

Japanese No-Noh: The Crosstalk of Public Culture in a Rural Festivity

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Noh is always the creation of the performer and the audience, an act of invocation of spirits, the transmutation of drama into reality. Therefore, the performer is always a someone and around that central *someone* is created the universe called Noh. The performer is not there as part of an event; rather, the arrival of the performer through the magic of transformation is the dramatic event. In the apt wording of the French poet and dramatist Paul Claudel (in *Mes idées sur le théâtre*, "Le théâtre japonais," 1926), "Le drame, c'est quelque chose qui arrive, le No, c'est quelqu'un qui arrive." (Drama is something that happens, Noh is someone that happens.) (Kunio Komparu, 1983:8)

"*nō o mi ni kuru ka? nomi ni kuru ka?*"

"Did you come to watch Noh or did you come to drink?" (a Kurokawa jest)

Every February 1 and 2, hundreds of people gather at a shrine in Kurokawa, a village in northern Japan, for an annual festivity that includes Shintō ritual, youthful competitions, copious drinking, and all-night presentations of stately Noh drama. In 1989, the assembled included local parishioners of the shrine, friends and relatives, tourists and scholars from Tokyo, Europe and North America, and camera crews from NHK (Japanese state TV) and the BBC.

As a prominent heritage spectacle, this Kurokawa Noh festival is clearly a production of the special zone that Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988) label 'public culture', the contemporary world's 'contested terrain' (ibid.:7) of posters and commercials, cookbooks and textbooks, political marches and popular festivities. I take theirs as an effort to specify the increasingly complex crosstalk between the permeable cultural spheres of modern life. For this reason, however, I prefer to emphasize public culture not as a zone but as a process – the continual transpositions across such cultural registers. In Japan, public culture is the transmissions across and interrogations between the national culture of the state, a mass culture of the media, a metropolitan culture of greater Tokyo, and subordinate regional cultures. This is certainly one way in which we may understand at least part of what is going on in Kurokawa.

This Kurokawa festival, like many other such cultural productions in contemporary Japan, is caught between having a past and being a past. To many residents, the festival's history is a timely reminder of continuing

contests for prestige and position between the sexes, generations, individuals and households in the locality. To much of the national media, which have enshrined it in Japan's folk museum of cultural tourism, the festival is a timeless display of organic ties and authentic beliefs. This juxtaposition of contest and celebration is related, I will argue here, to a critical dimension of national consciousness and nation-state building in 20th-century Japan: the countryside's simultaneous incorporation into and differentiation from the larger society.

THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF HERITAGE: DIVERSION OR CONTEST?

The proposition that there is a continuing and necessary tension between inclusion and exclusion, between identity and difference, should not be difficult to sustain. It does, however, run counter to our tendency, especially when talking about festivals and countrysides, to slip into an oppositional casting of the past and the present, a dichotomous historical (or ahistorical) vision. That is, by rotating an axis of historical change to an axis of geographical distance, we construct a matrix in which the country becomes the contemporary ancestor of the city.

Of course, behind this maneuver is a familiar modeling of change, by which undifferentiated social solidarities of the past yield to the fragmentation of modern society, and multiple, variegated, local traditions are homogenized into a single mass culture. We seldom appreciate and explore the apparent incongruity of these themes – social *fragmentation* and cultural *homogenization*. We have, though, at least become properly suspicious about any easy elision of the timeliness of historical change and the timelessness of authentic tradition, about efforts to make history appear "not as necessity, struggle, or transformation but as 'our'...Heritage" (Bommes and Wright 1982:265). Thus, there is much writing these days about the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), reliving the past (Zunz 1985), the marketing of heritage (Dominguez 1986), the future's past (Fisher 1975), and making histories (Johnson et al. 1982), to cite only a few of the more stimulating analyses. Much of this represents a new attention to what one might call the *cultural politics of heritage*, and it is, therefore, frequently concerned with how co-optive or how oppositional are those projects of traditionalism mounted by states, ethnic groups, classes, communities and other collectivities.

By and large, these recent studies have emphasized the *diversionary* potential of heritage, the ways in which it often becomes a substitute for active engagement with political and economic forces. David Whisnant (1983), for example, has traced the consequences of the simultaneous discovery of an Appalachian mountain culture by missionizing northern Protestant women

and the penetration of the region by capitalist mining interests at the turn of the 20th century. Founding such places as the Highlander Center, these missionaries mounted a 'romantic cultural revitalization' of clogging groups, weaving guilds, and recorder consorts. These projected a local, autonomous tradition in spite of, but hardly in effective defiance of, the capitalist convulsions.

