

CHANDU Quarterly

TEA AND THE ARTS OF JAPAN

No. 26

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CONSULTANTS Akanuma Taka,
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Tanihata Akio

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The names of Japanese and Chinese persons are written surname first, in accordance with the customary practice in these countries.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Sen Sōshitsu XV 千宗室 Urasenke Grand Tea Master; Konnichian Estate Master; Professor, University of Hawai'i. Author of '*Chakyō to Waga Kuni Chadō no Rekishiteki Igi*' (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1983), scheduled to appear from the University of Hawai'i Press next spring under the title *The Japanese Way of Tea: From Its Origins in China to Sen Rikyū*. Dr. Sen's main works presently available in English are: *Tea Life, Tea Mind* (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1979), and *Chadō: The Japanese Way of Tea* (Tokyo & Kyoto: Weatherhill/Tankōsha, 1979).

Bob Jones Freelance writer. Author of the article "Philosophical Fire: Unifying the Fragments of Heraclitus" appearing in *Prudentia: A Journal of the Intellectual History of the Ancient World* (University of Auckland, 1996). Regular contributor to *Modern Haiku*, and recipient of a 1995 Literary Award from The Constantza Haiku Society, Romania, for his essays published therein.

Maye Hisao 前久夫 Architectural historian; lecturer, Shoin Junior College; member of the Architectural Institute of Japan. Author of *Tokonoma no Hanashi* [About Tokonoma] (Tokyo: Kajima Shuppankai, 1988).

Zhu Jie 朱捷 Associate Professor, Chūkyō Women's University. Author of *Kamisama to Nihonjin no Aida: 'Mitate' ni Miru Minzoku no Kankaku* [Between God and the Japanese: Perceptions of a People as Seen in *Mitate*] (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1991), and numerous articles and papers in the field of comparative literature and culture.

Chanoyu is a synthesis of arts that gives expression to many aspects of Japanese culture. From its beginnings in the fifteenth century down to the present, it has been both catalyst and medium in the development of distinctive art forms. Under the guidance of Grand Master Sen Sōshitsu XV, the Urasenke Foundation seeks to encourage the further development of these arts and to promote a worldwide understanding of the spirit of chanoyu.

Tea Art Appraisal

Sen Sōshitsu XV

When I finally felt emotionally stable, I resumed my education at Dōshisha University and finished my remaining year of the Economics course in the Department of Law.

In reality, though, it was almost impossible to study. The number of ex-soldiers was so large that we alone could form a whole grade level. There were army veterans and there were those from the navy, who came to campus wearing their military uniforms simply stripped of their rank badges. Talk would come up about comrades who had died, and the day would be spent grieving. News would be heard about comrades taken prisoner in Russia, and we would sigh. The best we could do was gather around and talk about our hardships during the war.

Since the country had just undergone defeat, there were no employment opportunities even for college graduates, and so everyone's mind was filled with uncertainty about what to do. Though I had little power, I scrambled around looking for employment for my friends. This was no time to be bent on the luxury of employment at a large company; anywhere that was willing to hire you was fine.

I graduated from Dōshisha ahead of schedule in September 1946, and got a position as part-time lecturer for the Tea course at the Second Kyoto Prefectural Girls' High School (current Sujaku High School). I received a monthly salary of 15 yen. As a naval officer during the war, I received close to 200 yen, including peril compensation, so my new salary was terribly low. As I remember, that amount of money would be depleted by the purchase of three loaves of *pain coupé*.

I spent ten months as a lecturer. Around this time, however, in accordance with a directive issued from the Allied Occupation Headquarters aimed at removing military career personnel from positions within the field of education, screenings were being carried out to determine the suitability of teachers. Because I was a first lieutenant in the navy at the time of the war's end, I lost my teaching position.

* Translated from the serial "Watakushi no Rirekisho" [My Personal History], Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1986–87.

After that I lived in Tokyo for the first time in my life, though for less than a year. My purpose there was to study about tea art as a special staff member at the Nagao Museum, which was established by the former president of Wakamoto Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., Nagao Kin'ya.

On the same scale as such top-notch aesthetes and tea-art collectors as Matsunaga Jian (Yasuzaemon), Kobayashi Ichizō, and Fujiwara Ginjirō, Mr. Nagao had collected some of the finest examples of tea utensils, Buddhist statuary, ancient documents, and the like. I was allowed to live at his house in Setagaya, Tokyo. Every morning I would pick a few chabana flowers from the many that bloomed in the big garden and place them in the tea-room, put a hanging scroll up, and prepare the utensils for tea.

The tea utensils were all precious, top quality items. Nonetheless, Mr. Nagao trusted me and allowed me to take them out and put them back at will. I would use my own judgment in putting together utensil combinations, with which I would serve tea to Mr. and Mrs. Nagao and their guests. Afterwards, Mr. Nagao would tell me his opinion of the utensil combination that I had chosen, stating that it was good, or pointing out where it was weak. I made notes and learned from this.

In those days, the Nagao Museum had an art consultation office in Marunouchi. American soldiers of the Occupation would bring in Buddhist statuary, paintings and calligraphy, or antique objects that they had gotten around the country, and ask for an appraisal as to the item's authenticity, or for repair work to be done. I took turns with the other museum staff members in handling office affairs, and so I had the occasion to deal with those requests.

It was my father who had encouraged me to study art. I had majored in economics, and I guess he wanted me to develop an eye for art. He told me that it was important to be observant; that, "as a chanoyu devotee (*chajin*), you have to be able to distinguish between what is authentic and what is not. Even qualities that may not be visible, you must become capable of discerning with your inner senses." Though I couldn't attain that difficult level of ability, I learned a lot from my experience in Tokyo.

My father suggested that I continue my studies at the Tokyo National Museum. I wanted to study more, too, but as long as I was going to pursue the Way of Tea, it was necessary for me to go through a period of religious training at Daitokuji. I was already twenty-five, so, after a good deal of agonizing, I decided it was time for me to wind up what I was doing and get on to what I must.



Shintō Spirit in Haiku

Bob Jones

There is a tendency among Western commentators to regard haiku entirely as a Zen Buddhist vehicle. Yet there are some Japanese who resent the easy equation of haiku with Zen, insisting that haiku is, above all, a product of the Japanese spirit, which is more accurately reflected in the Shintō religion than in Buddhism. They point out that the latter is a late and foreign addition to Japanese culture, one that was profoundly influenced by Shintōism in the process of assimilation.

As might be expected, not all Japanese authorities give Shintō such a central place. The otherwise impartial and generous Zen commentator, Daisetz Suzuki, is reluctant to grant it any spiritual status whatever:

Shintō is an essentially political thought, and strictly speaking not a religious belief. It is not a manifestation of spirituality.¹

Given that these comments were written "between trips to the air-raid shelter during some of the heaviest bombing of the war,"² we can only admire Suzuki's courage in expressing strong reservations about the official state religion at a time when loyalties must have been under scrutiny. Yet, with the comfortable insulation of fifty years' hindsight, we can afford a more responsive assessment of Shintō's worth, particularly with respect to haiku.

"The relation of Shintō to haiku is a vital one," says R.H. Blyth, "but owing to the obscurity of the nature of Shintō it is difficult to write clearly on this subject."³ This seems to be a problem for most Western students of Japanese culture. Joseph Campbell recounts the story of a Western sociologist who, at an international conference on the history of religions, in Tokyo,

¹ Daisetz Suzuki, *Japanese Spirituality*, translated by Norman Waddell (Tokyo: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, 1972), 48.

² *Ibid.*, viii.

³ R. H. Blyth, *Haiku*, vol. One (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1976), 158.

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questioned his guide: "You know, I've now been to a number of these Shintō shrines and I've seen quite a few rites, and I've read about it, thought about it; but you know, I don't get the ideology. I don't get your theology." The guide, a Shintō priest, responded, "We do not have ideology. We do not have theology. We dance."⁴

The priest's reply greatly oversimplifies matters but highlights the experiential (rather than intellectual) basis of Shintōism, and perhaps affords some insight into haiku, which in its own fashion avoids theology and dogma in favor of direct experience:

sekkyō ni kegareta mimi wo hototogisu

a sermon
for soiled ears —
the cuckoo

Shiki

Yet the cuckoo's voice can be inspiration and relief only to those who already experience natural phenomena in a spiritual context, and it is precisely this context that is the basis of the connection between Shintō and haiku.

The word *shintō* comes from the Chinese *shintao*, meaning the *tao* (Chinese for "way") of the gods or spirits.⁵ Suzuki's assertions notwithstanding, Shintōism is thus identified as a certain attunement to spirit (or spirits), and this fact jibes with the orientation of the entire culture. The Japanese word for person (*hito*) has, for instance, the original meaning of "a place where the spirit is."⁶ Yet it is important to understand that, in the context of Shintōism, "spirit" means *kami*, a word that is both appropriately and misleadingly translated as spirit, soul, god, ghost, and ancestor. A full definition of *kami* literally entails a history of the Japanese people, but we draw closer to its meaning as soon as we appreciate that *kami* connotes, above all, the inmost vitality of nature, the principle that imparts existence to rocks, mountains, trees, and human beings alike. With respect to ordinary inanimate objects, it is the minimum life a thing requires in order to exist at all. One commentator describes it as follows:

It will be relevant to construe Kami as the deification of life-force which pervades all beings, animate and inanimate.

⁴ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), 474–76.

⁵ Jean Herbert, *Shintō: At the Fountainhead of Japan* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), 31–32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

Kami is the invisible power which unites spirit and matter into a dynamic whole, while it gives birth to all things without exception.⁷

The notion of kami had to evolve through many stages before it arrived at this point. Originally, it was not experienced as a single life-principle but pluralistically, as the unique personalities of particular natural beings. In this respect, early Shintō experience was not animistic but animatistic; that is, it was not so much a relation to a common spirit dwelling within things as to things themselves as manifold spirits. Professor Genchi Katō, author of *A Study of Shintō*, explains:

We often see a phase of religion among nature peoples which tells us that in that stage of religious development the object of their worship is one that directly appeals to our senses: for instance, they worship the sun, *i.e.*, not the spirit of the sun, but the sun itself, visible to the naked eye; they worship the wind, *i.e.*, the wind palpable to our sense, and not the invisible mysterious power residing in the wind. Thus also the visible Heaven itself, the high awe-inspiring mountain itself, the roaring sea itself, the tremendous cataract itself, and so on, are all worshipped as divine.⁸

So it was with former Shintō followers, and so it still is with many Shintō followers today. Originally, what we call life, consciousness, or feeling did not inhabit things; rather, it was identical with them, such that there was no effective distinction between spirit and matter. At the same time, literally everything was alive and conscious in much the same sense that humans are alive and conscious; everything had a personal existence.

[O]n one hand, the sun itself was divine, the visible sun-disc or solar orb was a divinity; on the other, the sun was completely humanized, endowed with human passions and will, acting as a sentient being, endowed with male or female sex.⁹

Consequently, it was possible to communicate with inanimate objects:

According to the *Nihongi*, in ancient Japan, the people . . . believed that trees and herbs could speak like men . . . , and

⁷ Chikao Fujisawa, "Some parapsychological aspects of Shintō," mimeographed; in Herbert, 25.

⁸ Genchi Katō, *A Study of Shintō: The Religion of the Japanese Nation*, 2nd ed. (London: Curzon Press, 1971), 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

some of the *Norito* or *Shintō Rituals* also mention that there was a belief among the primitive Japanese that rocks, trunks of trees, even tiny blades of herbs are endowed with the power of speech.¹⁰

It would be easy to dismiss all this and to conclude with Suzuki that early Shintō beliefs were merely primitive “fixations” that “did not touch spirituality.”¹¹ Assuming that absolutely everything was alive and conscious for the ancient Japanese, what did the term *kami* distinguish? Indeed, what room was there for genuine spirituality in a world where everything had a literal or sensual significance?

In order to understand the roots of Japanese culture, as well as those of haiku poetry, we need to grasp what is unstated, but definitely presupposed, in the world view of the first Shintōists: the animism implicit in animatism. If life, consciousness, and feeling refer equally to men, women, plants, and stones, then they describe the single matrix out of which things emerge, the very fabric of life, even though Shintō religion does not yet identify it as such. What the word *kami* distinguishes is presence, force of character, intensity of being, *mana*: an electric or magical quality which, though possessed in varying degrees by all creatures, is especially revealed in certain beings, such as “awe-inspiring” mountains and “tremendous” cataracts. Thanks to them, the entire life-matrix is opened to us and we feel our participation in it. That is precisely what makes great men great and holy sites holy. Accordingly, Masaharu Anesaki equates the primitive Japanese notion of *kami* with the sense of the sacred or the miraculous.

Any object or being which evoked a thrill of emotion, whether affectionate or awe-inspiring, appealing to the sense of mystery, might be regarded as a *Kami* and accorded due respect.¹²

Early Shintō experience represents the Golden Age, the first light of creation, the age of youth, before the world was, however uncertainly or provisionally, divided into spheres of spirit and matter. As Campbell puts it: “. . . the Japanese at the time of their entry upon the stage of history were still endowed with that primary sense of the numinous in all things. . . .”¹³ Presumably, this is also the stage to which spirituality returns after the spirit-matter distinction has been explored and resolved.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹¹ Suzuki, 18.

¹² Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion: With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation* (1930: reprint, Rutland and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963), 21.

¹³ Campbell, 461.

As an ideal of primordial life, Shintō animatism has had a more or less permanent influence on Japanese culture, and this influence is also apparent in haiku poetry. The works of Kobayashi Issa (as well as those of his many imitators) show an intimate, personal relationship between the poet and the humblest of natural creatures:

yase gaeru makeru na Issa kore ni ari

skinny frog,
keep up the fight — Issa
is here

The numinous sensuality of Shintōism is also preserved in haiku:

hototogisu ōtakeyabu wo moru tsukiyo

a cuckoo —
into the great bamboo grove
trickles moonlight

Bashō

katamatte usubi hikari no sumire kana

hardened
shafts of light
violets —

Suiha

With respect to the more evolved stage of Shintōism, where a unitary life-principle is glimpsed at the heart of things, there is in the poetry of most *haijin* (haiku poets) an animistic recognition of, and longing to merge themselves with, the inmost spirit of nature:

omoikiri hashitte wakaba no yami e haitte mitai

madly dashing
into fresh leafy darkness —
I want to plunge in

Ippekirō

In his *History of Japanese Religion*, Anesaki observes that Shintōism is "rooted in the instinctive being of human nature feeling itself in communion with the living forces of the world."¹⁴ It seems clear that the same is true of haiku.

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The essential lore of Shintōism is contained in two main works: the *Kojiki* or "Record of Ancient Matters" (712 A.D.) and the *Nihongi* or "Chronicles of Japan" (720 A.D.). Both are mythological and genealogical in character, and both are concerned with the various spirits of nature, particularly in relation to human beings — who, as we have seen, are nature spirits in their own right. The two works are valuable in that they show us the Shintō religion in transition from animatism to animism, and beyond. Though products of a Chinese-influenced literati whose aesthetic and intellectual ideals exceeded the scope of the earliest Japanese traditions, the texts can also be regarded as indications of a developing native sensibility whose further growth required new forms of expression. However the matter is construed, the basic situation remains the same: changes in perspective corresponded with the emergence of a national mythology. Especially revealing are those accounts that deal with the pre-phenomenal foundations of the material world, accounts that already imply an understanding of spirit *as* spirit and a fundamental discontinuity between spirit and matter. Campbell cites a useful sketch that appears to be a conflation of early material:

Now when chaos had begun to condense, but force and form were not yet manifest and there was nothing named, nothing done, who could know its shape? Nevertheless Heaven and Earth parted, and Three Spirits began the work:

1. The Spirit Master of the August Center of Heaven,
2. The August, High, Wondrously Producing Spirit,
3. The Divine, Wondrously Producing Ancestor.

