

As an aesthetic expression, *iki* alludes to a certain style of life and of art that was current in the amusement districts of Edo, reaching a fashionable climax around 1830. However, in spite of its mundane outlook, *iki* has spiritual roots enabling it to reconcile the idea of Buddhist renunciation with Bushido idealism. Kuki Shûzô (1888–1941) established *iki* as a more abstract, philosophical term by attempting to define it, in his famous book *The Structure of 'Iki,'* with the help of Western metaphysical and anthropological methods. Surprisingly, Martin Heidegger mentions the notion of *iki* in an essay published in 1959 entitled “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache.” Though Heidegger’s reflections are interesting as such, they do not grasp the real concept of *iki*. (TBB)

Kuki writes that “‘*iki*’ has its origin in the ‘World of Suffering’. [...] Now, ‘resignation’, that is the disinterestedness in ‘*iki*’, is an urbane and well-formed heart which has gone through the polishing of the hard and heartless floating world” (20). *Iki* is produced through a “resignation to fate and the gaiety based on ‘resignation’” (ibid.). *Iki* asks for the negation of an “everyday world” which Kuki calls the “conventional” world. If we resign from the “conventional” we discover style: “You will be chic when the conventional has been rubbed away” (20). In many ways *iki* comes close to a philosophical ideal of “coolness.” The decisive point is that through the negation of the “conventional,” *iki* will not be “discovered” as an “essence” that already existed “out there”, outside everyday life. On the contrary, the act of resignation from everyday life reveals a kind of *iki* that always existed within everyday life (and even within ourselves) but that was covered by the conventional. In this sense, Kuki writes: “If we are able to combine the abstract conceptual moments of transformation obtained through analysis, and to constitute the being of ‘*iki*’, that is because we already carry *iki* with us as experiential meaning” (73). The particular act of stylization through which the conventional is “cut off” depends on the stylistic cut called *kire*, which is essential to the aesthetics of *iki*.

Literature: Kuki, Shûzô. 1981a. ‘いき’の構造 (*Iki no kôzô; The Structure of 'iki'*) in *Zenshû* 1: 1-109. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. Nara, Rimer & Mikkelsen, *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shuzo: With a Translation of Iki no kozo*. University of Hawaii Press 2004. Botz-Bornstein, Thorsten. 1997. “Iki, Style, Trace: Shuzo Kuki and the Spirit of Hermeneutics” in *Philosophy East and West* 47:4, 554-580. Heidegger, Martin: “Aus einem Gespräch über die Sprache: Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Tübingen: Neske, 1959).