnic memory" (Watanabe 1974a, 23). Watanabe argues that this automatic and intuitive (*jōsho ni chokusetsu ni sūtto fureru* 情緒に直接にすうっと触れる), ever-lasting (*sameru koto wa nai* 醒めることはない) process is typically activated at the sight, for instance, of a glimpse of nature (*shizen no ibuki ni binkan ni kandōsuru* 自然の息吹に敏感に感動する) or by reading a waka, the traditional Japanese poetry usually composed mainly by Yamato words (Watanabe 1974a, 22–23). By way of example, the following *tanka* taken from *Kojiki* (Chronicles from Ancient Times, ca. 712 BC) and composed by the emperor Jinmu is an emblematic paradigm of what the scholar means by "pure language" (translation by Basil Hall Chamberlain):[9]

葦原の	*ashihara no*	In a damp hut on the reed-moor
しけしき小屋に	*shikeshi koya ni*	having spread layer upon layer
菅畳	*sugatatami*	of sedge mats, we two slept!
いや清敷きて	*iyasaya shikite*	
わが二人寝し	*wa ga futari neshi*	

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[9] It is worth noting that Watanabe quotes this waka re-elaborated in a modern Japanese version. To read the original version in ancient Japanese, please consult the following site: Poem KK.19: http://vsarpj.orinst.ox.ac.uk/corpus/ojcorpus.html#Kojiki

Tanka 短歌 are the 31-mora Japanese poems; *Kojiki* 古事記 is Japan's oldest historical record.

This waka from *Hyakunin isshu* 百人一首 (One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each) anthology, composed by Ki no Tomonori, is considered as another emblematic example (translation by Clay MacCauley):

久方の光	*hisakata no hikari*	In the cheerful light
のどけき春の日に	*nodokeki haru no hi ni*	Of the ever-shining Sun,
しず心なく	*shizugokoro naku*	In the days of spring,
花の散るらむ	*hana no chiruramu*	Why, with ceaseless, restless haste
		Falls the cherry's new-blown bloom?

In other words, *yamatokotoba* may typically evoke an emotional, introverted (*naikōteki* 内向的) world of softness (*yasashisa* やさしさ), tenderness (komayakasa こまやかさ), delicateness (*yawarakai* 柔らかい), as if the inner spirit would wrap something dear and nostalgic (*natsukashii mono wo dakishimetai yōna kimochi* なつかしいものを抱きしめたいような気持) (Watanabe 1974a, 19, 24–25). Moreover, Yamato words may have the power to ideally bring back the Japanese native speaker to the origins since they can provoke childish sensations associated to maternity: in this respect, they are even compared to the softness of the skin (*hada* 肌), of the breast (*chichibusa* 乳ぶさ) and of the uterus (*shikyū* 子宮) of a mother (*haha* 母) (Watanabe 1974a, 25). The world of feelings supposedly evoked linguistically by Yamato words is a world of love (*ai* 愛), considered as the most primitive expression (*kongentekina hyōshutsu* 根元的な表出) of the Japanese spirit, and it is generally defined as a "folkloristic world" (*fōkutekina sekai* フォーク的な世界) (Watanabe 1974a, 67). Indeed, Yamato words are also defined as *tamashii no furusato* 魂のふるさと (homeland of the [Japanese] soul), the ideal place where the innate form (*honnen no sugata* 本然の姿) of individual emotions (*jiko no jōsho* 自己の情緒, *jibun no kimochi* 自分の気持ち) dwells and where the real intentions and feelings (*honne* 本音) or the private sphere (*watakushi* 私) of an individual, namely the true essence of the Japanese, manifest itself (Watanabe 1974a, 22). In addition, Watanabe claims that this unique, atavistic feature of Yamato words – that is the core of Japaneseness – is engendered by the presence of a vital, primordial and animistic spirit of language called *kotodama* 言霊, moulding the ancient language of Yamato and its legacy – the Yamato words. According to him, *kotodama*, "whose substance remains very much in obscurity" (Watanabe 1974b, 10), is to be considered the primary source for the peculiar and unchangeable attributes of the Japanese language, specular to those qualifying alien idioms: emotivity, untranslatability/ineffability, illogicity, naturalness, and brevity of expressivity.

In fact, the "foreign", "contaminating" *kango* may be distinguished from *yamatokotoba* first for being more emotionally "detached" (*yosoyososhii* よそよそしい), because

they are believed to transport rational and logic thinking (*gōriteki* 合理的, *ri* 理), stranger to Japanese tradition. So, they appear typically at an intellectual (*chitekina reberu* 知的なレベル, *ganrai chitekina shisō* 元来知的な思想, *chitekina shikō* 知的な思考) and superficial or out-warded level (*gaikōteki* 外向的, *omote muki* 表向き), outside the soul (*tamashii no sotogawa de* 魂の外側で), involving the sphere of moving sensations to a lesser extent (Watanabe 1974a, 20–21). In this sense, the kind of emotion – literally interpreted as "stirring of the soul" – provoked by this lexical stratum is not an intense and touching sensation as that generated by *yamatokotoba*, able to grasp the essence of the things. It is nothing but a superficial and temporary exaltation of intellectual nature referred to as *kangeki* 感激. One may compare it to the euphoric and exciting condition caused by the abuse of alcohol (*hito wo yowaseru yōna ugokashikata* 人を酔わせるような動かし方) from which one can wake up by oneself sooner or later (*sameru koto no dekiru* 醒めることのできる) and that represents rather the relationship between concrete objects (Watanabe 1974a, 21). In this respect, it is insightful to consider the etymology of the term: *kangeki* is composed by *kan* 感 (sensation) and by the sinogram composing *hageshii* 激しい, meaning "violent, furious, impetuous". Thus, *kango* may recall aggressive, euphoric states of mind, alien to the "true" harmonious and peaceful Japanese spirit. Also, *kangeki* phonetically refers to *kōgeki* 攻撃, which means "attack, assault, offensive": the image of violence associated to *kango* and, generally speaking, to foreignness is conjured up by other terms, such as *konnyūdo* 混入度 (degree of penetration and diffusion), *kioi* 気負い (fighting spirit) or *hito o kiowaseru* 人を気負わせる (to exalt somebody) (Watanabe 1974a, 20-22). Typically, the superficial sensations of exaltation believed to be provoked by a language rich of *kango* are fervour (*akogare* あこがれ), pride (*hokori* 誇り, *puraido* プライド), exaltation (*kōyōshita kimochi* 高揚した気持ち), ambition (*yashin* 野心), expectation (*kibō* 希望), mundane aspiration or vanity (*shusse* 出世), thirst for conquest (*seifukutekina kimochi* 征服的な気持ち), which are commonly expressed in public occasions (Watanabe 1974a, 12, 14–15, 17, 24). As seen previously, whilst the sensory world evoked by Yamato words is motherly, that of *kango* is paternal and it is compared to a father's tough muscles (*kinniku no katai chichi* 筋肉の堅い父), since it expresses toughness (*katai* 堅い), lust, combativeness (Watanabe 1974a, 25). Besides, it is defined as "systemic" (*taiseiteki* 体制的), "bureaucratic" (*kanryōteki* 官僚的) and "socially controlled" (*kanrishakaiteki* 管理社会的) (ibid). This means that *kango* are associated with images of formality, stiffness, and generally have an official character by virtue of the fact that they are originally peculiar to the language of bureaucracy and legal documents, of those aspects of society defined as "system" (ibid). According to Watanabe, *kango* functions as linguistic "facade" or *tatemae* of the Japanese: they express those behaviours, states of mind,

