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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the thirteenth volume of the *Japan Studies Review* (JSR), an annual peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the joint efforts of the Institute for Asian Studies at Florida International University and the Southern Japan Seminar. JSR continues to be both an outlet for publications related to Southern Japan Seminar events and a journal that encourages submissions from a wide range of scholars in the field. Appearing in this issue are eight articles covering a variety of issues in Japanese studies.

The first article, titled "The Triviality of a Pop Song: How Murakami's Characters Overcome Detachedness," is by Christopher Mihalo. He follows the main character, Toru, and details the events that lead to his ultimate reentry into society.

The second article, "The Healing Processes in Two Religious Worlds," is written by Leila Marrach Basto de Albuquerque. She examines the use of hands for religious healing, as seen in the laying-on of hands (or *passe*), and with the *Johrei* Messianic technique.

Following this, the third article is "*Ganguro* in Japanese Youth Culture: Self-Identity in Cultural Conflict" by Xuexin Liu. She explains the results of a study about the *ganguro* phenomenon among Japanese youth. Liu explains the urban fashion trend's various roots in African-American hip-hop culture, as well as the concept of "black face" as a counterculture against Japanese notions of propriety, gender roles, and cultural identity.

On a different note, the fourth article is "The Soka Gakkai in Cambodia," written by Daniel A. Métraux. This article examines the modern trajectory of the Japanese New Religious movement Soka Gakkai in Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979. Métraux discusses the small but growing number of Cambodians that are turning to Soka Gakkai, an imported Buddhist sect, rather than native Khmer Buddhism.

The fifth article, "Why Did Japan Fail to Achieve Full-Fledged Democracy before World War II? – An Analysis of Class Relations and Forces Using Marxian Class Theories," is by Yukio Yotsumoto. She presents various theories of democratization against the backdrop of Japan's prewar labor conditions. Yotsumoto argues class relations and labor conditions did not allow democracy to fully develop until after World War II.

The sixth article, "New Trends in the Production of Japanese Ladies' Comics: Diversification and Catharsis" by Kinko Ito explores the

various types of ladies' comics in Japan and gives great insight into this fascinating world.

The seventh article, "Disaster-Relief Confucian-Style: Ninomiya Sontoku's Philosophical Approach to Late-Tokugawa Poverty" is written by John A. Tucker. This article mostly focuses on 19th century Japanese agricultural leader, philosopher, moralist and economist, Ninomiya Kinjirō, and his belief on how the *Daigaku*'s philosophy should be applied to better society.

The last article, "Sacred Pariahs: Hagiographies of Alterity, Sexuality, and Salvation in Atomic Bomb Literature" is by Yuki Miyamoto. She gives many compelling reasons and examples of how the Yumechiyo, an A-bomb survivor, is portrayed as a pariah the television drama *Yumechiyo Nikki*, or the Diary of Yumechiyo.

This year's issue also includes one essay, "Dōgen and Plato on Literature and Enlightenment" by Carol S. Gould, who argues that both Plato and Dōgen are iconoclasts in their respective philosophical realms who ask similar questions about self-reference and identity. By examining Dōgen's *Genjokōan* and Plato's *Theatetus* and *Symposium*, Gould concludes that the differences between Dōgen and Plato lie primarily in the cultural values of their times.

Lastly, this volume includes five book reviews. Takayuki Tatsumi's analysis of U.S.-Japanese relations through postmodern science fiction is reviewed by Natsuki Fukunaga of Marshall University. Ian Condry's exploration of hip-hop Japan is reviewed by Xuexin Liu of Spelman College. Hideaki Matsuoka's reflection about the growth of the Church of World Messianity in Brazil and other Japanese new religions is offered to us by Daniel A. Métraux of Mary Baldwin College. Jeffrey Lesser's collection of scholarly writings about ethnicity and identity issues of migrants with Japanese ancestry in Brazil and Japan is presented by Ronan A. Pereira of the Brazil-based *Universidade Estadual Paulista*. Lastly, Yuji Ichioka's overview of Japanese-American history in the 1920s and 1930s is also reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux of Mary Baldwin College.

Steven Heine

Re: Submissions, Subscriptions, and Comments

Submissions for publication, whether articles, essays, or book reviews, should be made in both hard copy and electronic formats, preferably Word for Windows on a disk or CD (please inquire about other formats). The editor and members of the editorial board will referee all submissions.

Annual subscriptions are \$25.00 (US). Please send a check or money order payable to *Florida International University* to:

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All comments and feedback on the publications appearing in *Japan Studies Review* are welcome.

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Articles

THE TRIVIALITY OF A POP SONG: HOW MURAKAMI'S CHARACTERS OVERCOME DETACHEDNESS

Christopher Mihalo
Creighton University

After returning from Princeton in what was his first extended stay in the United States, Japanese author Haruki Murakami witnessed two tragic events in native Japan. On January 17, 1995 a massive earthquake registering 7.2 on the Richter scale shook Kobe, thus killing over 6,000 people and causing major damage to the city itself. Shortly after this in March, the terrorist group AUM Shinryko attacked the train system of Japan by releasing deadly sarin gas onto various lines causing over 5,000 people to seek medical attention. This incident marked the first time any major terrorist activity had occurred within Japan since World War II, and still stands today as the most severe broad attack on the nation.¹ When one considers these two events in relation to one another, an immediate link between the two incidents seems hard to make. After all, one was an unforeseeable natural disaster and the other a premeditated attack. The only common theme one can formulate between these events is that regardless of a reason, terrible, almost meaningless violence occurs, and there is nothing an average person can do to prepare himself for such events. Unsurprisingly, Murakami became intrigued with these attacks and went on to write *Underground*, a collection of essays pertaining to the sarin gas attacks.

Murakami's first formal return to the romantically-driven novel came as *Sputnik Sweetheart*, in which critics like Michael Fisch see him finally offering some solution to the detachment his characters in past novels have experienced.² Rather than conclude that violent events prevented communication, Murakami extrapolates upon the idea that people

¹Jay Rubin, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words* (London: Harvill Press, 2002), p. 239.

²Murakami Haruki *Sputnik Sweetheart*, trans. Philip Gabriel (New York: Vintage Books, 2001). Michael Fisch, "In Search of the Real: Technology, Shock, and Language in Murakami Haruki's *Sputnik Sweetheart*," *Japan Forum* 16 (2004): 361-383. Commercialization

really can relate on more than a superficial linguistic level, but only after experiencing some sort of shock, after which a person is able to understand another's condition. Instead of living in realities constructed for a small number of people detached from society, one can live in a community with others. Unfortunately, such communication only occurs when a person somehow breaks out of his conditioned state of "habituation and adaptation to the conditions of everyday life."³ Fisch develops this idea by stating that in order to function once again with others, some sort of shock must occur. He explains this shock as a "dangerous yet liberating encounter with the real." The earthquake or sarin gas attacks would be sufficient terms, in other words, for one to get back in touch with the "real" or for all practical purposes, being able to communicate with others. Fisch's assertion that through shock one can reacquire the ability to communicate with others is an interesting one, especially when taken in conjunction with Fuminobu Murakami's claim that "the hero in Murakami's stories is quite happy to live the alienated lifestyle characteristic of cosmopolitan city people."⁴ Murakami's ideas then seem to be in conflict with one another: the hero withdraws from society but by doing so he deprives himself of the opportunity to experience anything that would allow him to connect with others.

In *Dances With Sheep*, Matthew C. Stretcher asserts that:

His [the hero's] refusal to join what he considers to be a dehumanized society does gain him a modicum of freedom in his movements, it does not aid him in reconnecting with the real objects of his desire – friends and lovers from his past who helped him determine his sense of self during his youth.⁵

Stretcher does not see early Murakami (1979-1995) characters as striving to have sincere interactions with society. Their isolation is completely voluntary and in alignment with their ultimate goal of reframing and reinterpreting their past. Stretcher goes even further and later clarifies that

³Fisch, "In Search of the Real," p. 361.

⁴Fuminobu Murakami, "Murakami's postmodern world," *Japan Forum* 14/1 (2002), p. 126.

⁵Matthew C. Stretcher, *Dances with Sheep* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2002), p. 123.

the nostalgia is not recalled “in terms of pleasure and rediscovery, but of crushing sadness and loss.”⁶ Even though he does concede that Murakami has recently begun stressing that through experience and discussion of traumatic events, people get closer to meaningful interaction, he designates this as a relatively new direction for Murakami.⁷

Jay Rubin slightly contrasts this view by noting that Murakami’s descent into the self is not as meaningless as that of some of his contemporaries. He states, “[A] massive wall separates the inner core of self from the part of the mind that is most in touch with the world or reality.”⁸ The examples used to illustrate this all deal with material objects – why, for instance, does Murakami’s girl from Ipanema think about high school when she eats salads? In his book *The Music of the Words*, Rubin further defines the problem, “Endless thinking is what troubles him [the protagonist].”⁹ Yet here, Rubin focuses more on material objects that ground the hero in reality rather than interactions with other people. What Rubin’s essay lets the reader see is that even though Murakami’s characters are ostracized from society, they have moments when they function within it. In Rubin’s view, Murakami’s characters seem stagnant.

While in *Sputnik Sweetheart*, Michael Fisch argues that the main character ultimately reestablishes himself in society, the conclusion of *Norwegian Wood* leaves the reader with a much more vague idea of whether or not the narrator, Toru, becomes actively engaged in society. Critics such as Fisch acknowledge that lately Murakami’s fiction acclimates his characters into society, yet his earlier works convey the idea that communication with others is futile. By analyzing the detachedness of the hero Toru in *Norwegian Wood*, I will show that although initially Toru seems at odds with society, by the end of the novel he appears on the verge of interacting with others in a meaningful way. While Matthew Stretcher claims that the ending of *Norwegian Wood* “turn[s] the moral fantasy of love triumphant into a farce, leaving the reader as confused as the narrator about how things finally stand,” it appears that things actually do reach a resolution, albeit it an incomplete one when compared to *Sputnik*

⁶Ibid., p. 211.

⁷Ibid., p. 214.

⁸Jay Rubin, “The Other World of Haruki Murakami,” *Japan Quarterly* 39/4 (1992), p. 497.

⁹Stretcher, *Dances with Sheep*, p. 54.

Sweetheart. The narrator, now acclimated with society, actually comes to terms with his position within society. He has undergone a sense of shock, and while it most certainly is not as intense as the shock that will later inhabit Murakami's work, it hints that as early as 1989 Murakami's view on communication was changing to a more hopeful outlook. Since the plot lines of *Norwegian Wood* and *Sputnik Sweetheart* follow nearly the same course, I intend to show that Fisch's idea of "shock" is applicable in *Norwegian Wood* by first establishing the detachedness of the main character, Toru. After he experiences traumatic events, specifically the riots of 1960 and interacting with people, he manages to overcome his prior affliction and somewhat reenter the realm of meaningful interactions with people. Ultimately, communication between people is possible.

In order to show how Toru is integrated into society, we must start by characterizing Toru's detachment from others. *Norwegian Wood* begins by giving the reader a glimpse of Toru's resolution from his detachment, yet simultaneously Murakami hints to the reader that while Toru achieves some sense of closure, pangs of his past inability to communicate with others still resides inside him. Within the first page, Murakami already mentions BMW and the song "Norwegian Wood," thus giving the reader a preview of the commercialization in a globalized society.¹⁰ Brand names make up the characters' world, and Toru immediately notices internationally recognizable branded objects but also minute details. Interestingly enough, the use of names recognizable worldwide seems to unite the character with others rather than separate him from others. Despite being about to arrive in Germany, Toru is able to immediately recognize the familiar. Instead of secluding the narrator from others as will be seen shortly, these symbols actually bring him closer to others. When the stewardess comes to check on a doubled-up Toru, he describes her smile as "lovely."¹¹ He is able to notice small details. After she talks to him in German ("Auf wiedersehen" or "Goodbye"), he accordingly responds in German. Here there are no barriers in communication between the two: Toru, an active member of society, has a sincere interaction. Toru is anything but detached in this scene: he is keen to pick-up on the stewardess'

¹⁰Ian Buruma, "Turning Japanese," *The New Yorker*, December 23-26, 1996, p. 67.

¹¹Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, trans. Jay Rubin (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 4.

actions and her disposition. This is the only scene within the book with an aged Toru and it shows the reader that Toru will eventually become a part of society – what Murakami leaves a mystery is *how* he gets integrated into it.

Perplexingly enough, this scene best depicts the author's ability to connect his characters with others. The novel quickly changes pace from the present to recollecting the past. Toru, now over a decade younger and detached from society, starts to describe meticulous details of some flowers, the lake, and finally one of the main female characters, Naoko. Yet he mentions these things only in a physical sense. Although he claims that this was the age when he was in love, he hardly mentions any actual emotions.¹² What is recalled is the trivial – details that might add to the scenery, but by themselves seem irrelevant. The meaningless brand names considered in the first few pages are gone and replaced by nature. Yet nature fails to allow Toru to communicate with Naoko. Already, Murakami hints that a natural existence is not enough for modern communication. Here, Toru recalls his love Naoko, one of the leading factors to his detachment with society.

Over the course of the novel, Naoko retreats away from the city and becomes so detached from society that she can no longer function within it. The first conversation Toru recalls Naoko discussing the “field well” – something that is undetectable in the middle of a grassy field. Any person could accidentally step onto the covering of this field well and fall into it and die. This reoccurring image in Murakami's work epitomizes one's distance in society. In *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicles*, one character comments on how when in doubt of what to do, crawling down into the deepest well will help solve the problem. Logically, being in a well completely removes one from society. Ian Buruma describes the well as “a common literary image. It is a retreat into the self; it is also a retreat into the world of memory, of the past, and of death.”¹³ Not only is one allowed to think but society also forgets about the person. Naoko goes as far as to remark, “Somebody disappears all of a sudden, and they just can't find him. So then the people around here say, ‘Oh, he fell in the field well.’”¹⁴ While such seclusion might allow the organization of thoughts, it simultaneously prevents one from actively taking part in society. This example has

¹²Ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹³Buruma, “Turning Japanese,” p. 67.

¹⁴Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 6.

diametric results: either think to oneself or be a part of society. Doing both, understandably, is impossible. The choice between introversion or active participation that Toru wrestles with is depicted in its clearest form here.

All of this serves as a backdrop to the actual story. Although his voice continues to narrate, Murakami never again mentions the thirty-seven year old hunched over in the airplane. Toru quickly confides in the reader his living situation – how his parents forced him to live in a dormitory although he “would have preferred to rent an apartment and live in comfortable solitude.”¹⁵ Toru readily recognizes his inclination towards spending life alone, thus setting up a second obstacle. In addition to coping with and understanding his relationship with Naoko, Toru must overcome his distance from others. This distancing is quite a feat. Stretcher notes that “he [Murakami] continues to point not only to the irony of the isolated individual in a city of over twenty million inhabitants, but also to the powerful and invasive force of the postmodern late-capitalist consumerist state into the lives of ordinary Japan.”¹⁶ The fact that Toru is detached from society is in itself quite an accomplishment because so many people surround him. Stretcher implies that *not* being engaged with other people is something that Toru, whether willingly or unwillingly, decides to do.

Not only does Toru separate himself physically from others, but he also does so mentally with his hobbies. Upon moving into the dormitory, he comments on “[t]he walls bore pinups from girlie magazines or stolen porno movie posters.” While he expresses disgust towards these decorations, it is not too long after that he actually buys one himself. His roommate tears it from the wall saying, “I’m not too crazy about this kind of thing,” and Toru is nearly unaffected.¹⁷ Like many other attempts Toru makes to conform to the mainstream, when he encounters even the slightest barrier he resigns and gives up. Carl Cassegard defines this as staple of Murakami novels: “Even though the story lines of his novels do not lack dramatic and unexpected turns of events, the protagonists are rarely

¹⁵Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁶Matthew C. Stretcher, “Beyond ‘Pure’ Literature: Mimesis, Formula and the Postmodern in the Fiction of Haruki Murakami,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57/2 (1998), p. 362.

¹⁷Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 15.

shocked.”¹⁸ Merely trying to enter into the dominant culture is not enough to remove a person from the isolation of an object.

To make matters worse, Toru's roommate also seems to be an eccentric. In contrast to the other disorderly dormitory rooms, Storm Trooper, Toru's nickname for him, keeps the room immaculately clean.¹⁹ If this quirkiness were not enough, Storm Trooper also stutters whenever he tries to say his major: maps. These two characters were randomly assigned to be roommates, yet this pair seems entirely different from anyone else at this private institution. Living with Storm Trooper instead of a “normal” college student presents an interesting problem to the reader: either there really is no typical college student, or the more reasonable conclusion that one is responsible for his view of what is typical or culturally normal. Regardless, Toru's living situation further ostracizes him from assimilating into society's conventions and causes him to withdraw even more into himself.