The Birmingham cultural historians Bommers and Wright (1982) have found a similar thrust in their analysis of British National Heritage. This construct has been fostered by the National Trust preservation movement, a long-standing Shell Oil ad campaign on touring the countryside, and a whole host of 20th-century commercial and cultural-tourist ventures, which have nationalized an idyllic pastoral past. History is rendered as timeless heritage:

This paradoxical sense of timelessness is in part a measure of endurance, of having 'come through' the trials of centuries. However, it also reflects the immobility which descends on the present when history is stylized and worn self-consciously over the social body. In order to become spectacular – something which one can stand outside and then reconnect within regular acts of appreciation – history must be completed and fully accomplished. As a process which is fully accomplished, history, with all its promise of future change and development, is closed down and confined entirely to what can be exhibited as 'the historic past.' (ibid.:290-291)

There is of course an important inversion in these two examples; in the former, the projection of a 'separate proud culture' masks the real incorporation into the national political economy, while in the latter, the myth of a single national heritage elides the social differentiation and class distance of British society. Yet in both cases, culture as heritage substitutes for direct action against political-economic forces.

Conversely, but much less frequently, these new studies find heritage in an oppositional mode – culture as charter for political struggle. "How can subordinate groups and communities develop and maintain a sense of their own history?" ask Bommers and Wright (1982:253). For example, in the midst of the Islamic and Javanist-dominated Indonesian state, the Balinese have adopted commercially successful programs of cultural tourism that highlight their indigenous Hinduized traditions and independent princely past (McKean 1989). Linnekin (1983;1985) similarly describes two Hawaiian cultural revivalist movements – that of the traditionalist taro-gardening village of Keanae and that of urban 'Hawaiians', especially the latter's efforts to use the reenactment of a canoe voyage as a protest against U.S. Navy bombing practice zones in the islands. Yet a third example is Handler's account (1985) of cultural-property legislation in Quebec and the

ensuing debate over the Place Royale project for a preservation district in Quebec City by which Quebecois nationalists could lay claim to a French patrimoine in the midst of English Canada.

It bears noting, however, that both the diversionary and oppositional arguments share a tendency to stress the fabrication and marginalization of difference. That is, the traditionalism that so marks and distinguishes the nation or the community or group appears as contrived and self-consciously, well, 'traditional'. Furthermore, these analyses tend to displace the expressions and voices of tradition so fabricated to some discrete and bracketed performance arena – the mini-wayang plays at the Denpasar Hilton, the digging-stick gardeners in Keanae Village, the Highlander ballad clubs and the Place Royale district.

Undeniably, these struggles to divert or oppose can often result in fabricated traditions, artificially re-presented craft technologies, and frivolous festivals. Yet these are not the only conceivable outcomes, and they do not seem to describe what is going on in Kurokawa, where difference and identity are simultaneous and where the past is so embedded in the present. In reassessing the cultural politics of its tradition, we must begin with the issue of how the dynamics of heritage within the Kurokawa cultural productions relate to more general dynamics of political economy and ideology in the postwar nation-state.

INCLUSION/EXCLUSION IN POSTWAR JAPAN

It is unfortunate that a large portion of the social science debate about postwar Japanese society has been devoted to the relative merits of consensual and conflict models. This makes it difficult to appreciate how necessarily connected are the incorporating and differentiating effects of institutions and ideologies in postwar Japan. For example, the reconstitution of the political economy in the late 1940s and 1950s and the imperatives of economic growth in the recent 'miracle' decades have required that regional, gender and class differences be muted even as they are perpetuated. That is, the postwar variant of Confucian capitalism is the uneasy articulation of a small core of full-time, lifetime, trained male employees and a peripheral cushion that includes female part timers, second-career retirees, seasonal rural labor, and small regional subcontractors. These distinctions between the privileged and the peripheral are maintained both within large corporations and ministries and in their linkages to extensive subcontracting networks and subordinate agencies. The subcontracting sector is one of small firms; about three-quarters of the Japanese workforce is employed in companies of 300 or fewer employees. These predominate in rural areas, and depend heavily on seasonal male labor and part-time female workers (Calder 1989;

Friedman 1988; Kelly 1990a, 1990b).