and ideals expected to be taken in society and in public spaces and are thus characterised by appearance, superficiality, rigidity. The cultural concept of *tatemae* 建前 refers generally to ideals, what is proper, etiquette to be held in society in front of other people (*seken* 世間) and also to the formal pronouncements on public occasions (*ōyake* 公) in order to conceal one's own true nature (*honne*) (Befu 1984, 70). For instance, this public-oriented stance may be particularly evident in the case of the so-called "Patriotic March" (*aikokukōshinkyoku* 愛国行進曲), elaborated in 1937 in the framework of the "National Spiritual Mobilization Movement" established in the former Empire of Japan. In fact, Watanabe says its text is so full of *kango* that it is necessary to add a phonetic transcription called furigana above the words to make them readable even for Japanese readers (Watanabe 1974a, 16):[10]

見よ東海の空をあけて	*mi yo tōkai no kara wo akete*	Lo! Above the eastern sea clearly dawns the sky
旭日高く輝けば	*kyokujitsu takaku kagayakeba*	Glorious and bright the sun rideth up on high
天地の生気潑剌と	*tenchi no seiki hatsuratsu to*	The spirit of heaven and earth fills the heart of all,
希望は踊る大八洲	*kibō wa odoru ōyashima*	Hope abounding springs –
おお清朗の朝雲に	*oo seirō no chōun ni*	O sweet Isles Imperial
聳ゆる富士の姿こそ	*shōyuru fuji no sugata koso*	Yonder where the clouds of morn
金甌無欠揺ぎなき	*kin'omuketsu yuruginaki*	Shed a radiant glow
わが日本の誇りなれ	*waga nippon no hokori nare*	Fuji mountain, Japan's pride,
		Rears its crown of snow
		Fair of form without a blot
		Nobly doth it stand –
		And unshakable – a true symbol of our land.

In this respect, Watanabe states that *kango* are not transparent and immediate from a semantic and cognitive point of view (*mimi de kiite wakaranai nihongo* 耳で聞いてわからない日本語, *mimi de kite wa mattaku rikai dekinai nihongo* 耳で聞いてはまったく理解できない日本語), because they refer to the intellect which erects a substantial barrier between the objects (*taishō to no aida ni kyori* 対象との間に距離) (Watanabe 1974a, 25). A text or a discourse full of *kango* deploys nothing but an obscure Japanese language unintelligible by just listening to it (Watanabe 1974a, 21). Watanabe insists many times on the semantic difficulty of a Japanese language composed by many *kango*, either in the written or in the oral language, and he mentions as outstanding ex-

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[10] Watanabe mentions only the first of three stanzas.
Free translation from: https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/愛国行進曲

amples dormitory's songs (*kōka* 校歌) of the old system high schools.[11] For instance, he alludes to a song composed in 1902 entitled "Ah, those cups of jade!" (*Aa gyokuhai* 嗚呼玉杯),[12] in each of whose verses – apart from the fifth – there are a number of complex *kango* as *gyokuhai* 玉杯, *ryokushu* 緑酒, *chian* 治安, *eiga* 栄華, *goryō* 五寮, *kenji* 健児, *iki* 意気, etc. (Watanabe 1974a, 13). Similarly, from the second stanza onwards, there are lexical items such as *fuyō* 芙容, *sei* 精, *jinsei* 人世, *igyō* 偉業, *seisō* 星霜, *risō* 理想, *jichi* 自治 and so forth. In the same fashion, the scholar claims to be able to fully understand his own school song of pre-war times by listening to it only once, for the fact of being a very well-known text, but he believes that other Japanese-speaking people would consider it completely unintelligible (*chinpunkanpun* チンプンカンプン), because of the high prevalence of Sino-Japanese words (Watanabe 1974a, 14):[13]

鳳嶺月峰雲に入り	*hōreigeppō kumo ni hairi*	The majestic mountain peaks merge into the clouds
滄水遠く海に行く	*sōsui tōku umi ni iku*	The greenish torrential waters and the sea flow into one another
山河の眺め雄偉なる	*sanga no nagame yūinaru*	Mountains and streams: what a great scenery!
ここ庄内の大平野	*koko shōnai no daiheiya*	Here the vast plains of Shōnai ——
地霊人傑たのもしく	*chireijinketsu tanomoshiku*	Shall our youth live strongly,
元気に生くるわが健児	*genki ni seikuru waga kenji*	powerful and healthy!

Finally, the last important dichotomic category which could be deduced from Watanabe's assertions concerns the expressive forms through which *yamatokotoba* and *kango* typically manifest themselves, represented by the opposition between *uta* うた (song, poetry) and *giron* 議論 (scholarly arguments)/public language (propaganda, bureaucratic, legal language). Generally speaking, Yamato words prevail in an informal, familiar language and are abundant if used to express speakers' real feelings and emotions and doing so in private (*watakushi* 私, *shiteki* 私的). By contrast, *kango* are copious in public and formal stances where the etiquette, appearances and social, collective values triumph over personal inclinations (*ōyake* 公, *kōteki* 公的) (Watanabe 1974a, 17–18). Therefore, Yamato words are usually dominant in prehistorical indigenous oral poems or songs (*uta* うた), progenitors of Japanese classical poetry (*waka* 和歌), (Konishi 1984, 7, 57, 91), in *haiku* 俳句, in folkloristic ballads (*fōkutekina uta* フォーク的な歌), in popular songs (*ryūkōka* 流行歌) and ultimately, in modern pop songs (*popyūra songu*

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[11] The school mentioned in the text was named *Kyūsei dai'ichi kōtō gakkō* 旧制第一高等学校 (also named *Ichi taka* 一高): it was created in 1886 and was dissolved in 1950 in the framework of education reforms during the American occupation. It survived as a preparatory school to enter Tōkyō university.

[12] http://www.todai-ouen.com/song/sindex.html?id=gyokuhai

[13] My own free translation.

