

Memory and Amnesia in the Presentation of the Hanamatsuri of Aichi Prefecture, Japan

Lisa Kuly

Cornell University

The Hanamatsuri is a complex ritual presented by around 17 communities located around a tributary system flowing into the Tenryū River which runs through the prefectures of Shizuoka, Nagano, and Aichi in Japan. It is associated with the end of the year, the New Year, and the revitalization of the world. Mapping the local onto the national is a significant concern that has been generated out of this festival. Maintaining a discourse of authenticity is another concern. These issues are set within a postmodern framework, as the author illustrates how elements of Japan's postmodernism filtered down to the communities which perform the Hanamatsuri. In a larger sense, this paper participates in the academic inquiry in Japanese religious studies into how ritual and popular religion contribute to the construction of cultural memory.

Introduction: Hayakawa Kōtarō's ethnography and the creation of memory

This paper is a study of the Hanamatsuri, a complex, multi-layered ritual associated with the end of the year, the New Year, and the revitalization of the world. Currently, the Hanamatsuri is presented by around seventeen communities located along a tributary system that flows into the Tenryū River which runs through the prefectures of Shizuoka, Nagano, and Aichi. Performances of the Hanamatsuri are scheduled from the last Saturday in October to the fifth day in January, with many communities holding the festival on the second day of January, a national holiday. The number of communities presenting the festival is decreasing because of lack of interest on the part of the youth, amalgamation of villages, and migration to urban centers. Also, the construction of a dam in the region forced the residents of an entire community to relocate to Toyohashi, a city south of the area, taking with them their production of the Hanamatsuri.

The detailed ethnographic records of the region's rituals and customs written by Hayakawa Kōtarō (1889–1956) hold the memory of the region. For example, when the NHK broadcasting corporation commissioned the Hanamatsuri preservation society of

I would like to thank Dr. Sara Warner for her insightful comments throughout the process of writing this paper. I attended my first Hanamatsuri while I was a research student supported by a Monbusho Fellowship from 1999–2001.

Sakauba, a hamlet of Toyone village, to reconstruct a performance of Daikagura, a festival considered to be the precursor of the Hanamatsuri, community members created the ritual from Hayakawa's documentation.

In recent times, the Hanamatsuri, and representations of the festival, have undergone change, precipitated by the festival's designation as an Intangible Folk Cultural Treasure in 1976. As such, many tensions are introduced when we look at this ritual as a device that produces regional memory, especially in this post-Hayakawa period. I argue that these tensions are part of a larger problem, a problem having to do with contemporary ritual performance finding a place for itself in a postmodern setting. The presenters of the Hanamatsuri grapple with issues of funding, conflicting notions of authenticity, and locating themselves within the broader context of the nation, which I consider to be postmodern concerns.

The problem of Japan's postmodernism

Postmodernism for Frederic Jameson involves society's preoccupation with endings, such as the end of ideology; the end of art; the end of social class; the end of the welfare state; and, the end of modernism. The vacuum left by all these endings is filled with the empirical, the chaotic, and the heterogeneous, expressed primarily in architecture, but also in the experimental film and video, and in the work of artists and musicians such as Andy Warhol, John Cage and Philip Glass.¹ In arriving at its postmodern period, Japan sidestepped the modern period primarily because its premodern period emphasized

pluralism, discontinuity, dispersion and differentiation without substratum, [and] has always had a profound fundamental affinity with the perspective that has emerged today as postmodernism. Traditional Japan was thus able to dispense with or circumvent the need to work through a modern period—at least in the Western sense of that term—characterized by structure, systematization, rationality and linear progression.²

If we return to the model laid out by Jameson, it is indeed difficult to identify Japanese postmodernism, because the examples he invokes exist within a decidedly Western idiom. In the same vein, Marilyn Ivy identifies one aspect of the problem of Japan's postmodernism:

[i]f postmodernism takes its point of departure from a contemporary crisis in representation, then what does postmodernism mean in a cultural situation where representation itself is different? Or, in critical practice, if postmodernism is equated with deconstruction, and if

¹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1991, 1.