These appeared spontaneously and afterward disappeared. But the young earth, like floating oil, now was drifting, and there sprang up something like a reed shoot, from which two spirits emerged.<sup>15</sup>

From the sketch, a number of conclusions might be drawn (some of which frankly depart from standard notions about Japanese myth):

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<sup>14</sup> Anesaki, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Following *Ko-ji-ki: Records of Ancient Matters*, by Basil Hall Chamberlain, supplement to Vol. X, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*; in Campbell, 466–67.

1. The recognition of a distinct spiritual domain.

Though heaven and earth appear together, they are distinct, and heaven (elsewhere designated as *takama-no-hara* or High Heaven's Plain) comes to light as the primary dwelling of the kami or spirits. Heaven retains the character of origination and is the higher sphere, the stand-in for the fertile chaos out of which heaven and earth first emerge. In a *Nihongi* passage, "the Chinese characters *kiyo-chiyun*, meaning 'emptiness,' occur instead of the usual expression *Takama-no-hara*,"<sup>16</sup> implying an equation of High Heaven's Plain with the great void of nature, which is also the fundamental reality for Taoists and Buddhists. According to Jean Herbert, author of *Shintō: At the Fountainhead of Japan*, "Although in the course of creation this void will be peopled with Kami, its denizens will never have the type of gross materiality which is that of our world."<sup>17</sup>

We conclude that Shintōism has reached a stage in its development where a distinction has been drawn between noumena and phenomena, spirit and matter, with the former holding the foremost place. Its void-like character is not that of a nothingness absolute but of a charged atmosphere, a spirited or living openness, whose numinous presence and secret productivity can be felt in the world of men and women.

2. The recognition of a single source-principle for all phenomena.

At the heart of the spiritual domain is a trinity of spirits, three specific characters or personalities, of which one is central to, and apparently generative of, the other two: Ame-no-minaka-nushi, Heaven's Core Master or "The Spirit Master of the August Center of Heaven." Though very little is said of this deity in Shintō holy texts, Professor Genchi Katō has championed the view that he/she is none other than the Shintō equivalent of God, the monotheistic nucleus of the Shintō religion.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever validity there is to this assertion, Heaven's Core Master appears to be identical with the spiritual dimension and especially expressive of its originary essence, the life-principle inherent in animism, the sense of vitality that prevents High Heaven's Plain from being a nothingness absolute.

3. Association of the inmost principle of nature with sheer spontaneity.

Alternative translations state that the original threesome arose "spontaneously" and "disappeared" (as in the above sketch) or were "born alone" and

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert, 236.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Katō, 62–63.

"hid their persons."<sup>19</sup> It is unclear whether the second halves of these characterizations are subsequent operations, implying a temporary physical existence for the kami, or representations of the non-material nature of the forces in question — though, as we will see, withdrawal is inherent in the nature of whatever emergence, however ethereal.

The essential activity of the original kami, to which the first halves of the descriptions refer, and of which the suddenly manifest world is a further expression, is that of spontaneous generation, aseity, self-creation, or what may be called the principle of suddenness. The view is supported by Anesaki, who correctly notes that the titles of the first kami ("Wondrously Producing Spirit," etc.) "indicate that they were intended to personify powers of spontaneous generation."<sup>20</sup> He goes on to point out that the same notion is "betrayed" even in the mating of the first worldly couple, Izanami and Izanagi (see below). Though the two procreate through sexual union, their bizarre offspring, which include the islands of Japan, are more or less magically produced; they emerge fully-formed, apparently in an instant.

Stated in terms that are perhaps more suited to Zen than to early Shintōism, the principle of spontaneity is that each being comes into existence independently, suddenly, and of itself, yet in accordance with a single, magical manner of generation that is the core of all manifestation. In the context of Shintōism, this mode of arising strictly applies only to the highest and earliest kami, but it is associated with religious experience in general, where the sense of nearness to the source of life is commonly accompanied by the feeling of a very first moment in time, of a sudden plenitude preceded by a nothingness containing the magical germ of creation. A similar or identical primordial experience of nature is essential to haiku.

#### 4. Realization of the bi-polar structure of existence.

As soon as worldly beings appear in the midst of the void, as soon as the earth takes its place beneath heaven, a duality exists; the familiar division between spirit and matter, noumena and phenomena, is accomplished. This duality is foreshadowed in the heavenly sphere itself. Following the appearance of Heaven's Core Master, the twin "Producing" deities, Taka-mimusubi-no-kami ("The August, High, Wondrously Producing Spirit") and Kami-musubi-no-kami ("The Divine, Wondrously Producing Ancestor"), come into being. Nominally, these two are linked by the term *musubi*, "the most enlightening word in Shintō."<sup>21</sup> Though the term has the primary meaning of productivity, creativeness, or growth (the principle of spontane-

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<sup>19</sup> See Herbert, 247.

<sup>20</sup> Anesaki, 24-25.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Warren Teets Mason, *The Spirit of Shinto Mythology* (Tokyo: Fuzambō, 1939); in Herbert, 67.

ity mentioned above), *musubi* also implies a sundering, “tree-splitting,”<sup>22</sup> dialectical process, according to which creation proceeds by way of a series of paired, complementary opposites: male-female, light-dark, life-death, etc. Thus, the twin deities, Taka-mi-musubi-no-kami and Kami-musubi-no-kami, have a *yin/yang* (*in/yō*) relation to each other:

The positive movement of *musubi*, deified as Taka-mi-musubi-no-kami, is the forward, expansive, swelling, exhaling, diversifying, ramifying male energy revealed in the exhaling, swelling and diversifying seasons of spring and summer, whereas its passive movement, deified as Kami-musubi-no-kami, is the backward, contractive, absorbing, inhaling, unifying or reintegrating female energy, revealed in the inhaling, withering and unifying seasons of autumn and winter.<sup>23</sup>

*Musubi* has the additional meaning of completion or drawing together, whereby these two contrary tendencies are seen as aspects of one perfect movement, whose final meaning is life in the fullest sense. Nonetheless, the liveliness of *musubi* expresses itself dualistically. Following the appearance of a number of spirit pairs come the first human-like beings: Izanagi (the “Inviting Male”) and Izanami (the “Inviting Female”), who are commanded by the other kami to unite and give birth to Japan. Reproduction replaces magical generation, or perhaps more accurately, becomes its new expression. And just as primordial spontaneity apparently entails a complementary movement of retreat — indicated in the disappearing, hiding, or waning of the original deities — sexual generation too proves to be connected with a waning. After a particularly difficult childbirth, the Inviting Female succumbs to death and withdraws to the Land of Night.

In haiku poetry this bi-polar structure of being will be encountered in dozens of different guises: in the evolutionary and devolutionary aspects of the mood *wabi* (sublime poverty); in the relation of haiku utterances to *yo haku* (empty space); in the double meaning of letting-be as a faithful ‘letting-appear’ and a creative ‘letting-into-existence’; in the two-fold significance of openness as ‘open revelation’ and ‘open-ended mystery’; and in the ultimate unity of elevation and lowliness.

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Despite charges that Shintō is a primitive religion, “[t]he traditional schools of Shintō mystics have precise and systematic metaphysical concepts about the world and life on higher planes” that are “solemnly transmitted to the

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<sup>22</sup> Herbert, 242.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 67.

disciples according to the latter's stage of development."<sup>24</sup> For the most part, these teachings are associated with practices that come under the general heading of "purifications" (*misogi*). At the popular level, they amount to little more than hygienic disciplines designed to promote increased physical vitality and well-being. Fasting, abstention from meat and stimulants, cold baths, special methods of breathing, and vigorous exercise are among the practices encouraged. But at more advanced levels, purification includes "purifying the astral body," "rising purified to higher and wider consciousness," and "purification by the holy soul which sheds light like the sun."<sup>25</sup>

As can be gathered, the higher purifications are essentially meditations. Sometimes characterized as acts of "pacifying the soul" (particularly in reference to the most advanced forms, *mitama-shizume* and *chin-kon*), they can often seem anything but pacific:

In direct contrast to the Hindu system, where great care is taken to make meditation as easy . . . as possible, the keen Shintōist likes to submit himself to as much hardship as he possibly can. He will practice squatting in the most awkward position, scantily clothed, or even stark naked after a bath taken with ice-cold water, or in the open on a hill-top battered by wind and snow, while his shivering body turns numb and his flesh turns blue and green.<sup>26</sup>

Inwardly, the practices aim at a tranquillity or detachment that recognizes no hardship or discomfort. There is an "opening of the inner self to higher powers":

It is said that, after both breathing and consciousness have been 'regularized,' the 'eyes of the heart' should be 'focused,' that the 'ears' of the body and the heart should be kept 'open to have a good reception of the strong spiritual waves,' that 'the chords of the heart which aim at a higher spirit' should always be 'brought into vibration.'<sup>27</sup>

Though the "opening" in question is described as an attunement to subtle spheres, it also has the sense of making oneself vacant for occupation by a particular kami. This is the magical practice of getting a soul or attracting a higher spirit (which, incidentally, Morton Smith insists is the true teaching

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 84–85, specifically in reference to information given by Kikimaro Ōue, president of Yamakage-shintō-aishinkai, Tokyo.

about the Holy Spirit in early Christianity).<sup>28</sup> In Shintō, of course, the inhabiting spirit is a force of nature.

What do advanced Shintō purification rites have to do with haiku, especially given that none of the major *haijin* (Bashō, Buson, Issa, Shiki) were Shintō adepts? As noted earlier, the Shintō religion touches every aspect of Japanese life, whether this is consciously appreciated or not. Purification, as a cultural ideal, does not necessarily refer to specific practices but to the goal of achieving absolute coincidence with what is highest and best in nature. Insofar as purification signifies an opening to subtle influences, and insofar as it invites the strength and energy of nature to inhabit or work through us, it is the goal of the Shintō devotee and the haiku poet alike. In the case of the latter, this manifests itself in the poet's virtual self-effacement before the things of nature. Thus, Bashō advises his pupils:

You can learn about the pine only from the pine, or about bamboo only from bamboo. When you see an object, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself; otherwise you impose yourself on the object, and do not learn. The object and yourself must become one, and from that feeling of oneness issues your poetry.<sup>29</sup>

In Shintō religion the traditional symbol for this sort of mental purity, as well as the essential purity of nature itself, is the sacred mirror, one of the several holy items found in Shintō shrines. Not surprisingly, it is one of the few symbols that appear in haiku poetry:

*togi naosu kagami mo kiyoshi yuki no hana*

rubbing  
the mirror clean —  
snow flowers

Bashō

Here, the ambiguity of whether the mirror's clarity refers to the mind of the poet or the beauty of the flowers is essential to the poem's full meaning.

Purity in the sense of openness can seem a wholly passive affair that has little to do with the active pursuit of higher spiritual forces (as in the practice of getting a spirit). However, it is important to recognize a dynamic element in such purity or openness: the dynamism of natural liberty, the creativity of

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<sup>28</sup> Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark and Jesus the Magician* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1974 and 1978, respectively).

<sup>29</sup> Bashō, in *The Year of My Life: A Translation of Issa's Oraga Haru*, by Nobuyuki Yuasa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 18.

freedom. "The sense of all purification is . . . to lead us toward that pure exercise of freedom by which our being is continually reborn," says the French philosopher Louis Lavelle.<sup>30</sup> In haiku terms, this is the same liberty that continually gives birth to the world, and it is one with the openness of nature.

Though Bashō himself fails to make the matter clear in his critical remarks, attunement to nature is not so much a fidelity to the things of nature as to the condition for their arising and being just so. The poet actively pursues the mood or spirit of freedom in which things have their being.

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Of the changes wrought by the nominally Shintō-instigated Meiji restoration, culminating in the "Bureau of Thought Control" of 1937 and in World War II, little need be said, save that in its original form, divorced from political affiliations, Shintō did offer genuine moral guidance.

According to Herbert, Shintō "has no recognized ethical code to offer": no system of moral precepts, no holy law, no sense of guilt in the Christian sense, no conception of original sin. This apparent lack of ethical direction has been cited by missionaries "as strong evidence in favour of their contention that Shintō does not deserve to be regarded as a religion."³¹ Doubtless, the same missionaries would also have found something lacking in haiku, which portrays prostitutes and thieves as readily as (and frequently with more delight than) it does nuns and priests, yet without moral comment.

nusubito no yane ni kieyuku yosamu kana

robbers
vanish over the roofs
a chilly night —

Buson

"The simplicity of Shintō," says Blyth, "like that of Zen and of haiku, is entirely non-moral."³²

But are Shintō and (assuming a fundamental relationship) haiku really, or only apparently, "non-moral"? And are they so in the same sense, as Blyth suggests? Shintō authority Professor Sokyō Ono insists that Shintō does in fact recognize good and evil:

³⁰ Louis Lavelle, *De l'acte: la dialectique de l'éternel présent* (Paris: Ferdinand Aubier, 1937), 190. My translation.

³¹ Herbert, 68.

³² Blyth, 159.

Man by nature is inherently good, and the world in which he lives is good. . . . Evil comes from without. The source of temptation and evil is the world of darkness. The cause is evil spirits, called *magatsuhi*. . . . Moral evil is thus an affliction, — a temporary affliction.³³

Hence, the various Shintō purification rites and exercises have an ethical as well as a sacramental and regenerative significance. Through them is achieved renewed connection with one's own inherent goodness, as well as with that of nature.

That Shintō lacks a precise ethical code, such as the Decalogue of Moses, indicates no moral failing but simply that it has other ethical foundations. Specifically, Shintō morality implies a flexible and in-dwelling path or way (*michi*), rather than a body of rules or commandments, fixed for all time and imposed from without. Shintō scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) says:

Human beings, having been produced by the spirit of the two Creative Deities, are naturally endowed with the knowledge of what they ought to do and what they ought to refrain from. It is unnecessary for them to trouble their heads with systems of morality. . . .³⁴

Correct behavior therefore consists in attuning to one's inmost nature, which, for Shintōists, is none other than nature. This is the meaning of following a path or way. Tasuku Harada explains:

By *michi*, the Way, is intended a mysterious, unformulated, yet influential conception, carrying with it a sense of awe and solemnity. . . . To act in accord with the course of nature, without conscious effort, obedient to the impulse of constitutional prompting, is the highest virtue in Shintō eyes. The course of nature is the will of the Gods. The will of the Gods is performed in all that acts naturally. Here is extreme simplicity, utter faith in the rightness of the natural. Such is the core of the Japanese *michi*.³⁵

This understanding of morality should not seem strange to Western readers, for it is similar to the Christian ideal of "walking in the spirit" (Gal. 5:25) as opposed to adhering to the letter of the Law. Likewise, the ideal of naturalness

³³ Sokyō Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way* (Rutland and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1962), 106.

³⁴ Motoori Norinaga, *Nahobi no mitama*; in Herbert, 69.

³⁵ Tasuku Harada, *The Faith of Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1914); in Herbert, 70.

in behavior can be found in the lilies-of-the-field discourse of Jesus (Mat. 6:25–34).

If morality is not exclusively identified with the observance of rules, haiku too discloses a moral dimension, one very close to the Shintō conception of *michi*. Throughout haiku is the sense of a wholesome direction or path, associated with the inmost feeling of nature, which, if followed, leads to fullness of life and harmony with one's fellow beings. To the extent that we act naturally, spontaneously, and with sincere feeling, our actions are good and just. To the extent that we accord with the way of nature, nature accords with us:

taku hodo wa kaze ga motte kuru ochiba kana

fire-building
The wind brings
fallen leaves —

Ryōkan

In addition to this intimation of a natural path — or as an extension of it — there is in haiku a value for plain truth that has about it a certain moral flavor. The idea seems to be that there is an inherent rightness in bearing faithful witness to the world, in attending to its precise is-ness and suchness, regardless of what that truth happens to be; a parallel ethic is practiced by the Society of Friends (Quakers). In some mysterious fashion, simply to see the world as-is contributes to its betterment as well as our own; there is a natural healing, purifying quality in plain truth that drives off moral affliction. Though the ideal of faithful vision has, in Japanese culture, come to be associated with Buddhism, it is a Shintō ideal as well, a function of the same mirror-like purity discussed earlier. Atsutane Hirata writes: “[T]o follow . . . nature just as it is, without bending or turning aside, is to conform to the teaching of the Kami.”³⁶

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Understood as a path or road in the literal sense, *michi* suggests a final association between Shintōism and haiku: that of the wilderness pilgrimage. From the earliest days of Shintō, such pilgrimages were undertaken as yet another form of purification, to draw nearer to nature's spiritual well-springs. Because certain spots were considered beneficial to the soul, they became holy sites upon which shrines were often built. The spots provided

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<sup>36</sup> Atsutane Hirata, *Zenshū* [Complete Works], 15 vols., compiled by Muromatsu Iwao (Tokyo: Ichidō, 1911–18); in Herbert, 70.

travelers with specific destinations along the forest paths where they could steep themselves in magical forces. Indeed, the age-old practice (still observed in modern Japan) of visiting cherry groves in springtime was originally for the purpose of absorbing the vitality-giving emanations of the trees.