This fuels a continuing but unequal struggle between metropolitan center and peripheral regions over the concentration of resources and the culling of talents. This is a struggle waged through not only the hierarchies of government bureaucracy and employment but also that of education, which has come to train broadly while discriminating absolutely. That is, mass public education has become the national norm in postwar Japan, through the equitable distribution of school funding, Ministry of Education standardization of the curriculum, open entrance examinations, and other mechanisms of a meritocracy. However these very institutions are founded on a narrow conception and standard of meritocratic achievement, which has only steepened the sides of the schooling pyramid. The articulation of postwar institutions has fostered linkages that are both managerial and meritocratic, and both standardizing and discriminating.

Perhaps the broadest and most potent ideological expressions of these dynamics of identity and difference are the seemingly contradictory discourses of mainstream consciousness (*chūryū ishiki*) and of tradition (*dentō*). As I have argued elsewhere (1986; 1990b), a New Middle Class ideology has had a compelling force in shaping typifications of lifeways in the last three decades. Both official policy and public opinion have idealized career employment in large organizations, meritocratic educational credentialing, and a nuclear household division of labor between the working husband who takes care and the domestic wife who gives care. These represent particular patternings of interests and emotions (Medick & Sabeau 1985) that fly in the face of the realities of life for many Japanese. However, in valorizing serious students, diligent workers, careful savers, and avid consumers, this New Middle Class ideology has nonetheless effectively defined standards of achievement, images of the desirable, and limits of the feasible.

At apparent odds with such ideology has been a renewed, shifting, and multifaceted discourse of tradition. Among its many forms have been several fads ('boom' is the Japanese term) in what Appadurai and Breckenridge would call the arena of public culture. One of these has been a history boom (*rekishi būmu*). While it includes a renewed interest in local history and in populist interpretations, it has largely been a media celebration of the Japanese past, with a particular emphasis on individual heroic action. Since the late 1960s, NHK state television's most popular series have been its Sunday-night *taiga dorama* and its weekday morning *renzoku dorama*. The former are year-long sagas of historical figures, typically men of bold character like the first Tokugawa shogun or a medieval warrior. The latter are six-month series of everyday life in the recent past, generally featuring women who stoically endure the hardships of the Depression, war, and im-

mediate postwar years. The effect, of course, is a gendered message about historical action and an individualized message about societal change.

A second of these heritage fads has been an equally fervent fascination with national character, a "Who are we Japanese?" boom, which has spawned a vast literature on the alleged uniqueness of all aspects of Japan – vertical social structure, a psychology of dependence and indulgence, a language of nuance and silent empathic communication, a climate of resignation, a democracy of factions. The Japanese palate, the Japanese brain, even Japanese bees and primates are claimed to exhibit distinctive traits that cannot be fully grasped by the non-Japanese observer (Dale 1987; Kelly 1988). Yet a third area of discourse has been an exaltation of Japanese folklore and rural nostalgia, a *furusato būmu* (home village boom) that has sought to locate and preserve a 'world we have lost' in an idealized notion of country life and country folk. International audiences of such recent Japanese films as *Himatsuri* and *The Ballad of Narayama* are given a glimpse of a much more extensive packaging of a homogenized rural landscape as national heartland (see also Ivy 1988).

The contemporary discourse on Tradition then has woven together heroic individuals, a unique nation, and an endangered folk to form a necessary, nostalgic counterpoint to the modern vision of mainstream New Middle Class lifestyle. Reinforcing the institutional pressures of the state, these ideological crosscurrents have sought to meld and modernize lifeways while preserving and traditionalizing folkways. They create profound ambivalences for the residents of Japan's countrysides, who are simultaneously drawn in and held apart. How are they to reconcile the divergent languages of the larger society to maintain any autonomous sense of local identity? How can they manipulate the divergent languages of the larger society to improve upon the terms of their inclusion?

Thus, this is not simply a contest between an incorporating center and regions striving to preserve autonomy, not simply a struggle between culture as diversion and culture as oppositional identity. It is a more complex dilemma for a regional place like Kurokawa, which produces a local festival built around performances of Japan's most difficult traditional dramatic art by ruralites whose ambitions and whose lifeways are in many respects indistinguishable from those of the Tokyo tourists. The festival expresses this fundamental tension of being drawn in while being held apart. It is an arena where the forms of inclusion and exclusion are contested and negotiated.