ポピューラソング), whose common subjects are emotions. I will provide two different examples quoted by Watanabe himself: the first is a famous *haiku* composed by Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694):[14]

古池や	*furu ike ya*	An ancient pond,
かはづ飛び込む	*kawazu tobikomu*	the frog leaps:
水の音	*mizu no oto*	the silver plop and gurgle of water

The second is a popular song very widespread among ordinary Japanese before the Pacific War broke out and is entitled "The Inn Along the Lake" (*Kohan no yado* 湖畔の宿) (Watanabe 1974a: 17–18):

山の寂しい湖に	*yama no sabishii mizuumi ni*	My broken-heart led me
一人来たのも悲しい心	*hitori kita no mo kanashii kokoro*	till a lonely mountain lake
胸の痛みに耐えかねて	*mune no itami ni taekanete*	Unable to bear inner pains
昨日の夢と焚き捨てる	*kinō no yume to takisuteru*	I throw away and burn ancient letters
古い手紙の薄煙	*furui tegami no usukemuri*	and the dreams gone by ——
		I gaze at a faded smoke climbing above the sky

In these poetical, musical, and literary forms, the most popular topics are love torments, sadness, melancholy, moving sensations and emotions. According to Watanabe, the ancient Japanese people never had the intention to translate their traditional oral poetry into classical Chinese since their first contact with the ideographic written system. In fact, guessing a loss in meaning, they intended to preserve their phonological structure: with the passing of time, their translation probably became a sort of social taboo derived from the primitive belief in the existence of a spirit animating the ancient Japanese language (*kotodama*) composed by Yamato words only (Watanabe 1974a, 58). This linguistic tradition based on the quasi-exclusive usage of *yamatokotoba* in indigenous oral expressive forms survived over time and became a prerogative of the Japanese poetry and musical forms of expression. It is from this distinguishing feature of Japanese literary expressivity that Watanabe then built an ideological opposition with foreignness.

In fact, and by contrast, *kango* words appear in abundance, first in newspapers and intellectual/academic essays (*shinbun* 新聞; *chitekina koto* 知的なこと, *chitekina bunshō* 知的な文章, *gakujutsu ronbun* 学術論文, *giron* 議論), which deal with intellectual arguments developed by means of rational and logical thinking and they are thus believed not to be apt to be expressed by emotion-oriented *yamatokotoba* (Watanabe 1974, 20). Watanabe also mentions legal and administrative or official documents (*kanryōteki*

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[14] Loose translation by Michael R. Burch.

shakai 官僚的社会, *hōritsu no bunsho* 法律の文書) which are particularly abundant in *kango* for deriving from the Chinese bureaucratic tradition (Watanabe 1974a, 25). Ultimately, in pre-war Japan, *kango* were plentiful in dormitory and school songs whose aim was to instil pride, ambition, expectation, a sense of euphoria and belonging to the institution in the young Japanese; in the "Patriotic March" (*aikokukōshinkyoku* 愛国行進曲) and in military code (*senjinkun* 戦陣訓). Even propaganda speeches proffered by left wing extremists (*kagekiha no aji enzetsu* 過激派のアジ演説, *sayoku enzetsu* 左翼演説) during the 1960s' student movements may represent another typical case of an incomprehensible Japanese language, which can provoke only an intellectual, superficial and ephemeral exaltation (Watanabe 1974a, 13–14, 20–21).

Definitely, a fundamental feature common to *nihonjinron* literature and discourse emerges from the linguistic and conceptual analysis of Watanabe's essay, that is the expression of Japaneseness by means of the comparison with foreignness. In other words, the characteristics which should differentiate the "Japanese" from the "Other" are evident through the medium of specific attributes opposed to their contrary, expressed by metaphors and dichotomic differentiations (connotative) which become more important than their proper, literal meaning (denotative) (Głowiński 2006, 175). In the specific case of Watanabe, these attributes may be conceptualised as follows: Japanese vs non-Japanese, us vs them/other, homogeneity vs heterogeneity, native vs alien, purity vs contamination, primitivity/antiquity vs historicity/modernity, continuity vs interruption, intuition vs reason, soul vs thought, spirit vs intellect, irrationality/emotionality/spirituality vs rationality/logicity, immediacy vs mediation, directness vs indirectness, clarity vs obscurity, authenticity (*honne*) vs façade (*tatemae*), nature vs artifice, original vs fictitious, homeland vs foreign, intimate vs superficial, inward-oriented vs outward-oriented, introverted vs extroverted, subjective vs objective, behind vs front, private vs public, sentiment vs obligation, emotional involvement vs intellectual exaltation, harmony vs conflict, peacefulness vs aggressivity, spontaneity vs enforcement, ever-lasting vs ephemeral, mystic ecstasy vs euphoric inebriation, softness vs toughness, maternal vs paternal, feminine vs masculine, love/delicate sentiments vs violence/euphoric states of mind, skin/breast/uterus vs muscles, refuge-seeking vs world-conquering, folkloristic vs systemic, non-verbal vs verbal, lyricism vs scholarly literature, private language vs public language... The list is potentially endless. The conceptualisation of the attributes summarised above may be reported in the tables below together with emblematic examples of the linguistic expressions, words, and metaphors associated to each of them (from Watanabe 1974a):

Table 1: The lexical and conceptual dichotomy between Yamato words/Japaneseness
and Sino-Japanese words/foreignness

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, ***nihonrashisa*** 日本らしさ	***kango*** 漢語, ***ishitsu*** 異質
Japanese The Japanese (*nihonjin* 日本人), Japanese race/nation/ethnic group (*nihon minzoku* 日本民族), Yamato race (*yamatodamashii* 大和民族), national language, Japanese language (*kokugo* 国語, *nihongo* 日本語)	Non-Japanese Foreigners (*gaikokujin* 外国人, *gaijin* 外人), different peoples/ethnic groups (*iminzoku* 異民族), foreign languages (*gaikokugo* 外国語)
Us Japanese fellows (*nihonjin dōshi* 日本人どうし), our blood (*ware ware no chi* われわれの血), the blood which flows in Japanese people's veins (*nihonjin no chi ga nagarete iru* 日本人の血が流れている), the average Japanese (*futsū no nihonjin* 普通の日本人), national sense (*kokumintekina kankaku* 国民的な感覚), the mindset of the Japanese (*nihonjin no kangaekata* 日本人の考え方), as Japanese (*nihonjin nara* 日本人なら), as a Japanese (*nihonjin toshite* 日本人として), we Japanese nationals (*wareware* われわれ, *wareware nihonjintachi* われわれ日本人たち), the Japanese style of thinking (*nihonjin no shikō yōshiki* 日本人の思考様式), the Japanese mode of behaviour (*nihonjin no kōdō yōshiki* 日本人の行動様式)	Them/Others Other peoples, countries, civilizations (*tanin* 他人, *ta no kuni* 他の国, *yoso no bunmei* よその文明, *yoso no kuni* よその国)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質
NATIVE Indigenous (*dochaku* 土着), to set their roots directly in the spiritual origins of the [Japanese] race (*minzoku no tamashii no minamoto ni chokusetsu ni ne o oroshite iru* 民族の魂の源に直接に根を下している), to be inseparably tied to the Japanese soul (*nihonjin no tamashii to wakachigataku musubitsuite ite* 日本人の魂と分ち難く結びついて), native Japanese reading of a Chinese character (*kun'yomi* 訓読み), the spiritual private propriety of Japan [Yamato words] (*seishintekishiyūzaisan* 精神的私有財産)	**ALIEN** Alien/foreign (*ibustu* 異物, *gaikoku no* 外国の), Chinese-derived reading of a Chinese character (*on'yomi* 音読み)
HOMELAND Homeland (*furusato* ふるさと), homeland of the Japanese soul (*nihonjin no tamashii no furusato* 日本人の魂のふるさと), our country (*waga kuni* わが国, *jibuntachi no kuni* 自分たちの国), the special features of my country/homeland (*jibun no furusato no tokushoku* 自分の故郷の特色), the world [of sensations] of Yamato words... is like that evoked by that of a homeland (*yamatokotoba no sekai wa...furusato no yōna mono* 大和言葉の世界は…故郷のようなもの)	**OTHERNESS** Foreign/alien country, alterity (*ikoku* 異国), the loandwords as alien elements (*ibutsu no toshite gairaigo* 異物のとして外来語), the quality of being alien, stranger (*ishitsu* 異質)
PURITY Purity (*tanjun* 単純), degree of purity (*jundo* 純度), the true essence of the Japanese spirit (*yamatodamashii no hongen* 大和魂の本源), the origin of the soul of the [Japanese] race (*minzoku no tamashii no minamoto* 民族の魂の源), the well-springs of Japan (*nihon no kigen* 日本の起源), the crystalline form of Yamato words (*yamatokotoba no kesshōkei* 大和言葉の結晶形), pure blooded-race (*chi no junsuina minzoku* 血の純粋な民族)	**CORRUPTION** Penetration and diffusion (*konnyū* 混入), degree of penetration and diffusion (*konnyūdo* 混入度)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質