Precisely owing to the magic, mystery, and natural allure of the woodland settings, poet-priests were often inspired to compose poetry about the sacred sites. The best of the compositions attracted later poet-priests, who frequently traveled considerable distances in order to immerse themselves in the spiritual vibrations:

These poet-priests believed that the local deities who had given the earlier poet inspiration lived on in each tree and blade of grass, as also in the mountains and rivers of the locality. It was essential to visit these places personally to engage in silent communion with these deities.<sup>37</sup>

Thus began the long tradition of poetic wanderings in Japan, culminating in Bashō's famous travel record, *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (*Oku no Hosomichi*), a work generally acknowledged to contain some of the world's greatest and most distinctive haiku. In the spirit of early Shintō priests, poets like Bashō regularly made treks into the wilderness to commune with the forces of nature. The records or journals that they composed along the way, classically consisting of short prose passages interspersed with poems, form an important body of haiku literature. That the haiku contained in these records were so often written at sacred sites once more testifies to the spiritual orientation that haiku shares with Shintōism.

It is true that, by Bashō's time, the poetic journey was not always undertaken with the central aim of communing with Shintō spirits. Especially after the poet Saigyō, poetic wandering increasingly acquired connotations of simplicity, detachment, and divine aimlessness — Buddhist values that are apparent in Bashō's travel writings, as they are in haiku generally. Wandering came to be prized as a spiritual end in its own right. Nonetheless, the broad ideal of immersing oneself in the magical, unseen forces of nature lived on in haiku to an extent not found in any other sphere of Japanese life, save that of Shintō worship itself. ♪

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<sup>37</sup> Jin'ichi Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 3, tr. Aileen Gatten and Mark Harbison, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 482–83.

# Theorizing about the Origins of the Tokonoma

Maye Hisao





Photo by Murai Osamu

There are many matters in this world that we think we fully understand, but that actually have no clear explanation to date. One of these is the origin of the tokonoma. I feel hesitant to write about such an inexplicable matter, but then again, my interest in doing so is piqued precisely because it is a topic that is still not understood. This must be what scholarship is all about.

Nowadays, it is not unusual for a house to be without a tokonoma. The rumor is that youths in Japan who are familiar only with apartment- or condominium-dwelling consider tokonoma to be special features of inns and restaurants. Before the War — that is, until fifty-some years ago — however, it was extremely rare for a house not to have a tokonoma.

違棚 One would not find average houses equipped with *chigaidana* (staggered shelves; the traditional built-in shelving in the space to the side of the  
書院 tokonoma, for displaying objects of art), or with a *shoin* (the traditional  
間 low, built-in desk-like cabinet under a window, used for displaying art  
objects). However, even if a house only had a tiny reception room one *ken*  
置床 (approximately 190 cm) wide, it would be provided with a tokonoma,  
釣床 though perhaps but a half *ken* in size. Or, if that were not possible, a portable  
*toko* (*okidoko*, basically consisting of a low, narrow shelf placed  
against a wall) or a wall space having another short wall built in front  
across the top (*tsuridoko*), would be improvised. There, seasonal flowers  
would be arranged, and a scroll featuring calligraphy or a painting  
would be hung. A tokonoma, however, did not merely serve as a decorative  
element in the room. During the feudal period, when social rank was  
a matter of strict concern, the area where the tokonoma was situated  
marked the “upper seat” (*kamiza*), and from there down, the seating order  
would be decided. This tradition continues to the present day.

Why is it, however, that in recent times this most symbolic feature of a Japanese house is rarely seen? It occurs to me that the answer may be related to the fact that we are unsure of why the tokonoma originally came into being. I wouldn't say that this would explain everything... but people generally tend to think lightly about things that have unclear antecedents. Let us, therefore, look into the antecedents of the tokonoma.

床 We run into a problem from the start, for the word “*toko*” itself is one of the most troublesome terms there are in relation to residential architecture. The reason is that the kanji character for it can also be read “*yuka*,”

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Translated and adapted, by permission, from the feature article “*Tokonoma o Kangaeru*” in the February 1994 issue of *Tankō* (Kyoto: Tankōsha Publishing Co.). Footnotes are by the translator.

*previous page photo*

Tokonoma at restaurant Tokyo Chikuyōtei within the Osaka Royal Hotel. The room divider between two Japanese-style rooms has been removed, to create one spacious room. This modern tokonoma is entirely made of metal. Architectural design: Izue Architects and Associates Co., Ltd., Osaka.

meaning “floor.”<sup>1</sup> As I will explain later, it is not as though there is no connection whatsoever between a *toko* and a *yuka*. However, most people presume that these are two totally separate kinds of things.

It is possible that the word “*yuka*” originated as a corruption of “*ika*” (purified place). The bases for this supposition are that “*yu*” here has the same root as the adjective “*yuyushii*,” meaning “serious” or “grave,” and “*ka*” refers to “place.” And if this is so, then the word *yuka* implies more than simply “floor” as opposed to “ceiling.” *Yuka* should, rather, be understood as out-of-bounds areas that are sacrosanct and should not be trespassed. On the other hand, what about “*toko*”? This word derives from “*daidoko*,” or “platform bed.” The word “*toko*,” hence, is commonly used to refer to a place to recline and, by extension, to sleep. When considered this way, I can’t help but feel that our conventional usage of the terms “*toko*” and “*yuka*” is switched around backwards. One particular thing that can be said in common of these two entities, though, is that both are assumed to be areas raised one level higher than the surrounding area.

There are instances where interior spaces consisting of two or more connected rooms will have the floor of one of those rooms built a level higher than that of the others. Again, just a part of a room might be built higher. These sorts of places are referred to as “raised level” (*jōdan*) or “raised-level room/space” (*jōdan-no-ma*). In our present day and age, however, these are no longer constructed. And they did not exist in average homes even in the past. They could be seen in such places as the Imperial Residence within the Inner Palace, the abbot’s hall or reception hall at temples, and Edo-period official inns reserved for use by top members of the Tokugawa bureaucracy. The mansions of daimyō of the late Edo period inevitably had these special features. When and why these raised areas began to be built, however, are not clear.

One theory is that these raised-level spaces evolved due to the correlation between the main roof eaves (*hisashi*) and the extended eaves (*mago-hisashi*), or the main roof eaves and eaves called *hiro-bisashi* (built one horizontal beam’s width below the main eaves, to cover the open-plank verandah [*sunoko-en*]), all of which were regular features of late Heian period palatial architecture (*shinden-zukuri*).<sup>2</sup> Among other theories, the following has also been proposed. In past ages tatami mats were not laid wall-to-wall, but only in the seating areas. The color and pattern of the fabric along their borders indicated the caste and social status of the person who would sit on the particular tatami. With the development of the *shoin-zukuri* style of residential architecture [which began around the

斎所

台床

上段

上段の間

庇

孫庇 広庇

寝殿造

書院造

<sup>1</sup> Because of this double pronunciation and meaning of the kanji character, in the original Japanese article the author deliberately “spells out” the word, using katakana characters.

<sup>2</sup> For details regarding the sources of the various theories mentioned in this essay, see the author’s *Tokonoma no Hanashi* [About Tokonoma] (Tokyo: Kajima Shuppankai, 1988).

The *jōdan-no-ma*, or  
“raised-level room,”  
of the Kuroshoin in  
the Ninomaru Palace  
at Nijō Castle in Kyoto.  
The Ninomaru buildings  
are designated a National  
Treasure. Photo courtesy  
of Motorikyū Nijōjō  
(the former detached  
palace, Nijō Castle).







The *jōdan-no-ma*, or "raised-level space," within the reception hall of the Kōjōin at Onjōji temple. The hall is designated a National Treasure. Photo courtesy of Onjōji temple, Otsu.

late Muromachi period], tatami mats came to be spread wall-to-wall, and this made it difficult to distinguish the different seating areas. Hence the practical thing to do was to indicate the difference by raising the floor level. It should be noted, however, that evidence has been uncovered which would seem to prove these theories invalid.

The reason I have given attention here to the *jōdan*, or “raised level,” is that it and the *oshiita* (literally, “pressing/flattening board”), which I shall describe next, may possibly have become combined, giving us the form of tokonoma that we know today. This is presently the most prevalent theory among scholars, and in some circles seems even to have become the established theory. The process by which the ‘combining’ came about, however, is not clear, though the theory hinges upon this point.

押板

Regarding the *oshiita* involved here, the fact of the matter is that it, too, was formerly considered the forerunner of the tokonoma. Indeed, this theory still holds weight and is commonly taken for granted.

When I started studying architectural history, I was shown slides of the tokonoma (that is what they looked like to me) in the reception halls (*kyakuden*) of the Kōjōin and Kangakuin edifices at Onjōji temple, and I recall being reluctant to accept the description given, that these were *oshiita*. Though they were somewhat broader across the front than usual tokonoma, and were rather shallow in proportion to that, they appeared no different from everyday tokonoma. After receiving an explanation of the construction of these *oshiita*, however, I understood how they differed from tokonoma. As opposed to the present-day form of tokonoma construction, wherein a raised tokonoma floor is created by installing a thick, horizontal timber (*kamachi*) across the bottom front so that its foot is flush with the tatami of the room, and installing the floor of the tokonoma to the rear of and level with the height of that, the *oshiita* seen in the slides were constructed of a thick board (approximately 9 cm thick) attached about 30 cm above the tatami. Prior to this form of construction, portable *oshiita*, called “*oki-oshiita*,” were used. These were composed simply of a loose board that could be moved to different spots or temporarily fixed in place somewhere. The idea has been raised that the tables set up in front of hanging scrolls, on which the conventional three-piece set of implements (*mitsugusoku*, composed of a candle holder, incense burner, and vase) could be placed and flowers could be decorated, ought also to be broadly included as a form of *oshiita*. These “front tables” would be created by spreading a cloth cover over a desk-like dais, and laying a lacquered board referred to as “*oshiita*” on top.

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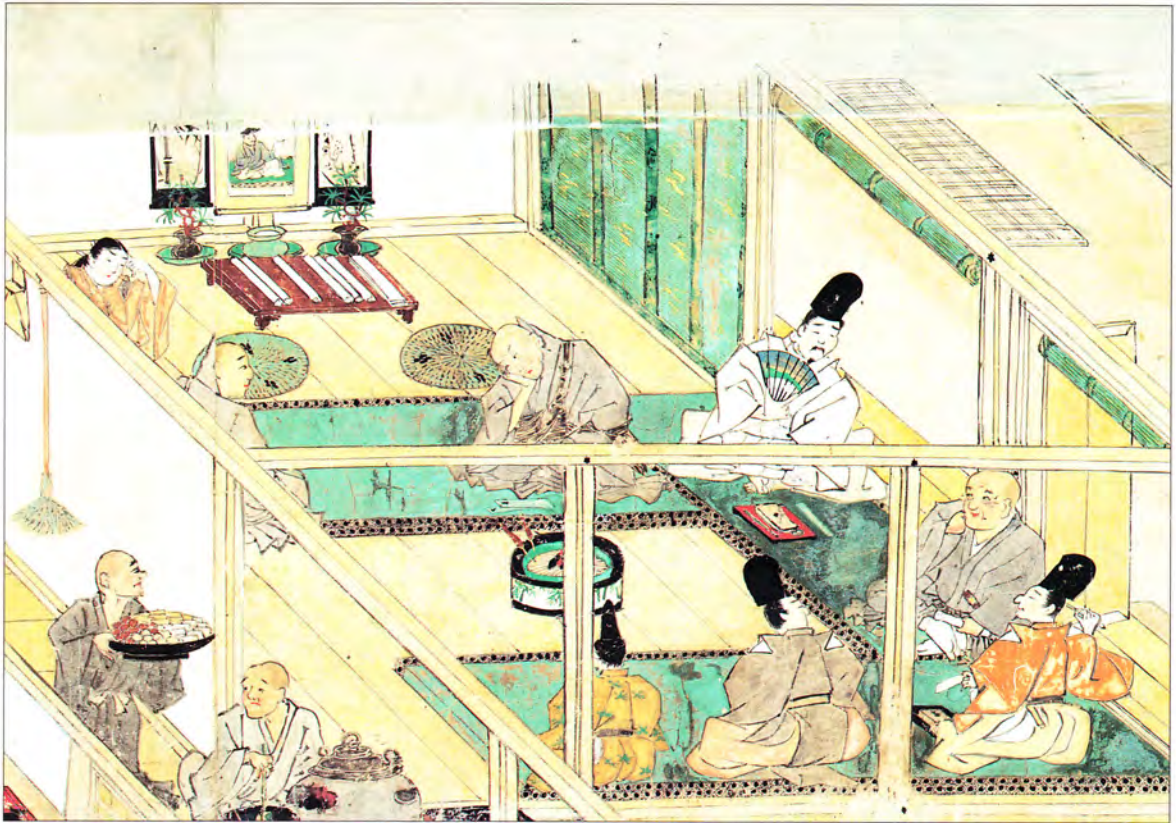
置押板

In any case, portable thick boards or front tables evolved into built-in fixtures, and this is what we see as the *oshiita* in the reception hall at Kōjōin and such places. . . . This ratiocination seems to hold together. However, there remains the question of why these became permanent installations.

The *kamiza-no-ma*,  
or “upper-seat room,”  
within the reception hall  
of the Kōjōin at Onjōji  
temple. Photo courtesy  
of Onjōji temple, Otsu.







*Boki-e* picture handscroll, detail of the third section of the fifth scroll, dating to the year 1351. A "front table" is seen in front of the hanging scrolls on the far wall. Note also that tatami are spread only in the seating areas. The *Boki-e* handscrolls depict the life of Priest Kakunyo (1270–1351), the third abbot of the Jōdō Shin sect temple, Honganji. In this scene, Kakunyo and others are selecting poems for inclusion in a poetry collection. Property of Nishi Honganji, Kyoto.

At this belated stage, let us determine the time frame for the above-mentioned events. Though firm evidence is not available, it can be supposed, based on general circumstantial evidence, that the reception hall at Kōjōin was built between about 1598 to 1603. This means that, among the extant *oshiita* today, the one here dates to the earliest period. The earliest documentary appearance of the term "*oshiita*" is said to date to about the end of the fourteenth century, or to the end of the Kamakura period (1192–1336), it is also said. Among old pictorial reference works, all of which happen to be picture handscrolls, the *Sairei Zōshi* (early 15th c.) has a depiction of what appears to be a provisional *oshiita* [photo, pp. 34–35]. If we are to include "front tables" in our consideration of *oshiita*, one of these can be seen in the *Boki-e* (1351), and in the appended section of this same work (1482), we see a fully consummated, fixed *oshiita*. There still

祭礼草紙

慕婦絵



*Boki-e* picture handscroll, detail of the third section of the first appended scroll, dating to the year 1482. There is a fixed, built-in *oshiita*. The scene is of Kakunyo in his youth, and thus chronologically predates that of the earlier handscroll (facing page photo). However, the artist's rendering probably represents things as they existed when the work was executed. This and facing page photo, courtesy of Nishi Honganji.

remain questions requiring answers, but it seems almost doubtless from this that built-in *oshiita* came into existence sometime between the 14th to the early 15th centuries — that is, about the mid-Muromachi period.