² Charles Wei-Hsun Fu and Steven Heine (eds), *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, x.

deconstruction deconstructs Western logocentrism, then how does deconstruction work in a culture which is nonlogocentric?³

Directly related to Japan's phoenix-like rise from the ashes of nuclear holocaust, its postmodernism is often connected with an accelerated information network and excessive economic consumption. Uchino Tadashi fuses together Nishida Kōjin's "Age of Informational Capitalism" and Senda Akihiko's "Age of Excessive Consumption," to formulate his definition of postmodernism; however, he stops short of assigning a definition and simply calls it "pseudo-postmodernism."⁴ More recently, theorists are examining the combination of technology and aesthetics, called "techno-orientalism," which they think exemplifies Japan's postmodernism, expressed in two-dimensional art, such as that found in *anime* and *manga*, where high art and mass culture are forged together creating a "superflat" aesthetic.⁵

For now, Japan's postmodernism is best characterized as that which it is not in a Western framework: it is not about deconstructing logocentrism; it is not about the death of modernity; and, it is not about secularism eclipsing spirituality and religion, as I shall soon argue. Jameson does not include embodied art such as ritual and theatre in his catalogue of postmodern cultural expressions; however, in unraveling this problem, I think we can look to the arena of Japan's contemporary theater movement in order to gain a greater understanding into the problem of postmodernism and Japan.

Japanese postmodern theatre and its avoidance of the rural

In the late 1960s, Japan had produced innovative theatre directors, such as Kara Juro, Terayama Shuji and Suzuki Tadashi, whose experimental productions radically altered the landscape of the theatre scene. The innovation of these directors opened the way for a theatre movement to develop where tradition, history, and the political climate were scrutinized, dissected, criticized, and abandoned. They are considered integral to the development of Japan's postmodern movement. There are tendencies in the iconoclasm of these directors, however, suggesting a kind of selective amnesia that allowed them to construct a new narrative.

Two such directors possessing this cultural amnesia are Suzuki Tadashi (b. 1939) and Terayama Shuji (1935–1983), the former known for his theatrical fusions based on classical Greek theatre and the latter, for his outrageous experimental productions.

³ Marilyn Ivy, "Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan," in *Postmodernism and Japan*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Hartoonian, Durham: Duke University Press, 1989, 39.

⁴ Uchino Tadashi, "Deconstructing 'Japaneseness': Toward Articulating Locality and Hybridity in Contemporary Japanese Performance," in *Dis-Orientations. Cultural Praxis in Theatre: Asia, Pacific, Australia*, ed. Rachel Fensham and Peter Eckersall, Monash Theatre Papers, 1999, 43.

⁵ Marilyn Ivy, "Superflatnation: On Techno-aesthetics and Politics in Contemporary Japan," Public lecture at Cornell University, 23 April 2004.

Apparent in their tendencies, however, is their desire to erase aspects of their national identity. Also, they seem almost embarrassed by the rural roots of so much of Japan's cultural emanations and go out of their way to ignore traditional ritual performance's influence on their theatre. When asked about his relationship with his natal Tōhōku, a rural, tradition-bound region in Japan's northeast, far away from Tokyo, Terayama admits that while one's native place is an important part of one's development, he himself has never given it much thought.⁶ This forgetting, I believe, stems from two impulses. First, Japan's a brutal colonizing force had its ideology formulated on the nativist notion of the locus of authentic Japanese culture contained in the "age-old" traditions and customs of the folk. Terayama and Suzuki consciously distanced themselves from this ideology in their attempt to articulate a new theatrical present. Sara Warner illuminated the tendencies of postmodern playwrights "to look back,"⁷ particularly evident in the postcolonial work of Wole Soyinka and Aimé Césaire. With the tendency of Japanese playwrights to look West (Suzuki) or to look forward (Terayama), one wonders if their refusal to look back is because of Japan's colonial past—it is easier to revive the past when one has been the victim. The victimizer, on the other hand, must turn a blind eye or look elsewhere. The second impulse comes from the tendencies of new generation artists, who, in their struggle to break with the traditions of their predecessors, abandon those traditions. Christopher Innes considers this type of attitude part of the old definition of avant-garde, which includes all forms of anti-traditional artistic expression.⁸

Suzuki's work characterizes this old form of avant-gardism. In what is considered to be an almost renegade act, Suzuki moved his theatre company to the rustic setting of Toga, eight hours away from Tokyo in 1976. There he could work far away from the pressures of Tokyo and concentrate on creating a new theatrical aesthetic. One of his aims was to resuscitate the idea of "public space" within the theatre:

I hope to bring a sense of public space back into the Japanese theatre. Such things as eating, greeting friends, talking, even watching the actors eat are in fact everyday experiences. They will not only feel that it has some connection to their own lives, but they will sense at the same time that they are stepping into a somewhat different atmosphere. This new sensation, something perhaps approaching the spirit of a holiday, will enter into their consciousness and

⁶ Akihiko Senda, *Gekiteki Renesansu Gendai Engeki wa Kataru*, Tokyo: Riburo-po-to, 1983, 9. Butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi (1929–1987), on the other hand, looked to his native Tōhōku as a source of inspiration for his work. His artistic representations of the region provided an escape from Japan's bustling modern and postmodern environment. He tried to capture the qualities of the region in his choreography and even composed a series about Tōhōku. For further reading, please see Kurihara Nanako, "Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh," *The Drama Review* 44, 1 (Spring 2000): 12–28.