In an effort to connect with fellow students, Toru complains about the bizarre activities his roommate does while he is in the room, such as waking up at 6:30 AM every morning to participate in Radio Calisthenics. While his classmates warmly receive these stories, Toru does not initially understand that these stories say very little about him. Although these stories are shocking and quirky, they tell absolutely nothing about Toru himself. Others never ask Toru about how he is doing; rather, they inquire about the latest oddity Storm Trooper has done. Whether the conversations are chosen consciously or subconsciously, they distance Toru even more from other people. Perhaps this is because we hear about all the things Storm Trooper does, while Toru passively observes. As a result, although Toru tries to interact with others, he fails because he inhabits a realm of inaction.

While all these details demonstrate some of the reasons why Toru might feel detached from society, very little has touched the heart of the issue: communication. Because of Toru's detachment, time and time again he shows a failure to communicate with others. Yet this inability to communicate with others does not always exist entirely because of him. On the first day he meets Naoko, she expresses:

¹⁸Carl Cassegard, “Haruki Murakami and the Naturalization of Modernity,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 10/1 (2000), p. 82.

¹⁹Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 15.

I can never say what I want to say...It's been like this for a while now. I try to say something, but all I get are the wrong words – the wrong words or the exact *opposite* words from what I mean.²⁰

Naoko suggests in this excerpt that her condition has not always existed, that there was a time when she had meaningful interactions with others, and furthermore, it hints at the severity of her miscommunication. It is one thing to have others not understand what Naoko says, it is another to have people think they know what she means when, in fact, the opposite is true. This scenario is similar to that of Murakami's female protagonist Sumire in *Sputnik Sweetheart* where, as Fisch points out, she has "Confusion over the functional difference between a sign and a symbol."²¹ Both female characters have trouble with the foundations of communication and consequently become so detached from society that they cease to function within it. It becomes clear to the reader that Murakami views language as a barrier. He suggests that to overcome detachedness, one has to do something more than just talk to one another – words alone cannot connect people in any meaningful way.

The detachedness both Naoko and Toru experience from society, it seems, keeps them from being able to talk to others. Toru describes how, despite knowing Naoko since high school because she was Kizuki's girlfriend, his freshman year in college marked the first time he ever really talked to her. He notes how conversation came easily when Kizuki, his best friend, was around, but the moment he left Toru plainly states, "Naoko and I had trouble talking to each other. We never knew what to talk *about*."²² This better clarifies Toru's affliction: he has had trouble since very early on communicating with others. His detached state has not recently come into existence; rather, he has never been able to function within society. Only when another person was involved could Toru communicate with Naoko. Toru, so far detached from society, could not even interact with his best friend's girlfriend.

Naoko too has trouble placing herself in society. Like Toru, from a young age she longed to move away from home. Although Naoko claims

²⁰Ibid., p. 364

²¹Fisch, "In Search of the Real," p. 364.

²²Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 22.

that she wanted to distance herself from the past in order to have a fresh beginning, the way she has conducted her life is by associating herself with Toru, a person she had known since high school. Rather than meet new people at her college, she avoids any opportunity to get involved in her school's community.²³ Toru does the same and further prevents himself from interacting with his classmates.

The characters' nonchalant attitude towards sex exemplifies their detachment from others. Sex – something that could create a meaningful bond between people – instead only makes Toru feel even more distant from others. Beginning as early as high school, Toru describes his first experience with a girl unenthusiastically while making note that, “Nothing about her really got to me.”²⁴ Casual adultery marks another way in which characters become detached from society. Instead of developing meaningful relationships over time, characters like Toru and the womanizing Nagasawa turn to sex instead of working out their problems. Like the many other traits that cause Toru's detachment from society, the more distant Toru feels from society and others, the more promiscuous he acts. Stretcher points out that “the narrator's reaction to meaningless sex is boredom and self-disgust, proving, according to Nagasawa, that the narrator is ‘an ordinary, decent guy.’”²⁵ The fact that Toru feels anxiety after meaningless sex shows that Toru's detachment is not a positive thing; it leaves him restless. Yet Toru does not realize he causes this because he is so out of touch with society. Nagasawa's revelation to Toru does nothing because Toru does not know how to interact with others. In *Norwegian Wood*, sex is not a unifying form of communication, but instead, an empty activity between people functioning as objects.

The way Toru idles away his time through Western literature and music further illustrates that he voluntarily removes himself from his Japanese home. He confides that, “I read a lot, but not a lot of different books. I like to read my favorites again and again. Back then it was Truman Capote, John Updike, Scott Fitzgerald, Raymond Chandler,” not normal Japanese authors like “Kazumi Takahashi, Kenzaburo Oe, Yukio Mishima.”²⁶ The only other people that share similar tastes to Toru are

²³Ibid., p. 27.

²⁴Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵Stretcher, “Beyond ‘Pure’ Literature,” p. 368.

²⁶Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, pp. 29-30.

Nagasawa and Naoko, both of whom are similarly detached from Japanese society. In fact, Toru affirms his friendship with Nagasawa when he learns of Toru's appreciation of *The Great Gatsby* in saying, "Well, any friend of the Gatsby is a friend of mine."²⁷ Here, for the first time, we see Toru not only meet a stranger but also begin a friendship with him. It becomes clear that Toru is not a social invalid; he understands the dynamics of how to get closer to people. His solitude and detachedness are a conscious choice.

Toru's musical choices similarly follow Western preferences. He and Naoko listen to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *Waltz for Debbie* when they spend time together. Eventually, when Naoko moves away to a psychiatric facility, she asks her roommate to play "Norwegian Wood" on acoustic guitar. When Storm Trooper leaves the dorm room, Toru hangs up pictures of Jim Morrison and Miles Davis. Ian Buruma interprets Murakami's references to Western tradition as "part of a conscious effort to expunge Japanese tradition."²⁸ Thus, Toru purposefully prefers things that other Japanese cannot readily relate to; he is the cause of his own isolation. Stretcher furthers this idea by saying, "Murakami's fiction suggests that materialism...has indeed destroyed the soul of the Japanese, preventing them from interacting with one another (or outside of) that system."²⁹ In many cases, social interactions begin by identifying with objects rather than asking questions about another's life. Relating to people solely through materialism is empty conversation that reveals little about its participants. Instead of creating a bridge linking two individuals to one another, it creates a divide of empty symbols like songs and books.

The distinction between materialistic interactions and sincere interactions with others is important. In Fisch's essay on *Sputnik Sweetheart*, he asserts, "What we need now, I'm afraid, are words that work in a new direction and an absolutely new story that will be told in those words."³⁰ In other words, Fisch envisions experiences and stories uniting people. This differs from the materialism that connects Toru and Nagasawa. While Toru and Nagasawa are able to get along with one another, we get the sense that they never really connect. They have no deeper understanding of one another; their social lives consist of going to bars and picking up

²⁷Ibid., p. 30.

²⁸Buruma, "Turning Japanese," p. 64.

²⁹Stretcher, *Dances with Sheep*, p. 18.

³⁰Fisch, "In Search of the Real," p. 364.

girls to sleep with. What facilitates these two getting together are material objects. While things undoubtedly let the two relate more easily to one another, these very same things help distance them from society. In 1960s Japan, these objects start to *become* the character's identity. Materialism, it then seems, aids people in communicating with one another if they partake in similar things. In Toru's case, he refuses to subscribe to society's popular interest, thus making him even more detached. While likes and dislikes alone are not enough to prevent a person from engaging with others, they certainly do not help the situation.

We see a perfect example of detachment when Toru goes out with Nagasawa to pick up girls. When he brings one back to the hotel room, he notes the "terrific struggle when I tried to get her undressed and into the hotel bed."³¹ The girl here tries to connect with him: she asks him "all kinds of personal questions – how many girls had I slept with? Where was I from? Which school did I go to? What kind of music did I like?"³² The girl tries to relate to Toru on all levels including the materialistic, but he has no interest in this. He views her as a thing, not a person, and thus further distances himself by at least feigning interest. Cassegard discusses how in several other Murakami works, people become objectified as simply "the wife" or "the business partner."³³ In this case, the girl is thought of merely as "the sex partner." When he later tries to justify the situation to Nagasawa's girlfriend, the best explanation he can come up with is, "It's [sleeping with girls] just something to do."³⁴ Rather than classify the activity as something meaningful, Toru removes any social significance from it.

Toru first experiences "shock" when Naoko writes him a letter explaining that she has enrolled herself at a sanatorium. Although this event does not appear startling, it shakes up the foundations of Toru's entire social world because he has few people he interacts with meaningfully on a regular basis. He describes how he felt as, "be[ing] filled with the same unbearable sadness I used to feel whenever Naoko herself stared into my eyes."³⁵ From this point onward, Toru unconsciously begins assimilation

³¹Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 42.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 43.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 207.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 44.

back into society. He starts his own narrative by gathering stories and experiencing events that causes his detached habits to begin to subside. Stretcher argues that in order to fill the missing pieces, “We see, in our encounter with the gap, a reconnection with the real, the prelinguistic.”³⁶ Simply put, the words uttered do not matter nearly as much as the actions the character performs. Perhaps the reason the girl on the bed fails to gain any meaning in Toru’s life is because she merely talks about connecting with him, rather than actually performing actions and doing so.

Shortly afterwards, another sense of “shock” occurs in Japan; students begin rioting to dismantle the schools. Toru isolates himself even more from his classmates by refusing to respond to roll in class, noting that, “By remaining silent when my name was called, I made everyone uncomfortable for a few seconds. None of the other students spoke to me, and I spoke to none of them.”³⁷ At this point, it appears that Toru is worse than ever, yet because he witnessed an event alongside all his classmates, he shares a sense of unity within society. Whether he acknowledges this or not is irrelevant. In Murakami’s *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the character Rat disappears at the end of the 1960s, which Stretcher attributes to ‘the radically changing values’ gradual rejection of – or perhaps more passively flight from ‘reality as it is.’”³⁸ Similarly, Toru, who is actively undergoing the drastic changes of the late sixties, acts in a passive way. Yet despite acting passively, the mere fact that he makes any statement is notable. Toru’s inaction during class – his miniature protest – shows that given the social circumstances of that era, not even he could escape from making some sort of statement. While Toru could easily have escaped any involvement in the movement, he is, in the end, a member. Events like the student protest cause people to participate whether they want to or not, thus forcing them to be active.

When Toru’s Euripides instructor is escorted out of the classroom by helmeted soldiers, he and Midori, a new love interest in his life, are able to bond together because of the situation.³⁹ In an interview, Buruma notes that Murakami “felt emotionally frozen by the violent radicalism as well as

³⁶Stretcher, *Dances with Sheep*, p. 113.

³⁷Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 48.

³⁸Stretcher, *Dances with Sheep*, p. 11.

³⁹Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 58.

by the chants of love and peace.”⁴⁰ This emotional frigidity Murakami talked about is reflected onto Toru and, because it has such an impact causes him to interact with others in society. The key idea is that the character feels anything – something that contrasts with the character’s unfeeling nature. Not long after the professor is escorted out, Toru goes to Midori’s to have dinner with her. The protests have put Toru in a situation he normally would not be a part of and impel him to interact with others on the basis of storytelling rather than materialism or sex.

Although Midori and Toru connect on some level by common interest like Humphrey Bogart, when she sings to Toru on her floor he confesses her song is a “musical mess.”⁴¹ It is clear that while Naoko and Toru’s relationship of isolation consisted of liking similar things, Midori and Toru must find another common ground. At face value, Midori hardly differs from Toru’s one-night stand. What makes her different to Toru, it then seems, is the shared narrative. The shock Toru undergoes removes him from his detachment and allows nonverbal communication to work where in other similar cases it had failed.

The couple later find commonality through this shock when they discuss people involved in the protests, saying “when they’re seniors they cut their hair short and go trooping to work for Mitsubisihi or IBM or Fuji Bank;” to show disgust towards their hypocritical nature. Stretcher points to a similar occurrence happening in Murakami’s *Rat Trilogy* where he states, “Two relevant points emerge from Ukuko’s experience: first, her identity, though fluid, is linked always and inexorably to the others around her; and second, these links are themselves bound to memory, experience, [and] the past.”⁴² This idea of nostalgia shows clearly why in Murakami’s world, overcoming detachment involves active participation in society. Not being involved with others harms the core of someone’s identity. In reference to George Herbert Mead, Stretcher offers further explanation by saying, “the self does not develop this capacity for self-reflexive discourse on its own, it must be created through meaningful interaction with others.”⁴³ In this case, the shock of the universities closing and constant recollection of the event brings Toru and Midori closer together.

⁴⁰Buruma, “Turning Japanese,” p. 66.

⁴¹Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 75.

⁴²Stretcher, *Dances with Sheep*, p. 119.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 120.

When Toru receives a letter from Naoko and visits her, the reader sees her detachment from society in full. Unlike Toru, Naoko has been completely sequestered from Japanese society; following the idea that shock helps one become less detached from society, she has missed out on crucial events of the student protests that have allowed Toru to engage society. This detachment is better understood when Naoko's roommate Reiko confesses, "We have just about everything we need without going to the city."⁴⁴ The world in which Naoko lives in no longer needs the "real" Japan to exist. Located in the country, people here exist happily without outside interference. Here Naoko and Reiko listen to the same pop songs over and over; nothing ever changes. This institution is a complete removal from the very society in which it is supposed to recondition its patients to reenter. No shock can ever occur because everything is safely monitored. Since Toru has begun overcoming his detachment from society, he paradoxically begins creating distance between him and Naoko.

During this visit, Murakami hints at how communication between individuals can occur. Reiko takes Toru aside and describes that the reason she is in this institution is because an adolescent she gave piano lessons to accused her of raping her during a lesson. Reiko's shocking incident allows her to be closer to Toru than talking about frivolous pop songs could ever allow. For nearly the first time in the novel, Toru responds to a story saying, "I understand...But I think you can do it. I think you can go outside and make it."⁴⁵ Even as early as here, Toru recognizes the importance of being a part of society. Fisch describes a similar incident in *Sputnik Sweetheart* where Miu's hair suddenly turns white as "confrontation with the real as a possibility for the emergence of the new story. Miu's story demonstrates unequivocally, that the encounter with *achiragawa* [surreal elements] inaugurates a shock in which the mechanism of repression is disabled and anamnesis is actualized."⁴⁶ Miu's white hair and Reiko's enrollment in the institution both precipitated some sort of action. The characters could no longer remain inactive and passive. Shocking events bring the characters together on a level beyond linguistic communication.

⁴⁴Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 100.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴⁶Fisch, "In Search of the Real," p. 375.

On returning to college life, Toru's boss tells him of his weekend conquests with girls.⁴⁷ While one might easily overlook this detail as excessive, it marks one of the few times Toru interacts with someone outside his close acquaintances. In conjunction with the riots, hearing Reiko's story has furthered Toru's integration. Stories about shocking events help Toru relate to others because they focus on action rather than mere words. Toru also manages to start understanding Midori in a more thorough manner. She asks him to explain the English subjunctive to her, and Toru does in a way that she understands. Real communication between two people is possible even though verbal games make it challenging. Toru can understand his boss on some level. His detachment diminishes with the more shock he undergoes, whether it be through first hand experience or through stories.

In contrast to Naoko, Toru actually does activities with Midori. Jay Rubin summarizes Murakami's outlook by commenting, "Civilization means transmission."⁴⁸ Since Naoko is no longer a part of society, she is thus no longer a part of civilization. She has no stories to transmit to Toru so the two grow apart. On the other hand, Toru and Midori reside in a relationship of action: they ride the Japanese trains from place to place, visit Midori's father, eat sushi, and cook for one another.⁴⁹ Compared to Naoko and Toru's Sunday ritual of taking long walks around the city together, it becomes apparent that Toru's antisocial, solitary tendencies lessen. Oddly enough, this happens because of the mere fact that he is out and doing things. Like the way his isolation only created more isolation, his activeness with Midori continually requires more and more participation, thus lessening his detachment from others. Toru manages even to communicate on several levels with Midori's father in a hospital room. He gets the dying man to eat, something he refused to do for many days on end.⁵⁰ Such talk is not perfect: upon leaving, Midori's father says "Ueno Station," and hopes Toru understands him. Seats notes that the usage of language in Murakami's work is part of the "critical-fiction thematic" he writes that "a concentration on the changing language of the novel becomes more closely correlated with an imagined 'colloquial' style," and notes the time period as

⁴⁷Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 165.

⁴⁸Rubin, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, p. 34.

⁴⁹Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 180.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 192.

“something which ultimately recuperates meaning.”⁵¹ Murakami shows in the hospital that although communication is possible, unless something unites the two people, the discourse will not be entirely understood on all levels.

Stretcher also illustrates the sentiment of misunderstanding: “Murakami Haruki plays a structuralist game with his readers, creating texts which are obviously and meticulously formulaic, but with results and purposes distinctly postmodern in character.”⁵² While glimpses are seen of Toru communicating rather successfully with people, moments like this one with the father (“Would you like something to drink?” Toru asks the old man, to which he replies, “Cucumber,” thus showing how words are cumbersome), illustrate that communication at times appears as if “true” meaning can be found but, in the postmodern vein, it recognizes that this is merely an illusion.⁵³ Words cannot (and need not) entirely convey meaning. When Toru’s detachment is taken into account where he has the inability to communicate with anyone at all, the progress he has made up until this point is because of mainly shared experiences, not verbal exchanges. Shock, not words, is what helps bring Toru back into society. Words always have the possibility of being misunderstood.