Besides the matter of the *oshiita* possibly representing the forerunner of the *tokonoma*, there is this to consider: In a Muromachi-period document we find evidence of the terms "*oshiita*," "*tokonoma*," and "*toko*" being used to refer to separate things, and, as fortune would have it, the actual building that the document speaks about is still in existence. The vocabulary comes up in entries written between 1485 and 1486 in the *Onryōken Nichiroku*,<sup>3</sup> and the architectural structure being discussed is the

蔭涼軒日録

<sup>3</sup> The official daily record kept by the head of the Onryōken at the Rokuon'in subtemple of Shōkokuji temple, Kyoto.



The *Sairei Zōshi* picture handscroll depicting a flower-vase-contest party held in conjunction with a festival. The *oshiita* on which the vases have been placed appears to be a temporary fixture. Property of the Maeda Ikutoku-kai Foundation, Tokyo.  
Photo from the Maeda Ikutoku-kai Foundation.





The "toko facing west" on the exterior west wall of the Tōgudō hall at Jishōshi temple.  
Photo courtesy of Himukai Susumu.

東求堂 慈照寺 Tōgudō hall at Jishōji (commonly referred to as Ginkakuji, the Temple of the Silver Pavilion). Let us confirm the pertinent entries.

|                           |                                                               |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1485, 12th month, 6th day | 御侍仏堂南向きなり—The private Buddhist altar hall faces south.        |
| same day                  | 同西向き押板あり—In the same, there is an <i>oshiita</i> facing west. |

|                           |                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1486, 1st month, 20th day | 御床間西にあり—The <i>tokonoma</i> is on the west.                                         |
| 1486, 3rd month, 4th day  | 西向きの床、御額あるべき由、... —In the <i>toko</i> facing west, as there should be a plaque, ... |
| 1486, 3rd month, 24th day | 東求堂の西の床の額名、... —The plaque title in the west <i>toko</i> of the Tōgudō, ...         |

Clearly, these include the three different terms — “*oshiita*,” “*tokonoma*,” and “*toko*.” Then, it would be ideal if we could actually place our fingers on the objects these terms refer to at the existing Tōgudō. Unfortunately, however, the Tōgudō underwent remodeling in later ages, eliminating that possibility. This being the case, these puzzles for a long time were the subject of wide-ranging theories.

When the Tōgudō was dismantled for repairs in 1964, however, [some of] the arguments were settled. In particular, it became clear that the “*toko* facing west” had constituted a bench-like fixture on the west side of the structure. Hence, at the time of the repair work, which continued into 1965, the clay wall at that section of the building was reconstructed into a bench-like form, as we can see today. It is difficult to imagine, however, that the two expressions, “*oshiita* facing west” and “*toko* facing west,” both referred to this one *toko* on the building’s west side. Furthermore, usually the wooden-floored room on the west is figured to be the “*tokonoma*”; however, the question as to why such a wooden-floored room would be called *tokonoma* has not been solved.

Another theory regarding the origin of the *tokonoma* says that it evolved from the Buddhist altar. This theory is quite old, having first been proposed by the Edo-period scholar, Ise Sadatake (1717–84). The theory was adopted unchanged by Sawada Natari (1775–1845), and even until about the middle of this century, a great number of architectural historians adhered to it. However, around the 1950s, it became thoroughly negated. The reasoning was that [in the era when Ashikaga Yoshimasa built the Tōgudō] the scrolls hung at the *oshiita* or *toko* nearly always featured paintings on non-Buddhist themes. Besides this, during this period — the Muromachi — the importing of paintings from China to Japan was a flourishing enterprise, and the majority of the imported works were in the form of hanging scrolls. Hence, it has been proposed that a fixed place to display these — that is, to hang them — was developed, and that this represented the prototype of the built-in *oshiita*. Recently, yet another theory has been proposed. It takes its starting point from the native land of those paintings, China, and claims not only that the desks that were set up in front of hanging scrolls in [Song- and Yuan-dynasty] China were the prototype of the Japanese *oshiita*, but also that

伊勢貞丈  
沢田名垂



The Dōjinsai room within the Tōgudō hall at Jishōji temple. It has built-in staggered shelves (*chigaidana*) and, in front of the window, a built-in *shoin* desk —the fixture that is the namesake of *shoin* rooms and *shoin* architecture.

牀 the tables called *shō* eventually became imbedded into the wall and developed into the form of *tokonoma* seen in Japan today.

As to any of these theories, the likelihood of their being widely accepted is slim unless it can be clarified why it was necessary to implant the display facility into the wall, and why it became a recessed area in the room — that is, an alcove.

豊臣秀吉 Toyotomi Hideyoshi not just once but on numerous occasions seated himself within the *tokonoma*. These accounts appear in the *Sōtan Nikki* and *Matsuya Kaiki*,<sup>4</sup> so they are probably not purely fictitious. I think we

宗湛日記  
松屋会記

<sup>4</sup> The *Sōtan Nikki*, or Tea Diary of Kamiya Sōtan, contains detailed accounts of tea events attended by the wealthy Hakata merchant, Kamiya Sōtan (1551–1635). It covers the years 1586 to 1613. The *Matsuya Kaiki*, or Matsuya Family Record of Tea Gatherings, consists of the records kept by three generations of the Matsuya Genzaburō family of lacquer craftsmen of Nara. Altogether, the entries cover the period from 1533 to 1650.

can safely say that his doing so was not a highhanded act of his because he held power, but rather, that it shows he had heard tell that tokonoma developed from those raised spaces called *jōdan*, where nobles used to sit. Indeed, Sen Rikyū himself is said to have approved of guests taking a seat within the tokonoma if the room were too small to sit elsewhere.

千利休

So far in this essay, I have gone around and around, vacillating about the antecedents of the tokonoma, for which an established theory has yet to emerge. So the next order of business must be to offer some counter-theory or tentative proposition.

For this, let us return to the *Boki-e* that I referred to earlier, and scrutinize it a bit more. The broad scroll that we see in it appears to depict a flowering plum branch and orchids. It is uncertain what kind of flowers they are that appear to have been loosely placed in the celadon vase in front of the scroll, but probably they are sprigs of this and that which were blooming in the garden. Other than these things, no other items have been placed in the *oshiita*. Considering this, it makes no sense to pursue the idea that this was a sacrosanct, out-of-bounds space. Stated in a different way, the items placed there would be meant for pure viewing, so the space was a display area for their appreciation. In other words, I believe that the genesis of the tokonoma can be traced to the emergence of the concept of an independent space set aside for the display and appreciation of artistic objects.

The problem is to explain how today's style of tokonoma, in terms of its physical characteristics as a recessed area with raised, usually tatami-matted floor, came into being. The notion that what was once a protrusion became imbedded into the wall seems unnecessarily shrewd. It would be more natural and straightforward to view this as the form which the temporary installment, like we see in the *Sairei Zōshi*, took through its natural course of development.

Suppose that, on the one hand, the freely movable *oshiita* gradually headed towards becoming a stationary fixture, and on the other hand, the *jōdan* gradually became extremely diminished in size. What if we were to see, at the point of convergence of these two occurrences, the incipience of the tokonoma. This, in effect, supports the theory that the tokonoma arose as a combined or unified form of the *jōdan* and *oshiita*, and quite concretely explains the process by which these two became unified.



Translated by Gretchen Mittwer

# Changing Order in Eternal Chaos: *Mitate*, Zeami, and Post-Modernism

Zhu Jie

風馬牛 The etymological roots of the expression *fūbagyū* (*feng ma niu* in Chinese) can be traced back to a time somewhere between the Spring and Autumn (770–431 B. C.) and Warring States (403–221 B. C.) periods, when the state of Qi was planning to attack Chu. Chu dispatched an envoy to Qi asking, “Why do you intend to attack us when Qi, which is north of the sea, and Chu, which is to the south, are like *fūbagyū* — cattle and horses that, left to their own devices, will not seek each other out?” The first character in the expression, read *fū* (Ch., *feng*), has been interpreted in two fashions: as meaning “to set free,” or as referring to the mating call of the sexes. If the second interpretation is adopted, then it follows that there would be no courting, cows and the horses being of different species. In any case, the import of the expression is that the two elements are utterly heterogeneous and disparate.

見立て The charm of *mitate* (visual or verbal analogs), as found in *ukiyoe* and *haikai* (the non-standard, often comic form of linked verse that evolved into *haiku*), lies precisely in this kind of coupling of two widely disparate elements, like the heterogeneous *fūbagyū*. The skill of the practitioner resides in pinning down a subtle common factor in the two elements and bringing the two together through it.

芭蕉 This verse by Bashō is a perfect case in point:

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>kiku no ka ya</i>      | Ahah, fragrance of mums!    |
| <i>Nara ni wa</i>         | And in Nara                 |
| <i>furuki hotoketachi</i> | Buddha after ancient Buddha |

Capturing the ethereal reverberations from the image, it combines into one unit the sight of the Buddhas of ancient Nara and the refined fragrance of the chrysanthemums.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Having written on this subject previously, I will not recapitulate here. Please see my *Kamisama to Nihonjin no Aida: 'Mitate' ni Miru Minzoku no Kankaku* [Between God and the Japanese: Perceptions of a People as Seen in *Mitate*] (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1991).

Translated, by permission, from the paper “Towa naru Konton ni okeru Chitsujo: *Mitate*, Zeami, *Posutomodan*,” in Sugimoto Hidetarō, ed., *Nihon-Kenkyū* — Bulletin of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, vol. 11, 1994.

We see here a consciousness that beauty exists in a precarious borderline area, in which apparently unrelated elements are linked by a nearly invisible thread within the aesthetic consciousness of he who would appreciate the verse.

As is well known, Zeami, in his dramaturgy, was keenly conscious of how the audience perceived what they were viewing, and believed that the success of a performance rested on the *wagō*, or harmony, attained between the performer and the audience during each separate moment of the performance. Zeami had the following to say about commencing a noh performance:

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First of all, by looking at the audience, one should be able to predict whether the results of the performance will be good or bad. Its is difficult to explain precisely how this can be done. Nevertheless, there are certain ways to attempt it. For example, when a performance is held for religious purposes or before the nobility, the audience will be a large one and the spectators will be slow in quieting down. On such an occasion, the performer must wait until the audience falls silent; when they find it difficult to wait any longer for the performance to begin, and when all the spectators are as one in their feeling that the performance is surely late in starting, they will look toward the green-room from which the performer will come. The performer should emerge at precisely the proper moment and begin his *issei* ["first voice"; the entry verse sung by the main actor]. This atmosphere that is created by such precise timing will in turn be transferred to the spectators, and their emotions will fall in harmony with the actor's performance. Once this atmosphere has been established, that day's performance can already be judged a success.<sup>2</sup>

一声

Insofar as the success of a noh performance hinges on the extent of the melding of the performer and his audience, the performer must, in this manner, sense the mood of each particular audience, just as if he were able to recognize the heartbeat of each person in it. The atmosphere of the audience will vary according to an array of factors, such as the spaciousness of the site, the number of spectators and their breeding, the time of the performance, such as whether it is in the morning, at noon, in the

<sup>2</sup> *Fūshikuden* (The Style and the Flower), Chapter 3, "Questions and Answers," p. 18. The English translation and titles of the works of Zeami are taken from J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu, trans., *On the Art of the Nō Drama: the Major Treatises of Zeami* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

evening, or at night, and the season or temperature. Zeami repeatedly explains in his treatises such as the *Fūshikaden* (The Style and the Flower) and *Shūgyoku Tokka* (Finding Gems and Gaining the Flower) that no matter how skilled the performer, should he fail to grasp the subtle alterations in the mood of his audience, his performance will not go well, even if he had been a success the previous day in what seemed identical circumstances.

Naturally, the harmony between audience and performer which is dependent upon this sort of delicate attunement to the atmosphere is itself fragile and volatile. It is exactly this fragile, fleeting harmony, however, that forms the base upon which Zeami's aesthetic is constructed. Precisely because it is evanescent and volatile, in the moment that it is captured, the beauty manifest therein attains the realm of the ecstatic. It was to achieve this moment that Zeami devoted his energies to vigorous and relentless training.

Furthermore, in that the harmony here is a matter arising between performer and audience, Zeami reasoned that if the performer were simply to weigh with his own eyes the atmosphere of the circumstances and the mood of the audience, this would still be one-sided. Hence, he stressed that the performer must be skilled at *riken no ken*, the ability to incorporate the gaze of the audience as his own.

Yamazaki Masakazu has criticized Zeami's theory of art, saying: "This effort to grasp objectively the essence of the drama through the incessant adoption of the point of view of the audience was for someone like Aristotle scarcely an issue. In his famed *Poetics*, Aristotle took the human instinct for imitation, *mimesis*, as his premise and simply raised it to a principle sufficient in itself." "... According to Aristotle, art is an imitation of the eternal ideal. Beauty thus came traditionally to be thought of as belonging to an inalterable realm that superseded the vicissitudes of present-day reality. Art is understood as the essence of nature taken in ideal form, and it is recognized that it is precisely this essence that lends beauty its eternal character."<sup>3</sup>

If art is something that imitates the eternal ideal, then imitation comes to be the special privilege of the performer and, of course, there is no relevancy in giving any thought to the eyes of the audience. On this point, Zeami's artistic theory, in which the beauty of the drama is built upon the precarious harmony (*wagō*) between performer and audience, is the polar opposite of that of Aristotle.

Now, if we return to *mitate*, we see that Zeami's aesthetic has much in common with the *mitate* that links two disparate elements by a slender

<sup>3</sup> Yamazaki Masakazu, "Heushin no Bigaku: Zeami no Geijutsuron" [The Aesthetics of Metamorphosis: The Artistic Theories of Zeami], in Yamazaki Masakazu Chosakushū [The Collected Works of Masakazu Yamazaki] (Chūō Kōronsha, 1982), vol. 4, pp. 40 and 47.

thread. In both *mitate* and Zeami's aesthetic, beauty resides not in some eternal, privileged realm, but in a precarious, fleeting linkage between two separate things.

Intriguingly, both Zeami's aesthetic and *mitate* have much in common with contemporary postmodern thought. The postmodern is characterized by a fundamental skepticism and denial of unchanging "essences" and authoritarian, universalistic systems, and advocates instead a multi-polar, particularistic movement.

We find in the recently published *Postmodernism: A Reader* that the editor, Thomas Docherty, advocates a fundamental shift from "scientific knowledge" to "discursive knowledge." Docherty asserts that we will, in the future, know the object by recounting the narrative of our encounter with the object rather than know some fixed essence of the object. The postmodern distrusts all varieties of theory of a scientific character and prioritizes the event, the process, of knowing rather than knowledge itself.<sup>4</sup>

"Event" is a keyword in Docherty's discussion of the postmodern. It is a concept at odds with the concept of an intrinsic, static, universalistic "essence." Objects are not to be rationally understood in terms of their essences, but their meaning is to be grasped discursively within the flow accompanying the movement of individual events. Docherty explains this movement of events using the words "appearance" and "disappearance."

One finds an example in studies of the victims of terrorism, people who have been taken hostage or have experienced hijackings and the like. After such incidents, these people are often thought to have undergone a complete personality change. However, in the aftermath of these incidents they are, of course, in reality the same person. It is merely that one heretofore suppressed aspect of their personalities has come to the fore, replacing some aspect of the person's character that we had taken as the essence of their personality. Following this same line of reasoning, modern genocide can probably be understood, as Zygmunt Bauman suggests, as a revelation of a hidden element of the modern, rather than as an aberration.

Let us next consider the body. As Foucault has indicated, during the period from approximately 1770 to 1840, public exhibitions of physical torture, which had previously been practiced in Europe, disappeared completely. Physical punishment, involving the infliction of pain on the body, was replaced by the deprivation of a person's liberty or suspension of rights.

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<sup>4</sup> *Postmodernism: A Reader*, edited and introduced by Thomas Docherty (Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 40.