HOMOGENEITY

The country inhabited by an uniform black-haired race (*dōzokushoku no koi kuni* 同族色の濃い国), the same quality (*dōshitsu* 同質), one pure-race nation (*tanitsu minzoku kokka* 単一民族国家), pure blooded-race (*chi no junsuina minzoku* 血の純粋な民族), one civilisation, one nation, one language, one history (*hitotsu no bunmei, hitotsu no kokka, hitotsu no gengo, hitotsu no rekishi* 一文明、一国家、一言語、一歴史), without ethnic minorities (*iminzoku wa nai* 異民族はない), the Japanese are equal before Japanese poetry, i.e. the Japanese language since they all share the same language since the beginning of time (*waka no mae ni byōdō* 和歌の前に平等, *nihongo no mae ni no byōdō* 日本語の前に平等), the Japanese were naturally born into the Japanese language, which is thus not solely an instrument of conscious communication (*nihonjin wa nihongo no naka ni umareru no de atte, tan'ni ishi dentatsu no dōgu toshite nihongo o manabu no dewa nai* 日本人は日本語の中に生まれるのであって、単に意思伝達の道具として日本語を学ぶのではない)

HETEROGENEITY

Miscegenation of races (*jinshu no konketsu* 人種の混血), different, alien qualities (*ishitsu* 異質), various and diversified countries, races, languages, cultures, etc (*samazamana kuni ya minzoku, gengo, bunka* さまざまな国や民族、言語、文化), different peoples/ethnic groups (*iminzoku* 異民族)

PRIMITIVITY/ANTIQUITY

Primitivity (*genshi* 原始), since prehistorical times (*yūshi izen kara* 有史以前から), primitive expression (*kongentekina hyōshutsu* 根元的な表出), [Yamato words] are as old as our blood (*wareware no chi to onaji furui* われわれの血と同じく古い), to have deep roots (*ne ga fukai* 根が深い), since times immemorial (*taiko kara* 太古から, *shindai kara* 神代から, *shindai irai* 神代以来, *taiko irai* 太古以来, *shindai yori* 神代より), in the ancient times (*kodai* 古代, *korai* 古来) → Yamato period (*yamato jidai* 大和時代 250–710 AD), ancient Japan/Japanese (*kodai nihon* 古代日本, *jōdai no nihon* 上代の日本, *kodai nihonjin* 古代日本人)

HISTORICITY/MODERNITY

Historicity (*rekishisei* 歴史性) → Nara period (*nara jidai* 奈良時代 710–794 AD)

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yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質

CONTINUITY

Continuity (*renzokusei* 連続性), to continue to be linked (*musubitsuiteiru* 結びついている), to keep deploying (*tsukaitsuzuketekuru* 使い続けてくる), without interruption (*taeru koto naku* 絶えることなく), to continue (*renzokusuru* 連続する), one single dynasty continuing to succeed (*hitotsu no ōchō ga tsuzuite iru* ひとつの王朝が続いている), [Yamato words] trace back directly to an era when an ape-like Japanese ancestor uttered for the first time articulated sounds (*saru mitai na dōbutsu ga, saisho ni nihonjin no senzo toshite, nanikakuchi kara motomatta oto o dashita jidai ni made, massugu ni sakanoboru no de aru* サルみたいな動物が、最初に日本人の先祖として、何か口からまとまった音を出した時代にまで、まっすぐにさかのぼるのである), [Yamato words] are lexical items handed down orally and continuously by the Japanese race since prehistorical times (*nihon minzoku ga yūshiizen kara kuchi tsutae nitsudukete kita kotoba na no de aru* 日本民族が有史以前から口伝えに使い続けてきた言葉なのである), since Yamato words have continued to be used without interruption after being generated simultaneously with the Japanese race, they are inseparably tied with the Japanese soul (*yamatokotoba wa nihon minzoku no hassei to tomo ni hassei shite taeru koto naku rennzoku shite kita no de, nihonjin no tamashii to wakachigataku musubitsuite ite* 大和言葉は日本民族の発生とともに発生して絶えることなく連続してきたので、日本人の魂と分ち難く結びついていて), to have been transmitted (*denshō sarete kita* 伝承されてきた), ancestor (*senzo* 先祖), to remain/linger (*nokoshite iru* 残している), the country of ancestral divinities [Japan] (*senzokami no kuni* 先祖神の国), tradition (*dentō* 伝統), the venerable treasure of future

INTERRUPTION

Either ethnic groups or dynasties keep changing over time (*minzoku mo ōchō mo kawatte iru* 民族も王朝も変わっている), to be changing (*kawatte iru* 変わっている), not to be succeeding one after another [dynasties] (*keishōsarete inai* 継承されていない)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質
generations [Yamato words] (*oie jūdai no tama* お家重代の玉), to continue, to make succeed (*seizoku sasete kita* 継続させてきた), our descendant (*ware ware no shison* われわれの子孫), to be continuing since times immemorial (*shindai kara tsuzuite iru* 神代から続いている), to have kept existing as a substance of continuity since prehistorical times without interruption [modern Japanese language] (*yūshiizen kara taeta koto no nai renzokutai toshite sonzoku shite kita mono* 有史以前から絶えたことのない連続体として存続してきたもの)	