As Toru gets more involved with Midori, his behavior changes. He goes to a little league game and afterwards finds himself unable to read in solitude. After reading in frustration at a jazz café, Toru ponders, “How many Sundays – how many hundreds of Sundays like this – lay ahead of me? ‘Quiet, peaceful, and lonely.’”⁵⁴ The Toru that matriculated into college has already started to change into a character that craves attention from others. The solitude and introversion that characterized Toru at the beginning of the story has been replaced by socialization in order to fully function in society. Cassegard cautions that given time, if a shocking event does not occur, a person becomes naturalized and acclimated to his situation.⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, Toru has gotten used to his set of

⁵¹Michael Seats, *Murakami Haruki* (Maryland: Lexington, 2006), p. 37.

⁵²Stretcher, “Beyond ‘Pure’ Literature,” p. 354.

⁵³Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 191.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁵⁵Cassegard, “Haruki Murakami and the Naturalization of Modernity,” p. 84.

circumstances: no trembles or traces of shock have occurred in his world for a while, so he begins to resort back to his old isolation.

During dinner with Nagasawa and his girlfriend, Nagasawa makes the generalization that “where Watanabe and I are alike is, we don’t give a damn if nobody understands us.”⁵⁶ Toru angrily responds, “I don’t feel it’s O.K. if nobody understands me. I’ve got people I want to understand and be understood by. But aside from those few, well, I figure it’s kind of hopeless...I *do* care if people understand me.”⁵⁷ This statement best summarizes Toru’s views with being part of society: although he feels speech ultimately prevents communication rather than facilitates it, he attempts it anyway. Like the shock that sparks Toru to be more involved with others, action is the main driving force of communicating with others. When Toru was feeding Midori’s father, he scarcely said a word; what drove them to have a kind of connection was Toru watching and responding to him. Once again, the passivity that once exemplified Toru has dissolved into activity.

In an aside, Toru explains how two years later, Nagasawa’s girlfriend, Hatsumi, committed suicide. This is yet another example of shock driving a character to change the way he acts in order to adjust to the situation. Nagasawa, a man who only a page ago proclaimed how he did not need anyone, writes Toru an emotional letter that states, “Hatsumi’s death has extinguished something. This is unbearably sad and painful, even to me.”⁵⁸ Again, action drives the characters to interact with one another. Without Hatsumi’s death, Toru would have never again heard from Nagasawa. If anyone were immune to the power of shock establishing a person’s place within society, it would be Nagasawa. Fuminobu Murakami labels Nagasawa as, “merely curious to see if he can succeed in a chosen role. Everything is a game for him and in this respect he is a quintessentially postmodern character.”⁵⁹ Yet his letter written to Toru reinforces the idea that shocking events – stories – force even the most detached people, like the womanizing Nagasawa, to get involved with others. When detached from society, life was merely a game to Nagasawa but after witnessing shock, he has sobered to the idea of needing others.

⁵⁶Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 209.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵⁹Murakami, “Murakami’s Postmodern World,” p. 135.

After returning to the main story, we learn how powerful an effect Toru's presence has on Hatsumi when she states, "I was an only child, but the whole time I was growing up I never once felt deprived or wished I had brother or sisters. I was satisfied being alone. But all of a sudden, shooting pool with you, I had this feeling like I wished I had had an elder sister like you – really chic."⁶⁰ Since Toru has started going out and being a part of Japanese culture, he has had a powerful influence on those around him. In response to Hatsumi's question about whether people change, Toru responds, "You mean, like, they go out into society and get their butts kicked and grow up kind of thing."⁶¹ It seems here that Toru is talking about the shocking events he has recently undergone. This statement reaffirms the sentiment that only by participating in society can one become a part of it; the impediments a person encounters make him more relatable to others.

What the older Toru complains about is all the death that happened during the late 1960s, yet no revolutionary changes actually occurred. He states, "The 'changes' that came were just two-dimensional stage sets, background without substance or meaning."⁶² By explaining these changes, Toru signals that no universal shock was occurring in his world. Although he became more active in society and better functions within it, the shock he experienced was on a much smaller level than that of the sarin gas attacks that would change Murakami's life in the mid-1990s. Toru's shock allows him to communicate with a much smaller group of people – specifically people within his own age group – in other words, people who had experienced similar events. Yet here he cues the reader that nothing allows him to become integrated with all of Japan. He gets over his detachment from others his age, but not in any timeless sense.

Toru makes the statement, "I'm an inborn optimist," after he confides in Naoko that he is going to move out of the dorms.⁶³ This is shockingly in contrast with Toru's earlier tone. While Toru's behavior beforehand was certainly not pessimistic, his confession of optimism offers a stark contrast. Yet, taken in conjunction with Toru's approach towards his finals, "1970 – A year with a whole new sound to it – came along, and that

⁶⁰Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 215.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 239.

put an end to my teen years.”⁶⁴ Toru’s original detachment from society – where he identifies more with books and music than people – is clearly being left behind him. While he will never identify with the pop culture references that make up his world, they no longer impede him from interacting with other people.

Although his saying, “Now I could start my new life with a new state of mind,” shows Toru’s reintegration to society, he quickly remembers that he neglected to tell Midori he moved.⁶⁵ Almost as quickly as Toru stopped being isolated, he resumes, saying, “I saw no one and talk to almost no one” while he waits for two responses to his letters.⁶⁶ Despite his frustration, Toru does continue to have meaningful interactions with others – his landlord invites him to tea – thus showing that his isolation or detachment from society, even though it might reoccur, is never as complete as it was in the beginning of the story. Having interacted with society and undergone shocking events, Toru is now a part of society. Like in *Sputnik Sweetheart* where Fisch observes, “When individuals do attempt to communicate...it is misunderstanding and imperfect communication rather than perfect communication that characterizes their interaction and serves as the grounds for incomprehensible alienation and loneliness.”⁶⁷ To think that people can continually interact by relating their shocking experiences, however, seems unrealistic; people need to eventually fall back on the imperfections of language. Without a sense of shock – a common reality on which to base language – communication is difficult.

Yet Toru’s detachedness from society never completely fades. When he sees Midori for the first time in weeks, he fails to notice her drastically different new haircut. After this he learns of the plans she had to spend the night with him and that she wishes never to talk to him again. Following this, however, we see Toru of his own accord writing letters and calling Midori in attempt to be around people. Toru takes action, even though he opines, “I spent this whole month with this hopeless sense of isolation.”⁶⁸ Toru no longer is content being detached from Midori and Naoko, and not having either instills yet another instance of shock within

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 239.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 241.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 243.

⁶⁷Fisch, “In Search of the Real,” p. 364.

⁶⁸Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*, p. 255.

him. Soon after, he discusses Mozart, Ravel, Georges Bataille and Boris Vian with a fellow employee. Rather than using his interest in music and literature to distance himself from others, Toru once again relates to people by using these ideas. Rather than undergo an arrest of detachment and cease actively living his life, Toru pursues the company of others. Unsurprisingly, as Toru continues to engage society by being an active member, Midori resumes conversation with him. The possibility of losing his close friends shocks Toru and prevents him from regressing to past habits.

Midori explicitly describes how her use of “shock” was meant to make Toru engage her: “I wanted to give you a good kick in the pants.”⁶⁹ She does this through the unbearable silence she puts Toru through. In the following scene, Toru declares to her, “I love you...from the bottom of my heart.”⁷⁰ This is the first time in the book that Toru portrays any internal feeling besides loneliness. Furthermore, this feeling is no longer entirely framed around Toru himself; it is directed towards another person. If being detached from society means caring only about oneself, then a sign of overcoming detachment is conveying feelings towards others.

The final shock Toru undergoes is the death of Naoko in conjunction with her ex-roommate Reiko coming to visit him. Naoko’s death causes Toru to become a vagrant along Japan’s countryside. When Toru is at his worst, a young fisherman comes and helps him recover his now poor health by offering him food, drink, and money, but he describes this as “not money...it’s my feelings.”⁷¹ Even in instances where Toru tries to escape society, he is still a part of it. One should also note that a shocking event again causes Toru to take action. While being in touch with society mainly means being with others, it can also mean confronting and reacting to situations and not merely sitting in inactivity.

When Reiko comes over, the two perform a “funeral” for Naoko by playing songs on the guitar. Again, the reader is bombarded with names of musicians like “The Beatles, Ravel, Rodgers and Hart, Gershwin, Bob Dylan...” yet this time, the music serves a deeper meaning than the triviality it held earlier in the book.⁷² Here, the two discuss the meaning of the most notable song in the book, “Norwegian Wood,” commenting,

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 261.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 262.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 275.

⁷²Ibid., p. 289.

“Those guys sure knew something about the sadness of life and gentleness.”⁷³ These songs gain meaning not because of the “non-sense” and “non-meaning of lyrics,” but rather because both Reiko and Toru shared the experience of losing Naoko. The songs themselves act as a symbol and without any context would be meaningless. Since these two characters share similar aspects of their respective realities, they are able to understand the symbolism of the songs.

In the final scene, Murakami leaves the reader disoriented by having Toru telephone Midori, pleading, “I have to talk to you...I have a million things to talk to you about. A million things we have to talk about.”⁷⁴ This confession comes immediately after his brief encounter with Reiko telling him to, “Be happy.” Finally, Toru inhabits a world where other people care and have feelings towards him. Unlike one of the opening scenes with only Toru and Naoko walking through the park, here Toru is in the middle of a giant city with “people walking by to nowhere.” Through the course of several shocking events – some of these taking place on a national level while others a microscopic – the reader gets a sense that although Toru is not with Midori, he is about to “begin everything from the beginning.” Since Toru is no longer detached from society, he can now take part in a real relationship. Like in *Sputnik Sweetheart* where Fisch notes that “Boku will discover a new self-awareness and emerge from a lifetime of alienation,” the reader gets the feeling that Toru too has adjusted as a member of Japanese society. Although communication is imperfect, through shock and stories, meaning can be conveyed.

⁷³Ibid., p. 289.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 293.

THE HEALING PROCESS IN TWO RELIGIOUS WORLDS¹

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Introduction

Human hands have many senses, according to various knowledge systems such as anatomy, physiology, anthropology, and philosophy, but also magic, technology, and religion. Moreover, accompanying the history of societies, manual gestures have always had an important role, both in daily and religious life.

Among the countless religious meanings transmitted through manual gestures, the healing gesture, because of its wide presence in many cultures, allows for comparative study among different forms of religious expression. Through the healing gesture it is possible to grasp ideas related to the body that help explain health and illness, good and evil, disease and cure, life and death, pleasure and pain. In Brazil, Kardecist Spiritism and the Japanese religion of the Universal Messianic Church are relevant examples of the use of hands in religious healing. As a result, this study inquires into a conception of the body that exists during the religious healing that takes place through the hands, with the laying-on of hands (or *passe*), and with the *Johrei* Messianic technique.

Research on human gestures is rare. Mauss' study on physical techniques is very broad and allows for an understanding of the healing gesture as a physical healing technique, in addition to other techniques mentioned by him.² Using his or her hands, the healer expresses a "belief not only in the physical effectiveness, but also the moral, magical and ritualistic aspects of certain acts."³ In this sense, "the technical act, physical act, and the magical-religious act are blended by the healer."⁴ Therefore, the

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²Marcel Mauss, "Técnicas corporais," in *Sociologia e Antropologia*, vol. 2 (São Paulo: EPU/EDUSP, [1934] 1974), pp. 209-233.

³Ibid., p. 216.

⁴Ibid., p. 217.

healing gesture shares, with other physical techniques, the attribute of being a physio-psycho-sociological phenomenon.

As Rodrigues explains, “Illnesses, along with their causes, healing practices, and diagnoses are integral parts of a social universe and are, therefore, inseparable parts of our magical, cosmological and religious conceptions.”⁵ In this sense, like medicine, the religious healing itself holds the concept of the illness, the healing process, the power of the healer, and the most appropriate procedures for expressing the overall conception of the human body. Moreover, these conceptions express cultural contents and social ties through their own language.

Regarding the forms of religious expression chosen for this study, the use of hands is a central healing practice for the relief of physical and mental illnesses. However, they have their own historical path, both in the context of their origins and in Brazilian society. Their doctrines, theodicies, rituals, and cosmologies grant specific attributes to the hands, which should be considered in the description of their healing powers. They also translate Brazilian cultural content, shared collectively, and the way each of them confronts the consequences of modernization.⁶

Kardecist Spiritism arrived in Brazil around 1860 through a group of French immigrants interested in the Spiritist theme and it soon spread among Brazilians. However, non-Kardecist Spiritist practices were already known among Brazilians through Mesmerism and homeopathy.⁷ It should be emphasized that these schools of thought were previously focused on healing practices and were, at that time, integral parts of medicine. Consequently, when Kardec’s doctrine arrived in Brazil, the soil was fertile for receiving it and also for determining the predominant nature that this

⁵José Carlos Rodrigues, *Tabu do corpo* (Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé, 1980), p. 90.

⁶The collection of data for this study was done in 2004 and 2005, in Rio Claro, São Paulo, Brazil. This city has thirteen Spiritist Centers, one Universal Messianic Church headquarter and three *Johrei* Centers. The methods used to collect the data were a systematic observation of the healing practices studied and interviews with followers.

⁷Eduardo Araia, *Espiritismo: doutrina de fé e ciência* (São Paulo: Ática, 1996).

religion would assume among us: therapeutic means, for which the laying-on of hands is the primary form of expression.⁸

The Universal Messianic Church has had a different path in our country, one connected to Japanese immigration. Like other religious movements, it has served the Japanese community and its descendants as a religion of preservation of their ethnic and cultural assets.⁹ However, in the early 1960s, many of these religious movements started reaching out to the rest of the Brazilian population, achieving relative success. This was the case with some of the so-called Japanese “new-sects” such as, Seicho-no-ie, Perfect Liberty, and the Messianic Church, which integrated the new religious movements among the Brazilian people and according to Camargo’s classification, transformed them into universal religions, open to the conversion of everybody.¹⁰

All of these religions show considerably strong therapeutic functions. However, only the Messianic Church uses “healing through hands” (*johrei*).¹¹ Also, over the past few years, this practice has earned its own place: *Johrei* Centers have spread to various neighborhoods in cities where the Messianic have established themselves. This has reinforced their therapeutic vocation.

Sociology of religion and sociological and anthropological studies regarding the body provide the theoretical framework for this study. Along

⁸Cândido P. F. de Camargo et al., *Kardecismo e Umbanda* (São Paulo: Pioneira, 1961).

⁹Idem et al., *Católicos, protestantes, espíritas* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1973).

¹⁰Takashi Maeyama, *O imigrante e a religião* (M.A. diss., São Paulo: Escola de Sociologia e Política, 1967); Hiranclair. R. Gonçalves, *Perfect Liberty: o fascínio de uma religião japonesa no Brasil* (M.A. diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 1998); Idem, *O fascínio do Johrei: um estudo sobre a religião messiânica no Brasil* (Ph.D. diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2003); and Leila Marrach B. de Albuquerque, *Seicho-no-ie do Brasil: agradecimento, obediência e salvação* (São Paulo: Annablume; FAPESP, 1999); and Camargo et al., *Católicos, protestantes, espíritas*.

¹¹Mokichi Okada was a member of Ōmoto kyō, which also has a practice of laying-on of hands. Other Japanese religious movements, like Mahikari, whose founder was member of Universal Messianic Church, use the practice of laying-on of hands.

with this, we also give some attention to the Western world's process of scientization and the arrival of post-modernity, as well as the status of religions in Brazil today viewed as components of the larger historical context where the healing gesture is found.

Bodies and Gestures

It is only recently that the social sciences have started looking at the human body as a collectively built corporeity. Although Hertz and Mauss directed their attention in the first half of the twentieth century to the cultural dimensions of the body, their efforts have not resulted in their own tradition of studies.¹² In other words, a sociological or anthropological perspective of the body has not become naturalized as it has been for religion, economy, knowledge, and so many other fields of social science.

Therefore, bodies became corporeity only with the social movements of the 1960s which affected many sectors of Western culture and behavior. Such movements favored the emergence of an appropriate context for studies that, as Rodrigues teaches, "...made evident the gigantic difference between the human and the merely animal body."¹³ In this process, those pioneering studies were invaluable for illuminating the historical, sociological, and anthropological dimensions of corporeity.

Perhaps the best study comes from Mauss, who dared to debate the biological and psychological dimensions of the corporeal techniques, attempting to tear down the barriers traditionally built between these domains and the social sciences.¹⁴ The theoretical effort of Mauss emphasizes the importance of education and the imitation of the constitution of corporeities, of *habitus*, and its variations among societies.