In a related fashion, and almost contemporaneously, there occurred a change in the European consciousness of beauty and the expression of corporal decorum, or manners. During the latter half of the seventeenth century, actors in the English and French theatre employed a broad physical style of expressiveness, lacking in inner depth. The custom of the day was for the actor to respond to objects with a directly visible expression, such as tears. By 1771, however, this social custom was being parodied in Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling* and, within the passage of a brief thirty years after that, thoroughly satirized in the works of Austin and others. Thereafter, the body gradually came to be alienated from the open expression of emotion, and the so-called English 'sang-froid' and 'phlegmatic' character was cultivated. Thus, in this sense, the modern stance towards the human body may correctly be reinterpreted as the stance taken, particularly, in regards to its appearance and disappearance.

Docherty summarizes the above, noting that the real, as had been previously recognized by the modern, is always in flux. And, if such is the case, then reality is not dependent on the bipolar relationship between appearance and reality, but, instead, the real should be viewed as depending on the political and dialectical speed that governs appearance and disappearance. There exists no intrinsic, static, universalistic essence. All that exists are individual things/matters in the stream of appearance and disappearance, that is to say, events. Such is the view advocated by the postmodern.<sup>5</sup>

Given this, art can no longer be an imitation of the eternal ideal, and beauty ceases to be something that supersedes the flow of present-day reality. It follows that if the once dominant essences or ideals have disintegrated, beauty will be understood to reside in the precarious links formed in the flow of the appearance and disappearance of individual things/matters. Here we come to see a connection between post-modernism and *mitate*, and post-modernism and Zeami.

At the risk of being redundant, the theatre of Zeami does not represent an absolute beauty. It is built instead on a series of precarious harmonies of subtly intertwined heterogeneous elements, which are dependent on a multiplicity of factors — the season, weather, temperature, time, number and social class of the audience, and so on, in each and every case — and, set upon a precipitous brink, they fade into the shadow and, by turns, burst into the light (to borrow the analogy and make a play on Docherty's appearance and disappearance). *Mitate* also brings the encounter of widely disparate elements linked by the finest of now-you-see-it, now-you-don't threads to the consummate state.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 11–12 and 22–23.

## II

In Kida Hajime's extremely concise explication of the postmodern, he states: "In contrast to the 'macro mythos' of modern thought and culture, such as 'revolution,' 'progress,' or the 'liberation of the human body,' the knowledge of post-modernism is characterized by a denial of these *mythos* and a disbelief in them. Micro narratives, multipolar and heterogeneous, flow together creating new conditions for which different standards of value and new sets of rules of the game are required."<sup>6</sup>

Of course, it is not easy to predict what sort of "new standards of value" and "rules of the game" will be created by the postmodern. However, were I to venture such a prediction, it seems that the aesthetics of *mitate* might prove suggestive in regard to the issues of post-modernism.

In denying the Euro-centered world view, the postmodern places special emphasis on the value of "local knowledge." The postmodern advocates that all cultures have a latent dynamism, possess adaptability, and are mutually interactive, and, conversely, that language, geography, and society — in fact, all borderlands — are artificial and contingent. Moreover, the postmodern emphasizes that all these boundaries are political creations.<sup>7</sup> Post-modernism is most wary of the linkage of cultural difference, as it stands, to the power structure of the ruler and ruled.

However, in contrast, both *mitate* and Zeami take difference as a creative factor, giving birth to a new image, and difference is enjoyed as difference, *per se*. In Suzuki Harunobu's familiar "*Mitate Daitokuten*," the relationship of ruler and ruled cannot be found between the image of Daitokuten, one of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, and the contemporary beauty portrayed on the surface of the painting. The focus of appreciation is simply concentrated in the vast discrepancy between the sacred and the profane.

鈴木春信  
「見立て大黒天」

Zeami has the following to say:

A good player will find it difficult to please an audience that is not discriminating. A bad actor cannot please any audience that displays artistic judgment. Thus, while it is true that an untutored audience may not be able to grasp the elements that make a performer good, and thereby learn to appreciate him, nevertheless a truly gifted player, if he really makes use of all his artistic skill, should be able to move even an indiscriminating audience. An actor

<sup>6</sup> *Chiezō: Asahi Gendai Yōgo* (The Asahi Encyclopedia of Current Terms) (Asahi Shinbunsha, 1991), p. 728.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph R. Roach, *Critical Theory and Performance*, edited by Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 12 and 14.

who has truly mastered such skills and the real secrets of his art can be said to have achieved his Flower.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the width of the gap between the capacity of the performer and the indiscriminating viewer to appreciate beauty, it is difficult to achieve harmony (*wagō*). But, he who bridges this yawning gap by virtue of rigorous training “attains the Flower,” the ultimate realm of art. This Flower, or consummate realm of art, resides precisely where difference is greatest. And, the art that spans the gulf between the divergent is appreciated as the Flower.

One can also interpret the relationship between the performer and the spectator as a subset of the relationship between ruler and ruled. The performer on the stage is always at the center, attracting the viewers’ gaze and playing the central role in the progress of the narrative. In this sense, the performer is undoubtedly the ruler of the theatre. Yet, in Zeami’s theatre the performer can never be the imperious, absolute ruler. The performer’s every movement is exposed to the merciless gaze of the audience. Zeami stressed the importance of *riken no ken*, seeing oneself on the stage through the eyes of the audience, placing one’s mind at the rear of the stage and seeing oneself from behind. Although one purpose of this self-imposed rigorous training is surely to more effectively control the gaze of the audience, it is also, on the other hand, undoubtedly a defensive measure designed to conceal the fear of exposing an aspect of one’s own “ugliness.” While the performer may be the ruler of the theatre, he is likewise ruled by the atmosphere of the theatre and, particularly, the gaze of the audience.

Out of difference is born power and authority, but these products do not constitute an imperious, unilateral political power. Instead, the products of diversity are, in many cases, mutually pervasive. In reality, the ruler is in some sense the ruled. In the aesthetic of *mitate*, which appreciates the resonance (*hibikiai*), derived from the marshalling of heterogeneous elements, and especially in the aesthetic of Zeami, who sought the ultimate Flower in the *wagō* that bridges the gap between the performer and the indiscriminating audience, the power generated out of diversity is understood as an intertwined subtle *hibikiai* rather than a political one. When the postmodern claims that all borderlands are political, the political seems to signify the repression of a divergent other (an inferior) by another (the superior). However, as understood in Zeami and *mitate*, difference, generating mutual interaction, is instead productive. If the postmodern, professing that all borderlands are artificial and that the Western-centered world view has dominated other cultures through the

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<sup>8</sup> Fūshikaden, “The Most Profound Principles of the Art of Nō,” pp. 39-40.

exercise of repression, sees this only as a politically-related issue, then it will be overlooking the other side of the matter.

In *mitate*, however, the relationship between the subject and the object of the *mitate* strictly holds effect provisionally or hypothetically. The belief that the finer the thread linking the *mitate* the better tells of the vulnerability of the linkage, but this is not all. In addition, the *mitate* is dynamic and volatile, on the verge of an instantaneous transformation into the next *mitate* in the very instant of the formation of the resonance (*hibikiai*) linking two disparate elements. The phenomenon known as the *mitate-gurui*, or “*mitate* madness,” is indicative of the volatility of the link provisionally established between the heterogeneous elements.<sup>9</sup>

見立て狂い

The disputes between Jean-François Lyotard and Jürgen Habermas over the postmodern are well known. The two are at odds on many points, among them the possibility of consensus in communications. For Habermas, the building of consensus among the participants in an event of communication is not only desirable but also achievable. Thus, by means of a discursively agreed upon consensus, a social formation can in theory be constructed on more rational terms. In contrast, Lyotard is extremely critical of the drive to seek consensus, seeing it as marking the end of thinking and the concealing of injustice. He further links consensus to “soft-imperialism” or “conversational imperialism.” Docherty asserts that only by respecting and emphasizing the heterogeneity of language games can we rescue the possibility of thinking. In short, only by denying consensus and seeking “dissensus” can we advance thinking and thus incorporate it into a new postmodern.<sup>10</sup>

Is it not then possible that the aesthetic of Zeami and/or the protean *mitate* ceaselessly seeking an ever provisional “*hibikiai*” (resonance) or “*wagō*” (harmony)—a “consensus” of disparate elements—may offer the prospect of a solution in regard to the disputes within post-modernism?

In the very fact that it is provisionally constructed, the fragile harmony, or resonance, becomes critically important and therein resides consummate beauty. Furthermore, precisely because it is provisional, like the flower to which it was likened by Zeami, the ultimate realm of art, this harmony or resonance, is prone to evanescence. Here there is neither rigid consensus nor mere ceaseless and random dissensus. Nothing remains but the provisional consensus — the harmony, or resonance, of a multitude of disparate elements transformed in the flow of appearance and disappearance amidst the “dissensus.”

In the well-known myth of Sisyphus, Sisyphus, having disobeyed the will of the gods, is condemned to roll a boulder up a mountainside in

<sup>9</sup> Kusamori Shin'ichi, *Mitate-gurui* [Mitate Madness] (Furumuaatasha, 1982). Also see my *Kamisama to Nihonjin no Aida*, note one.

<sup>10</sup> Docherty, pp. 25-26.

Hades. Yet in the instant he feels he has finally reached the summit, the boulder begins to tumble an infinitely long distance back down the same mountainside. He then has to restart his arduous task from the beginning. Sisyphus is forced to endure the torment of endless repetition of pointless suffering.

Camus took Sisyphus as man confronting unreasonable fate. Although he wrote "the struggle to reach the summit is itself sufficient to replenish the spirit of man. One must imagine Sisyphus content," he also wrote, "if this myth be tragic, it is so because its hero is conscious. What indeed is to be made of his suffering, if at every step the hope of accomplishing his task of pushing the stone to the summit sustains him?"<sup>11</sup> In other words, the infinite repetition of useless suffering is tragic, but in the sense that Sisyphus confronts his condition without flinching, he fashions his own fate and is content.

九鬼周造

In 1928, ten some years prior to Camus, Kuki Shūzō lecturing in Paris on "The concept of time and its reoccurrence in the Orient" also touched on the myth of Sisyphus, but Kuki spoke of the contentment of Sisyphus in a rather different sense. "Should this (the eternal repetition of rolling the stone) be called misfortune? Is this really a punishment? I cannot comprehend it [as such]. . . . Because Sisyphus can repeat his dissatisfaction eternally, he must be content."<sup>12</sup> Kuki claimed that there was contentment to be found in "being able to repeat dissatisfaction eternally" rather than in confronting, of one's own will, the suffering of infinite repetition.

Thus in *mitate* and the aesthetic of Zeami, *wagō* or *hibikiai* is built on a precariously fragile link in full realization that it may at any moment disintegrate (and in the case of *mitate-gurui*, *mitate* madness, it may preemptively self-destruct) or, more precisely, in the very knowledge that it will disintegrate, and in the instant before that disintegration, while the link still holds (the moment immediately before Sisyphus' boulder starts tumbling downward), in that one instant consummate beauty is discovered. "The hope of accomplishing the task" cannot be sustained. Therefore, a new *hibikiai*, or "*wagō*," is sought in eternal repetition.

This "resonance," or "harmony," may be understood to appear as chaos within the flow of the whole, or, instead, as a moment of constructed order. In other words, both *mitate* and Zeami's aesthetic neither maintain the "hope" of an eternal order nor abandon such hope; instead, they stare out on the ephemeral reality of life and the beauty of order in the transient, ever-changing flow of time, and thereby an aesthetic, invested with emotion, is made possible.

<sup>11</sup> Camus, *Shiishuposu no Shinwa* [The Myth of Sisyphus], translated by Shimizu Tōru (Shinchō Bunko, 1969), pp. 173 and 170.

<sup>12</sup> Kuki Shūzō *Zenshū* [The Complete Works of Kuki Shūzō] (Iwanami Shoten, 1980), vol. 1, p. 409.

There is a verse by Bashō that reads:

|                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>yo ni furu mo</i>   | Passing through this world   |
| <i>sara ni Sōgi no</i> | Were that not enough, refuge |
| <i>yadori kana</i>     | in Sōgi's shelter            |

... which is itself recognized as an allusive variation on Sōgi's own

|                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>yo ni furu mo</i>      | Passing through this world    |
| <i>sara ni shigure no</i> | Were that not enough, shelter |
| <i>yadori kana</i>        | in sudden showers             |

It may just be that the face of the real — the reality of life, beauty, order — can be glimpsed but momentarily, as from a temporary lodging in a sudden downpour. ☂

Translated by Michael Jamentz

## *Temae* — Tea Procedure

### *Shaza no Shiki*— Part 2

Photos courtesy of Tankōsha Publishing Co., Kyoto. Project assistance, Urasenke San Francisco Branch.



(31)

The host invites the first guest to begin preparing the incense (31).



(32)

The guest first stretches out the right hand to check the condition of the fire in the kōro (32).



(33)

The guest moves forward on the tatami (33).



(34)

The guest removes the lid of the layered incense case (34).



(35)

The guest places the lid to the right of the tray (35).



(36)

The guest removes the incense packet from the top layer of the incense case, and places it by the right knee, two sections of tatami weave within the tatami border (36).



(37)

The guest replaces the lid on the incense case, then removes the top layer and lid together, and places them to the right of the tray (37).



(38)

The guest picks up the tongs and uses them to take the mica chip from the second layer of the incense case (38).



(39)

The guest places the mica chip on the charcoal in the kōro so that the chip appears square, left hand balancing the right at the wrist as this is done (39). The guest then returns the tongs to their original position on the tray.



(40)

Using the fingernail of the fourth finger of the right hand, the guest lightly presses the mica chip to secure its placement on the charcoal (40).



(41)

The guest picks up the incense packet, holds it with the left hand, and opens the lower flap (41).



(42)

The guest picks up the chopsticks and, supporting them between the third and fourth fingers of the left hand, reholds them for use. Using the chopsticks, the guest opens the top flap and the first fold of the incense packet (42).



(43)

With the chopsticks, the guest holds the incense lengthwise and removes it from the remaining folds of the packet. While holding the incense with the chopsticks, the guest folds under the top flap of the packet with the left hand and places the packet by the left knee, two sections of tatami weave within the tatami border (43).



(44)

The guest places the incense on the mica chip in the kōro (44).



(45)

The guest returns the chopsticks to their place on the tray (45).



(46)

The guest picks up the incense packet with the left hand, tucks the top flap inside the lower flap, and places the packet by the right knee, two sections of tatami weave within the tatami border (46).



(47)

The guest tests whether the incense is releasing its fragrance adequately. For this, he or she picks up the kōro with the right hand, holds it with the left — fingers underneath and thumb at the rim — and makes a chimney with the right hand to direct and concentrate the rising fragrance (47). After breathing in once, the guest exhales to the right. Meanwhile, the second guest excuses himself or herself for going ahead of the third guest.



(48)

Once the first guest has passed down the kōro, placing it to the inner side of the tatami border, the second guest picks it up and raises it in a gesture of thanks (48). He or she then turns it twice counterclockwise before 'imbibing' the fragrance. Meanwhile, the first guest closes the second layer of the incense case and removes the lid.



(49)

The second guest makes a chimney with the right hand over the top of the kōro and three times breathes in the fragrance of the incense, exhaling to the left each time (see following photo). Meanwhile the third guest excuses himself or herself for going ahead of the host, and the first guest replaces the incense packet into the top layer of the incense case and closes the lid (49).



(50)

While the second guest is still imbibing the incense, the first guest, having closed the lid of the incense case, moves back on the tatami (50).



(51)

The second guest turns the kōro twice clockwise so that the front once again faces himself or herself, and passes the kōro to the next guest (51).



(52)

While the third guest imbibes the incense, the host excuses himself or herself for going before the first guest, who, as *kōmoto*, or the originator of the incense, enjoys its fragrance last (52).



(53)

The third guest turns the kōro twice clockwise and passes the kōro to the host (53).



(54)

The host imbibes the incense (54).



(55)

The host stands on the right foot (55) and carries the kōro to the first guest. [Note that the host does *not* turn the kōro before taking it to the first guest, because the front is already facing towards the first guest].