KUROKAWA NOH: THE LIFE AND ART OF FARMERS

Center-periphery is a fundamental distinction of cosmology and statecraft, even in present-day Japan where the (latter) two are only loosely linked. Put simply, the national center (*chūō*) is Greater Metropolitan Tokyo; everywhere else is penumbral. Yamagata is one of the prefectures of the most backward of Japan's regions (*chihō*), the Northeast. Its coastal plain of Shōnai is roughly 50 miles long by 10 miles wide, with two cities, several smaller towns, and some 700 nucleated rural settlements. Kurokawa, now part of a town on the southern edge of the plain, was in the Tokugawa period an administrative village of 13 of these nucleated settlements. These 13 settlements of Kurokawa still define the parish membership of its Kasuga Shrine, which sits on a hill overlooking the parish and the plain. About 250 of the 300 households of the 13 Kurokawa settlements are children (*ujiko*) of the shrine god, and are divided into two Noh guilds (*nōza*).

The annual centerpiece of observances at Kasuga Shrine is the *Ōgi-sai*, or *Ōgi* Festival, on February 1-2. This is a festival to invoke, entertain, and supplicate the tutelary god of the shrine and of its parishioners; the god is called upon to descend from its mountain abode, commune with parishioners, and bestow good fortune on their lives and livelihoods. When written with a particular character for fan, *ōgi* refers to an assemblage of three long, tufted poles, bound together with white cotton. When opened in a triangular fan shape, it both attracts the god and serves as its temporary abode (*yorishiro*). The *Ōgi-sai* is a two-day sequence of processions, feasts, prayers, competitions, and divine entertainment in the form of Noh drama.

Noh drama is typically described as the classical stage art of Japan. It has eclectic origins in popular entertainment and sacred ritual, which were refined and systematized some 600 years ago, most notably by Zeami (1363-1443). Actor-dancers, chorus, drummers, and flutist fuse chant, poetry, music, and dance in a sparse and stylized presentation of characters and themes that range from the benevolent to the demonic, the felicitous to the tragic. A full program intersperses Noh plays with lighter, comic *kyōgen* plays.

The Kasuga Shrine parish of 250 households is further divided into two sections, or Noh guilds (*nōza*) of about equal size – an upper guild (*kamiza*) of 130 households in 7 settlements and a lower guild (*shimoza*) of 120 households in 6 settlements. There are several hereditary positions, including the shrine priest, the shrine deacon (*negi*) for each guild, and the chief actor of each guild (*nō tayū*). While most performance roles are not hereditary, principal stage and music performers are often confined to certain household lines. Children and youth are used extensively in secondary

roles, while older men in their 60s and 70s tend to fill chorus positions. About 70 males from each guild appear on stage during the February festivities.

In addition to the shrine, these Noh plays are performed at the private house of a member of each guild. The host (*tōya*) each year is selected by age seniority – the oldest male who has not yet served in what many regard as the final honor in one's life. Few have declined the opportunity cum obligation, which requires extensive preparations of materials and money and the maintenance of a house structure in the old style (e.g., large rooms, high ceilings, removable wall partitions) often against the temptations to renovate and rebuild in a more modern style.

Early in the morning of the first day, the hosts and certain officers of the two guilds meet at the shrine to entreat and greet the descending god. Each bearing one of the *ōgi* pole assemblages, they proceed to their respective host houses to ensconce the god. Through the day, there are meetings and feasts for all guild members and invited relatives and guests. Towards evening, a Noh stage is set up in the central room of the house, and by 7:00, all have gathered for an all-night celebratory entertainment. The program begins with an invocation – a chant and stamping dance by a selected 5-year-old boy before the open *ōgi* fan. This is followed by three dances of felicitation (the *shiki sanba*) and a sequence of five Noh plays, separated by four *kyōgen* intervals.

At dawn of the second morning, host, performers, and other guild members return in procession to the shrine – or more precisely to the house at the foot of the shrine, where they meet and exchange greetings with the other guild. The side-by-side climb up the stairs to the shrine ends in a race between the guilds' young men to be the first to place their *ōgi* in back of the shrine stage. A joint *daichifumi* invocation is followed by a Noh presentation by each guild, several more competitions between the young men of each guild, and prayer sequences by the shrine priest. The festival proper concludes by late afternoon with a fast *sanbasō* dance and a final competition to rush the *ōgi* to the interior of the shrine where, no longer animated by the god-spirit, they will be stored for a year.