¹²Robert Hertz, "A preeminência da mão direita: um estudo sobre a polaridade religiosa," *Religião e Sociedade* 6 ([1909] 1980), pp. 99-128; and Marcel Mauss, "Técnicas corporais," *Sociologia e Antropologia*, vol. 2 (São Paulo: EPU/EDUSP [1934] 1974).

¹³José Carlos Rodrigues, "Os corpos na Antropologia," in Maria Cecília de S. Minayo and Carlos E. A. Coimbra Jr., org, *Críticas e atuantes: Ciências Sociais e Humanas em Saúde na América Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: FIOCRUZ, 2005), p. 159.

¹⁴Marcel Mauss, "Técnicas corporais," *Sociologia e Antropologia*, vol. 2 (São Paulo: EPU/EDUSP [1934] 1974).

The thesis on the collective and spiritual superimposition over the organic and individual is already present in Durkheim's study on suicide.¹⁵ This author identifies social and historical reasons for such an intimate act with obvious consequences to the body. Following in the French School tradition, Rodrigues states that it is less in the separations and more in the encounters between the biological and the social, in the interpenetrations between the individual and the collective, and in the correspondence between animal and human, present in all collective effervescences, that the human body materializes itself.¹⁶ Paraphrasing Rodrigues, it is within these circumstances that culture reverberates within the flesh.¹⁷

These circumstances are also what make possible the symbolic efficacy of the various healing systems. That is, individual experiences earn meaning because they all participate in the narrative of a coherent system which explains not only the universe, but health and illness as well. This is valid equally from the most scientific of medicines to the most alternative of therapies.

Culture reverberates within the flesh, as well as within our mystical states. These states are reached through corporeal techniques. They are a "biological means of entering into *communication with God*," says Mauss.¹⁸ I have identified three large groups as gateways to alternate states of consciousness typical of mystical experiences: techniques centered on *breathing*, on *movements*, and on *food*. Individually or combined, these groups give us the yogas, meditations, pilgrimages, dances, fasts, various diets, and the ingestion of herbs. Accompanying these techniques, our *senses* contribute with the emission of sounds, the inhalation of aromas, and the control of vision. All of this demonstrates how we are, in fact, biochemical and symbolic at the same time.

Like this, facts taken as inexplicable by isolated sciences, like death by witchcraft or healing by faith, can be understood in these hybrid terrains, *impure*, in that they disobey the Cartesian separations such as,

¹⁵Emile Durkheim, *O suicídio* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, [1897] 2000).

¹⁶José Carlos Rodrigues, "Os corpos na Antropologia," in Maria Cecília de S. Minayo and Carlos E. A. Coimbra Jr., orgs., *Críticas e atuantes: Ciências Sociais e Humanas em Saúde na América Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: FIOCRUZ, 2005), pp. 157-182.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁸Mauss, *Técnicas corporais*, p. 233.

body and mind, science and belief, man and nature, individual and society, spirit and matter. That is to say, these facts are contrary to the ideological substrata of the civilized model of modernity.

In summary, *sickness*, *health*, *illness*, and *cure* have their own religious explanations and, such as, they are culturally determined. In this way, they allow for an infinite range of definitions, beyond the debate regarding whether the practices involved are “scientific or unscientific.”

The use of hands during religious healing is part of a group of signs that has been considered natural, but that is, in truth, anchored in a theodicy. Like the corporeal contacts (the postures, aromas, physical appearance, facial expressions, the movement of body parts, and the focus of the eye), the position of the hands expresses a socially shared language.¹⁹ Through the hands, the priest blesses his followers at the end of the mass. Asking for the blessing of a father, older relative, or godfather involves gestures with the hands, followed by wishes for good health.

Hertz's study, *The pre-eminence of the right hand: a study of religious polarity*, based on a plentiful array of ethnographic material, discusses the polarity between the right and left hand.²⁰ The author argues that the opposition between the right and left hand carries cultural meanings which contrast them, such as: good and bad character, intellectual retention and mistake, good and bad luck, the sacred and the profane. Based on examples within a religious context, Hertz denaturalizes the opposition between hands and confers to them the characteristics of social institution.

Ramm-Bonvitt, in his study on the *mudras*, presents a wide inventory of the use of hands among various Indian cultural expressions such as dance, iconography, and yoga.²¹ He highlights the importance of hand gestures in their healing system. Creating a comparison with Western cultures, he assesses the devaluation of hand gestures within Christianity:

The scorn shown regarding the language of gestures in the West can be understood starting with its history and the feelings of the

¹⁹José Carlos Rodrigues, *Tabu do Corpo* (Rio de Janeiro, Achiamé, 1980), p. 99.

²⁰Robert Hertz, “A preeminência da mão direita: um estudo sobre a polaridade religiosa,” *Religião e Sociedade* 6 (1909; 1980): 99-128.

²¹Ingrid Ramm-Bonwitt, *Mudras: As mãos como símbolo do Cosmo* (São Paulo: Pensamento, 1987).

Western world devotees. The Western Christian has always considered the body as an adversary, an obstacle on the path to salvation.²²

However, through traditions distant from Christianity, or even by their re-readings, as in the case of Kardecist Spiritism, the healing gesture remains in the West and occupies the obscure left by both Christian and scientific rationality.

Science and Religion

The consensus of modernity, as we know, produced a new approach with regard to interpreting human experiences by trying to eliminate the sacred dimension from its narratives. Since the sixteenth century, the advance of science and the profane with regard to traditions, common sense, and religion has brought to the West a process of rationalization that is marked by a significant change in our conception of the world, humanity, and earth. We have, therefore, the decline of the feeling of integration of mankind in relation to nature and the cosmos on both the physical and psychic levels. This is the disenchantment of the world.

Furthermore, this process expelled from reality its incalculable dimensions, planted the foundation of scientific knowledge, and has been the basis of a duel between science and religion which has lasted four-hundred years.

In this process, health and the treatment of illness were re-defined in the sphere of scientific knowledge based on the canons of materialism which are supported by their own empirical evidence. Obviously, religious healings were not immune to this movement, and, moreover, it was expected that rational thinking would completely replace these enchanted religious rituals regarding the mind and body. It can be said, however, that in this crusade, the religious procedures did not disappear, but that they hid themselves. Niches such as oral traditions, rites of passage, traditional religiosity, and the ceremonies and cultural legacy of minorities gave refuge to a wide range of pre-modern knowledge which, in spite of everything, became fragmented.

²²Ibid., p. 266.

The increasing scientization of life has obviously brought positive results, such as technological advances, control over the forces of nature, longevity, and well-being for those that have the resources to reap their benefits. However, science has shown itself incapable of dealing with the mystical and metaphysical dimensions of human existence. Hobsbawm, while evaluating changes brought by the typical rationale of the capitalist system, offers an interesting hypothesis regarding this subject.²³ He affirms that capitalism, although built based on market forces and focused on the search for advantage by the individual, always depends on relationships and social ties outside of its core objectives. He also suggests that, at the start of capitalism, family values, work habits, loyalty, and obedience nourished ways of behavior far from the theory of rational-choice based on the maximization of profit.

Presenting a similar argument, Ravetz says that the transmission and construction of scientific knowledge happened until the middle of the twentieth century in a context that used community ties, master-disciple relationships, and apprenticeship along with rigorous methodologies.²⁴ These reflections allow us to suggest that the enchanted stories, traditions, and theodicies typical of these social arrangements could still be present and remain plausible today. Paraphrasing Hobsbawm, we could say that science won not only because it is scientific.²⁵

Specifically in the field of health, it is within the practice of medicine that *powerful non-scientific forces* have been noticed. These behaviors distance themselves from the canons of scientific methodology.²⁶ That is to say, over the course of the rationalization and scientization of life which was implemented with modernity, it is likely that doctors and patients have maintained habits and behaviors *inherited from the past*, in addition to instrumental scientific rationality. In this way, the cosmic

²³Eric Hobsbawm, *Era dos extremos: o breve século XX: 1914-1991* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995).

²⁴Jerome Ravetz, *Scientific Knowledge and its Social Problems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

²⁵Eric Hobsbawm, op. cit., *Era dos extremos*, p. 336.

²⁶Marco Antônio Porto, "O Método está nu! Lupicínio, Latour e a medicina moderna," *Revista da Sociedade Brasileira de História da Ciência* 12 (1994): 99-106.

narratives and theodicies would not have been silenced, but still inspire people, guide life, teach how to heal, and explain death.

In the 1980s, the disappearance of this *historic fund* would reveal difficulties in operating without such an inheritance. That is, the absence of the old value systems and customs would make capitalism problematic, science utilitarian, the medicines mercenary, and, paradoxically, would initiate the so-called modernity crises. This loss was felt and reflected in movements focused on the recovery of fragments of the past, kept conscientiously by the dispossessed of modernity.

Hobsbawm refers to the erosion of the historical advantages of capitalism and to the beginning of neo-liberalism as a cultural revolution.²⁷ During this revolution, starting in the 1960s, he identifies a return to the values previous to modernity: a sense of national or religious ethnic identity, and nostalgia for community, family, and nature.

In truth, the post-modern condition is born with the discrediting of an entire civilization. It is within this wide social movement that alternative therapies and complementary medicines are developed, bringing with them rationalities and knowledge from other cultures which do not avoid the sacred, the religious, or, in the end, the mystery; it is the re-enchantment of the world.

Brazilian Religions in the Post-Modern Context

The cultural changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century brought an interesting lesson to the social sciences: they showed that planners and sociologists ignored the wise words of Weber when the German sociologist alerted us to the involuntary consequences of collective actions. Modern thinkers waited for the disappearance of religion. However, it came back with a thousand faces, playing with such serious things as the care of the mind and body.

To start, it is necessary to emphasize the reduction in the number of followers of the traditional Christian religions. Catholicism, Brazil's traditional and official religion, has been declining since the 1970s. Along with Catholicism stands Lutheranism, with a noticeable decline, although less than that of Catholicism. To complete this picture, the Umbanda religion, very connected to our national identity, shows a relative retraction

²⁷Eric Hobsbawm, *Era dos extremos: o breve século XX: 1914-1991* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995).

as well. In truth, this would be the inevitable destiny of the major traditional religions when confronted with the modernization process.²⁸

However, there are religions that have been growing over the past twenty years. It should be emphasized here that primarily Pentecostalism has shown an extraordinary vigor. Along with them is one category that has been intriguing observers, the *without religion*; they also present quite a significant growth rate. Moreover, the Spiritists show constant growth during the same period. So, if on the one hand, the emptying of traditional religions is attributed to the de-traditionalizing of Brazilian society, on the other hand there is also a mobilization of the population, now free of ties, in search of other religious expressions.

The secularization and decline of the traditions freed individuals of their religious commitments and opened space for a flood of diverse religious experiences. This space was partially occupied by new religious movements, an apparently heteroclite group of religious expressions originating from various cultural traditions with a strong *Eastern* influence.

Among the various religious forms of expression which nurture new religious movements, there are some which carry out the function of preserving the cultural heritage of their respective ethnic group.²⁹ This function is especially prominent among religions of Japanese origin. However, in the 1960s, these religions stopped catering only to the immigrant community and their descendents and opened themselves to the rest of Brazilian society, transforming them into universal religions, opened to the conversion of all people.³⁰ In this process, the Universal Messianic

²⁸ Antônio F. Pierucci, “‘Bye bye, Brasil’ – O declínio das religiões tradicionais no Censo 2000,” *Estudos Avançados* 18/52 (2004): 17-28.

²⁹ Cândido P.F. de Camargo et al., *Católicos, protestantes, espíritas* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1973).

³⁰ Hiranclair R. Gonçalves, *Perfect Liberty: o fascínio de uma religião japonesa no Brasil* (M.A. diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 1998); Idem, *O fascínio do Johrei: um estudo sobre a religião messiânica no Brasil* (Ph.D. diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2003); and Leila Marrach B. de Albuquerque, *Seicho-no-ie do Brasil: agradecimento, obediência e salvação* (São Paulo: Annablume; FAPESP, 1999).

Church of Brazil stands out. According to 2000 census data, it has 109,000 members, the majority of which are Brazilians without Japanese ancestry.³¹

Among the various characteristics of the new religious movements already discussed, it is important for this study to highlight the value placed on physical contact as a means of compensation for and rejection of intellectualized religion.³² The importance of the body resulted in the development of a group of practices and therapeutic knowledge impregnated with religiosity. That is, in the new religious movements, the physical and therapeutic aspects unfold into physical and mental care through a variety of paths: environmental, oriental medicine, non-conventional psychology, and natural treatments, along with prayers, rituals, dances, meditations, and other procedures full of religiosity; all focused on the same objectives. Soares describes a common trait to these manifestations: the use of the category *energy* as a passport, which identifies the militant environmentalist, the alternative therapist or the follower of *Eastern religions*.³³

In truth, the energy category, surrounded by all of the typical misunderstandings when it circulates among the wide range of new religious movements, seems to resuscitate the idea of a vitalism that enlivens and organizes living beings, which is contrary to the perception that they are an inert mass defined by mechanistic laws.

³¹Hirancelair R. Gonçalves, *O fascínio do Johrei: um estudo sobre a religião messiânica no Brasil* (Ph.D. diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2003).

³²Leila Marrach B. de Albuquerque, "Estrutura e dinâmica dos novos movimentos religiosos," in Beatriz Muniz de Souza and Luiz Mauro S. Martino, orgs, *Sociologia da Religião e mudança social* (São Paulo: Paulus, 2004), pp. 139-150.

³³Luiz Eduardo Soares, "Religioso por natureza: cultura alternativa e misticismo ecológico no Brasil," *O rigor da Indisciplina* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará, 1994), pp. 189-212.

Religious Worlds and Healing Procedures

THE UNIVERSAL MESSIANIC CHURCH OF BRAZIL

The Universal Messianic Church of Brazil is one of the most prominent forms of expression of a religious movement which appeared in Japan in 1935 under the leadership of Mokichi Okada.³⁴ Historically speaking, Japan was undergoing a huge social transformation at that time which created an environment very favorable to the emergence of new sects. In fact, many new religious movements appeared in Japan during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. These religions are characterized by their critical evaluation of the new paths followed in Japan, through syncretic proposals that combine traditional Japanese religions, Christianity, and Western thought.

In all of them there is a hagiography of founders filled with stories of material and spiritual suffering that favor a radical religious experience leading to the creation of cults which had varying degrees of success. Pereira analyzes these phenomena from the point of view of the traumatic personal events that led to the mystical experiences of both founders of Oomoto kyo and Tenrikyo.³⁵ Moreover, depending on the political ability of the leadership, there were also varying degrees of acceptance by the Japanese state.

This was also the case with Mokichi Okada and the Messianic Religion.³⁶ His impoverished childhood, poor health in his youth, and his arts studies strongly influenced his doctrine. His dialogue with the historical situation of Japan was done, basically, through his refusal to accept the

³⁴The Brazilian rendering of the founder's name is Mokiti Okada and he is called Meishu-Sama (Lord of Light) by his followers all over the world.

³⁵Ronan Alves Pereira, *Possessão por espírito e inovação cultural: a experiência religiosa das japonesas Miki Nakayama e Nao Degushi* (São Paulo: Aliança Cultural Brasil-Japão; Massao Ohno, 1992).

³⁶Peter B. Clarke, "Movimentos milenaristas japoneses e o papel do Brasil na construção do paraíso na Terra. A Igreja Messiânica Mundial (Sekai Yusei Kyo)," *Ilha. Revista de Antropologia* 2/2 (2000): 104-123; and Hiranclair R. Gonçalves, *O fascínio do Johrei: um estudo sobre a religião messiânica no Brasil* (PhD diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2003).

principles of modernization, especially those resulting from modern science. His main argument states that the cultures and religions that arrived in Japan from the West did not bring happiness because they were an escape from the natural order. According to Okada, humanity needed the Light of the Orient to find happiness. He expressed this message symbolically through images of the movement of the Sun and the natural order of nature. Mokichi Okada himself was born in a neighborhood east of Tokyo. These would be signs to reinforce his mission of bringing an era of peace, harmony, and happiness.

As with other founders of the new Japanese sects, Mokichi Okada presents his doctrine as an ultra-religion which, without objecting to the others, tries to integrate and adapt them to a new era. He argues that, for each era, God sends his messenger. In this way, everyone avoids confrontation with the already established religions.