⁷ Sara Warner, seminar on "Mythic Modernity and Modern Primitives: Revisionist Glances I," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 10 February 2004.

⁸ Christopher Innes, *Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 2.

buoy them up; they will begin to examine themselves from new and unusual angles. This is the kernel of the excitement involved in watching a play. Through the creation of this atmosphere, people will begin to contemplate their own actions. The confluence of those diverse activities taking place in one spot constitutes the kind of public space I dream of.⁹

Suzuki found inspiration for this type of theatre in France when he participated in Jean-Louis Barrault's international festival "Theatre des Nations." Soon after returning from Paris, Suzuki moved to Toga. His experience at the theatre festival also encouraged him to recreate the atmosphere of classical Greek theatre, particularly the type of atmosphere evoked in an outdoor setting. It is odd that Suzuki had to travel to France to find inspiration for his theatrical aspirations, for the ritual performance of festival settings in Japan generates this kind of theatrical experience. Even odder is that his retreat to the countryside was part of a larger return-to-the-countryside movement of the 1970s generated by the Japan National Railway that I will discuss shortly.

In Suzuki's ideal theatrical space, quotidian experience occurred in a bounded setting, with the line between performer and audience blurred; yet, this type of theatrical environment exists in Japan in the form of festival performance. For example, in the Hanamatsuri, audience members mingle with the performers, force-feeding them copious amounts of *sake*; children, oblivious to the sacredness of the rituals being enacted, run in and out of the sacred space, taunting the performers; mothers feeding their babies watch their husbands dressed as devils dance around a boiling cauldron of water. This type of public space is in fact what producers of avant-garde performance sought to achieve.

If we look at Innes's formulation of avant-garde theatre and its use of myth, we see that this type of theatre tends to "merge [...] audience and action, by a rejection of language or verbal logic as a primary means of communication; and where the aim is to induce trance states that are active and tend toward convulsion."¹⁰ One of the Hanamatsuri's climaxes involves dancers achieving a trance-induced state through a repetitive, long dance. Members of the audience experience a similar trance-like state as they dance along with the dancers. Suzuki has travelled a full circle here without even realizing what was available to him for inspiration in his quest for of a new theatre aesthetic.

In discussing why modern Japanese stages no longer have special spaces for the gods, Suzuki appears to be highly influenced by Nietzsche's tract on the death of God:

Modern man no longer believes in gods he cannot see; in the theatre, the gods have become the members of the audience themselves. Any space that—though seemingly useless—could inspire a sense of the sacred, has now disappeared. The gods did not only descend into the towers of the *kabuki* theatres; they lived, invisibly, in empty spaces. Even now, if you made a

⁹ Senda, *Gekiteki Renesansu*, 81.

¹⁰ Innes, *Holy Theatre*, 7.

trip deep, deep into the mountains, you would come across spaces that are fenced in but otherwise exhibit no special qualities. If you lingered there, some spirit or other might seemingly manifest itself in that space, and you might suddenly find yourself in tears. This relic of the traditional Japanese susceptibility to space can still be found in *Shintō* shrines or on the *nō* stage. Nowadays, though however many years you might spend, that space is empty, worthless.¹¹

What is striking about this passage is that Suzuki completely overlooks the hundreds of festivals performed throughout the country where the *kamis*' presence is strongly felt, not only in the *Shintō* shrines but also by the community itself. Furthermore, throughout his work he refers to the Kabuki and *Nō* stages as the resting places of the *kami*, yet refuses to acknowledge the rural festival space as a locus of this same sacrality. I argue that he is expressing anti-traditional sentiments because the theatre forms he focuses on are examples of Japanese high art. His references to Kabuki and *Nō* are not imbued with primitivist rhetoric; he holds them up as examples of Japan's cultural accomplishments. My sense is that the performance of farmers and woodcutters, and now, truck drivers and businessmen, the usual participants of rural ritual performance, is almost a source of embarrassment for Suzuki. Moreover, the secularism he decries is not the secularism of Japan; it has overtones of Western secularism. The existence of such a rich festival calendar, where the *kami* are put on centre stage, clearly suggest that the religious life of the Japanese is firmly intact.