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質

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Intuition/Irrationality/Emotionality: Spirit

Japanese soul (*yamatodamashii* 大和魂, *nihonjin no tamashii* 日本人の魂, *nihon seishin* 日本精神), spirit (*kokoro* こころ), soul (*tamashii* 魂), emotional, spiritual (*kanjōteki* 感情的, *seishinteki* 精神的), the spirituality possessed by the Japanese (*nihonjin no motsu seishinsei* 日本人の持つ精神性), individual emotions [of the Japanese] (*jiko no jōsho* 自己の情緒), individual sentiments [of the Japanese] (*jibun no ki-mochi* 自分の気持ち), the homeland of the Japanese soul (*tamashii no furusato* 魂のふるさと), the "spirit" originally emotion-oriented (*ganrai jōshotekina kokoro* 元来情緒的な「こころ」), the Japanese spirit of the language (*nihon no kotodama* 日本の言霊), intellect is not needed to understand such simple and pure words [*yamakatokotoba*], nor it is necessary to have such a high cultivation to use them: it is sufficient to be Japanese (*kō iu tanjunna kotoba ga wakaru ni wa chishiki wa iranai. kō iu tanjun na kotoba o haku ni wa takai kyōyō wa iranai. nihonjin de areba yoroshii* こういう単純な言葉がわかるには知識はいらない。こういう単純な言葉を吐くには高い教養はいらない。日本人であればよろしい), the learning of waka as the crystalline form of Yamato words as the first high-level education (*yamatoko-toba no kesshōkei toshite no waka ga shotō kyōiku* 大和言葉の結晶形としての和歌が初等教育), emotionality (*jōsho* 情緒), [Yamato words] are not suitable for building intellectual thought (*chiteki ni shisō wo tsumiagete iku ni ha futekitōna tokoro ga aru no da* 知的に思想を積み上げていくには不適当なところがあるのだ)

Reason/Rationality: Thought

Foreign thought, thought of foreign contents (*gairai shisō* 外来思想, *shikō naiyō ga gairai shisō* 思考内容が外来思想), intellect (*chi* 知), mind (*seishin* 精神, kokoro 心), rational, intellectual thought (*gōriteki* 合理的, *ri* 理, *chitekina shikō* 知的な思考, *chitekina reberu* 知的なレベル, *ganrai chitekina shisō* 元来知的な思想), the intellectual learning of foreign languages (*chiteki gaikokugo kyōiku* 知的外国語教育), intellectuality (*chisei* 知性), the so-called for-eign language education based on "intellectuality" (*iwayuru "chisei" naru kyōiku wa gaikokugo kyōiku* いわゆる「知性」なる教育は外国語教育)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質
Semantic, Cognitive Immediacy/Directness/Clarity Semantic immediacy (*massugu* 真直ぐ), sensorial directness (*jōsho ni chokusetsu ni sūtto fureru* 情緒に直接にすうっと触れる)	Semantic, Cognitive Mediation/Indirectness/Obscurity Unintelligibility (*chinpunkanpun* チンプンカンプン), impossible-to-read sinograms (*yomikonasenai yōna kanji* 読みこなせないような漢字), a Japanese language incomprehensible by listening to it (*mimi de kiite wakaranai nihongo* 耳で聞いてわからない日本語, *mimi de kiite wa mattaku rikai dekinai nihongo* 耳で聞いてはまったく理解できない日本語), objective distance posed between the cognitive targets, to be distant (*taishō to no aida ni kyori* 対象との間に距離, *yosoyososhii* よそよそしい)
Authenticity/Original/Nature *honne* 本音, innate form of individual [of the Japanese] sentiments (*jiko no jōsho no honnen no sugata* 自己の情緒の本然の姿), human feelings (*ninjō* 人情), originality (minamoto 源), set one's roots (ne o orosu 根を下ろす), originally (honseitekini 本性的に, honrai 本来, honshitsuteki ni 本質的に), original quality, essence (honshitsu 本質), the foundation principle as Japanese nationals (nihon minzoku toshite no kongen 日本民族としての根源), homeland of the Japanese soul (nihonjin no tamashii no furusato 日本人の魂のふるさと), nature-oriented (shizen shikō 自然志向), the true quality of Yamato words and waka (*yamatokotoba to waka no honshitsu* 大和言葉と和歌の本質)	Façade/Fictious/Artifice Social principles, etiquette, official stances, ideals, overt principle (*tatemae* 建前), obligation (*giri* 義理), otherness (*ibutsu no toshite gairaigo* 異物のとして外来語), artifice (*jinkō* 人工), corruption (*konnnyū* 混入, *haitte kuru* 入ってくる)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *nihonrashisa* 日本らしさ	*kango* 漢語, *ishitsu* 異質
INTIMACY/SUBJECTIVITY/BEHIND Inward-oriented, intimate, introverted, deeply inside the soul (*uchi* 内, *uchiwa* 内輪, *uchigawa* 内側, *oku* 奥, *tamashii no oku no oku kara kuru* 魂の奥の奥からくる, *naikōteki* 内向的, *wareware no tamashii no uchigawa* われわれの魂の内側), subjective (*shukanteki* 主観的), behind (*ura* 裏), to set their roots (*ne o oroshite iru* 根を下している), [Yamato words] spread their roots in Japanese spirit and grow up from it (*nihonjin no kokoro no naka ni ne o haratte, soko kara haete kita* 日本人の子心の中に根を張って、そこから生えてきた)	SUPERFICIALITY/OBJECTIVITY/FRONT Outward-oriented, superficial, extroverted, outside the soul (*soto* 外, *sotogawa kara* 外側から, *tamashii no sotogawa de* 魂の外側で, *gaikōteki* 外向的), objective (kyakkanteki 客観的), front (*omote* 表, *omote muki* 表向き), loanwords that are superficially rooted [in the Japanese language] (*ne no asai gairaigo* 根の浅い外来語, *ne ga harinikui* 根が張りにくい), since loanwords come from outside, they don't spread their roots [in the Japanese spirit] (*gairaigo wa soto kara kita no de aru kara ne o hatte inai* 外来語は外から来たのであるから根を張っていない)
PRIVATE Private (*watakushi* 私, *shiteki* 私的, *puraibeeto* プライベート)	PUBLIC Public (*ōyake* 公, *kōteki* 公的)

Table 2: The lexical and conceptual dichotomy between Yamato words/emotional involvement and Sino-Japanese words/intellectual exaltation: The language of feelings