Built upon the three pillars of truth, goodness, and beauty, the Messianic Church has developed many activities, some of which are: the healing of diseases through *johrei*, natural agriculture through an organic substract called Nutri-Bokashi, the process of raising Korin birds, the cultivation of the arts through Ikebana courses, and the collection of masterpieces in their own museums. Its objective is to offer its followers the end of misery, disease, and conflict, with a view towards the construction of a Terrestrial Paradise, referred to by Mokichi Okada as the New Era. Because of these characteristics, the Messianic Church doctrine, in some aspects, resembles the alternative ideas of many new religious movements. It should also be mentioned that, from the time of the first Mokichi Okada teachings up to the present, the Messianic Church has suffered much dissension within Japan which, in some cases, has been reproduced in Brazil.³⁷

In the messianic doctrine, the concept of purification is extremely important, with regards to both the material world and the spiritual world. Therefore, disease, conflict, and poverty, as well as natural catastrophes are thought of as a reflection of a stain on the spiritual world produced by bad thoughts. Evaluated by this movement, the history of humanity reveals to us that the scientific process has generated these stains through the use of

³⁷Hiranclair R. Gonçalves, *O fascínio do Johrei: um estudo sobre a religião messiânica no Brasil*, (Ph.D. diss., São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2003), pp. 83-86.

agrochemicals in agriculture, materialism in medicine, un-natural eating habits in health, and the accumulation of garbage and the polluting of the environment. It still glimpses a Final Judgment, equivalent to natural selection, in order to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth.³⁸

As we can observe in the following teachings, the history of the creation of the world follows this purpose:

The universe is constituted of three fundamental elements: Sun, Moon, and Earth, formed, respectively, by the essence of fire, water, and earth, generating the Spiritual World, the Atmospheric World, and the Material World, which merge and harmonize perfectly. Until now, only the Atmospheric and Material World[s] have been recognized. In fact, the Spiritual World is more important than the other two combined, because it constitutes the fundamental force...This ignorance has led humanity to not believe in the invisible and, as a result, Evil has appeared...Therefore, we can conclude that the mission of Evil was the creation of a material culture. As a consequence, at this moment, God's plan marks the advent and realization of a Terrestrial Paradise through the construction of a spiritual culture, which will totally eliminate Evil.³⁹

Johrei is also presented within the context of human history. It emphasizes the freedom of hands movement, inherent to all human beings. Found in one of their theological pieces was the following explanation:

These free hands aren't only natural tools for building things. They are creative hands for preserving nature...Since long ago, man has used his hands to assist the ill. According to the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth, when coming across a sick person, put his hands over the person and the illness was cured. Meishu-Sama speaks of the mysterious value of these free hands, emphasizing the higher meaning of the spirituality that shines in them. With

³⁸Igreja Messiânica Mundial do Brasil (hereafter IMMB), *Curso para iniciantes* 1 (Cenário atual da humanidade [s.l.], 1998).

³⁹Idem, *Curso para iniciantes* 2 (O caminho para reequilíbrio do planeta [s.l.], 1998), pp. 8-9.

them, we realize the divine act, *johrei*, the technique of the Messianic Church...Man has different characteristics from other mammals. With his free hands, he has the power of putting himself in the position of being a mediator of the mystery.⁴⁰

A belief in reincarnation is also a part of their theological construction. However, it is not emphasized in their teachings among Brazilians.

Starting from this cosmogony, the Messianic Church constructs an anthropological presupposition to their doctrine, in which the man-nature relationship has a predominant role throughout history, theology, and human destiny. In the Messianic Church, there is a basis for restrictions to material advancements resulting from sciences related to medicine, food, chemical agriculture, and the medical system, all of which are impregnated by pollutants and toxins, and are distant from the forces of nature.

However, science is not completely eliminated from the procedures of Meishu-Sama. In many parts of the world, the Messianic Church encourages a scientific evaluation of its practices through scientific research. As Kawai explains:

Through his scientific quest, man penetrates, each time more deeply, into the micro and macro world, until he reaches a union between theoretical science and conceptual religion. Meishu-Sama referred to this important issue, teaching that the religious concept cannot and must not stand only as a statement of faith...This is an important means of reviving the spirit of man to God's existence and to grant faith in him.⁴¹

Johrei

Johrei is a compound word of two ideograms, *Joh* (to purify) and *Rei* (spirit), and it has been translated as "baptism by fire." Its performance has

⁴⁰Naoyuki Kawai, *O homem, ser religioso* (São Paulo: Fundação Messiânica do Brasil, 1972), pp. 29-30.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 40.

taken on many features and has received different names throughout Messianic history, before assuming its current name and practice.⁴²

Johrei is offered at the Messianic Church headquarters and at *Johrei* Centers, in the praying room itself, which offers easy visibility to passers-by. There, people are always available to apply *johrei*. The official definition states that *johrei* is a “scientific-religious activity which aims at eradicating the latent causes of humanity’s suffering, manifesting surprising miracles.”⁴³

It is taught that the follower is capable of giving *johrei* after he or she receives a type of reliquary, called an *ohikari*, which is given by the institution after a course that grants the power to channel divine energy through the hands.⁴⁴ Moreover, this reliquary must always be with the channeller, as a pendant, hung around the neck at chest height. Its use is surrounded by taboos, such as: it cannot be lent; it should be taken off only for bathing; it cannot be mixed with other objects; if it falls down, it must go through rituals towards its re-consecration.

The Messianic doctrine states that *johrei* is the transmission of a ball of light existent in Meishu-Sama’s body, from the channeller to the receiver. The *ohikari*, in turn, is the representation of his Light. As Mokichi Okada explains:

The world of the *ohikari* and I are connected by a spiritual link of an invisible nature. Through this link, the Light that radiates through me flows incessantly to the *ohikari* and to the minister’s body, being then radiated through the palms of his hands.⁴⁵

It is recommended by the Messianic Church that, when giving *Johrei*, the channeller should maintain an attitude of prayer, in silence,

⁴²Hiranclair R. Gonçalves, *O fascínio do Johrei: um estudo sobre a religião messiânica no Brasil* (Ph.D. diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2003), pp. 83-86.

⁴³IMMB, *Curso para iniciantes* 2 (O caminho para reequilíbrio do planeta, [s.l.], 1998), p. 5.

⁴⁴IMMB, *Curso para iniciantes* 3 (O fundador, sua missão e o johrei, [s.l.], 1998), p. 9-10.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6.

because this is “a sacred act that connects us to God and Meishu-Sama.”⁴⁶ And also, with regard to body posture and the positioning of hands, they teach, “We should let the arms relax, without swinging the hands, and the fingers should be lightly united. It is essential that the Light flow freely.” The *johrei* session lasts between ten and thirty minutes and the distance between the channeller and the receiver ranges from thirty centimeters to one meter. The performance of the channeller and receiver follows some rules: initially *johrei* is given to the front part of the receiver’s body, and afterwards to his back. It is also important to note that there are certain points to where the energy should be directed, such as the head, neck, shoulders, upper back, kidneys, and the inguinal region.⁴⁷

However, *johrei* does not need the presence of the receiver to be applied. The followers of the Messianic Church say that *johrei* can be directed towards a person who is at a long distance.⁴⁸

Finally, through this practice it is expected that the stains of the spiritual body will be erased. These stains are thought to materialize in the physical body as toxins and impurities, typical of a life in disagreement with the laws of nature.

Spiritism in Brazil

Spiritism appeared in France in the middle of the twentieth century, starting with studies conducted by educationalist, Léon Hyppolite Dénizart Rivail, also known under the pen name of Allan Kardec, regarding unusual phenomena such as psychographic messages, table-turning, and talking tables (a precursor to the Ouiji board). Inspired by the strong scientific climate of European positivism, Kardec tries to give to his analysis the character of a rational critique, which leads him to define Spiritism as philosophy, science, and religion all-in-one.

As Camargo teaches, this spiritual doctrine is based on two central ideas: reincarnation and medianimity.⁴⁹ The idea of reincarnation predicts an evolution of humanity through a successive process of incarnations,

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁷“Johrei e ciência: juntos pelo bem da humanidade,” *Johrei, a energia do novo milênio* (São Paulo: Mythos, 2001), p. 19.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁹Cândido P.F. de Camargo et al., *Católicos, protestantes, espíritas* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1973).

which is responsible for making progressive steps towards spiritual perfection. Spiritism has its foundation in the karmic law, certainly of Hindu inspiration, which confers to the individual responsibility for their spiritual growth. Therefore, Spiritism is a system of thought based on the idea of evolution. The theory of medianimity assumes the possibility of communication with spirits of the dead through mediums. In this process, the living and the dead interact: spirits of light through teaching and healing; evil spirits through obsessions and *encostos*.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the author explains that these assumptions were tempered by both Christian ethics and the teachings of the Gospels. Spiritism considers Christ to be the greatest incarnated entity and values the practice of charity and developing a strong vocation to volunteer work. Moreover, Hindu ideas were also reinterpreted within the same framework so that the karmic doctrine does not apply to all life forms as it does with metempsychosis, but is only restricted to humans.

It is interesting to call attention to this aspect. The idea of reincarnation, in its original form in India, presupposes that all beings – minerals, vegetables, and animals – are animated and reincarnate. In addition, they go from one kingdom to another without implying an idea of evolution and without a specific direction that involves the material world. This certainly has had consequences for the idea of nature and marks the attitude of man regarding his natural environment. On the other hand, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, man distinguishes himself from the rest of nature through Original Sin – his only defining attribute. Animals, plants, and minerals are not *animated* in that they do not have a soul. The transposition of the idea of reincarnation to the West was constrained by the Christian idea of Original Sin, which led to the abandoning of metempsychosis and to the restriction of reincarnation to humans alone.

As part of the virtues of charity, we find the treatment and cure of diseases through the laying-on of hands. On the other hand, in the *Book of Mediums*, Kardec deals with healing mediums by differentiating them from the mesmerisers, and explains:

We will now only remark that this type of medianimity consists principally in the gift possessed by certain persons, of healing by

⁵⁰*Encostos* are a form of evil spirit which stays with the person, encouraging them to behave badly.

the laying-on of hands, by the look, by a mere gesture, and without the help of medication...It is evident that the animal-magnetic fluid has much to do with it; but when this phenomenon is carefully examined, we perceive that there is in it something more...The intervention of an occult power, which constitutes medianimity, becomes unmistakable under certain circumstances; especially when we consider that the majority of those who may be regarded as undoubted healing mediums have recourse to prayer; for prayer is unquestionably an *invocation* as well as an *evocation*.⁵¹

The arrival of Kardec's doctrine in Brazil was facilitated by the presence, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, of a group of homeopaths concerned with healing issues. As a matter of fact, Kardec gives an account of his dialogue with the spirit of Hahnemann, and the support offered for his work.⁵² In this way, Kardec's approach becomes a part of the same world of restless preoccupations regarding magnetism, homeopathy, and spiritual healings. This is illustrated in the following passage from Maes' psychographic work:

Therefore, Homeopathy is already a medicine of psychic order, capable of draining from the disorderly mind the harmful residues of the ill, in perfect sympathy with Spiritism, which explains to man, "to sin no more" and, like this, to enjoy your wellbeing!⁵³

When transposed to Brazil, Spiritism had some of its aspects emphasized to the detriment of others. In this way, the scientific and experimental dimensions of spiritual phenomena as well as the accompanying philosophical reflections were made secondary in relation to the religious aspects. Chico Xavier himself, through the spirit Emmanuel, contrast:

⁵¹Allan Kardec, *The Mediums' Book: Being the Sequel to "The Spirits' Book"* (Rio de Janeiro: Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1986), pp. 185-186, (http://www.sgny.org/main/Books/The_Mediums_Book.pdf).

⁵²Idem, *Obras póstumas* (São Paulo: LAKE, 1988).

⁵³Hercílio Maes, *A missão do espiritismo* (São Paulo: Freitas Bastos, 1974).

While in Europe, the Spiritualist idea was only an object of observation and research in the laboratory, or of grand, sterile discussions on philosophical terrain...Spiritism penetrates Brazil with all the characteristics of a resuscitated Christianity, uplifting souls to the dawn of a new faith.⁵⁴

It is common to classify Kardec's Spiritism in Brazil as part of the group of psychic religions that, along with Umbanda, form a gradual syncretism, in which the extreme opposite poles would be the "white table" of Spiritism at one end and the Umbanda "*terreiro*" at the other.⁵⁵ The centrality of possession in this classification marks one of the Spiritist aspects of Brazilian society. However, as Stoll shows, another form of expression, which blends with Catholicism, is also possible.⁵⁶ According to Stoll, it was due to the Catholic ethos that Brazilian Spiritism shaped its identity in opposition to the French scientific model. Certainly, both traditions are present in many of the Spiritist expressions established in Brazil. As this author demonstrates, in 1998, almost half of Brazil's practicing Catholics believed in reincarnation. In addition, mediums from all over Brazil are currently reinforcing this trend by putting forward an emphasis on self-help and New Age thinking.

SPIRITUAL PASSE

Chico Xavier expressed the *passe* in this way:

Jesus, with his sweet and compassionate hands, revived in a country blessed by his teachings, wonderful healings at the time of the apostles. Self-sacrificing medium healers...healing the ill,

⁵⁴Francisco Cândido Xavier, *Brasil, coração do mundo, pátria do Evangelho* (Rio de Janeiro: Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1938), p. 178.

⁵⁵Cândido P.F. de Camargo et al., *Católicos, protestantes, espíritas* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1973), p. 27.

⁵⁶Sandra J. Stoll, "Narrativas biográficas: a construção da identidade espírita no Brasil e sua fragmentação," *Estudos Avançados* 18/52 (2004): 181-92.

these new disciples of the Lord re-established the spirit of the people for the grand task.⁵⁷

It is, therefore, from this cultural melting pot that the *passe* receives its efficacy. In Spiritism, the cure for physical illness is given by *passes*, prayers and recipes of medicinal teas, or more specialized formulas, possibly provided by a faculty of medium healers. Mediums are people endowed with a special power to communicate with the spirits. However, as the Spiritist doctrine states, we all have these powers, but, in some people they manifest spontaneously and in others they need to be developed. Because of this, there are courses that define and orient this practice. Allan Kardec had already addressed the topic of healing:

If you magnetize with the intention of healing, for instance, and evoke a good Spirit who is interested in you and in your patient, he will increase the force of your will, steer the energy flow, and give you the abilities necessary.⁵⁸

In this explanation, the three factors responsible for healing are given: man's magnetic power, the help of spirits, and the will to heal.

Healing through the *passe* is done by the medium, guiding his hands over the ill or the region of the illness while maintaining a short distance from the body. Its duration is, according to teachings, equal to "One very slow 'Our Father' (approximately two minutes)."⁵⁹ The treatment can be done with the palm of the hands, the tips of the fingers, or with a light touch. A stronger contact such as through friction or hugging is inadvisable. While the patient should be sitting or, if necessary, lying down, the medium must stand or sit. In addition, *passes* can be longitudinal, rotary or dispersive, with each technique leading to different results.⁶⁰

In summary, the *passe* should be done in a quiet and discrete place called a *passe* chamber, with little light, in order to avoid curiosity and the

⁵⁷Francisco Cândido Xavier, *Brasil, coração do mundo, pátria do Evangelho* (Rio de Janeiro: Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1938), p. 177.

⁵⁸Aurélio A. Valente, *Sessões práticas e doutrinárias do Espiritismo* (Brasília: Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1990), p. 106.

⁵⁹Casa dos Espíritos, *Apostila do passe* (Rio Claro, São Paulo), p. 3.

⁶⁰Valente, *Sessões práticas e doutrinárias do Espiritismo*, pp. 107-108.

dispersion of attention. The medium must be silent, and maintain an attitude of reflection and prayer.

Medium Divaldo Franco explains:

In the field of energy exchange, the *passe* signifies what the blood transfusion represents to the exchange of red blood corpuscles, which helps the circulatory system. The *passe* is a donation of energy that we put within reach of the ones with deficiencies, in a way that they can have their vital centers re-stimulated and, as a result, recover their equilibrium or their health, if it were the case...It is a transfusion of energy of the donor. The *passe* which we apply in the Spirit Centers, is the result of a tuning with Superior Spirits. It is helpful to think of it as more of a mental tuning in, rather than as a connection for the purpose of embodiment.⁶¹

The *passe* is based on the presupposition of the existence of a universal flow of energy, or “fluid” that permeates the carnal body as well as the spirit, with strong healing powers, when it is transmitted appropriately. The spiritists teach that:

The incarnate or disincarnate spirit is the propelling agent that infiltrates a deteriorating body with part of the fluidic substance of its sheath. Healing happens through the substitution of an unhealthy molecule with a healthy molecule. Therefore the healing power will be, for obvious reasons, based on of the purity of the projected substance and on the donor’s will, which, the greater it is, the greater will be the fluidic emission, and more penetration power will be given to the fluid.⁶²

In fact, the causes of and responsibility for illness belong to man himself due to a disorderly life of alcohol use, cigarettes, drugs or wild sex, as well as sinful attitudes, addictions, pride, vanity, etc. or karmic

⁶¹Divaldo Franco, “Diretrizes e segurança: passes, perguntas e respostas,” *Presença Espírita* (s.l.), p. 44.

⁶²Casa dos Espíritas, *Apostila do passe* (Rio Claro, São Paulo), p. 2

inheritance from other incarnations. Conversely, the absence of these factors is attributed to a life of happiness.