I have alluded to the problem of Japan's colonial past as a reason behind Suzuki and Terayama's refusal to acknowledge their heritage, and the traditional forms which no doubt influenced their work. Charles Wei-Hsun Fu and Steven Heine explain this tendency in more detail:

[there are those] who assert the priority of traditionalism in interpreting the basis of Japanese culture; and those who in increasing numbers are—from what can be referred to as a postmodern perspective—highly skeptical of traditionalist claims as being little more than an apparition, a collective fantasy generated to a large extent by a nationalist/ nativist sociopolitical agenda.¹²

Suzuki and Terayama fall partially into the latter category, in that they selectively distance themselves from aspects of their history and their heritage.

The growing pains experienced by the practitioners of Japan's theatre revolution in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s were also felt by the practitioners of the Hanamatsuri, however, they are expressed in different ways as the practitioners of rural ritual performance operate in an entirely different milieu. In the following section of this paper, I will focus on how the effect of Japan's postmodernism filtered down to the communities which perform the Hanamatsuri. Two fieldwork expeditions, one in 2001

¹¹ Tadashi Suzuki, *The Way of Acting: the Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1986, 22.

¹² Charles Wei-Hsun Fu and Steven Heine (eds), *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, ix.

and the second in 2003, have allowed me to explore various aspects of the Hanamatsuri, a festival performed by seventeen communities in the mountainous region of Aichi, Shizuoka, and Nagano prefectures of central Japan. I attended events put on by Shimokurokawa, Kamikurokawa, and Makuro, three communities of Toyone village.

Issues of funding, conflicting notions of authenticity, and asserting region

One strand of Japan's postmodern movement can be found in the periods of nostalgia that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, where the media and commercial organizations launched aggressive campaigns to stimulate a national longing to return to the past, a past that was distinguished by uniformity, uniqueness, and homogeneity. The plurality and motion of the rapidly modernizing nation clearly expressed in the megalopolis of Tokyo brought about a revival of the work of Yanagita and Orikuchi.¹³ Remnants of their nineteenth century project are seen in the Japan National Railway's "Discover Japan" domestic tourist campaign of the 1970s "which developed a securely nativist project of national (re)discovery"¹⁴ and the company's "Exotic Japan"¹⁵ campaign of the 1980s. Also imbricated in this push toward reviving the past, is the postmodern concern of creating a strong regional identity. Jane Marie Law asserts the revival (or invention) of this rural aesthetic invigorated by Yanagita and Orikuchi is part of the discourse of regionalism:

Inherent in the idea of regionalism is the view that although there is a common world that unites all phenomena of the folk, each region has its own unique version of this larger reality. Recreating these regional identities, frequently as tourist destinations, has been a major part of contemporary nostalgic discourse in Japan.¹⁶

Folk performance was one means by which a region could distinguish itself from other regions, but still remain part of a larger national identity.

A national system that awards regional folk performing arts by designating them as Intangible Folk Cultural Properties is a method of expressing a larger identity.¹⁷ With the Hanamatsuri receiving designation as an Intangible Folk Cultural Treasure in 1976, the inaugural year of the program, a number of questions arise. For instance, how is the

¹³ For further information on discourses of nostalgia refer to Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995; Jennifer Robertson, *Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991; Jane Marie Law, *Puppets of Nostalgia: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of the Japanese Awaji Ningyō Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

¹⁴ Ivy, *Discourses*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Law, *Puppets of Nostalgia*, 214.

¹⁷ Barbara E. Thornbury, *The Folk Performing Arts: Traditional Culture in Contemporary Japan*, Albany: University of New York Press, 1997, 157.

festival re-invented to align its reality with this designation? Also, as there are two village administrative units, Toyone and Tōei, comprising seventeen hamlets that produce the Hanamatsuri, how are funds distributed amongst the participating communities?