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *kandō* 感動	*kango* 漢語, *kangeki* 感激
HARMONY Peaceful (*heiwateki* 平和的, *yūwateki* 融和的), harmony (*wa* 和), emotions without a fighting spirit (*'kioi' o nakushite* 「気負い」をなくして, *kioi no nai jōsho* 気負いのない情緒)	CONFLICT Bellicose (*kōsenteki* 好戦的), aggression, violence (*konnyūdo* 混入度, *kioi* 気負い, *hito o kiowaseru* 人を気負わせる)
SPONTANEITY Spontaneously flowing from the inside [the spirit] (*uchigawa kara honseiteki ni wakiagaru* 内側から本性的に湧き上がる), [yamatokotoba] overflow without limits from inside (*mukumuku to saigen naku uchi kara waite kuru* むくむくと際限なく内から湧いてくる)	ENFORCED To enter by force from the outside as alien element [the thought] (*sotogawa kara ibutsu toshite haitte kuru shisō* 外側から異物として 入ってくる思想)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *kandō* 感動	*kango* 漢語, *kangeki* 感激
EVER LASTING Like the delicate emotion, mystic ecstasy caused by a glimpse of nature (*shizen no ibuki ni binkan ni kandōsuru* 自然の息吹に敏感に感動する, *chiisana shizukana kōkotsukan* 小さな静かな恍惚感), everlasting (*sameru koto wa nai* 醒めることはない)	**EPHEMERAL** Like the euphoric inebriation caused by the abuse of alcohol (*hito wo yowaseru* 人を酔わせる, *seinen wo yowasu* 青年を酔わす), temporary (*sameru koto no dekiru kandō* 醒めることのできる感動)
DELICATE SENTIMENTS: LOVE Softness (*yasashisa* やさしさ), tenderness (*komayakasa* こまやかさ), delicateness (*yawarakai* 柔らかい), love (*ai* 愛, *ren'ai no jō* 恋愛の情), romantic love between a man and a woman (*danjo no ren'ai no jō* 男女の恋愛の情, *danjokan no kanjō* 男女間の感情), the country started on the basis of love between a man and a woman (*danjo no ai de kuni ga hajimaru* 男女の愛で国がはじまる, *fūfu no ai de kuni* 夫婦の愛で国), a sentiment as if the inner spirit would warp something nostalgic (*natsukashii mono wo dakishimetai yōna kimochi* なつかしいものを抱きしめたいような気持)	**EUPHORIC STATES OF MIND: VIOLENCE** Fervor (*akogare* あこがれ), pride (*hokori* 誇り, *puraido* プライド), exaltation (*kōyōshita kimochi* 高揚した気持ち), ambition (*yashin* 野心), expectation (*kibō* 希望), mundane aspiration, vanity (*shusse* 出世), thirst for conquest (*seifukutekina kimochi* 征服的な気持ち), toughness (*katai* 堅い)
MATERNAL: FEMININE PRINCIPLE Mother (*haha* 母), the soft futon of a mother (*yawarakana haha no futon* 柔らかな母のふとん), [motherly] skin (*hada* 肌), breast (*chichibusa* 乳ぶさ), uterus (*shikyū* 子宮), like babies who, tired of playing, seek refuge in their mother's breasts (*asobitsukareta akanbō ga haha no mune ni mogurikomu* 遊び疲れた赤ん坊が母の胸にもぐりこむ)	**PATERNAL: MASCULINE PRINCIPLE** Father (*chichi* 父), the tough futon of muscled-father (*kinniku no katai chichi no futon* 筋肉の堅い父のふとん), [fatherly] muscles (*kinniku* 筋肉), like children who play catch with their father (*kodomo wa kyacchi bōru wa chichi to yaru* 子どもはキャッチ・ボールは父とやる)
FOLKLORISTIC World of softness (*"yasashisa" no sekai* 「やさしさ」の世界), folkloristic world (*fōkutekina sekai* フォーク的な世界 a precious world (*kichō na sekai* 貴重の世界), the world of "emotions" of Japan since times immemorial (*shindai kara no nihon no "jōsho" no sekai* 神代からの日本の「情緒」の世界)	**SYSTEMIC** Bureaucratic (*kanryōteki* 官僚的), systemic (*taiseiteki* 体制的), socially controlled (*kanrishakaiteki* 管理社会的) world, the world of foreignness (*ikoku no sekai* 異国の世界)

yamatokotoba 大和言葉, **kandō** 感動	*kango* 漢語, **kangeki** 感激
Non-Verbal	Verbal
Not to rely on eloquence, speech (*benzetsu ni tayoru koto ga sukunai* 弁舌に頼ることが少ない), to hate verbosity (*taben o kiratte ita* 多弁を嫌っていた), the tradition of "the country which does not accomplish the verbal act" (*"kotosaegu kuni" no dentō* 「言挙げせぬ国」の伝統), the country of empathetic silence rather than verbosity (*taben yorimo haragei no kuni* 多弁よりも腹芸の国), not to be good in speech in international meetings (*kokusai kaigi de hatsugen ga heta* 国際会議で発言がへた), quiet, sound familiar to small conversation should sound like that (*shizukana, kuchikazu sukunai kaiwa ni nareta mimi ni wa sō kikoeru hazu* 静かな、口数少ない会話に慣れた耳にはそう聞こえるはず), the language that overcomes "the mean of communication" (*"dentatsu no shudan" o koeru mono* 「伝達の手段」を超えるもの), the condensed expressivity (*hyōgen ga tanjuku sareru* 表現が短縮される), the uselessness of any verbal explications (*setsumei mo nanimo iranu* 説明もなにもいらぬ)	Unintelligible, bothersome, noisy (*kotosaegu* 言さへぐ), to hear something unintelligible, unclear and noisy without understanding it (*nani ka ga wake ga wakarazu chinpunkankan de, yamashiku kikoeru* なにかがわけがわからずチンプンカンカンで、やましく聞こえる), to have been considering the languages, words of neighbouring countries as wild things (*shūhen no kuni-guni no kotoba o mono, no na mono to ite ita* 周辺の国々の言葉をもの、野なものと見ていた), to listen to the so-called foreigners' conversation [that is loud-voiced and noisy] (*gaijin no kaiwa to iu no wa kikoeru* 外人の会話と言うのは聞こえる)

Table 3: The lexical and conceptual dichotomy between Yamato words/lyricism and Sino-Japanese words/intellectual literature or public language: Literary/discursive genres