(56)

The host places the kōro on the tatami to the lower (i.e., right, as he or she faces it) side of the incense tray (56). Shifting slightly to the right, the host stands on the left, and returns directly to his or her seat.



(57)

The first guest imbibes the incense as did the others, only exhaling to the right (57). After turning the kōro back twice clockwise, the first guest replaces it on the tray.



(58)

The host asks the first guest to leave the incense burning (*"Dōzo okō o sonomama ni"*), and the first guest bows in acknowledgement (58). Then the first guest moves forward on the tatami to turn the tray.



(59)

The first guest turns the tray two quarter turns clockwise so that the front edge comes to his or her far side (59, 60).



(60)



(61)

The first guest moves back on the tatami, to return to his or her proper seated position (61).



(62)

The hantō, who has been sitting outside the sadōguchi, enters the tearoom, sits in front of the first guest, and picks up the incense tray (62).



(63)

In this example the hantō shifts to face the toko, and places the incense tray to the left or *geza* side of the flowers in the toko (63). If the toko is too small to accommodate the tray, he or she may stand to carry the tray over to the shelf next to the toko, an area known as the *tokowaki*. The hantō then goes to the mizuya to get the teabowl for the koicha.



(64)

The hantō carries the teabowl into the tea-room and proceeds to sit at the *temae tata-mi* (64).



(65)

The hantō temporarily places the teabowl near the wall (65).



(66)

The hantō moves the chaire slightly to the right in front of the tana, then places the tea-bowl in balance with it, to the left (66).



(67)

The hantō returns to the mizuya to get the kensui, brings the kensui into the tearoom, and places it just below the temae tatami and near the wall (67).



(68)

The hantō stands on the right, backs up three steps, and crosses onto the tatami on which the host is sitting with the right (68).



(69)

The hantō sits next to the host (69).



(70)

The host, who will do the koicha temae, stands on the right and proceeds to the fumikomi tatami (70).



(71)

The host steps onto the fumikomi tatami with the left (71).



(72)

Sitting where the hantō placed the kensui, the host picks up the kensui (72), stands on the right, and proceeds to the temae position.



(73)

The host places the futaoki and hishaku in their designated position (73).



(74)

Then all participants bow together (74).



(75)

The host prepares the koicha as usual, and places the bowl in its designated position (75). [Note that in *shichiji-shiki*, a kobukusa is not provided, even if the teabowl is not Raku ware.]



(76)

The first guest stands and goes to get the koicha (76).



(77)

The first guest returns to his or her seat with the koicha, sits, places the bowl to the left inside the tatami border, and bows with the other guests and the hantō — all of whom will share the koicha (77).



(78)

While the first guest proceeds, in the standard manner, to take the first sip of the koi-cha, the hantō stands on the right and walks over to sit in the host's seat (78), so that he or she may easily receive the bowl from the third guest.



(79)

In the standard manner, once the first guest has tasted the tea, the host inquires about its sufficiency, and the first guest responds (79). The host then faces *kyakutsuki*, while the second guest excuses himself or herself for drinking before the next person. [Note that in *shichiji-shiki* the customary dialogue between the first guest and host about the tea and sweets is eliminated.] The tea is drunk and passed from hand to hand in the standard manner.

**THE STANDARD DIFFERENCES IN RO AND FURO KOICHA TEMAE** are observed in *shaza*; most notably the closing of the kettle lid when the chasen and bowl are cleaned and when the host turns to *kyakutsuki* after having inquired about the sufficiency of the koicha.

Continuation to follow in issue no. 87.

## Book Reviews

**Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics.** By Leslie Pincus. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996. xii + 271 pp. US\$45.00, £35.00. Cloth.

Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941) — whatever his contributions to “national aesthetics” may have been — is one of the foremost Japanese philosophers of the century, and it is lamentable that none of his major works has been translated into English. Leslie Pincus’s book is the first substantial study of his thought, as far as I know, to be published in a Western language. (An interesting — but short — work by Stephen Light, entitled *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre*, appeared ten years ago.) The argument of *Authenticating Culture* ranges beyond Kuki to the larger historical context in which he wrote; but since his thought is the primary focus, Pincus’s book constitutes a welcome beginning from which there is much to be learned.

Any study of a life or life’s work is bound to be partial, if only because the disproportion between the scope of a book and the enormous complexity of a corpus demands that the author be highly selective. With a thinker as profound and complex as Kuki, who cultivated an unusually wide range of intellectual interests and was as cosmopolitan in his life as in his thought, the task of presenting a fair picture of his thought becomes formidable indeed. Pincus provides an informative account of Kuki’s eight years in Europe, together with an overview of the intellectual and philosophical currents that were prevalent in France and Germany at the time. The third chapter supplies an interesting overview of the late Edo culture during the period known as “Kaiseiki” — to which many of the historical portions of Kuki’s best known work, “*Iki*” *no kōzō* (The structure of *iki*; 1930), refer. Pincus has undertaken an impressive amount of research, especially in original Japanese sources from the 1920s and 1930s, so that her study is particularly informative about Japanese intellectual life during that period. She has read widely in Kuki’s own corpus, and for this reason the book is to be recommended to anyone interested in his ideas. But it is also informed by an extreme partiality, so that the picture it presents of Kuki’s philosophy is unnecessarily distorted.

I say “unnecessarily” because while all studies of this kind are bound to be partial, some are more partial — and less impartial — than others, depending on how much the methodology is determined by ideological considerations. A sentence from the blurb on the inside of the book jacket is informative in this respect: “Inspired by the work of Foucault, the Marxist culturalists, and the Frankfurt School theorists, Pincus reads against the grain of traditional interpretations to reveal the disturbing proximity between aesthetic modernism and political fascism in Japan.” The body of the text lives up to this preview: the angle of approach

is decidedly narrow, as evidenced by the fact that almost all the secondary literature cited, whether in Japanese or English, is Marxist in orientation. Kuki's philosophy is by contrast aristocratic (and occasionally elitist) in its refined treatment of topics in the history of philosophy and the aesthetics of culture, with almost no reference to social or political issues. The young Marx expressed enthusiasm in the 1844 manuscripts for "the wealth of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye which is sensitive to the beauty of form)" as well as for "the cultivation of the five senses [as] the work of all previous history," and so one can imagine much in Kuki's writings that would have appealed to him. But since neo-Marxism has little interest in cultural refinement — and often appears to cultivate *ressentiment* against it — one might well doubt whether a neo-Marxist perspective would be adequate for seeing what is of importance in Kuki's philosophy.

The first chapter of *Authenticating Culture* provides a brief sketch of Kuki's early years, in the course of which Pincus refers to a discussion of his life by a recent commentator, Sakabe Megumi of Tokyo University. Sakabe argues on depth-psychological grounds that the structure collapse of Kuki's family when he was young had a lasting effect on his subsequent life and thought. Pincus comments: "Here Sakabe's argument drifts into an explicitly political register" (p. 30).

Deprived of a family model of integration and harmony, Kuki had no choice but to do without the security offered by fixed collectivities and assume the difficult burden of a thoroughgoing individualism rare in prewar Japan. Banished from the family circle into the lonely exile of a harsh individualism, how could Kuki have acceded to a "family-state," in other words, to an emperor-system ideology representing Japan as a family under the paternal authority of the emperor?

Immediately after the passage paraphrased here, Sakabe writes that Kuki was nevertheless able to develop "a thinking and ethics [concerning] the public world [which] went beyond reference to any specific group" and that later, during the period leading up to the Pacific War, his early experiences allowed him to resist being drawn in, such that he was able to become "a witness to the era's misfortune through seeing it, as it were, from the back."<sup>1</sup> [notes, on p. 70—E.] These are the grounds for Sakabe's saying, as Pincus goes on to mention, that Kuki had no interest in "the notion of traditional community that thinkers like Watsuji and Nishida incorporated into their thinking" (p. 31). But she will have none of it.

Sakabe has enmeshed the child in a family scandal only to rescue the intellectual from embroilment in what is considered by a number of postwar Japanese thinkers to be a historical scandal — the complicity of prewar intellectuals with a family-state ideology that underwrote the repression and militarism of the 1930s and 1940s. . . . What enables Sakabe to vindicate Kuki's thought politically is a tacit disregard for the historical settings and textual networks in which "*Iki*" *no kōzō* is interpolated.

These are strange remarks, for a number of reasons. Sakabe's study of Kuki evidences a most insightful regard for the "historical settings and textual networks" of his subject's thought; and since that thought deals primarily with culture and the arts, there is no need for him to "rescue [Kuki] from embroilment" in any historical scandals. Sakabe mentions the "family-state" (*kokka*) ideology because he is aware that colleagues of Kuki's such as Nishida and Watsuji have been harshly criticized for subscribing to such an ideology, and his exposition of Kuki's philosophy makes it clear why Kuki has not been the target of such criticisms. (Not until Karatani Kōjin, at least; and now Leslie Pincus.)

Pincus's attitude toward Sakabe's work is a mystery. He is one of Japan's pre-eminent contemporary philosophers, and his masterly study of Kuki's thought in the context of his life, *Fuzai no uta* (Songs of absence; 1990), is an indispensable item in the secondary literature which no subsequent scholarship can afford to ignore. But though Sakabe's is the only book-length study of Kuki to appear in her bibliography, Pincus declines to discuss it after criticizing the above-mentioned passages from its first chapter.<sup>2</sup> Could the reason be that Sakabe's presentation of Kuki as an unusually apolitical thinker is so at odds with her presentation of him as an accomplice of Japanese fascism? (References in her index under "Kuki's fascist affinities" refer to 25 of the text's 250 pages). Sakabe's picture of Kuki's philosophy as replete with insights into human existence, art, and culture seems to me a faithful one; it in any case inspires the reader to study Kuki's writings. If Pincus thinks that picture is false, then the intellectually responsible thing to do would be to tell us what's wrong with it — rather than proceed to present a flatly contradictory thesis without further comment.

The index entries under "*'Iki' no kōzō* and fascism" make reference to five pages of the text, but neither there nor anywhere else in the book do we find any evidence for this insalubrious association. Pincus herself is forced to acknowledge how poor in grist for the political mill that text really is: "Despite the very rare references to nation or state in '*Iki' no kōzō*, the cultural community that the text presupposes may in fact represent the preferred idiom for the expression of nationalism" (p. 282). She admits too, perhaps with Sakabe's suggestion in mind, that there is no sign there of "the *kazoku kokka*, the 'family state' ideology" or even of the state *simpliciter*: nevertheless, "despite the marked absence of the state on the surface of the text, '*Iki' no kōzō* in fact represented the state in another form" (pp. 235–6). The more obvious conclusion to be drawn from this "marked absence" is that the text is more or less lacking in significant political implications.

In view of the background Pincus herself provides to Kuki's writing of the book "*Iki' no kōzō*, one can give a quite unconspiratorial account of what the book is about and of what she rightly calls Kuki's "philosophy of culture." During his years in Europe Kuki learned a great deal of European philosophy and aesthetics, and found that his distance from Japan gave him a new perspective on his own culture, which he realized was poorly understood in Europe. After drafting numerous reflections on the peculiarly Japanese notion of *iki*, he returned home to an academic atmosphere in which philosophy looked almost exclusively to Europe for its topics as well as its methods. He then published a book that employed a methodology from Western hermeneutics and aimed to contribute to the philoso-

phy of culture by explicating the aesthetic notion of *iki*. There is indeed a mention at the beginning of Kuki's text of the *minzoku*, the people, or nation, members of a community formed by a shared language; but his point is simply that different cultures develop their own particular ideas about aesthetics, which resist being subsumed under the universal categories proclaimed by the prevalent European theories. He could have found such incommensurable aesthetic notions in any number of other cultures, but he began with *iki* because he was writing for a Japanese audience. Perhaps there was some kind of national "inferiority complex" in intellectual matters at work here (since Europe so completely dominated the philosophical scene in Japan); but Kuki's choice of a topic from the history of his own culture doesn't justify calling him an ultranationalist.

Since Kuki's writings provide so little in the way of evidence for his alleged fascist proclivities, Pincus tries to establish some guilt by association through invoking his relations with Heidegger, whose credentials in the area of political incorrectness apparently need no establishing. Several factors contribute to the failure of this tactic. First, her reading of Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer" takes that complex text too much at face value. Elsewhere she cites (p. 58) a footnote in Stephen Light's study which contains a reference to Tezuka Tomio's account of the actual conversation with Heidegger upon which the "Dialogue" purports to be based. If Pincus had bothered to read that account she would have gained a very different perspective on Heidegger's text and could not have endorsed Peter Dale's egregiously literal misreading of it (p. 93). One wishes that she had in general striven for a better first-hand understanding of Heidegger's philosophy and its relation to the history of Western metaphysics, rather than relying so heavily on commentaries by people such as Tosaka Jun, Theodor Adorno, and Karatani Kōjin (interesting thinkers, but hardly the most reliable sources on Heidegger). Heidegger scholars will find it hard to take seriously an account containing claims such as this: "But interestingly, the 'Dialogue' suggests one further temptation never explicitly acknowledged in the text — the temptation compelling Kuki to invest his description of *iki* with Heidegger's desire for the unutterable beyond of Western metaphysics."<sup>3</sup>

The most telling feature of the discussion of Heidegger, however, is Pincus's attempt to argue that *Being and Time* presents "collective and conservative dimensions of Dasein" that are continuous with its author's "association with National Socialism" (p. 176). "In what I would call a calculated oversight, Kuki, Watsuji, and Miki — all conscientious students of Heidegger — neglected the implications of this last section of *Being and Time*." The implications of that section are simply that authentic being-in-the-world is not an existence lived in splendid isolation but involves a return to being a member of a community after the alienation occasioned by *Angst*-conditioned confrontation with death. But Pincus complains that in this section "the hard-won authenticity of Dasein . . . is abruptly and somewhat mysteriously collectivized in the form of an 'authentic folk'." The move is abrupt only if the reader has forgotten that Heidegger earlier established *Mitsein*, or being-with-others, as one of the basic existential structures of Dasein. But the main problem is that Heidegger never talks about "authentic folk." (What would that be anyway — *eigentliches Volk*?) In fact there is only a single occurrence of the word

*Volk* in the entire text of *Being and Time*, where it appears in apposition to the term for “community” (p. 384 of the German edition). But Pincus has to make a great deal of this lone *Volk*, since she argues that Kuki drew on “the semantic resources” of the word, “as a translation [for which] ‘folk’ would have the advantage of invoking the German fascist politics associated with the term” (p. 55).

Although much of Pincus’s writing is fairly clear, two factors make *Authenticating Culture* a difficult book (for the reader, at least) to read. For one thing the sound of various ideological axes being ground often drowns out the main theme. Some sections contain so much political commentary from the sidelines by neo-Marxists that one forgets that the ostensible subject of the study is Kuki’s aesthetics. And the author’s own discourse is often blurred by lapses into postmodernist academic jargon: “Kuki’s venture into critical alterity was compromised from the outset by a compulsion to reproduce the expansive identity that it opposed — a compulsion enacted in the interests of a domestic hegemony . . .” (p. 246). It is a bit like hiking mountain trails around the cloud level: every now and then one is enveloped by thick mists which completely obscure the path, so that even after the mystification lifts it takes a while to regain one’s bearings.