There are many indications throughout the region that plenty of funding has been allocated to promote the festival. Tōei is home to the Hanamatsuri Kaikan, a center which hosts a museum, an auditorium, and archives. A newly built train station designed in the shape of a devil's face greets the passenger who disembarks from the Iida line at Tōei. Furthermore, that passenger can rest in the station's waiting room in which memorabilia related to the festival is on display. A tunnel leading into Shimokurokawa of Toyone village is decorated with large paintings of a devil and a dancer. While on the surface it would seem that with this blanket coverage of iconic signage of the festival, an even distribution of funds has been spread across the region, however, below the surface there are indications this is not the case.

Economic disparities among three hamlets of Toyone village

Unequal access to funds is apparent in the material culture and the production values of the productions of the Hanamatsuri by Shimokurokawa, Kamikurokawa, and Makuro. When I returned to Shimokurokawa in the winter of 2003, the newly built *hanashuku*, which had been erected the previous year, was a distinct marker of progress and budget for that community. Initially, as I observed preparations a few days before the festival began, I noticed that much effort had been put into the construction of the *hanashuku*. It housed a reception desk and administrative office; a bathroom (with a heated toilet); a well-equipped kitchen; and, was decorated with an intricate border around the ceiling of wood cut-outs in the style of the paper decorations called *zazechi* that are hung around the festival area during the event. The performance of the Hanamatsuri, however, had changed because of this new, sterile environment. Previously, the lighting was dim and the bonfire at the center of the space provided the main source of illumination, creating an exciting, almost menacing, atmosphere; now, fluorescent tube lights kept the space brightly lit throughout the night performance. Little seating space in this new structure forced the audience to stand throughout the night. On the other hand, the *hanashuku* of Kamikurokawa was an old, ramshackle structure that bore the mark of many years of use. Large and sprawling, spectators had plenty of room to sit comfortably in chairs to watch the performance or simply enjoy the night with friends. Women bustling away in a busy kitchen served a menu of tasty food. Although this presentation of the Hanamatsuri was not as slick as that of Shimokurokawa's, there was a sense that the community felt comfortable in their space. Makuro's *hanashuku* was the least hospitable of the three. A small structure, there was

no comfortable seating space and audience members either sat in groups on a raised platform, or huddled outside in the cold winter night, watching the dancers. A temporarily erected structure housed the kitchen and the washroom facilities were functional. The markers of wealth and poverty clearly distinguished the three communities from each other.

Another area where an unequal distribution of funds is apparent is in the notable differences of the productions of the three hamlets of Toyone. The performance standards of the Hanamatsuri of Shimokurokawa seem to be higher than those of the other hamlets. The dancers of Shimokurokawa's Hanamatsuri appeared as if they rehearsed together for a long time as their footwork was well-coordinated and their timing, excellent. The dances performed at Kamikurokawa's Hanamatsuri were much rougher. In particular, the *yubayashi*, the complex and long, trance-inducing dance that builds to a climax when the dancers empty the cauldron of water on onlookers, had none of the choreographic flourish of Shimokurokawa's *yubayashi*. The dancers merely rocked back and forth in time with the music, visibly showing their exhaustion and desire to reach the climax. In contrast, the dancers of Shimokurokawa's *yubayashi* endured challenging choreographic moves including leaps and intricate patterns, which they sustained for over ninety minutes, fighting their exhaustion.

In Makuro, the dancing appeared to be the least-polished and rehearsed. The Hanamatsuri's *oni* (devils), provide one of the many climaxes of the festival and it is important that their appearance is frightening. They brandish long, dangerous-looking halberds and stand in poses designed to intimidate the audience; yet, one *oni* at Makuro was a laughingstock as he performed his version of the dance. Visibly inebriated, he was unable to execute the correct footwork and maintain intimidating poses. I noticed members of the audience, in fact, dancers from Shimokurokawa and Kamikurokawa, mimicking this poor devil's awkward dance.

Protecting the new *Hanashuku*: The fire brigade of Shimokurogawa

Another difference I observed in Shimokurogawa's Hanamatsuri of 2003 was a uniformed crew of volunteer firefighters who hovered around the bonfire, protecting the *hanashuku* and the performers and audience members. Their presence not only obstructed the view of the dancers, but, added a new element to the festival. One of the features of Shimokurokawa's Hanamatsuri that struck me when I first saw it in 2001 was the rowdiness of a small group of drunk men stumbling around the *mado* and coming far too close to the boiling cauldron of water. Now, a group of men in official-looking uniforms dampened the violence and pacified unruly audience members. The dangerous elements I detected in the festival that I attended two years earlier no longer remained. The volunteers were members of the community whom I

noticed the previous time, so it was not like the arm of an unknown authority hovering over the festival and putting a damper on the festivities and rowdy behavior. This uniformed cadre of men, however, added a new dimension to the festival: they created a new level of hierarchy based not on proficiency at dance or knowledge of the tradition of the festival, but based on enforcement. As the festival is noted for the rowdiness of its male participants and the abandonment of social conventions, this is one area where I observed a new form of ideology being performed in the festival; an ideology of discipline and control. Furthermore, the uniforms worn by the firefighters were obvious markers of the wealth of Shimokurokawa, thus accentuating the economic hierarchy amongst the communities of Toyone.