The healing gesture is emphatically attributed to antiquity, particularly among the people of Egypt and Greece. Jesus is always remembered by the laying-on of his hands over the sick. The history – which contemplates the obscurantism of the Middle Ages, Mesmer's investigations, and Kardec's research – grants to the *passe* a cosmological dimension. In addition, part of the teachings of the *passe* involves a description of the yogic *chakras*, understood as centers of vital force through which the universal cosmic fluid permeates the human body. In a sense, they create an invisible map of the human body composed of the following centers, or *chakras*: crown, third eye, throat, heart, solar plexus, sacral, and root chakras.

Moreover, the scientific rhetoric is woven into the Kardecist language, as Greenfield explains:

Spiritism is invariably presented as a science that codifies the wider laws of the invisible world. Scientific terminology is used in the discussion of reincarnation, karma, and spiritual evolution and the basic beliefs are presented as laws.⁶³

However, this can be regarded as one more analogy between religions, precepts, and scientific presuppositions rather than a precise scientific approach towards the facts.

Corporeities and Healing Techniques

The learning of healing gestures and the corporeity's associated with them happens, as with other corporeal techniques, through many sources. These range from the most formal, such as courses and religious bibliography readings, to the most informal, such as living together, storytelling, imitation, and apprenticeship. Through healing gestures, the body becomes sacred, achieving distinctive power in both *johrei* and Spiritism. To heal and be healed by hands, the body gains dimensions out of the everyday code.

⁶³Sidney M. Greenfield, *Cirurgias do além: pesquisas antropológicas sobre curas espirituais* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999), p. 87.

This sacredness expands throughout such space and confers to it special meanings. Among the Messianic, meaning is derived from a historic process defined by dualities such as Oriental/Occidental, Eastern/Western, and traditional/modern to explain illness, misfortune, and human suffering. On the other hand, for the Spiritists, the care of the healer grants to the space special characteristics, proper for the performance of the healing gesture. However, for both religions you can heal at a distance, applying the *passe* or *johrei*. On the other hand, something still distinguishes them regarding space: the *passe* is applied in a place that evokes discretion and reflection. For *johrei*, there is no such worry and it even seems that public exposure is almost a part of its procedure, considering that places where *johrei* is applied are easily seen from the street.

In the Universal Messianic Church, the corporeities are trapped within the duality of natural versus anti-natural, which involves this and other lives. This naturalization of the care of the body has, as a basis, a rejection of the transformations brought by the process of modernization. As a result, this religion produces bodies with cosmic dimensions, granted by the energies of the natural elements of earth, water, and fire. The sum of these elements produces divine energy, or divine light, granted only by Meishu-Sama – he grants it to man through the healing gesture.

The loss of the natural state is attributed to a historic process, which brought impurities, toxins, and illnesses. Through the healing gesture, a natural life that refuses modern innovation returns history back to its intended direction and the body returns to being healthy. In other words, both history and body recover to their natural state. In summary, the hands are instruments for man to recover his primordial nature, through the divine energy granted to Meishu-Sama. The ideal of the body, for the Messianic, is in nature.

In Kardec's doctrine, the body is trapped by the accountability required for actions conducted in this and other lives. In this way, the condition of the body is a consequence of what has occurred with the spirit and perispirit [or aura] among the living and the dead. Moreover, the body is full of fluids and energies mobilized by the will and desire through medianimity. Illness would be the result of the tension that exists between free-will and karma. Therefore, the body has a moral dimension which, for Spiritists, is the result of a combination of choices and destiny, which affects the perispirit either through illness or healing.

The healing gesture is an attribute of all people, from the beginning, because we are all mediums. The psychic experience of healing,

sacred because it is exceptional, confers to the body sacred attributes through spirits, fluids, and energies. It is present throughout all history, both visible and invisible, and is received in a variety of expressions. Consequently, the gift of healing is democratically available to all of humanity from time immemorial, because we all possess energies and fluids. In Spiritism, the healing gesture is more of a symbol than an act of healing power for the benefit of all mankind.

Although the idea of energy is a category of central understanding for both religions – both *johrei* and the *passe* mobilize energies – this idea presents different attributes to each of them. In Meishu-Sama's doctrine, energies originate from the kingdom of nature, according to definitions of reality typical of pre-modern cultural traditions. They express a resuscitation of tradition. On the other hand, among the Spiritists, the energies are clearly from the supernatural kingdom, based on a conception of the world which understands sacred and profane dimensions. As Soares has already highlighted, the idea of energy is an important common trait within alternative therapeutic-religious expressions.⁶⁴ However, its strong presence in Kardecism, beginning the nineteenth century, suggests that the "idea of energy" was a category of crucial understanding to religions born after the scientific revolution.

The attributes of the idea of energy in both religions depict the mode in which each religion confronts their disenchantment with the world brought about by modernity and science. Energy symbolically represents the dialogue between these religions with the scientific universe. It establishes a relationship between the enchanted and disenchanted worlds by offering definitions of the sacred and profane with characteristics typical of the cultural and historical period in which these different religions were born, and from where they became plausible.

In this way, among the Spiritists, the idea of energy approximates the vitalistic model that was very present in the European intellectual scene at the end of the nineteenth century. They carry a triumphant conception of science, which promises a better life through a control of nature (remember, it was Kardec that used to carry out experiments). On the other hand, the Messianics are completely against the scientific interventions of man in the

⁶⁴Luiz Eduardo Soares, "Religioso por natureza: cultura alternativa e misticismo ecológico no Brasil," in *O rigor da indisciplina* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará, 1994), pp. 189-212.

world, seeing them as a deviation from the natural state. However, they do not discard the word of science when it is evaluating or legitimizing the power of *johrei*. These would then be an expression of a critical and also post-modern science, which is breaking down the barriers between scientific and religious thinking, especially within the alternative movement.

In fact, their relationship to medicine demonstrates very well the dispositions of each when forced to face scientific achievements: for the Spiritists, the *passe* does not lead, absolutely, to the abandoning of medicine. They are very careful to advise the continuity of medical treatments, allopathic or homeopathic, in addition to the spiritual. In contrast, for the Messianics, the dropping of medicine and other scientific resources is part of their spiritual care, an essential part of a healthy and good life.

Triumphalists on one side and post-modernists on the other, introduce in this dialogue with science corporeities typical of their participation in the history of modernity. For both, the body is inscribed with the idea of paleo-knowledge as vital energy, natural elements, fluids, ethereal forces, wills, desires, spirits, perispirits, *encostos*, and healing powers, innate or granted. In one case, they are in harmony with a progressive science and, in the other, in opposition to a threatening science. In both, science was again re-signified in the field of theodicy, which either legitimizes or discredits science. These would be ways to tolerate modernity and let science exist.

GANGURO IN JAPANESE YOUTH CULTURE: SELF-IDENTITY IN CULTURAL CONFLICT

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Introduction

This paper reports a study of the *ganguro* phenomenon² as a new fashion style³ prevailing among young Japanese girls in some Japanese

¹The research presented in this paper was conducted with the support of the Spelman Bush-Hewlett Grant Program (Dr. Anne B. Warner, director), Spelman College Museum of Fine Art: *irona rozeal brown: a³...black on both sides* (Dr. Andrea D. Barnwell, director), and Department of Foreign Languages at Spelman College (Dr. Anthony Dahl, chair). This research project would have been impossible without the Japanese participants of University of Tokyo (directed by Dr. Kairong Yang) and Kyoritsu Women's University (directed by Professor Hisako Yanaka). Special thanks also go to the participants in this research project at Spelman College: Tiffany N. Tyson, Jason Woody, Charli Kemp, Chris Shaw, Sheena Young, Aryen Moore-Alston, Joseph Barden, and Erin Aisha Williams.

²By imitating their idols Lauryn Hill and TLC (see footnote 17), *ganguro* girls want to make themselves look like black Americans. Signs posted outside hair salons advertise the newly popular "buraku" (black) or "afuro" (afro) hairstyles. Also, in the cosmetics aisles of mainstream supermarkets, dark beige powders and tanning lotions are sold. In pursuit of a special color beyond tan, they frequently visit tanning salons, use sunlamps, or smother their faces in brown make-up. Because of their limited means, some girls even color their entire faces with a brown magic marker. "Yamanba" is another name for *ganguro*. Yamanba, "mountain grandmother," is the name given to a mythical hag said to haunt the Japanese mountains.

³*Ganguro*, meaning "black face" in Japanese, became a popular fashion style spreading among some Japanese teenage girls. The basic characteristics of this fashion style are bleached-blond hair and a deep tan, produced by tanning beds or make-up. *Ganguro* girls intend to produce the look of a tanned, blond California beach girl look or that of an African-American woman. They wear particular accessories like high platform

major metropolitan areas. Most previous Japanese social and cultural studies⁴ only described the phenomenon, without exploring the sources and nature of such a social and cultural development. However, this study not only describes the phenomenon, but also investigates the personal motives for some Japanese girls to practice *ganguro*, potential social and cultural consequences of such a practice, the unavoidable conflict between this new youth culture and the traditional one, the influence and impact of *ganguro* on the current younger Japanese generation's social attitude and behavior, and the relationship between such a subculture and the Japanese mainstream culture. It assumes that *ganguro* girls intend to identify themselves as free individuals departing from the social behaviors and cultural values as established or commonly accepted in Japanese society. The research project relied on the direct input and feedback from some young Japanese students about their understanding of *ganguro*. Sixty-six participants from two Japanese universities in this research project were given a questionnaire covering the most relevant questions regarding the issues under investigation. In addition, this research project involved several organized discussions among several African-American students about their views and attitudes toward *ganguro* girls. One of the most

shoes or boots, purikura photo stickers, and cellular phones. Japanese metropolitan areas like the Shibuya and Ikebukuro districts of Tokyo are the center of *ganguro* fashion. This fashion goes against the usual Japanese standards of female beauty, which calls for skin as white as possible. This fashion is said to have begun in the mid 1990s, starting with a popular tanned Okinawa singer named Amuro Namie (see footnote 16).

⁴Several previous studies of the hip-hop impact on Japanese youth culture and Japanese pop culture include Sir George Bailey Sansom, *A History of Japan* (Kent: Dawson, 1978); Wilhelm Heine, *With Perry to Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990); Boleslaw Szczesniak, ed., *The Opening of Japan: A Diary of Discovery in Far East, 1853-1856* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962); Kate Klippensteen, *Ganguro Girls: The Japanese "Black Face"* (Hungary: Kőnemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2000); Rebecca Mead, "Shopping Rebellion," *The New Yorker*, March 18, 2002, pp. 104-121; and Kinga Talarowska-Kacprzak, "Media and the Construction of the Ganguro Trend in Japan," *Journal of Mundane Behavior* 2/1 (2001): 92-105.

important findings of the study indicates that such a self-identity is unavoidably in conflict with Japanese traditional culture and society.

Hip-Hop as a Communicative Tool for Self-Expression

A dynamically expressive verbal art form known as rap music first appeared in the inner city streets of New York during the late 1970s. Rap music was deeply rooted in the rich African-American socio-cultural continuum, and, as a particular art form, it became known as the verbal expression of a contemporary youth culture. Rap music initially became popular among young African-Americans, but later it had become an outstanding pop culture called “hip-hop.”⁵ As Marriott points out, “‘Hip-hop’ is the total expression, in attitude, dress, dance, graffiti, art, and music of an ever growing African-American youth subculture which challenges the status quo and moves them into a crucible of change.”⁶ Using rap music as an artistic and cultural form, African-American youths have developed a powerful communicative tool for self-expression.

With a “blend of reality and fiction, rap is a contemporary response to the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America.”⁷ Decades later, hip-hop culture still remains a very present and

⁵Rap music has become the most prominent genre of music in America today since it first appeared in the early 1970s. Hip-hop music originated as the voice of African-Americans who were largely oppressed and confined to the urban ghettos. For these people, hip-hop was a form of expression they had previously been denied. Rap carried on the African-American oral tradition and reintroduced the importance of music with something to say. Hip-hop culture, comprised of rap music, graffiti art, break dancing, ‘b-boy’ fashion and a rebellious attitude, has blown from its cradle in New York City across the globe.

⁶Michael Marriott, “Hip-hop’s Hectic Takeover,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 3/3 (1990): 207-216. Marriott specifically points out that the African-American oppressed use rap music, part of “hip-hop” culture, to make their voices heard in order to change their status quo.

⁷Geneva Smitherman, *Talkin’ and Testifyin’: The Language of Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), p. 1; and Tricia Rose, *Black Noise* (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1994), p. 2. These authors emphasize that rap is a representative and explicit display of the realistic problems of black urban life in contemporary America.

most popular expressive art form. This is mainly because of the fact that hip-hop is a representation of the indigenous socio-cultural form of a rich African-American tradition, and this strong tradition continues to function as the socio-cultural background for rap artists to dramatically voice their concerns about issues that speak to the young urban African-American population.⁸ Sager calls rap music “rhythmic American poetry.”⁹

With its powerful socio-cultural influence, hip-hop culture has made an indelible impact not only on the African-American community, but also on the American community as a whole. One of the most important reasons for hip-hop culture to have been accepted and appreciated by the general American community is that more and more young Americans, black and white alike, find socio-psychological self-expression, thought provoking verbal dexterity, emotionally involving and explicit content, and outward physical expressions or body language as saliently conveyed within rap or hip-hop. Rap not only has become the language of hip-hop culture, but also has entered mainstream American culture because of its significant socio-cultural and socio-psychological effects. As often observed, hip-hop influence keeps growing and spreading itself to the global community. Today, all over the world, more and more young people make idols of rap artists or hip-hop culture in order to express themselves and make their voices heard.

***Ganguro* as a Subculture in Japanese Society**

Ganguro, which literally means “black face” in Japanese, has emerged as a trend of new fashion style among some Japanese girls in big

According to them, rap music is used as a communicative tool for those who intend to make a positive change.

⁸ James Bernard, “Rap is Testimonial to Black Pride,” *Billboard* 24 (November 1990), p. 11. Bernard believes that hip-hop, as an art form, is deeply rooted in a rich African-American tradition and expresses the difficulties and problems that the young urban African-Americans face in their everyday life.

⁹ Mike Sager, “The World According to America’s Most-Wanted Rapper,” *Rolling Stone* (October 1990), p. 78. Sager regards rap as a particular type of literary work that enters mainstream American culture.

cities like Tokyo.¹⁰ As often observed, some Japanese girls, especially teenage girls, adopt this new fashion style for promoting a unique individual expression of “being a woman.” They wear boots with solid platform soles over ten centimeters high, brightly colored tight mini-skirts, have blonde or white hair, and wear make-up that shimmers. Some of them even have their faces and necks tanned or blackened, often highlighted by white make-up, to look like black women. In today’s Japanese fashion crazed culture, such a *ganguro* look stands out dramatically as a style entirely unique to Japan.

The phenomenon of being *ganguro* is actually not entirely new in Japanese society. As noted by Barnwell, as early as the 1840s, a popular form of entertainment by blackface performers’ ridiculous attire and outlandish skits had widespread appeal in Japan to entertain the Japanese commissioners, who “enjoyed the imitations of the Negro and laughed very heartily.”¹¹ As a renowned artist, Iona Rozeal Brown¹² devised a theme

¹⁰“Black face,” also often called “dark face,” means *ganguro* girls’ faces are darkened to the color of football pigskin, their eyes are ringed with stark white panda make-up, and their hair is dried, fried and blown to the side. *Ganguro* girls make their faces blackened to look like black women. Some observers suggest that this *ganguro* fashion is also a representation of the yamanba, a Japanese folk figure whose name translates roughly as “monster mountain woman.”

¹¹ Andrea D. Barnwell, “Guilty (Blackfaced) Pleasures,” *Iona Rozeal Brown: a³...black on both sides* (Atlanta: Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 2004). Barnwell, director of Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, reviews the history of “black face” in Japan and some previous studies of the phenomenon in today’s Japan. See also Boleslaw Szczesniak, ed., *The Opening of Japan: A Diary of Discovery in the Far East, 1853-1856* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 153. Szczesniak mentions that as early as in the 1840s, “black face” already appeared for comedic entertainment in Japan.

¹²Iona Rozeal Brown is one of the nation’s most exciting emerging artists. She explores the theme of a³, an afro-asiatic allegory, in her first major solo project ‘black on both sides’ at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in 2004. Brown’s work is heavily influenced by the geisha, courtesans and artists depicted in seventeenth century Ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Her subjects are also influenced by twenty-first century popular culture.

after she traveled to Japan in 2001. The theme she particularly devised for her paintings is named “a³,” the artist’s shorthand for ‘*afro-asiatic allegory*.’ Inspired by the young Japanese girls with drastically darkened faces, at Spelman College in 2004 Brown exhibited her paintings,¹³ entitled “a³...*black on both sides*,” exploring the global influence of hip-hop, commercialism, and African-American culture as fetish. More than forty works in Brown’s exhibition examine many provocative issues such as the history of black face performance traditions in Japan and the current fascination with hip-hop among Japanese youth. *Ganguro* began to appear as a fashion style in Japan in early 1990s and remains popular among some Japanese teenage girls.¹⁴ By means of their outlandish fashions, platform shoes, darkened faces, dyed hair and eccentric white make-up, *ganguro* girls distinguish themselves in conservative Japanese society. Barnwell specifically mentions several speculations, among which some suggest that *ganguro* girls are using such fashions to rebel against wearing traditional school uniforms in order to express their individuality.¹⁵ Others suggest that a Japanese singer and model, Namie Amuro, who became substantially popular in Japan in the 1990s, was the initial stimulus for *ganguro* girls when she performed with darkened skin.¹⁶ Still others suggest that some

¹³The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art presented *Iona Rozeal Brown: a³...black on both sides* in 2004. Brown’s paintings are well known as an unprecedented mixture of anonymous courtesans, geisha, and other Japanese subjects in black faces. Her paintings particularly address the global influence of hip-hop, commercialism, and African-American culture as fetish, and her works as exhibited explore many provocative issues such as black face performances in earlier Japan and hip-hop impact on contemporary Japanese youth culture.