For many, the two days are an aesthetically and emotionally satisfying rhythm of the frenetic and the stately, the ludic and the formal. The festival tempo appears to replicate the *jo-ha-kyū*, the tripartite tempo of Noh drama – the simple and slow introduction, the more lengthy exposition, and the fast finish.

The *Ōgi* Festival in a broader sense is the one-month period, January 3 to February 3. It begins with offerings, an announcement of the plays, and a first purification of sites and persons. Practice, preparations, and purification continue through the month. On February 3, the masks, robes, and

stage are packed away, and other items moved to the next year's host house. A feast by the old host thanks those who lent assistance; another by the new host asks for support in the coming year.

While the *Ōgi* Festival is the principal ritual occasion for Noh presentations, the guilds perform on six other fixed occasions during the year, and usually accept two or three special invitations to perform in Tokyo and elsewhere in the country. In fact, the *Ōgi* Festival and its Noh drama has become one of rural Japan's most well-known and long-studied folk arts – the subject of TV documentaries, scholarly dissertations and tourist guidebooks. It figured importantly in the emergence of the folk performance art (*minzoku geino*) studies of Honda Yasuji in the 1930s, which formed one of the three branches of a national anthropology. It was feted in Tokyo at National Folk Festivals and at professional Noh theaters. It has been an official 'national intangible living folk treasure' since 1976, and has been awarded several important cultural prizes. In short, it has all the trappings of designated authenticity.

The outsiders who lavish such attention on Kurokawa are a mixed lot – professional Noh actors, university scholars, media people, amateur photographers and festival freaks, casual tourists and curious relatives. A Noh Preservation Association, with an office within the town education board, has served as a buffer and a channel for what some locals refer to as their foreign relations. In recent years, a lottery system has been used to regulate outside visitors to the *tōya* night. Ministry of Agriculture project money was used to build a Learning Hall adjacent to Kasuga Shrine. It has a practice stage, exhibit space, and lecture rooms – and ambitious plans to add parking and restaurant facilities to attract, entertain, and educate visitors on a continuing basis during the year. This only begins to suggest the range of incidents and issues that spark debate among Kurokawans about their place in a national cultural milieu and the intrusions of that larger society into their local life.

TIMELY DRAMAS, TIMELESS TRADITION

I was initially tempted to analyze the presentation and re-presentation of Kurokawa Noh in dramatic metaphors of frontstaging and backstaging. For example, in 1985, the Kurokawa groups were invited to the National Noh Theatre in Tokyo for three days of performance. In conjunction, a special exhibit was held of masks, costumes and other artifacts, with a beautiful illustrated catalog of *The World of Kurokawa Noh*, which opened with the following preface.

Kurokawa Noh was established as a shrine ritual Noh drama in the village of Kurokawa near Tsuruoka in Yamagata Prefecture. It has been continuously performed from before the Edo period to the present day. It is a rare example of the transmission of Noh by farm villagers, who are not professional Noh actors. In contrast to the artistic refinements of the Five Schools of Noh, it is Noh drama that continues to live in close relation to festival and daily life; it thus preserves the life breath of the common people, which is at the heart of the artistic spirit. It is also valuable because it retains many performance techniques and plays that have been lost to the repertory of the Five Schools. In recent times, Kurokawa Noh has come to the attention of scholars and has been performed many times in Tokyo. In these ways its existence has come to be widely known.

This is a stilted language of nostalgic verities that hermetically embalm an allegedly living tradition. Kurokawa Noh is, first, *dentō*, enduring tradition. It represents *kyōdō*, communal production. It is a *nōmin geinō*, the folk art of common farmers. And it is *jinji nō*, Shintō ceremonial, shrine ritual Noh.

It also seemed to me to be an obvious frontstaging of pious conventions for outside consumption, behind which one could identify actual, antithetical feelings shared among insiders (not unlike the staple distinction in Japanese culturology between formal principle – *tatema* – and true intention – *honne*). That is, reading the catalog preface, insiders readily understood that:

Kurokawa Noh isn't *unchanging*: there has been a constant undercurrent of change. Despite the norm of a single unbroken line of a chief actor (*tayū*) in each guild, the *tayū* post of the upper guild has changed lines four times in the 20th century.

