

# KYOTO CULTURAL MANIFESTO

It was some 1,200 years ago that a capital was built in the city that today is known as Kyoto. The name given then to the new seat of national government was Heian, meaning peace, stability, and tranquility; the name embraces the wish that the people and the country would come to enjoy these qualities.

Over its long and illustrious history, the city has nurtured a culture rich in diversity and has also served as a center of artistic activity and religious worship. These traditions have, fittingly, coexisted and thrived peacefully in the spirit of harmony, a key concept underlying the seventeen-article constitution authored by Prince Shotoku in the seventh century.

Another key concept alongside harmony that has served as a spiritual foundation for the people of Japan is the notion that divine nature dwells in all things, both living and nonliving. This has bred compassion for and a propensity to coexist with the world around us.

The Japanese word *mottainai* is now attracting international attention as an effective approach to rethinking modern society's wasteful habits and in addressing such issues as global warming and shortages of food and water. Another traditional notion that we believe should be shared more broadly with the international community is *arigatai*.

This word expresses a sense of gratitude for the many things with which we are blessed and connotes reverence for others.

For instance, *arigatai* is a feeling that is conveyed to the deities—both Shinto and Buddhist—that provide guidance and protection, and it has much in common with prayer.

In Japan, though, this notion is applied not just to beings with divine powers but also to our fellow humans. *Arigatai* is a response that promotes respect for and agreement with one another and is thus central to the achievement of harmony.

It is also expressed more broadly toward all things, such as the blessings of nature. Even everyday objects, such as the kitchen furnace (*okudo-san* or *bettsui-san*), are still referred to by Kyoto residents with honorifics that are normally used for people whom we respect.

There are many charming traditions that survive in Kyoto that articulate people's sensitivity to inanimate objects, such as the practice of personifying even roadside stones, and that depict the sense of gratitude with which people lead their lives, emanating from their desire to avoid waste and be content with what they have.

Turning our eyes to the international situation, we see that the world confronts many

difficult issues, such as ethnic conflict and global warming.

The United Nations is now giving top priority to showing deference to the history and culture of each country and respecting diversity. This is something that is embodied by the notions of *mottainai* and *arigatai*, which have engendered a spirit of harmony and coexistence among the Japanese people.

These notions that have long been nurtured and handed down in Japan also underlie the principles of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which seeks the coexistence of the global environment and humankind.

It is with the desire to communicate the importance of *mottainai* and *arigatai* from Kyoto—the emotional home of the Japanese people—and to promote their recognition as common assets for humankind that we, the undersigned, declare the Kyoto Cultural Manifesto and resolve to share them with people around the world.

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