¹⁴Rebecca Mead, “Shopping Rebellion,” *The New Yorker*, (March 18, 2002), pp. 104-121. Mead mentions as early as in the 1990s, *ganguro* was first recognized as a new fashion style being popular among some Japanese teenage girls in big cities like Tokyo.

¹⁵Andrea D. Barnwell, “Guilty (Blackfaced) Pleasures,” *Iona Rozeal Brown: a³...black on both sides* (Atlanta: Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 2004).

¹⁶Namie Amuro was known as one of the most popular singers in Japan during the 1990s and perhaps the most successful of all time. Amuro’s musical talent and dance ability combined with her characteristic uncanny

Japanese teenagers, inspired by the perceived coolness, want to be *ganguro* girls by imitating African-American hip-hop acts that they admire and emulate popular performers like Lauryn Hill and TLC.¹⁷

stage presence has gained fame all around the world. She became the best of the Japanese music industry and perhaps the first Japanese sensation. As one of the best known singers and models in Japan, especially when she performed with her face blackened, Amuro became a popular idol of many Japanese teenage girls. Some researchers in Japanese social and/or cultural studies speculate that Ai Iijima was also a great influence on *ganguro* girls. Ai Iijima was known as an adult video star. She had light brown hair and wore colorful, ultra sexy clothes. At the moment when cosmetic giants like Shiseido were starting the rage for whitening skin products, Iijima sported a deep tan.

¹⁷Lauryn Hill, known as one of the best African-American pop artists and hip-hop musicians, has stepped fearlessly into the musical arena, dealing with subjects that are close to her heart. At times, her humor is wry and candid and her pain and anger startling, but she is never bitter. She has been galvanized by her life experiences. Produced by Lauryn Hill herself, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* is a deeply personal album, running the gamut from affairs of the heart to socio-political issues, set against a sonic backdrop displaying the remarkable talent of this young artist. She explains: "... the concept of 'miseducation' is not really miseducation at all. To me, it's more or less switching the terminology...it's really about the things that you've learned outside of school, outside of what society deems school, outside of what society deems appropriate and mandatory...It's really our passage into adulthood when we leave that place of idealism and naivete." Well known as a singer, a writer, a rapper, a Grammy winner, an activist, an innovator, and a crossover artist, Lauryn Hill is an amazing phenomenon.

Tionne "T-Boz" Watkils, Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes, and Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas formed TLC (from the initials of their nicknames) at the behest of Perri "Pebbles" Reid, a 1980s recording star and wife of a LaFace Records executive. TLC literally burst onto the music scene in 1992 with their debut album, *Ooooooh...On the TLC Tip*, a unique blend of styles combining core R&B and hip-hop with a touch of '80s funk and rap. See also Kinga Talarowska-Kacprzak, "Media and the Construction of the *Ganguro* trend in Japan," *Journal of Mundane Behavior* 2 (February 2001): 92-105. Talarowska-Kacprzak's paper "claims that Japanese media have

For whatever speculations, “*ganguro*” is the name not given by the Japanese girls with darkened faces but by the Japanese public who decided that these creatures reflected all that was ill in society. As with most tribes, naming is important for its implicated meaning. Some members of the *ganguro* tribe call themselves *ganguro*, meaning those with salon tans; some members call themselves *ganguro*, meaning those with fake tans; some members call themselves *gals*, meaning teenagers, or *gal oneesan*, literally meaning big sister gals who are usually in their early twenties or *otona gal*, literally meaning adult gal with a more polished look, and other members call themselves *gal mama*, meaning teenage gals with infants. No matter how they call themselves, such *gals* are mostly academically disinclined and lack ambition for personal success. For this reason, the Japanese public disdains them. However, as observed by Klippensteen, *ganguro* girls have made their own choice to not follow the pack but, instead, they have chosen a carefree and open approach to living for the moment and escaping from being ignored or neglected at home and isolated, bullied or depressed at school.¹⁸ Largely unconcerned with money and material gain, *ganguro* girls, like everyone else, want to have fun in their lives, and they prefer to put on a flamboyant outfit and hang out with their friends rather than worry about toiling away at boring studies or jobs.

Although *ganguro* as a fashion style does not fit well with traditional Japanese social standards and cultural values, it is becoming popular among some Japanese girls who are just approaching adulthood. Many non-*ganguro* girls and boys readily accept some of the *ganguro*

managed to effectively disseminate, and to shape the further development of a new style trend called *ganguro*. The *ganguro* trend among high school girls has had a significant and growing influence on everyday life in Japanese society.

¹⁸ Kate Klippensteen, *Ganguro Girls: The Japanese “Black Face”* (Hungary: Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2000). Kate Klippensteen and Everett Kennedy Brown, in their quest to interview and photograph *ganguro* girls in Shibuya, Tokyo, got to know a group of girls with their striking looks: platform boots, miniskirts, fantastical make-up, and tanned skin. These girls, known as *ganguro* girls, have become part of popular Japanese youth culture. Klippensteen’s book provides an insight both into the looks and thoughts of the *ganguro* girls.

elements, and fearing exclusion, some may often conform to the style due to peer pressure.

***Ganguro* in Conflict with Japanese Society**

Some scholars believe that such a new fashion style is the young generation's revenge against Japanese society's traditional values. Others believe that because this new fashion style differs from tradition and is promoted by those who intend to change the peripheral female position in Japanese society; some believe that it is some Japanese girls' explicit self-expression of sexual attractiveness; while others believe that it is just some Japanese girls' imitation of elements of an African-American woman's appearance to be a woman, and still others believe that it simply makes girls *kawaii* (cute) or cool because it makes them look different from others. Although the *ganguro* phenomenon, or the so-called new fashion style, has been largely observed among some Japanese girls, it has been recognized as being in conflict with Japanese society.

Out of the various reasons for *ganguro* to be in conflict with Japanese society, as speculated by scholars in Japanese social studies, three particular reasons may indicate roots of conflicts. First, the inadequate relationships between some Japanese children and their parents cause frequent childhood neglect and stress. Most parents are overwhelmed by their work, and in order to keep their jobs or get promoted, they devote themselves fully to their companies. Such overwhelmed and devoted employees have to spend over 90 percent of their daytime hours working and have no sufficient time to communicate with their children to learn about and listen to their children's problems. Children growing up in such a difficult family environment become stressed and feel ignored. They tend to look for companions outside their families for a sense of belonging.

Second, the fierce competition and many difficulties at school cause extreme stress, frustration and depression. In Japan, competition starts at an extremely early age. Young children have to vigorously prepare themselves for entrance exams into highly recommended kindergartens and so on, up to top universities. Better education is the fundamental requirement for higher positions in Japanese society. Committing suicide is not uncommon in Japan for those young Japanese who experience frequent failure, frustration or stress at school. Those who struggle to survive and are stressed by the competition, tend to seek a carefree lifestyle outside school.

Third, the strict conformable and compulsory school rules and standards imposed upon young children cause severe constraints on

children's individuality, freedom, and behavior. Children are not expected to conduct themselves as individuals in school but as components of the group; they must wear school uniforms and even use similar knapsacks. All school activities are designed to shape and promote a sense of communal strength. Similarly, strict rules are enforced in high schools, where students must wear school uniforms and make-up and jewelry are prohibited. Starting from a very early stage of their academic life, young children begin to sense the lack of freedom and, more seriously, when they become teenagers, they begin to sense the severe suppression of their individualities and differences. Throughout the many years of restraint and suppression in school, some teenagers tend to look for fun and freedom in their life outside of school.

Among other factors, family neglect, fierce competition in school, and strict conformable rules and standards have become the most important motivations for those Japanese girls to join the *ganguro* tribe. In other words, being *ganguro* indicates an escape from the problems they encounter with family, education, and school environment. The outlandish and expressive appearance of *ganguro* girls does not comply with family and school standards, but openly expresses their attitudes of defiance. *Ganguro* girls want to look different in order to be noticed, understood, and regarded as real and free individuals in society.

***Ganguro* as Viewed by Others**

To explore the most relevant issues regarding the *ganguro* phenomenon and its conflict with Japanese society, instead of subjective speculations or judgments, this study relied on the direct input and feedback from some young Japanese students about their understanding of *ganguro*.¹⁹ Sixty-six participants from two Japanese universities in this research project

¹⁹This is the author's own specially designed project to investigate the *ganguro* phenomenon. In order to know what average young Japanese of the same generation thinks about the *ganguro* phenomenon as observed in their everyday life, the project involved sixty-six Japanese participants between seventeen and twenty-five years of age from The University of Tokyo and Kyoritsu Women's University. All the participants were required to respond to a specially designed questionnaire covering the most relevant issues of the *ganguro* phenomenon and participants' opinions and views about it from their individual perspectives.

were given a questionnaire covering the most relevant questions regarding the issues under investigation. The most commonly shared opinions, views and positions as reflected in the responses to the questionnaire are highlighted and summarized to discuss the relevant issues. The following table contains the ten specific open-ended questions. Since the questionnaire invites different answers rather than multiple choices, the responses are generalized from the participants' individual answers.²⁰

²⁰The questionnaire was specially designed by Xuexin Liu by focusing on the most relevant issues (questions) for the study to elicit opinions and views from the Japanese participants about the *ganguro* phenomenon as observed in their everyday life. The participants' opinions and views are generalized in the columns so that the most common ones can stand out. Also, the different opinions and views can be clearly seen in the table. Although the irrelevant responses are included, they are not calculated in terms of their effects on the commonly shared ones.

The Questionnaire for the Study and Feedback Types
(Liu, 2004a)

1. What is 'ganguro' in Japanese society?	Blackened face		Fashionable appearance		Self-expression		Irrelevant		Total
	44	67%	13	20%	9	14%	0	0%	
2. What are the most important reasons for being ganguro?	Different for attention		Group identity		Imitation of celebrity		Irrelevant		66
	40	60%	11	17%	12	18%	3	5%	
3. What do you think about ganguro girls in Japan?	Dirty and ugly		Inconceivable and indisposed		Open-minded and personable		Irrelevant		66
	7	11%	42	64%	15	23%	2	3%	
4. Do you think Japanese young people are really interested in hip hop culture?	Very interested		Somewhat interested		Little interested		Irrelevant		66
	31	47%	18	27%	6	9%	11	17%	
5. Do you think ganguro as a new fashion style is the young generation's revenge against the Japanese traditional value?	Yes		No		Generational difference		Irrelevant		66
	34	52%	6	9%	25	38%	1	2%	
6. Do you think ganguro as a new fashion style is promoted by those who intend to change the 'peripheral female position' in Japanese society?	Not their real intention		Unhappy with their current social status		Their own choice for personal reasons		Irrelevant		66
	29	44%	16	24%	14	21%	7	11%	

7. Do you think <i>ganguro</i> is some young Japanese girls' explicit self-expression of sexual attractiveness?	For sex appeal		Not for sex appeal		Self-expression not related to sex appeal		Irrelevant	
	15	23%	33	50%	12	18%	6	9%
8. Do you think <i>ganguro</i> is some young Japanese girls' imitation of an African woman's appearance to be a 'woman'?	Not an imitation of an African woman's appearance		An imitation of a celebrity's appearance		Hip-hop image		Irrelevant	
	28	42%	4	6%	27	41%	7	11%
9. Do you think one of the important motivations for Japanese girls to practice <i>ganguro</i> is to identify themselves as individuals departing from the commonly accepted Japanese social behaviors?	Behaviors departing from the commonly accepted ones		Behaviors as personal choices		Self-appreciation		Irrelevant	
	38	58%	19	29%	4	6%	5	8%
10. Do you think <i>ganguro</i> as a self-identity is unavoidably in conflict with the Japanese traditional culture and society?	Unavoidable conflict		Somewhat conflict		No conflict		Irrelevant	
	24	36%	17	26%	8	12%	17	26%

The research findings provide strong evidence in support of the assumption that *ganguro* in Japanese youth culture is for individual Japanese girls' self-identity in cultural conflict with Japanese society. These findings are understood and interpreted as follows.

Question one: 67 percent believe "blackened face" is a typical outward appearance of *ganguro*, rather than simply a fashionable appearance, while only 20 percent of the responses believe so. This means a "blackened face" may mean more than a new fashion style.

Question two: 60 percent believe that the most important reason for being *ganguro* is for them to be "different for attention," rather than simply an "imitation of a celebrity" which only 18 percent of the responses believe is the case.

Question three: 64 percent think *ganguro* girls are "inconceivable and indisposed," which indicates the lack of understanding of *ganguro* girls by most of the public.

Question four: 47 percent believe they are "very interested" and 27 percent of the responses believe they are "somewhat interested" in hip-hop culture, which indicates a general influence and impact of hip-hop culture on *ganguro* girls.

Question five: 52 percent believe that *ganguro* as a new fashion style is the young generation's revenge against traditional Japanese values, which indicates a special social and cultural meaning of *ganguro*.

Question six: 44 percent do not think *ganguro* as a new fashion style is promoted by those who intend to change the "peripheral female position" in Japanese society, which means that *ganguro* girls are either unhappy with their current social status or they choose this fashion style for personal reasons.

Question seven: 50 percent do not think *ganguro* is some young Japanese girls' explicit self-expression of sexual attractiveness, which means that *ganguro* may not always be for sex appeal.

Question eight: 41 percent believe *ganguro* is some young Japanese girls' imitation of hip-hop image, rather than an imitation of an African-American woman's appearance, which indicates a strong hip-hop influence.

Question nine: 58 percent think that Japanese girls who practice *ganguro* identify themselves as individuals departing from the commonly accepted Japanese social behavior, which indicates a clear conflict between *ganguro* girls' behaviors and the commonly accepted ones in Japanese society.

Question ten: 36 percent think *ganguro* as a self-identity in unavoidable conflict and 26 percent think such a self-identity is somewhat in conflict with Japanese traditional culture and society, which indicates a general conflict between the two.

These findings strongly support the general belief that the *ganguro* phenomenon is in conflict with Japanese society and its traditional culture. Different from some of the previous speculations are that *ganguro* is not simply an imitation of a celebrity,²¹ *ganguro* girls do not necessarily intend to change their “peripheral female position” in Japanese society,²² and *ganguro* is not necessary always for explicit sex appeal.²³

What is interesting and important in this investigation lies in the fact that although the participants may view the same issues from different perspectives, the general understanding of the *ganguro* phenomenon in terms of its conflict with Japanese society is clearly reflected.

In addition to the investigation conducted among the Japanese participants, supported by the Spelman Bush-Hewlett Grant Program, this research project involved several organized discussions among some African-American students at Spelman College about their views and attitudes toward *ganguro* girls.²⁴ All the participants in the discussions have been involved in study-abroad programs in Japan, and they have become very interested in the issues of the *ganguro* phenomenon as they have personally observed. Cited below are what they think about *ganguro* at the

²¹ Andrea D. Barnwell, “Guilty (Blackfaced) Pleasures,” *Iona Rozeal Brown: a³...black on both sides* (Atlanta: Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 2004).

²² Kinga Talarowska-Kacprzak, “Media and the Construction of the Ganguro Trend in Japan,” *Journal of Mundane Behavior* 2 (2001): 92-105.

²³ Kate Klippensteen, *Ganguro Girls: The Japanese “Black Face”* (Hungary: Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2000).

²⁴ Anne Warner is the director of the Spelman Bush-Hewlett Grant. She initiated and organized several Bush-Hewlett Fellows Workshops at Spelman College. The American students who participated in the research project offered their opinions and views in the format of essays about the *ganguro* phenomenon as they observed during their visits in Japan. Warner reviewed the participants’ essays and published them at the website of the Spelman Bush-Hewlett Grant (http://www.spelman.edu/bush-hewlett/about_grant.html).