Kurokawa Noh isn't *communal*: there is a healthy dose of competition, marked in the ritual, unmarked elsewhere, but remarked about everywhere – as in the delicate maneuvers to have one's young son selected for the *daichifumi* role.

Far from *isolation* and *indifference*, there has been long standing intercourse with the larger society. In the 1700s and 1800s, Kurokawans gave regular command performances before the domain lord of the region and held periodic public subscription runs in the castle town. 20th-century contact has been even more extensive. The repertory has been learned from outside teachers, and the extensive collection of robes and masks has been received from patrons or purchased from professional artisans.

And *sacred*? The focus of feast talk, well-lubricated with sacred rice-wine, is less communion with the god than comparison with one's fellow performers. Was not the lower-guild chorus so weak as to be inaudible this year? Was not the musician T too inexperienced to handle the last section of *Takasago*? Did C's

student do better in the *daichifumi* than U's? Feast talk is *gei* talk, performance talk, incessant appraisals of one's family, friends and foes.

Presuming such a distinction between a staged image of Kurokawa Noh and its backstage realities, I initially wrote about the ironies of traditional art and modern agriculture (Kelly 1986). That is, I thought it most important to talk about the Kurokawans' calculated and tactical uses of the festival and about the ways they could trade on its reputation as traditional art for subsidies to mechanize agriculture and modernize town facilities. I still think there is some value to that view of the posturing and politics of the festival, but increasingly it seems too simple.

For one thing, the postwar relationship between the festival and farming has been more complicated – more tenuous and certainly not direct. To wit, immediately after the war, in the late 1940s and 1950s, as agriculture recovered, the festival nearly collapsed, as residents channeled their time and resources elsewhere; in the 1960s and early 1970s, as agriculture boomed with generous subsidies and mechanization, the festival was again threatened by disinterest and winter-season outmigration; and in the 1980s, with a deepening agricultural crisis of surplus rice production and failed diversification, the festival is booming. Indeed, with most local income derived from factory and office work and with only a handful of full-time farmers, the festival organization is far more vibrant than the agrarian work routines which it is said to reflect and to which it is now only perfunctorily related. Whatever the politics of culture, they are not simply utilitarian. Nor do they neatly divide the local performers and the new national audience. This is a second problem with my initial formulation of insiders and outsiders, and it returns me to my opening argument.

CONTAINMENT AND AUTHENTICITY

The diversionary and oppositional potentials of traditionalism might also be expressed as the containing pressures of the center to incorporate and subordinate regional political economies and the differentiating impulse of regions to preserve authentic forms and protect local memory of the past. This may be an adequate distinction for the Highlander Center or the Balinese hotel *gamelan* orchestras or the Hawaiian taro gardeners. It is, however, somewhat misleading for Kurokawa. Here we must recognize that containment is also a process *internal* to the festival, while authenticity requires the complicity of Kurokawans and outsiders alike.

Integral to the preparations and performances of the festival are multiple contests among local residents: among older men for prominence in the Noh guilds, shrine committees, and local political organizations; among actor

households for relative prestige; between male performers and female support staff; between fathers and sons, teachers and students; and between those who emphasize a social identity of farm household (*nōka*) and those who emphasize a company job (*sarariman*). The symbolic resources, social matrix and effective powers of ritual more often than not enact and enforce the structures of elite power. By aligning and weighting these multiple contests, the annual festival at Kurokawa is no exception.

Yet a hegemony of form, meaning, and value both allows domination by the elite and exacts a discipline from that elite. Compliance, as Scott (1986) has shown so well, can be an effective weapon of the weak. In this sense, the production of the *Ōgi* Festival has kept open a local space for contest, which is generally conducted in an idiom of customary practice. At present, for example, both guild heads (*tayū*) are facing considerable criticism from members for quite different deviations from guild expectations. One, much liked for his good-natured demeanor (which is thought to reflect a true amateur spirit), has nonetheless been roundly criticized because he hasn't been able to prevent his 40-year-old son and designated successor from refusing the *tayū* role and recently moving away from Kurokawa. The other guild's chief actor is admired for his stage technique and his personal relations with the heads of several of the professional Noh schools, but has come under severe attack for his autocratic one-man leadership. He has, many charge, subverted an older pattern of joint management by a trio of leading actors and teachers. Both have provoked several threats of resignation and withdrawal. These issues have brought to the fore a continuing contradiction between the hierarchical practice of artistic talent and the egalitarian principle of festival sponsorship.