Moreover, by addressing the contemporary concern to be recognized as an important cultural asset, one of the original intentions of the festival was eliminated. The communities of this remote mountain region most probably required a mechanism to quell disharmony and unease amongst the residents of the villages. The Hanamatsuri, I believe, historically provided an outlet for neighbors to settle old scores and release the tensions of living together in such close proximity. In short, anti-social elements existing in the community were sublimated during the festival. Rene Girard shows how the reversals and “loss of distinctions”¹⁸ and ritual violence are the “initial stages of a cathartic process.”¹⁹

The violent, out-of-control behavior in the context of the festival also served as a ritual device for giving community members, primarily people who relied on farming and other agriculture-related economic activities, a sense of control over their livelihood. Raz Jacob discusses the audience interaction that occurs in the Hanamatsuri and other festivals which he claims are part of the network of festivals of this type. The audience participates with *hayashikotoba*, a term Jacob translates as “rhythmical cries.”²⁰ He identifies “witty banter” that is used to encourage the dancers and *akutai*, abusive language directed at the “evil kami.”²¹ He points out that *akutai* is a common feature of many festivals and has “become independent and developed into independent festivals, such as the Akko Matsuri, Akutare Matsuri, [and] Akutai Matsuri,” where spectators direct abusive language at each other, at other groups *dashi* (festival floats), and at priests.²² He theorizes that the violent mockery is a ritual tool for bringing on good crops in the spring. Also, the abusive language drives away evil.

At the core of the festival, a process of revitalization occurs, as illustrated by Girard: “the festival revitalizes the cultural order by reenacting its conception, reproducing an

¹⁸ Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 120.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actors: A Study of Their Interaction in the Japanese Traditional Theatre*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983, 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²² *Ibid.*

experience that is viewed as the source of health and abundance; reenacting, in fact, the moment when the fear of falling into interminable violence is most intense and the community is therefore most closely drawn together.”²³ With the creation of this new brigade of firefighters, I wonder if the community is actually pulled asunder as some men are chosen for this prestigious position and others are overlooked; furthermore, the firefighters dampen the thrill of the cathartic moments of the festival and reduce “anti-structural playfulness,” so necessary for ritual performance.

Locating degrees of authenticity: Views from the inside and the outside

Mr. Kiyokawa, the proud resident of an old, traditional farmhouse conspicuously displayed on his *meishi* (business card) and an important member of the community of Shimokurokawa, could be considered an insider of the tradition as he has been involved in the Hanamatsuri from the time he was born. His two sons, both excellent dancers, inherited the role of *oni*, a role which is only given to select members of the community. When word got out that a graduate student had traveled all the way from the United States to watch the Hanamatsuri, it was only a matter of a day before I received an invitation to his house and had the opportunity to hear his stories and discuss with him aspects of the Hanamatsuri. He told me how the community of Shimokurokawa preserves the most authentic production of the Hanamatsuri, as the dancers precisely follow the choreography handed down from generations and, more importantly, women are still not allowed to participate as performers.²⁴ His discourse of authenticity, however, is closely aligned with the discourse set out by the national designation system; where there is a strong push to preserve the tradition in a museum-like setting. In a sense, a process of deracination is occurring in the production of Shimokurokawa’s Hanamatsuri with the transplantation of the event in the new *hanashuku* and the installation of the volunteer brigade of firefighters.

From the outsider’s point of view, however, the kernel of authenticity is located in the *soboku*, translated as simplicity and artlessness.²⁵ The Hanamatsuri of Makuro exemplifies the aesthetic of *soboku*. When I arrived at Makuro on January 4, after a harrowing ride up an ice-coated twisting mountain road, I was first struck by the

²³ Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 120.

²⁴ The communities of Kamikurokawa and Makuro have to use female dancers and musicians because there are simply not enough males to fill the roles.