The *coup de grâce* is administered in a lengthy epilogue based on the premise that “the theoretical framework elaborated in ‘*Iki no kōzō*’ served as a firm foundation for the more militant pronouncements of the later texts” and “the more explicitly ideological writings” (p. 213). Pincus discusses two essays from the late thirties in which, she claims,

Kuki enlisted the discursive tactics and objects first deployed in “*Iki no kōzō*” in a widening movement to suppress pluralism at home and mobilize the Japanese populace for an expansionist war in Asia. By the end of the decade, the discourse on culture — in a blunt rapprochement with a repressive and militarist state apparatus — had placed itself at the disposal of what has been called, with much exception, Japanese fascism. (p. 214)

Expectations raised by her claim that in these later essays “affinities with fascist cultural discourse stand out in clear relief” (p. 220) are hardly fulfilled by the treatment that follows. Yes, fascism traditionally makes much of aesthetic and cultural concerns; but this does not mean that anyone who, like Kuki, writes about aesthetic and cultural issues during a politically repressive era is a fascist. Pincus criticized Kuki’s later essays in an earlier journal article, and since I have responded to those criticisms elsewhere I confine myself here to a brief discussion of what is new in the book version of her critique.<sup>4</sup>

In his essay on the Japanese character, Kuki argues for an open-minded internationalism, exhorting his fellow countrymen to “recognize the unique strengths of other cultures and respect their legitimate rights and aim for the coexistence of all human beings. . . . Thus world culture as a whole will advance through the exercise of each country’s uniqueness.”<sup>5</sup> But now Pincus dismisses this, and Kuki’s major concern with trying to integrate “Japanism” (*Nihonshugi*) into a “cosmopolitanism” (*sekaishugi*), by calling them mere “rhetorical gestures toward in-

ternationalism" (p. 223). Such a cavalier dismissal of an author's main theme is breathtaking in its perversity. What Kuki proposes in the concluding section of the later version of the essay, from which Pincus cites only selectively, is a balancing of nationalism with internationalism.

In the present situation [1937] some people engage in an uncritical adulation of Western culture, abandoning themselves to its influence completely. Japanese character will be lost in this way. Other people regard Japanese character as something absolute and can do nothing but try to preserve it as absolute. Neither of these extremes will work. On one hand we must become fully aware of the uniqueness of Japanese culture, but at the same time we must open ourselves to a broad view of world cultures and display a capacity to incorporate their good features.<sup>6</sup>

When Kuki discusses "nature" (*shizen*) as a key element in Japanese character earlier in the essay, he adduces numerous examples from the arts of Japan to show the importance in this area of the Daoist ideal of *ziran* (which comprises the same characters as *shizen*). At the end of the discussion, he mentions that Japanese ethics is similarly naturalistic insofar as it is natural for the same person, the emperor, to be in charge of worshipping the gods and governing the people. Pincus reads this as an endorsement of "the subjugation of individuals to absolute power" (p. 224), though there is no mention in the essay of "subjugation" or "absolute power." Just as forced is the way she interprets Kuki's discussion of another kind of *iki* as a second element in Japanese character: by bringing a mention of "the spirit of self-sacrifice born of a pure heart" (KSZ 3:384) into association with the language of *Kokutai no hongei*, she conjures up visions of "a democracy of death . . . in which all Japanese are equal as willing subjects of sacrifice" (p. 225). But again there is nothing in the text to suggest that the people should lay down their lives for emperor or country.

Pincus's reading of Kuki's four-page pamphlet "*Jikyoku no kansō*" (Thoughts on the current situation) is an egregious exercise in taking quotes out of context, insofar as the major mood of the piece is Kuki's distress at what he perceives as the degeneration of Chinese culture, for which, thanks to his classical education, he has sincere and profound respect.<sup>7</sup> She portrays the author as a bloodthirsty warmonger who "praises the Japanese spirit, whether it found expression in kimono patterns or suicidal bomber missions" (p. 232). She declines to note that Kuki supports the war against China only grudgingly, and on the grounds that, since the war is already underway, it might as well be brought to "a meaningful conclusion": "When I think of the fact that war is something that sacrifices individual happiness in favor of the whole, then I'm actually always a pacifist" (KSZ 5:37). Kuki does indeed say that the *Yamato damashi* is manifested by the pilot who uses his plane as a weapon when the armaments have run out, but he immediately adds that a "feminine version" of the same Japanese spirit is manifested in the way a women's group arranged shipments of food and medical supplies as an expression of solidarity with the Chinese (5:39). Again what is in Kuki a balanced treatment is portrayed as militantly one-sided.

Pincus ends her book by invoking Adorno on the way “insistence on the autonomy of the spirit” ultimately conducted in Germany to “absolute horror.” There is no better way to convey how she overstates the case in Japan than to quote her last sentence: “It is this discursive itinerary, from culture as ideal to culture as terror, that I have endeavored to trace in this study of *‘Iki’ no kōzō*” (p. 247). But after following this itinerary all the way to “culture as terror,” any reader possessing prior acquaintance with Kuki is going to be left with the question of *why* Pincus should have gone to such lengths to portray him as a protofascist when there is so little in his philosophy to justify such a representation.

Karatani Kōjin obviously plays a role here: Pincus writes that he “has drawn an even more direct ideological line between the related projects of Kuki and Heidegger and the fascist development of their respective states” (p. 94) — though the justification he presents for drawing such lines is no less flimsy than her own.<sup>8</sup> She also acknowledges Harry Harootunian as one who helped her “discover the meaning of critical thinking” (p. xi) — another scholar who is remarkably liberal when it comes to applying the fascist label to members of the Kyoto School.<sup>9</sup> In fact a flourishing division of the deconstruction industry in Japanese studies these days seems to be devoted to demonstrating the extreme political incorrectness of the major figures in twentieth-century Japanese philosophy. It is hard to resist the suspicion that, since Nishida and Watsuji and Nishitani have already been severely reprimanded in this regard, the desire to add Kuki to the list by demonstrating his complicity with Japanese fascism prompted Pincus to try situating his texts in suitably damning contexts. Not that the relation of philosophy and culture to politics is not an important topic of intellectual inquiry: it is just that accusations of ultranationalism and fascism are serious matters that require careful substantiation. All the more so since unsuspecting students coming across such accusations in books published by respectable university presses will be inclined to believe them — and so disinclined to further their own reading of the philosophers themselves.

It is true that as social and political tensions within Japan intensified toward the outbreak of the Pacific War, Kuki made a few remarks in his essays with a nationalistic and cultural-imperialistic tone to them; and it would have been perfectly appropriate for Leslie Pincus to devote a section of her book to a critical discussion of those remarks in their contexts. But when a neo-Marxist ideology conditions the study from beginning to end, the resulting picture of Kuki is grotesquely distorted. There is much in Kuki’s work, especially in his internationalist reflections on culture, that could illuminate contemporary problems concerning multiculturalism and pluralism, but Pincus’s study hardly begins to examine these ideas. She does deserve our gratitude for getting the conversation started — and I have kept the tone of this review polemical in the hope of sparking further discussion of one of modern Japan’s most fascinating thinkers.

Graham Parkes  
Professor of Philosophy  
University of Hawaii

- <sup>1</sup> Sakabe Megumi, *Fuzai no uta: Kuki Shūzō no sekai* (Tokyo 1990), p. 22. Pincus refers to the initial appearance of Sakabe's text as a series of journal articles that appeared under the title "*Kuki Shūzō no sekai*" (The world of Kuki Shūzō) before they were collected and published in book form.
- <sup>2</sup> There are only two subsequent references to Sakabe's book but no further discussion of his view of Kuki's thought.
- <sup>3</sup> For a judicious discussion of Heidegger's "Dialogue" in the light of Tezuka's account of their conversation, and an English translation of that account, see Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work* (Routledge 1996).
- <sup>4</sup> Graham Parkes, "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy," in *Philosophy East and West* 47/3 (1997), \*\*\*-\*\*\*.
- <sup>5</sup> Kuki, "*Nihonteki seikaku*," *Kuki Shūzō zenshū* (hereafter "KSZ") 3:290-91.
- <sup>6</sup> Kuki, "*Nihonteki seikaku ni tsuite*," *KSZ* 3:398.
- <sup>7</sup> See my brief discussion of the main thrust of this essay in "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School."
- <sup>8</sup> For a brief criticism of Karatani's ideological critiques of Kuki and Heidegger in English, see "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School."
- <sup>9</sup> See his account of "the Kyoto faction" in Tetsuo Najita and H. D. Harootyan, "Japanese Revolt against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century," in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan* (Cambridge 1993), 6:711-74. I criticize this treatment in "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School."

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**Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan.** By Marilyn Ivy. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. viii + 270 pp. Cloth: US\$52.75, UK£36.75. Paper: US\$20.75; UK£14.25.

No one who has dealt with Japan in recent times can have avoided the ubiquitous refrain that "Japan is different." "Because of our history," the refrain runs, "—feudalism, Buddhism, the Emperor system, the island-country mentality, the homogeneity of the Japanese people, the uniqueness of the language — all these have conspired to produce a society that operates on essentially different principles from those of the other advanced economies of the world: principles which stress harmony, consensus, and the well-being of the group, as opposed to conflict, confrontation, and the needs of the individual. At any rate," the song often continues, "you can be reasonably certain that whatever you, as businessman, entrepreneur, politician, etc., may have done successfully in some other part of the world will not be appropriate for Japan."

Responses to such information vary. Many are inclined to accept it at its face value and modify their principles and behavior accordingly. Others take a harder line: Whatever is good enough for Peoria and Brussels will damned well be good enough for Tokyo and Fukuoka; and they have stuck to their traditional behavior and principles — most frequently with disastrous results.<sup>1</sup> [notes, on p. 75—E.]

The same choices, perhaps not surprisingly, also seem to trouble the American academic world, as scholars in their various disciplines appear to be trapped between *Nihonjinron* ("What makes the Japanese what they are, that is to say, unique?") and the universal theories that seem to comfort those of their colleagues

who don't happen to be called upon to "explain" Japan. And more than one scholar has felt it necessary to cast his or her lot with the discipline and its commitment to universal theory, so as not to run the risk of becoming a mere Japanologist (with, presumably, no legitimate academic home).<sup>2</sup>

At any rate, Japan seems to present particular conceptual difficulties for virtually everybody: foreign businessmen, Southeast Asian boat people, Japanese-American Nisei, academics in a number of fields, and anyone who needs somehow to come to grips with the country's past and present; even the Japanese themselves, we are often told, sometimes have considerable trouble determining who they are.

There is little disagreement regarding the background of these problems. Apart from occasional spurts of cultural borrowing from China and a more recent controlled trickle of information from Europe, Japan managed to exist for well over a millennium in relative isolation (politically enforced for the first 250 years of that period). Suddenly, in the middle of the nineteenth century, it found itself thrust willy-nilly into an unprecedentedly rambunctious world scene, with a pressing need to modernize/westernize as rapidly as possible if independence was to be assured and equality among nations achieved. And, as we know, within a mere two generations, those goals were met, with startling speed and efficiency, though not without substantial costs, one of which was a certain rupture in Japan's sense of identity. Such rupture may be endemic to modernity everywhere (as this book suggests), but it certainly has a particular poignancy in the Japanese context.

The official Meiji ideology, with its amalgam of mythology and history, Emperor and people, custom and tradition, aesthetics and ethics, served to paper over this rupture to some degree.

But with the end of the Pacific War, even that comfort was forcibly eliminated, and there remained an urgent need for whatever bits and pieces of Japanese culture and tradition could serve to self-define Japan and the Japanese. (Roy Andrew Miller makes an interesting case for the unlikely psychological role played by the Japanese language, for instance, in filling this need.<sup>3</sup>)

Marilyn Ivy deals in depth with four such bits and pieces, self-defining (and thus comforting) retreats from modern reality into "tradition" and "culture": internal tourism and its culture-based rationale as developed through advertising; the nostalgia surrounding folklore, seen as part of Japan's essence and mobilized once again for local public relations purposes; an ostensibly unconvincing, but yet somehow moving, summoning of the dead by blind mediums in Japan's far north; and itinerant popular theater that persists despite the absence of the mass media support of television or the official backing and historical prestige of kabuki.

These are all examples of what Ivy means by "the vanishing": "marginalized events, sites, and cultural practices suspended at moments of impending disappearance," preserved and cultivated as means to contain deep Japanese anxieties about the perceived loss of national identity in the wake of the society's spectacular rush into modernity — a nostalgia for a past (real or imagined) which, however, cannot actually be retrieved, but can only be replaced by "fetishes."

The Japan National Railroad's extremely effective "Discover Japan" campaign of the 1970s, for instance, according to Ivy, evinces a nostalgia for origins, for the Japanese soul (*kokoro*) in contrast to "Americanized" rationalism and materialism. The original Japanese self is seen as rural, remote, non-American, and non-rational, and travel to remote and obscure corners of Japan would seem to permit its temporary recovery (as does, for an even greater number of people, its ethos as captured in the nostalgic photographs used in the advertising campaign). This was a genuine "modernist nostalgia," as opposed to more recently observed post-modernist pastiches designed to appeal to Japanese youth who are attracted to "nostalgia" merely as style.

As for Japan's love affair with its folklore, it is seen as having begun with Yanagita Kunio and *The Tales of Tōno*.

Written at a moment (1909–1910) when it had become inescapably clear that western industrial capitalism not only would bring civilization and enlightenment but would efface most of the older Japanese world, *The Tales of Tōno* thematized this effacement in its descriptions of Tōno, an obscure region in northeastern Japan. Presented as an unmediated transcription of oral tales and lore told its "author" (the father-to-be of the nascent discipline of folklore studies, Yanagita Kunio) by a local storyteller, the *Tales* scripted the uncanny remainder of capitalist modernity, that which could not be contained within the nationalist rationalist discourse of the maturing state system. The *Tales* took its place among numerous texts signifying the rediscovery of the rural countryside. . . . [T]he discipline was concerned with the preserving of the traces of a folkloric world not only as a representation of the unwritten essence of ethnic Japaneseness, but also as the indication of a non-West that never could be subsumed under the dominant signs of western modernity.

Nativist ethnology appeared particularly relevant in the mid-'30s as an alternative to mainstream scholarship. Its espousal of the "uniquely Japanese" (non-Western, non-modern) easily lent itself to chauvinism and cultural nationalism. In the early post-war period such attitudes were out of favor as representing cultural essentialism. But in the '70s, in the aftermath of the destruction of much of "old Japan" by the rapid period of economic growth, there was a resurgence of interest in folklore.

In this context Ivy outlines the town of Tōno's attempt to capitalize on its literary fame, define itself as the *furusato* (home) of folklore, recreating itself as "a museum-park city of nature, history, and folklore," thus giving tourists access to a vanishing Japan (and incidentally bringing financial benefit to an otherwise declining rural region of Japan). But as Ivy points out, the stated folkloric ideal of "harmonious co-existence of gods and humans" has the decided odor of Japan's pre-war ideology.

In yet another quest for a "home" for Japan's past and its true self, Mount Osore, "home of the dead," is simultaneously a metaphor for "the unrecoverability of tradition, of a vanishing cultural otherness . . . and of personal loss. . . ." (the death of loved ones). It is a place for pacifying the dead by remembering them, and for communicating with them via the mediation of the *itako* (blind mediums). Ivy insists that, although the activity of the *itako* can be considered essentially a stereotypical performance, without pretense of ecstasy or genuine trance, it is nonetheless believable and produces real emotion in the kin who are using their services. In an essentially post-belief age, the *itako* manage to accomplish the dual functions of establishing the dead as dead and reawakening them.

Finally, many of the themes of *taishū engeki*, the itinerant popular theater that Ivy deals with as her last "remainder" of Japanese modernity, are familiar from the better known and more prestigious kabuki theater as well as the samurai dramas seen on television. Also related to kabuki are the use of *onnagata* (female impersonators) and of *chambara* (sword play). In fact, *taishū engeki* has been called "third-rate kabuki."

This theater, which had developed before the Second World War, actually flourished during the Occupation (despite official opposition to *chambara* and the historical military themes). It faded from the late '50s, reaching a low point in the '70s, due largely to the competition of television and the rising value of theater real estate, but the television airing of a national *taishū engeki* festival had the effect of calling wide attention to the art form, turning the decline around and giving the theater a new lease on life. Audience support is still thin (primarily local middle-aged women and young arty intellectuals), however, and the art remains a nostalgic oddity, a misplaced fragment of an earlier world.

The nostalgia is actually two-fold: thematically, the plots refer to the Tokugawa Period — feeding the early modern (i.e., the time of the heyday of this theater) nostalgia for pre-modern authentic culture; and contextually, the performances hark back to the pre-war entertainment districts, encouraging late modern nostalgia for the incipient mass culture of the early modern period.