One might express the struggles of containment in another sense. The spirit (*seishin* and *kokoro* are both used) of the festival is one of both cooperation and competition, *kyōdō* and *kyōgi*. Both are liable to abuse, and thus must be restrained. Cooperation, for example, can easily be seen as collusion, as comments by a number of guild members suggest for the closed proceedings of the Kasuga Shrine management committee. Likewise, behind the arranged competitions on the Noh stage are bitter rivalries and antagonisms between some of the leading actors of one of the guilds.

Authenticity raises hoary questions about the changing nature of ritual and the criteria for assessing ritual performance, about which of course there are many formulations. In commentary about Japanese rituals, the most frequently cited is the lament of the folklorist Yanagita Kunio about rituals' fate in a disenchanting modern world. Writing in 1936, at about the same moment as Walter Benjamin's essay on re-presenting the authenticating aura of an original, Yanagita held that exclusive, inner circles of believers were gradually surrounded and replaced by outside spectators. Communal sacra-

ment was becoming touristic spectacle in Yanagita's model of spiritual entropy.

Yanagita's nostalgia has some currency with many older Kurokawans when asked by outsiders for quick 'how-do-you-compare' opinions about current performances and memories of long-past festivals. In part, this is because a Yanagita boom has popularized many of his ideas, and rendered them safe and easy answers for a variety of 'the way things were' questions. Nonetheless, when pressed, few residents are comfortable with the implied dismissal of the current festival spirit.

Alternatively, we might borrow from Appadurai (1986) a distinction he originally suggested in a somewhat different context – that a concern with *exclusivity*, with external boundaries, becomes, with notoriety, a concern with the internal shape, the *authentic* character of festival ritual. This has the advantage of taking present intentions seriously, but the trajectory of 'exclusive to authentic' is difficult to apply to a cultural production that has *always* seen itself both against and in terms of the larger society.

Exclusivity is still defended, for example, in a notion of sacred time and space and of degrees of participation in those times and spaces. However, this three-dimensional topography of the festival time-space should not be read in too Euclidian a manner (e.g., concentric circles of participation). In fact, there are complicated collisions and collusions of insiders and outsiders necessary to the proper showcasing of Kurokawa Noh. Outsiders, for example, are literally inside; it is the lottery-selected visitors who are accorded the largest section and most honored view (front-center) of the *tōya* stage, while many guild members peer in through windows from the cold night. And, my most vivid memory of Kurokawa is of the end of that night, about 5:00 in the morning, when all of the robes used in the plays are gathered up and thrown in an enormous pile in the middle of the now-empty stage. As the actors and guild men leave and proceed with the audience to Kasuga Shrine for the second day of performance, the guild helpmates (*naijo*) – the women – are left behind to begin the enormous task of cleaning and folding the tens of robes, many fragile and priceless.

Outside scholars, too, have been crucial in 'authenticating' the *Ōgi* Festival, with their photo archives, dance diagrams and instrumental recordings, flow charts of the festival, catalogs of robes and masks, and compilations of village records. It is not that they have formalized previously inchoate and unreflective performance technique. Ritual protocol notebooks and acting manuals have been passed down and used privately for centuries. Rather, the corpus produced by outside scholars has served to make public and to standardize the festival forms and the aesthetic criteria by which techniques are taught and performances may be judged. The several generations of this 20th-century commentary on the *Ōgi* Festival, on its

Noh, and on Noh more generally continue to circulate back into and influence Kurokawans and outside scholars alike in their subsequent interpretations.

This audio-visual and written record has also been used by Kurokawans both to publicize the festival and its Noh and to insulate themselves from continuing inquiry. On many points, the curious ethnographer is frequently referred to the several relevant books and articles, and some ingenuity is required to provoke dialogues *between* local people and a range of scholarly and journalistic writings.

Still, it is too simple to see favored experts and interested locals colluding in the determination of authentic form and standards. Perhaps the most influential promoter of Kurokawa Noh was the poet and populist writer Makabe Jin, a Wendell Berry-like figure who visited Kurokawa frequently from the 1940s until his death in 1979. In the late 1940s, he was instrumental in reviving a commitment to the festival in many Kurokawans, and the trickle of journalists and tourists in the 1950s came in response to his first book and articles. It was he who persuaded Kurokawans to cooperate with the team from a national magazine in the mid-1960s, and who advised the guilds in their trips to Tokyo and in negotiations with NHK state TV. Yet he was also a tireless critic of state agricultural policies, and in the 1960s, his widely read accounts of Kurokawa included severe criticism of the regional development plans that were intended to modernize away such a traditional way of life – even as the same Kurokawans were working actively to implement those same programs in their villages.