Yamatokotoba 大和言葉, *uta* うた	*Kango* 漢語, *giron* 議論/**public language**
High degree of linguistic purity (*yamatokotoba no jundo no takai* 大和言葉の純度の高い歌, *yamatokotoba hyaku pāsento* 大和言葉百パーセント)	High-kango degree language (*kango ganyūryō no takai* 漢語含有量の高い, *kango no konnyūdo ga takai* 漢語の混入度が高い)
Japanese prehistorical oral poetry/songs (*uta* うた) Japanese traditional poetry (waka 和歌): Man'yōshū 万葉集, Genji monogatari 源氏物語, Kokinwakashū 古今和歌集, Ise monogatari 伊勢物語, Kojiki no uta 古事記の歌, Nihon shoki no uta 日本書紀の歌, Hyakunin isshu 百人一首 *Haiku* 俳句 Folkloristic ballads/popular songs (*ryūkōka* 流行歌, *popyūra songu* ポピューラソング, *fōku no kashi* フォークの歌詞, *fōkutekina uta* フォーク的な歌, *hitto kyoku* ヒット曲)	Scholarly literature (*chitekina koto* 知的なこと, *chitekina bunshō* 知的な文章, *gakujutsu ronbun* 学術論文, *giron* 議論, *tetsugaku ya shakaigaku no ronbun* 哲学や社会学の論文) Legal documents (*hōritsu no bunsho* 法律の文書) Bureaucratic (*kanryōteki shakai* 官僚的社会) Newspaper (*shinbun* 新聞) Propaganda speeches (*gakusei undō* 学生運動, *kagekiha no aji enzetsu* 過激派のアジ演説, *sayoku enzetsu* 左翼演説) Military code (*senjinkun* 戦陣訓) Military songs (*aikokukōshinkyoku* 愛国行進曲) Pre-war school and dormitory songs (*kōka* 校歌, *ryōka* 寮歌)
Spontaneous, informal, familiar language	Artificial, formal, official language
Language of emotions, private sphere: individual stance	Language of bureaucracy, law and intellectuals: public sphere: collective stance

As well as the characteristics peculiar to one's own homeland (*furusato* 故郷) might be fully understood only after travelling throughout a foreign country (*ikoku* 異国), and as well as ancient Japanese scholars studied zealously the alterity represented at that time by ancient China re-elaborating Japan's reality, Watanabe declares to have been able himself to rediscover Japan's diversity thanks to his own life and study experiences abroad. It is precisely the shocking contact with the 'Other' that seems to have induced the scholar to conceive and put in writing the above discussed literary work *Nihongo no kokoro* (Watanabe 1974a, 213). Moreover, its lexical and conceptual distinction between Yamato words and Sino-Japanese words are inscribed in an ambitious and concrete proposal of returning to the pre-war system of education, revised during the Amer-

ican occupation and considered by Watanabe as more reliable and patriotic for having been directly conceived by the Japanese people. His initiative envisaged the recovery of the traditional intellectual dualism between Japanesesness and foreignness elaborated throughout the centuries in Japanese culture. The aims were to restore in the elementary school the learning of Japanese classical poetry, defined as "the venerable treasure of future generations" (*oie jūdai no tama* お家重代の玉) and considered as paradigms of a crystalline usage of the ancient and "uncorrupted" Yamato language, thus recovering the "lost" Japanese pride for their identity and history. On the other hand, he purported to maintain the pragmatic and intellectual study of foreign languages as solely *forma mentis*, because, as Watanabe argues and the ancient scholars teach, the understanding of Japaneseness necessarily passes through cultural confrontation (Watanabe 1974a, 202). Only plunging oneself into an alien world, only imbibing oneself of foreign culture through the medium of another language, the Japanese may acknowledge the richness and the uniqueness of their own nation and culture, and they may foster their own identity. Only by setting out on a journey into the Otherness, the Japanese shall be able to find out the existence of a "warp" (*tateito* タテ糸) inside their own language, otherwise destined to oblivion through the strength of tendencies of modernisation and internationalisation spreading all around the world (Watanabe 1974a, 206). Watanabe also advocates the prestige of the well-known poet of *haiku* Bashō to justify the apparent paradox inherent in his own statements: should the poet not have engaged himself in a fictious voyage into alterity, namely into the classical Chinese culture he loved so much, the inestimable emotional world of *yamatokotoba* evoked in his brief and short verses would likely not have been so polished (Watanabe 1974a, 211). The ultimate goals of the amendment invoked by Watanabe were the re-discovery of autochthonous purity and the reach of a conscious re-evaluation of the Japanese true essence by the Japanese themselves in order to oppose the corrupting foreign influence. Therefore, these plans merged into the theoretical identity discourse of nihonjinron, which is definitely judged as an illustrative case of social and cultural construction of the diversity where the real state of affairs – the multicultural heterogeneity of the 'Japanese' and their internal variations – is deliberately ignored, as well as the fundamental principles of biology such as the inexistence of human races. In conclusion, Watanabe indicates the key to redefine the tattered post-war Japanese identity in the scholastic revival of the ancient Japanese language or Yamato language through the eyes of modernity and foreignness to "correctly" educate new generations, namely via the study of classical Japanese poetry, rep-

resenting a "pure" usage of language, together with the simultaneous analysis of the "dianoethic" foreign language" (Watanabe 1974a, 210):

> The deep understanding of the Archipelago of Green Mountains called "Japan" shall be peculiar to the traveler who wandered through the immense continental lands.
>
> 日本という緑島山をほんとうに理解するのは、やはり大陸の広漠たる地をさまよったことのある旅人であろう。

4 Conclusions

Much has been discussed so far and the time to draw the conclusions has come. First, I will point out some contradictions, irrationalities, and criticisms inherent to Watanabe's nationalistic rhetoric; second, inspired by this analysis, I will propose a reflection as a way of conclusion about the mechanisms through which nationalism and identity narrations are potentially activated by emphasising the importance of the "primordial element".

As far as the first aspect is concerned, it is worth noting the linguistic incoherence in the conceptualisation of the qualities considered as distinctive of the sole Japanese, that is the use of Sino-Japanese words to express supposedly native concepts: the most evident case is that of *ai* 愛 'love', a *kango* used to denote the "most primitive expression of the Japanese". The same goes, for instance, for *kandō* 感動 'emotional involvement', defined as the kind of emotion typically provoked by *yamatokotoba*: if that is the case, why is it then expressed through a non-native word? Another kind of incoherence, typical of *nihonjinron* discourse and of many national identity discourses, is the necessity of the comparison with the "Other" to express and foster "Japaneseness", namely the dependence upon value standards of out-groups other than their own to reflect upon their own group (cf. Yoshino 1992). His amateur speculations also show to be highly irrational and lacking scientific rigor given two unquestionable evidences: the internal heterogeneity and variation of the so-called "Japanese national community" (cf. Sugimoto 2010) and the artificial, socially-constructed character of concepts like 'human race', 'blood', 'cultural purity', 'national community', which are social constructions and not tangible realities. Moreover, he explicitly confesses not to believe to evolution, as if it was a sort of belief or religious credo to which one could adhere or not: in this way, he gives a hint of the degree of his lack of seriousness and scientific precision. Besides, the sort of nationalism attested by the ideology underlying the lexical and conceptual dualism between Yamato words and *kango* and the rhetoric around Japanese uniqueness

developed by Watanabe should be considered in a critical perspective because they imply at least three potential dangers: first, the revival of the 1930s' ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic ideology of the former Japanese empire represented by the infamous *Kokutai no hongi* (Principles of National Polity) and evoked by the claims surrounding concepts such as 'yamatokotoba', 'kotodama', 'yamatodamashii'; second, Watanabe's purpose to transform words into concrete deeds, namely to restore the Japanese pre-war education system centred on the inculcation in Japanese pupils' mind of Japanese "racial purity"; third, the diffusion of a poisonous chauvinism intended only to foster Japanese pride, re-discover a "lost" identity and a "primordial" purity, and re-evaluate "the true essence of the Japanese spirit" by excluding the Other – here "all those people without Japanese blood" – that is the implementation and boosting of a rhetoric of exclusion.