²⁵ The notion of the *soboku* as an element of equivalence in the equation of the exotic and the authentic is discussed by Regina Bendix in *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); by Marilyn Ivy in *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and, Jennifer Robertson in *Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

poverty of the festival. The second thing that struck me was the flock of photographers who practically outnumbered performers and audience.

Common fixtures at festivals in Japan, such as the *Ta-asobi* of the Itabashi district in Tokyo, they crowd around the stage blocking the view of the audience as they feverishly try to record what seems like the final breaths of a tradition that will soon vanish from the cultural landscape of Japan's folk performing arts. While I noticed their presence at both events of Shimokurokawa and Kamikurokawa, the crowd of photographers at Makuro struck me by its size. They also seemed like a veteran group, for they fit the type that one often encounters at festivals: older men, outfitted in the latest adventure wear and armed with high-tech photographic equipment and cameras fitted with enormous lenses. As this crowd of photographers had not appeared at the performances at Shimokurokawa and Kamikurokawa, I sensed they measured the poverty and roughness of the Hanamatsuri of Makuro as an index of authenticity. They also attempted to capture and generate an exoticism out of the event, indicated by the feverish way they crowded around the bewildered *chigo* (child performers) who were dressed in beautiful costumes and whose faces were decorated with make-up.

With these two examples, I have illuminated two strands of cultural memory in relation to authenticity discourse generated by people who are related to the festival on different levels. The insider of the tradition possesses one version of authenticity based on his relationship to the festival and his desire to promote it as an event that is in sync with a larger reality generated by the national designation system. The outsiders of the festival interpret authenticity differently, focusing on a rough aesthetic that is danger of being absorbed into the larger reality.

Theatrical representations of the regional and the national

One instance where we see the local community's attempt to latch itself onto the national while preserving its local flavor can be found in the *Hanamatsuri Denshoshū* (The Transmitted Miscellanea of the Hanamatsuri). References to Amaterasu and Ise are scattered throughout the text. As she is invoked in the ritual section entitled "Handling of the Imperial Property,"²⁶ it would seem like the creators of the Hanamatsuri are holding on to the idea that the connection between the Emperor and Amaterasu has not yet been severed. She is mentioned in other sections as part of the pantheon of *kami* associated with the region performing the Hanamatsuri.

By invoking Amaterasu, the creators of the Hanamatsuri assert their position in the broader context of the nation, cementing their rightful place in the national construction of Japan. It also provides an opportunity for state ideology to be expressed. Whether

²⁶ Shimokurokawa Hanamatsuri Hozonkai, *Hanamatsuri Denshoshū*, n.p., Aichi Prefecture, 1993, 26.

this is a remnant of state control over the festival or an internal impulse from the community still identifying itself with the national cult of Amaterasu (and the associated discourse of cultural superiority) is a question that remains to be answered.

While Amaterasu is the link that binds regions together in a unified national front, the figure of Okina gives the region its local flavor. Okina stands for Old Man and the debate surrounding him hinges on whether or not he is an actual God or just a representation of divinity, or is he a senile old man, a reminder of where we are all heading. He appears in the Nō drama, performed by a veteran actor during the auspicious occasion of welcoming the New Year; he also appears in regional festivals scattered around the archipelago. He is represented by a mask in which a string hinge fastens the jaw and the rest of the mask in place; a long beard signifies his age and wisdom. In the case of the Nō, much ritual is associated with the actor who plays Okina as he must undergo austerities and abstain from certain activities, although the severity of these austerities is softening. The Okina of the highbrow Nō drama is a dignified, auspicious character. The Okina of the Hanamatsuri, on the other hand, is a rustic country bumpkin whose mother has to find an adoptive rich father (a king, in fact) and is spurned by the women of the capital. We even have graphic details of his birth, a subject too vulgar to be discussed in the Nō drama: “Since it was the middle of the sixth month, his mother wondered where and in what place she would give birth to her child? Spreading out the brocade over the patterned silk. Spreading out the honored seat upon the brocaded silk. From between two standing mortars with a loud squeal and a lusty bellow, he was born.”²⁷

Okina’s biography and the rituals in which he participates change from region to region. He provides a means by which a region asserts its “localness” while simultaneously aligning itself with the overarching myth of the nation. In general, the one-thousand-year-old Okina is associated with longevity. In the Hanamatsuri, however, he is also identified with fertility, giving the region an even more particularized identity.