Indeed most experts are treated with much ambivalence. Central to the festival image is Noh as shrine ritual, not as professional drama, and the probing specialists always create some discomfort. "We aren't pros" is the frequent disclaimer, and there are certainly a fair number of residents who prefer those who come at festival time to socialize and drink rather than to attend closely to the full details of performance. In part, this reflects a more general ambivalence about the authenticity of festival Noh. On the one hand, it depends on disciplined training and careful preparation of a complexly structured art form; on the other, it requires an emotive and uncritical celebration of mood, easily disrupted by self-conscious analysis. What and how Kurokawa Noh *ought* to be divides residents and drives them to outsiders as often as it bounds and binds residents against a prying world.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN AN AGE OF ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION

VCRs, minicams, FAX machines, direct-dial international phones, and other high-tech instruments are drastically altering fieldworker-informant contacts in anthropology. One can literally remain in continual electronic communication with one's 'field'. I was not able to attend the 1989 *Ōgi* Festival, but a friend recently visiting from Shōnai brought me a videotape he had made of a TV program last summer. This was an NHK special on Kurokawa that was entitled, "The Major Role of 80-year-old Men: The People Who Have Sustained Kurokawa Noh for 500 Years." The senior citizen they profiled was not one of the chief actors (the *tayū*), who have been the central subjects of all other Kurokawa specials I have seen. Rather, he was the 80-year old resident of the upper guild who, in 1987-88, was serving as designated host (*tōya*).

I suspect that two issues lay behind this choice of theme, which I am told was decided in negotiations between NHK and the Kurokawa Preservation Association. The first was the embarrassing difficulties with the upper guild *tayū*, who had failed to persuade his son to follow him in this hereditary role, and was being replaced in 1988 by another household line; the 1988 *ōgi* was his final performance. The focus on the *tōya* obviously helped the collective public image by accentuating the lines of continuity.

The program also served to re-state the *tōya* system in contemporary terms. With much concern to limit entitlement calls upon state resources, the Japanese government is actively engaged in trying to gear up citizenry for Japan's 'graying'. Part of its ideological apparatus is a new rubric, the "80-Year System," by which it means life planning for 80-year mass longevity (Plath 1988a, 1988b). Thus, it is making much of life-long education, mandates of higher retirement age, a rhetoric of family ties, and new definitions of mature old age (as opposed to widespread beliefs about one's declining years as a reversion to a second childhood).

Kurokawans are pleased and at the same time suspicious about this state talk of an 80-year system; they feel both vindicated and threatened. That is, as the documentary reminds viewers, Kurokawa can claim to have had its own 80-year system for 500 years. The *tōya* system continues as a local form of age-order prestige and public roles for (male) elders. This is obvious hyperbole, but not a total fabrication. It is a further reminder of the pervasiveness of state efforts to enlist citizens in a national way of life, the persistence of local efforts to define the terms of that enlistment and participation, and the inherent limitations to both.

In sum, there are a number of elemental crosscurrents in the organization and production of the Kurokawa festival: cooperation and competition; the

spiritual and the secular ('Did you come to watch Noh or to drink?'); the hierarchy of artistic authority and the equality of festival sponsorship; spontaneity and codification. All act to continually reconfigure the lines and the grounds of inclusion and exclusion in its performance.

In the current politics of heritage, traditionalism in Japan is both state policy, metropolitan fetish and local identity. Kurokawa Noh is a stage for constant crosstalk about criteria of talent, principles of association, the proper relations of the genders, and the demarcation of work and leisure. The drama is one of struggles *among* local criteria and principles, as between guild actor households and guild member households. It involves divergent national representations, as between more populist and more official versions of rural folk performance. And finally, it is the competitive crosstalk of local concern with the changing basis of participation and metropolitan celebration of an enduring and essential mutualism of the agrarian routines and festival rituals of rice farmers at the very moment of agriculture's terminal decline. This is the sense in which Kurokawa is poised delicately between having a past – the basis of local concern – and being a past – the focus of metropolitan fascination.

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