In conclusion, Ivy suggests that the longing for the superseded pre-modern (or "traditional") is itself an indication of modernity. Japan's burden, however, is a modernity that is also essentially foreign; nevertheless, the search to find authentic pre-modern/pre-Westernized survivals is, she believes, necessarily a modern endeavor. Such searches are primarily attempts to deny modernity's ruptures, and tend to create an essentialism which "places Japan in an exceptionalist limbo where continuities of culture are invoked to deny dislocations of history."

Ivy rejects the "assimilation" model for understanding Japanese history, as well as the notion of "the final imperviousness of Japanese culture:" "I [would not] want to insist on the radical nature of Japanese difference and thus to displace the shared historical burdens of modernity . . . in favor of a specifically *cultural* incommensurability. . . ."

Certainly those positions are not the only possible ones. Edwin Reischauer, for example, denied the equation of "modernization" with "Westernization": "[M]odernization has taken place on the foundation of Japan's own traditional culture."<sup>4</sup> And Kato Shuichi seems to regard essential Japaneseness as bridging

not only the Meiji Restoration, but the Taika Reform as well, stating: "What happened when this [Japanese] indigenous world view encountered the . . . world views of foreigners? . . . [O]nly that proportion of it [was] retained which had value in terms of practical application. What remained was a 'Japanized' foreign world view."<sup>5</sup> And specifically, "As a change in the system of government the Meiji Restoration (1868) was sudden, fundamental and far-ranging. In terms of culture however there was no abrupt break. . . . There was of course great change; yet the elements of continuity were more intrinsic."<sup>6</sup>

Regarding essentialism, perhaps we should bear in mind the statement by Reischauer that "[One] reason for looking back at Japanese history . . . [is that] the Japanese have a strong consciousness of history. They see themselves in historical perspective. They will delve a thousand years and more into their past in analyzing their contemporary traits,"<sup>7</sup> and John Campbell's view that "the consensus model must be taken into account precisely because Japanese themselves . . . think it is important."<sup>8</sup> In the same way, one probably ought not to ignore the succession of well-known Japanese statements, virtually from the time of the Black Ships onward, to the effect that Japan should (will) adopt Western (modern) methods and techniques when they are useful, but retain its own core of traditional values.<sup>9</sup>

As David Williams has written recently, "[T]o stress the dangers of imaginative essentialism . . . is to emphasize the intellectually resistant character of Japan's apartness. . . . But to interpret post-war Japan . . . solely in the light of that country's undeniable modernity . . . is to sidestep the issue of cultural difference, and therefore to understate the problem of the perceiver and the perceived."<sup>10</sup>

*Discourses of the Vanishing*, then, is a collection of extremely useful pieces of research and analysis, given structure and direction via a considerable quantity of contemporary critical theory, which is generally illuminating but allows itself on occasion to become smothered in less-than-transparent academic jargon. We are told, for instance, on page 15 of the first chapter, that "The moments engaged by this study . . . indicate a return to modernity's before within the future anterior after of increasingly dominant (post) modern regimes of signification, repertoires of consumption, and modes of information. Not strictly confined to the enclosure of the pastoral (although located most paradigmatically there), they index the investment in the survival of a continuous communality, guaranteed by the thought of tradition as unbroken transmission. This transmission is assured by the redemptive mode of the dialogic presumed in its most unmediated form: that of the 'voice.'"

This sort of thing will not be everybody's cup of tea, and, whereas I assume it is a style that may be appropriate for the original context in which the work was intended to be read, I suspect that it will be off-putting to many who might otherwise have found the material interesting and provocative.<sup>11</sup>

Eric Sackheim  
Adjunct Professor, Japanese Language and Culture  
La Salle University  
Philadelphia

## ◀ NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. Eric Sackheim, "Have U.S. Failures Been Self-inflicted?" in *Across the Board*, Vol. xxx, No. 6 (June 1944); pp. 48ff.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. Brian Moeran, "Individual, Group and Seishin: Japan's Internal Cultural Debate" in *Japanese Culture and Behavior*, ed. Lebra and Lebra. University of Hawaii Press, 1986; p. 77.
- <sup>3</sup> Roy Andrew Miller, *Japan's Modern Myth*. Weatherhill, 1982.
- <sup>4</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, *The Japanese Today*. Belknap/Harvard, 1977/1988; p. 172.
- <sup>5</sup> Shuichi Kato, *A History of Japanese Literature: The First Thousand Years*. Kodansha International, 1979; p. 21.
- <sup>6</sup> Shuichi Kato, *A History of Japanese Literature: The Modern Years*. Kodansha International, 1983; p. 111.
- <sup>7</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, op. cit.; p. 41.
- <sup>8</sup> John Creighton Campbell, "Policy Conflict and Its Resolution Within the Governmental System," in *Conflict in Japan*, ed. Krauss, Rohlen and Steinhöff. University of Hawaii Press, 1984; p. 295.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. W.G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarians*. Yale University Press, 1995; pp. 37ff.
- <sup>10</sup> David Williams, *Japan and the Enemies of Open Political Science*. Routledge, 1996; p. 17.
- <sup>11</sup> Quite apart from the special vocabulary that may be unavoidable when dealing with certain theoretical propositions, there is indeed a school of thought that would argue against the appropriateness of the application of those (Western) theories in the first place. David Williams (*ibid.*, p. 16), for example, urges: "... the Western student of modern Japan must learn to set to one side his expectations, his ideology, his values, perhaps even some branches of his science. ..."

## **The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan.** By Eiko Ikegami. Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1995. 428 pp. US\$45.00, cloth.

The title of Eiko Ikegami's book strikes right to the heart of numerous socio-political problems and draws the reader beyond the dust jacket. What one finds between the covers of *The Taming of the Samurai* is a masterfully crafted and thoroughly researched treatment of the diverse role of the samurai in the formation of Japanese society. In particular, it addresses the ways in which the samurai, as a distinct class, developed a unique culture of honor which enabled them to preserve their status as well as maintain a modicum of individualism.

Individualism is a quality commonly said to be weak, non-existent, or crushed under the weight of group loyalty and conformity in Japan. If I had a dollar for every time I have heard the old shibboleth about Japanese society, "The nail which sticks up . . .," I would now be living comfortably in the south of France. Obviously, there is more room for analysis of the dynamics of relations in Japan, and Eiko Ikegami chooses the samurai to illustrate this.

The samurai hold an indomitable position in the historical landscape of Japan, and the word "samurai" is already well established in the English language lexicon. Stories about these men, such as that of the Forty-Seven Rōnin (*Chūshingura*), are known to all Japanese, while Kurosawa Akira's film, "The Seven Samurai" (*Shichinin no Samurai*), has memorialized them in the West as swords for hire in the

name of romantic ideals of justice. Not surprisingly, both defenders and critics of the samurai are legion.

One cannot understand the long period of relative political and social peace that prevailed in Japan during the Tokugawa Period, nor Japan's transition into the modern period, without placing the samurai into proper perspective. Their role in state formation, civil administration, and social hierarchy was vital. Eiko Ikegami, who is Associate Professor of Sociology at Yale, uses the samurai as a case study in understanding the conflict and tensions between individualism and collectivist norms. She goes far in shattering the stereotypical image of both pre-modern and contemporary Japanese society as group-based, conformist, and lacking in individualism. In fact, what makes her study uniquely valuable is that it focuses on the samurai as a group which was able to "construct a resilient sense of individuality." By using the samurai as a vehicle in examining the elasticity of tradition, this study is able to present an active, multi-dimensional image of Japan. It should be noted, however, that Ikegami states at the outset that focusing on the samurai does not indicate a defense of the samurai class or that they were the sole arbiters of Japan's honor culture.

*The Taming of the Samurai* takes the reader on a carefully plotted journey tracing the evolution of the samurai from their ancient origins as a class of semi-autonomous warriors into domesticated civil servants under the Tokugawa administration. This in itself is nothing new, but where Ikegami breaks new ground is in her attempt to look at this transformation from a comparative sociological perspective. The study, in effect, considers the samurai beyond the narrow context of Japan. For example, no discussion of the role and development of the samurai would be complete without an examination of the concept of honor, and to this end Ikegami introduces a rich and varied body of literature on traditional honor-based cultures, presenting comparisons with European feudal concepts as well as contemporary Mediterranean honor cultures. These are instructive and useful case studies on how styles of honor vary. In this regard, her treatment is brilliant. It is not often that one can read a discussion of samurai loyalty and honor juxtaposed with that of Mediterranean modes of violence, revenge, and vindication. While this is just a minor part of Ikegami's thesis, it is refreshing, as it places the samurai squarely within a broader framework.

Seasoned scholars, graduate students, as well as the casual reader will no doubt be fascinated with Ikegami's second chapter, "The Coming of the Samurai: Violence and Culture in the Ancient World." Here, as in her exploration of the concept of honor, she refuses to reduce Japanese history to a single dimension.

The importance of Ikegami's work is not just in its recasting of the image of the samurai, but also in its efforts to counterbalance some of the journalistic nonsense which has been written about Japan's "traditions." Although Karel van Wolferen, the author of *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, is never mentioned, Ikegami's use of the word "enigma" throughout her Introduction can be seen as a veiled attack on those who would give us a ready-made Japan that is elitist, static, unimaginative, and culture-bound. Ikegami writes: "I approach the enigma of present-day Japan through an examination of the process of state-making in the early modern pe-

riod, through its transition from Japan's medieval feudal society to the construction of a more centrally organized state. I conclude that the cultural development of the concept of samurai honor in Japanese society, as a result of the confluence of largely unforeseen events, is a critical ingredient of the social process that created the distinctly modern Japanese mix of competition and collaboration." (p. 5)

A central dilemma in explaining the operations of modern Japan is the paradox of intense competition functioning alongside collaboration and consensus. The role of the samurai in manipulating this apparent anomaly is Ikegami's central theme — the pivotal issue giving credence to the title, *The Taming of the Samurai*. In each chapter, she reinforces her thesis that the samurai were able to uphold their sense of individuality in the face of a system which demanded conformity. They were able to retain their positions, roles, and individuality not by engaging in private acts of brutal revenge or senseless street fights over imagined slights, but instead, by devoting themselves to polishing and refining their public image. Individual dignity could thus be maintained by suppressing private impulses but never surrendering the core of their pride.

Ikegami makes her point that by the late Tokugawa period the samurai were finally tamed but had created an "honorific individualism." This constituted an "inner resistance" which struggled against the personae of the samurai being totally absorbed and dominated by the state. This individualism, Ikegami notes, had its limitations and did not enlarge into more transcendental or overarching Christian or Kantian notions.

*The Taming of the Samurai* seems to end prematurely, as it includes but brief comments on the abolishment of samurai status — but this is nothing for which the author should be faulted. A further work on the use and misuse of the samurai ethic, the concept of honor in postwar Japan, and the use of honorific individualism in contemporary Japan would no doubt make fascinating reading. In addition, the concept of honorific individualism should provide fruitful debate in comparative studies of the scope and depth of individualism.

Ikegami has written an authoritative work, a must-read for anyone interested in the institutional history of Japan and the dynamics of authority relations. Throughout, she demonstrates mastery of the issues involved, does not lose the reader in endless pedantry, and in the end posits her arguments convincingly. One point needs to be made, however. Given the state of computer technology, one would assume that Harvard University Press would be able to print a work in which kanji characters are provided. *The Taming of the Samurai* has Japanese expressions scattered throughout. As a lifelong student of both Chinese and Japanese, I would have appreciated a glossary at the end, or kanji given within the text.

Paul D. Scott  
Professor of Modern Chinese and Japanese History  
The Asian Studies Program  
Kansai Gaidai University  
Hirakata, Osaka

**Makiko's Diary: A Merchant Wife in 1910 Kyoto.** *Translated by Kazuko Smith.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996. 256 pp. US\$45.00, cloth.

History is constantly rewritten to meet the needs and whims of later generations. In Japan, the proselytizers of "democracy" after the Second World War decided to characterize most aspects of the prewar society as feudalistic. This was little different from what the Meiji elite, in their need to Westernize Japan, did with the period before the arrival of Commodore Perry, in 1853.

I mention this repeat revisionism during a 100-year period in Japan's recent past because, of course, realities can often be at odds with what later determinations suggest. Nakano Makiko (1890–1978) is a case in point. Married in her late teens to a pharmacist in Kyoto in a household in which her husband's mother presided as the source of ultimate authority, Makiko can easily be, in revisionist imagination, a classic example of doubly oppressed Japanese womanhood. Yet her life revealed through her diary kept for the year 1910 shows few traces of oppression either by her husband or her mother-in-law.

Makiko certainly was kept busy. The Nakano household was large. In addition to husband and mother-in-law, it had the husband's five siblings, two store managers, an unspecified number of clerks, shop boys, and maids. She was responsible for the general welfare of all of them. Then there were constant visitors who thought nothing of dropping by and staying on for lunch, snacks, or for dinner. On many occasions she had to prepare gifts and "return gifts."

Also, Makiko had to be concerned about her own father and siblings who lived nearby. She had lost her own mother just before she started the diary.

For all this, Makiko managed to go to the theater — noh, kyōgen, kabuki, the newly instituted Miyako Odori — and art exhibitions, visit relatives and friends, and take lessons in Western cooking. Indeed, Makiko's single notable emotional crisis for the whole year occurs when the head store manager decides to take unexpected offense when served the Western food she prepared during one lesson and behaves rudely to her to vent his frustrations. The most frequently registered sentiment in this yearlong diary is the sense of fun.

Makiko's husband, Chūhei (1884–1949), inherited the pharmaceutical business started several generations earlier, but he was educated enough to take in new ideas from the West. It is said that he established the monthly serving of sukiyaki for the entire household for nutritious reasons. Meat-eating was not all that common during the Edo period and before.

In the year described by Makiko, Chūhei is busily working for the introduction of better pharmaceuticals and the general improvement of the trade in Kyoto. (For such a man, his apparent ignorance of intestinal parasites is a surprise. He twice comes down with a high fever because of tapeworms, but he doesn't seem to have shown any special reaction as a pharmacist.)

Later, Chūhei's interest in Western music will grow to be strong enough for him to become manager of what is named the Cassiopeia Musical Group. He will also become a strong promoter of the Boy Scouts in Japan, and the high point of his

life comes in 1931 when he travels to Europe and receives instruction from no less than Baden-Powell, Sir Robert Stephenson Smyth. In the end, the offer is made to appoint him Chief Scout of Japan — although by then he is, sadly, on his deathbed.

Yet to ascribe Makiko's unoppressed life to Chūhei's Western-style "enlightenment" — they lived toward the end of the era when that was one of the government's own slogans — would be to accept the modern-day prejudice too unthinkingly. Although Chūhei evidently was an understanding husband, he was, for one thing, deeply involved in public affairs, such as those related to the pharmaceutical associations and the local school board, which, in Makiko's view, kept him out of the house too much of the time. It is not as if their relationship was an embodiment of Disney-style conjugal bliss.

Still, as Kazuko Smith, who has translated and annotated this diary with love and dedication, points out, "personalities and circumstances have more to do with creating the character of such relationships than does the individual's structural position in the household" — or, for that matter, the position of someone like Makiko seen through later or culturally different prisms. It is brought home all the more persuasively here because this is a diary kept by an ordinary person with no ax to grind.

*Makiko's Diary* comes with a number of photographs — not only of the diarist's family and relatives, but also of various places and scenes of Kyoto around 1910. These, along with all the foods Makiko prepares and relishes and the comings and goings of all sorts of people she describes, give us an unusually vivid look into a Kyoto life actually lived at the start of this century.

*Makiko's Diary* won a Hiromi Arisawa Award for 1996, which is given every two years to an outstanding book in the field of Japanese studies or a Japanese work in translation published by an American university press.

Hiroaki Sato  
Writer and translator  
New York

### **Japanese Historical Periods**

Asuka period, 538–645  
Hakuhō period, 645–710  
Nara period, 710–794  
Heian period, 794–1192  
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Modern period, 1868–

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