In the light of these considerations, a reflection on Watanabe's rhetorical strategy is required in order to grasp the scope of the nationalistic discourse he represents and expresses. I argue that the core of his argument is what I referred to as "primordialism" or the primordial character of the "Japanese nation", since a fundamental nucleus in this sense could be found in his assertions, whose claims could be summarised as follows:

1. NATURALNESS of the Japanese nation, conceived as a homogenous biological and territorial community of people sharing the same blood/genotype-phenotype/lineage/ancestry/kin and the same living territorial bonds, which are thought to determine the automatic, passive transmission of the same cultural traits (customs, values), the same language, the same religion, the same social institutions, from one generation to another;

2. ORGANICITY of the nation: the Japanese nation is considered in terms of an organic whole that cannot be divided;

3. CONTINUITY over time of the Japanese national community through the passive genetic transmission of its essence from the first pithecanthropus ancestor to the modern Japanese: linear historical evolution;

4. TIMELESSNESS of the Japanese national community, for having been originated "since immemorial times", "since prehistorical times";

5. MYTHICALNESS: the temporal and historical origins of the nation are wrapped in the fog and mystery: the line between history and myth is very evanescent;

6. SAMENESS of the national community: since it is transmitted genetically since the beginning of time, its essential traits are determined and are not subject to change;

7. PERENNIALNESS of the nation: it is an entity which recurrently and cyclically occurs in history by eternally re-producing and re-generating itself.

These claims are set forward through the medium of various linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical devices, which all gravitate around a central, essential claim, that is the postulation of the primordiality and the primacy of the Japanese language, born together with the Japanese nation and from which all the other unique aspects of the Japanese (history, culture, worldview...) derive. What follows is an attempt to sketch at least some of the possible communicative strategies deployed by Watanabe in his nationalistic discourse:

1. POLARISATION: enumeration of markedly valued attributes or positive/negative attributes associated to Japaneseness/Foreignness, that is the outline of dichotomic differences by emphasising the evaluation or the qualification given to the attributes rather than the significance given to them and the deployment of a "loose semantics" (Głowiński 2006, 175);

2. MAGICALITY: the use of the "magical element", i.e. words create reality, especially an expected, desired situation as if it was real (Głowiński 2006, 176), that is, in this case, the social perception of a strong identity diversity and particularism;

3. VAGUENESS: usage of a nebulous expressive style, such as expressions conveying temporal imprecision or referring vaguely to a "lost past" or a "golden age" (e.g. shindai kara 'since the times of gods', korai 'in ancient times', etc.) or ambiguous grammatical constructions conveying probability and not certainty (e.g. *kamoshirenai* 'might', *de arō* 'may', *te itte mo ii* 'it is possible to say that', *to iwareru* 'it is said that', *dewa nai darō* 'to suggest that something is possible to', etc.);

4. BANALITY: the subtle use of common, "innocent" words already widespread in the Japanese language in order to enhance the nationhood such as *nihonjin toshite* (as a Japanese), *waga kuni* (our country), *wareware nihonjin* (we Japanese), etc. and their semantisation, in particular of some ordinary verbs such as *tsuduku* (to continue), *nokoru* (to remain), *kaifukusuru, modoru* (to restore, return) or adjectives such as *hontō, honshitsuteki, honrai* (true, original), *kanjōteki* (emotional), etc., to which an unprecedented significative, value-marked meaning is attributed;

5. POETICALNESS: wide use of metaphors from kinship language (mother/father/child attributions, ancestor, descendant reference), love-relationship language (e.g. love between man and woman), of poetical images from mythology (especially *Kojiki, Nihon shoki*...) and ancient poetry (*Man'yōshū, Genji monogatari*...) transferred to a broader, "national" scale.

If we understand "primordialism" as a category of practice representing a specific ingredient of nationalistic rhetoric, that is "as a sentiment, or affect laden set of beliefs and

discourses, about a perceived essential continuity from group ancestry to progeny (perceived kith and kin), located symbolically in a specific territory or place (which may or may not be the current place of the people concerned)" (Weinreich et al. 2003, 119 in Coakley 2017, 3), then Watanabe's rhetoric, here viewed as an extreme manifestation of *nihonjinron* nationalistic rhetoric, is essentially constructed upon the primordialist belief whose gravitational axis is language. In fact, this understanding of "primordialism" "draws attention to the vast amount of material that has been generated by élites as part of the nationalist project" (Coakley 2017, 3): the features of the primordialist nucleus I have outlined in the specific context of *nihonjinron* through the analysis of an exemplar nationalistic discourse could be studied in comparison with other nationalistic narratives in other contexts in order to broaden our comprehension of the nationalistic phenomenon.

In light of this, I would like to present three suggestions. First to remove "primordialism" as category of analysis and to restrict it to its original, nationalistic significance, namely to interpret it as a specific ingredient or moulding component of the nationalistic discourse, that is the sentiment or belief in the perceived genetically-transmitted, natural character of a national community, conceived as a mythic/historical "organic whole" located in a specific and symbolical territory and characterised by continuity, timelessness, perennialness and monolithicity. Second and subsequently, to operate an overcoming of the nomenclature in nationalism studies about "primordialism", by rethinking the entire categorisation of the field, by restricting the meaning and denotation of its definition and by introducing another kind of terminology, which would be, for instance, "analyst of the primordial" in order to indicate those scholars like Steven Grosby who defend the original significance of the category of the "primordial" for analytical purposes, i.e. for the "analytical recognition of that existential significance, namely, kinship, as one among a number of persistent orientations of self-classification having a bearing on human action because of the preference expressed toward what one perceives as one's kin, variously understood" (Grosby 2016). Third, I urge the necessity to reinterpret *nihonjinron* in the specific light of nationalism studies and, in particular, by paying attention to the "primordialistic ingredient" which I take as the essence itself of *nihonjinron* discourse in order to achieve a deeper understanding of its scope and meaning in Japanese society. In this sense, a careful and special attention should be reserved to the linguistic mechanisms through which Japanese nationalism is reproduced in everyday language and discourses and so a metalinguistic analysis of *nihonjinron* texts may help to shed light on the importance of language in vehiculating and slyly imposing ideology, power, identity paradigms and distorted realities in the minds of social actors, and, thus, to show how nationalism and ideology work and manifest themselves

through language. The final purpose of this desirable tendency is to stimulate collective awareness of the modalities through which nationalism is slyly imposed in order to resist to it: I think this is all the more current in the contemporary world, where the spread of nationalisms and ethnic conflicts is sustained by a scattered usage of rhetoric and ideological narratives.

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