Conclusion

John K. Nelson asserts that “[r]eligion and its ritual practices have always depended on addressing both the tangible and the intangible needs of human beings, including one’s social and cultural identity as a subject within a domain of political power.”²⁸ My case of the Hanamatsuri performed by the three communities of Shimokurokawa, Kamikurokawa, and Makuro adds nuance to this statement as the communities struggle to maintain their identities, preserve their collective memory, and assert their

²⁷ Shimokurogawa Hanamatsuri Hozonkai, *Hanamatsuri*, 35.

²⁸ John K. Nelson, *Enduring Identities: The Guise of Shinto in Contemporary Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000, 121–2.

independence, while simultaneously aligning themselves with the larger reality of the nation. This struggle is especially apparent in the Hanamatsuri of Shimokurokawa, the community that appears to have benefited the most from the funding allocated for the Hanamatsuri being designated as an Intangible Folk Cultural Treasure. The national designation system, while providing an opportunity for regions to maintain and preserve their customs and develop their unique practices, while at the same time expressing their rightful membership in the national and aligning themselves with a larger national identity, has changed the course of the Hanamatsuri's development.

Jameson entreats us to view "the cultural evolution of late capitalism [...] as catastrophe and progress all together,"²⁹ and encourages us to look for a "moment of truth."³⁰ A festival performed in a remote village in central Japan does indeed struggle with this concern of re-establishing community in Jameson's "world space of multinational capital,"³¹ a problem identified by Senda brought about by the "Age of Excessive Consumption." The "moment of truth" these residents seek, however, is not Jameson's truth. In the case of Shimokurokawa's Hanamatsuri, the community is struggling to maintain the high standard expected of an Intangible Folk Cultural Treasure while at the same time keeping its balance in the shifting sands of authenticity discourse. Also, it struggles to hang on to its unique regional identity while it is almost being digested by a powerful national identity. I see a process of self-creation happening in the Hanamatsuri of Shimokurokawa. In effect, this self-creation involves holding on to certain aspects of tradition and discarding others, which is, in essence, a process of selective memory and selective forgetting.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Shimokurokawa Hanamatsuri Hozonkai. *Hanamatsuri Denshoshū*, n.p., Aichi Prefecture, 1993.

Secondary Sources

Fu, Charles Wei-Hsun and Steven Heine (eds). *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Girard, Rene. *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Hayakawa, Kōtarō. *Hanamatsuri*, Tokyo: Iwasaki Bijutsu Sha, 1966.

Innes, Christopher. *Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Ivy, Marilyn. "Superflatnation: On Technoesthetics and Politics in Contemporary Japan," Public lecture at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 23 April 2004.

———. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

²⁹ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

- . “Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan,” in *Postmodernism and Japan*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Hartoonian, Durham: Duke University Press, 1989, 21–46.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Kurihara, Nanako, “Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh,” *The Drama Review* 44, 1 (Spring 2000): 12–28.
- Law, Jane Marie. *Puppets of Nostalgia: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of the Japanese Awaji Ningyō Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Nelson, John K. *Enduring Identities: The Guise of Shinto in Contemporary Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000.
- Raz, Jacob. *Audience and Actors: A Study of Their Interaction in the Japanese Traditional Theatre*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983.
- Roach, Joseph R. “Kinship, Intelligence, and Memory as Improvisation,” in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond, London: Routledge, 1996, 217–36.
- Schechner, Richard. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*, London: Routledge, 1993.
- Sendai, Akihiko. *Gekiteki Renesansu Gendai Engeki wa Kataru*, Tokyo: Riburo-po-to, 1983.
- Suzuki, Tadashi. *The Way of Acting: the Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1986.
- . *Enshutsuka no Hassō*, Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 1994.
- Thornbury, Barbara E. *The Folk Performing Arts: Traditional Culture in Contemporary Japan*, Albany: University of New York Press, 1997.
- Uchino, Tadashi. “Images of Armageddon: Japan’s 1980’s Theatre Culture,” *The Drama Review* 44, 1 (Spring 2000): 85–96.
- . “Deconstructing ‘Japaneseness’: Toward Articulating Locality and Hybridity in Contemporary Japanese Performance,” in *Dis-Orientations. Cultural Praxis in Theatre: Asia, Pacific, Australia*, ed. Rachel Fensham and Peter Eckersall, Monash Theatre Papers, 1999, 35–53.
- Vlastos, Stephen (ed.). *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Lisa KULY (lk83@cornell.edu), Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, Department of Asian Studies in the field of Asian Religions
 ☒: 2206-335 Webb Drive, Mississauga, ON Canada L5B 4A1