Annual Japanese Speech Contest hosted by the Japan-American Society of Georgia in cooperation with the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, Georgia (March 2004)²⁵ and from their essays published at the Iona Rozeal Brown Exhibition: *a³...black on both sides* held at Spelman College and at the Spelman Bush-Hewlett Grant website.²⁶

Tiffany Tyson and Jason Woody participated in the Annual Japanese Speech Contest hosted by the Japan-American Society in cooperation with the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, Georgia. Their topics for the speech contest were focused on their understanding of the *ganguro* phenomenon as they observed as part of their study abroad experience. In his speech, Jason Woody commented, "I see Japanese rap groups on posters in Tokyo and at the same time Missy's new video begins with a Japanese skit with some fake *ganguro* girls." Tiffany Tyson said:

I was particularly fascinated by young Japanese students' interpretation of African-American hip-hop style...I was amazed to see young men in Adidas sweat bands, Sean Jean outfits, Timberland boots, and large diamond studded necklaces. Young women were wearing Kangol hats and bananas, Baby Phat outfits, Minolo boots, and large gold hoop-earrings. Long, jet black hair was replaced with intricately designed cornrow braids on the heads of males and females...It was great to see that they are embracing a positive aspect of my culture especially because of historical incidents of mistreatment by the western world. Although this

²⁵The Annual Japanese Speech Contest is hosted by the Japan-American Society of Georgia in cooperation with the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, Georgia for the purpose of promoting Japanese language learning and educational and cultural exchange between the United States and Japan. All the Japanese speech contest participants are American college students who have acquired a certain level of Japanese proficiency for a particular level of speech contest. Their topics include various themes ranging from the relationship between the United States and Japan to cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

²⁶Barnwell, "Guilty (Blackfaced) Pleasures." The Spelman College students who participated in Liu's research project contributed their essays about their opinions and views toward the *ganguro* phenomenon to the Iona Rozeal Brown Exhibition: *a³...black on both sides* at Spelman College.

external shift in culture is evidence that Japanese society is becoming less traditional in its acceptance of western ways, one thing that I found the most interesting was the ability for young Japanese people to revert back to their traditional ways when necessary.

Joseph Barden, Charli Kemp, Aryen Moore-Alston, Chris Shaw, Erin Aisha Williams, and Sheena Young contributed their essays on the issues of the *ganguro* phenomenon as they observed to the Iona Rozeal Brown Exhibition: *a³ ...black on both sides* (2004) at Spelman College. Cited in this paper are parts of their essays most relevant to the issues under investigation.

Student Charli Kemp commented:

I view the *ganguro* girls as a big part of the younger generation that is breaking away from traditional Japanese ways. I see the *ganguro* girls looking to another very popular culture that seems to communicate what they are trying to say...African-Americans in the hip-hop culture display the carefree attitudes of the rap artists and their go-against-the-grain standpoints. In the *ganguro* girls' culture, they seem to have the same carefree attitude, as if they do not want to fit the mold anymore. I see a direct correlation between the two cultures.

Chris Shaw stated:

I remember seeing images of brown skinned girls on the cartoon motifs of the ubiquitous sticker picture machines (or purikura). These images were usually clad in what some might call "hip-hop hoochie" fashion, baggy pants or mini skirts, big hoop earrings, and tight tops. I perceived this to be some sort of "ghetto fabulousness." I was fascinated.

Sheena Young said:

When I first saw a *ganguro* girl in Japan last fall, I was amazed. I could not believe that there were girls in Japan walking around with darkened skin...To me, it didn't seem as though Japanese

girls were getting dressed up and putting on dark make-up to mock the African-American culture but, instead, to idolize it.

Joseph Barden contributed:

[They]...find life easier in this “black face” because it moves them outside of mainstream Japanese culture. By adopting that lifestyle, they are able to absolve themselves of the obligations omnipresent in Japanese culture...So the adoption of darker skin is used by those in the subculture as a visual cue to the rest of Japanese society that they are not participating on the same terms as everyone else.

Erin Aisha Williams noted:

They go against the normalcies of Japan’s homogenous society – adding color to the wash of fair skin and black hair, making themselves a target of interest for outsiders. The *ganguro* is a rebel, albeit cheerful on the outside...For they are essentially starting a revolution – breaking free of the rules and expectations, set upon them passed down from generation to generation.

Finally, Aryen Moore-Alston said:

I don’t use the term “black face” negatively because I see this painting as a compliment to black culture rather than having a derogatory connotation.

What those African-American students said clearly reflect their understanding of the *ganguro* phenomenon and their positive views toward *ganguro* girls. Like most of the Japanese participants, they also believe that *ganguro* for self-identity is against traditional Japanese culture beyond an imitation of the “black” side.

Conclusion

This paper goes beyond superficial descriptions of the *ganguro* phenomenon by exploring the sources and nature of this particular subculture based on the input and feedback provided by the Japanese and American participants in the research project. From social and cultural

perspectives and through an analytical approach, it offers an objective and critical analysis of this particular phenomenon. Some of the most commonly expressed speculations on the social motivations for some Japanese girls to become *ganguro* and the potential impact of such a subculture on traditional Japanese culture have been verified. Based on the research findings, this paper has reached the following conclusions:

1. *Ganguro* is more than an imitation of some celebrity's facial color and physical appearance, or for explicit sex appeal. *Ganguro* girls blacken their faces, wear make-up that shimmers, dye their hair, and wear hip-hop clothes not simply to adopt a new fashion style but, more importantly, to make themselves stand out as being different from others. They do so because they intend to be noticed, rather than ignored. They are usually those who face problems with their families, fierce competition in education, school rules, and standards.

2. *Ganguro* girls do not necessarily attempt to change the "peripheral female position" in Japanese society, but to express their unhappiness with their current social status. Most such girls seek a carefree life style to escape from their stress and depression.

3. *Ganguro* girls adopt this particular fashion style to promote their self-identity as free individuals who refuse to follow the majority of their own generation. They do not want to be constrained by the established or commonly accepted social standards.

4. *Ganguro* girls' self-identity is unavoidably in conflict with traditional Japanese culture and society. They attempt to identify themselves as free individuals departing from the commonly expected social behaviors, a phenomenon of rebellion against society.

5. Although *ganguro* has become a relatively common feature of ordinary life in the streets and private sectors of Japan, it has not become a social and cultural trend among Japanese teenagers. It represents a particular young population, attempting to redefine Japanese young womanhood, individuality, community, collectivity, and meaning of life.

6. *Ganguro* is a cultural borrowing phenomenon. Like any other cultural borrowing, *ganguro* is socio-culturally meaningful and significant. *Ganguro* makes an idol of African-American culture or the hip-hop image for its positive impact on society. Although *ganguro* has not entered mainstream Japanese culture, it has exerted an impact on traditional social standards and cultural values.

This paper provides a transparent window through which researchers in the field of Japanese social and cultural studies can see beyond phenomena on the surface. Only in this way can research become not only observational and descriptive, but also analytical and explanatory.

THE SOKA GAKKAI IN CAMBODIA

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Since the 1960s, the Japanese-based Soka Gakkai has evolved into an international movement with more than twelve million members in 190 countries and territories worldwide.¹ Soka Gakkai International, or SGI, the international wing of Soka Gakkai, has made significant gains in reaching out to the native populations in each of the jurisdictions it has penetrated. Its greatest successes have been in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia, where SGI has attracted tens of thousands of ethnic Chinese followers. SGI has also done well in the United States and South America and has smaller chapters across Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and Oceania.

The subject of this brief study is the rapid growth of SGI in Cambodia. The Soka Gakkai had existed as a small movement consisting primarily of foreigners in Cambodia before the rise of the Khmer Rouge in the mid-1970s, but then it completely disappeared. Today SGI has returned to Cambodia growing from a small handful of followers in the late 1990s to over a thousand faithful in early 2007. Cambodia remains a deeply Buddhist country with its native practices and temples fully intact, so it is interesting to ask why a Japanese-based New Religion has established a viable foothold there and to find out who is joining.

Overview of Buddhism in Cambodian History

Buddhism has a long history in Cambodia, dating back to at least the late twelfth century. At that time a “Sanskritized ‘Mahayana’ Buddhism” coexisted with a variety of Brahmanical beliefs and practices, but by the early fourteenth century, a Pali-based form of Theravada Buddhism became dominant. Since then, Ian Harris notes, “it has been customary to regard Cambodia as a Theravadan country, even though ‘Mahayanist’ elements have survived down to the present day.”² Over the

¹These numbers are provided by Soka Gakkai International and cannot be verified independently. They are accessible from <http://www.sgi.org>.

²Ian Harris, “Buddhism in Extremis: The Case of Cambodia” Ian Harris, ed., *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia* (New York and London: Continuum, 1999), p. 54.

next six centuries Cambodia developed its own form of Theravada Buddhism.

The Khmer Rouge, which ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, took a terrible toll on Buddhist institutions and clergy. They closed and then dismantled virtually all monasteries, using the rubble for building materials. “Buddha images were beheaded, stupas smashed, and ancient palm-leaf manuscripts were used for rolling cigarettes. Remaining monastic premises became the location for local Khmer Rouge Economic Bureaux or, if they were remote – torture, and execution centres.”³ Every effort was made to destroy every aspect of Buddhism: Buddhist clergy were executed in mass numbers and libraries containing any Buddhist works were destroyed.

When the Vietnamese captured Phnom Penh in 1979, there were only about one hundred ordained Cambodian monks in existence, most of them in Thai or Vietnamese exile.⁴ Since then, there has been a modest recovery as temples and monasteries have reopened and growing numbers of young monks have been ordained. When visiting a monastery in Kampong Thom in central Cambodia, I met a fifteen-year old novice monk who pointed towards his crude dormitory, proudly telling me that there were twenty or more novices living there, most of them younger than him. Today Cambodia is a nation of young people, with many families bringing up four to six children and often sending one of their sons to a temple.⁵ It appears that Buddhism is experiencing a healthy revival.

It is apparent, however, that not all young Cambodians are returning to traditional Khmer Buddhism. When I asked groups of educated young Cambodians in Kampong Thom who worked for Japanese and other NGOs or as health workers about their religious practices, most replied that they had no use for traditional religious practices. Although there was no apparent Soka Gakkai presence in this region, these young educated Cambodians very much resembled the younger and young-middle-aged educated SGI members I interviewed in Phnom Penh.

Virtually all interviewed SGI members said that their families had stopped practicing Buddhism during the disruptive Khmer Rouge years and

³Harris, “Buddhism in Extremis,” p. 66.

⁴Ibid.

⁵This figure is based on anecdotal evidence. I made several surprise visits to English classes at several high schools in rural Cambodia and was told by each student I met that he or she had three to six brothers or sisters.

that part of their attraction to SGI is that it is, itself, a Buddhist group at a time when they felt a yearning for a Buddhist presence in their lives. The fact that Japan has such a good image in Cambodia, because of the massive Japanese aid effort there, was also an attractive feature.

Perspectives on SGI's Universal Growth

When tens of thousands of Japanese immigrated to North and South America a century ago, they built their own temples and invited Buddhist priests from Japan to tend to the needs of these entirely Japanese congregations. The older, largely Buddhist congregations have largely faded as later generations became assimilated into the native population. Japan's contemporary New Religious Movements (NRM's), however, have become genuinely global movements because their teachings have attracted non-ethnic Japanese faithful abroad and today, survive as autonomous units. Today a number of Japanese NRM's such as SGI, Mahikari, and Tenrikyo are growing in Southeast Asia, North and South America, and elsewhere because they have successfully adapted rituals, languages, customs, and leadership to non-Japanese contexts.⁶

SGI in particular has succeeded in developing a strong following in many countries because, as Peter Clarke notes, "though a very Japanese form of Buddhism, it appears capable of universal application: no one is obliged to abandon their native culture or nationality in order to fully participate in the spiritual and cultural life of the movement."⁷ Soka Gakkai leaders, while maintaining the essential elements of their faith, have released their form of Buddhism from its inherently Japanese roots by skillfully adapting their religious practices to each culture that they seek to penetrate. They recruit local leaders who direct the foreign chapter free of any direct control from Tokyo, conduct all religious exercises, publish all documents in the native languages, and emphasize those traits that are important to the host culture. Clarke, for example, notes that SGI practices in the United States that appeal to many American members are "the

⁶Harumi Befu, ed., *Globalizing Japan* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2001), pp. 74-76.

⁷Peter B. Clarke, "'Success' and 'Failure': Japanese New Religions Abroad" Peter B. Clarke, ed., *Japanese New Religions in Global Perspective* (Curzon Press: Richmond, Surrey, England: 2000), p. 281.

absence of moralizing, the stress on individual choice, and the need to take responsibility for one's own actions."⁸

National SGI chapters, however, are autonomous on an organizational level. They are run and manned by local nationals and all business is conducted in local languages. National chapters make their own decisions, generally raise their own funds, and choose their own leaders. Links with Tokyo are generally informational. Strong efforts are made to show the local community that SGI follows the culture and customs of its host nation. Its international success also stems from the fact that it does not promote itself or its doctrines as being inherently Japanese, emphasizing instead a form of Buddhism, though founded in Japan, as applicable to everyone everywhere. Spiritual leader Ikeda Daisaku, however, is revered and studied in every Gakkai chapter I have visited from Staunton, Virginia to Phnom Penh.⁹ This dramatic respect and loyalty to the aging Ikeda plays an important role in uniting the Soka Gakkai worldwide.

My research on SGI members in Canada, the United States, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand indicates that the Soka Gakkai attracts followers because of what they perceive to be its strong message of peace, happiness, success, and self-empowerment. Many adherents interviewed or surveyed by this writer believe that the Buddhism espoused by the Soka Gakkai gives them some degree of empowerment over their personal environments, that through their hard work and devout practice they can overcome their suffering and find happiness in the here and now. They also find great satisfaction and a sense of community joining with other people who follow the same faith. The practice of having small groups of members meet together regularly to pray, discuss personal and mutual concerns, and socialize as close friends is an important social reason for the success of the Soka Gakkai, not only in Japan, but abroad as well.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 285.

⁹Ikeda Daisaku served as the third president of the Soka Gakkai from 1960 to 1979 and is currently the Honorary President of SGI. He is the spiritual leader of Soka Gakkai constantly visiting Soka Gakkai chapters in Japan and abroad. His many writings on Buddhism are studied by Soka Gakkai members throughout the world.

¹⁰This interpretation is bolstered by the work of Hammond and Machacek in the United States, as well as Wilson and Dobbelaere in Great Britain. Their studies related the growth of SGI in these countries to value shifts

Many of the younger SGI members in these countries are also very well-educated. I was especially impressed by the large number of well-educated, upwardly mobile, ethnic Chinese members I met in Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore. There seems to exist a strong affinity between a religious dogma that emphasizes “mental work” (attitudes and individual focus) and the well-educated who have to work very hard to attain their educational credentials. This phenomenon may well explain why this form of Buddhism is attractive to this particular social stratum and also helps address why the Japanese origin of the Soka Gakkai does not seem to matter very much to these non-Japanese converts.

Cambodia, however, is very different from any of the other countries where I have studied SGI. Few countries in the modern era have experienced the trauma of genocide that the Khmer Rouge inflicted on its own people – taking the lives of almost two million of the nation’s eight million citizens. Virtually all of the country’s doctors, teachers, and intellectuals died or fled the country. Thirty years of civil war from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s brought further ruin and misery to the whole nation.

I interviewed many Cambodians from all age groups while traveling through the country in May, 2006.¹¹ One factor emerging from

associated with growing economic well-being. In short, the idea, drawn from other cross-national studies of value change in advanced industrial societies, is that as economic security rises, so does the population’s desire for intangible rewards such as happiness, self-fulfillment, and aesthetic pleasure. See: Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere, *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Phillip Hammond and David Machacek, *Soka Gakkai in America: Accommodation and Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); David Machacek and Bryan Wilson, eds., *Global Citizens: The Soka Gakkai Buddhist Movement in the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Metraux, *The Lotus and the Maple Leaf: The Soka Gakkai Buddhist Movement in Canada* (New York: University Press of America, 1996); and *The International Expansion of a Modern Buddhist Movement: The Soka Gakkai in Southeast Asia and Australia* (New York: University Press of America, 2001).

¹¹See Daniel A. Metraux, “Cambodia Today: The Slow Road Back From the Inferno and Killing Fields Revisited,” *The Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 28 (2006).

these discussions is a need for hope for a better future. Many Cambodians admitted to a sense of hopelessness in their lives. Everybody I met had lost close family members; family life had been destroyed, their homes and villages obliterated, and they felt betrayed by their own government and abandoned by the outside world. Life is gradually improving for many Cambodians and on the surface everything looks quite normal, but the mental and physical scars of three decades of turmoil are very deep and very real. I was told over and over by older Cambodians that when one loses their family, home, and village, there is a sense of desperate rootlessness and instability that pervades their world views.

There is also the fact that virtually everybody in Cambodia today is quite poor. True, there is little real starvation; most young Cambodians look healthy and children are working hard in primary and secondary schools across the country, but there are very few prospects for high school and college graduates. Outside of the tourist areas around Angkor Wat and Phnom Penh, there are no industries and very few jobs that lead to meaningful careers. Many educated Cambodians have no real hope for a productive professional life. This fact adds to a pervasive sense of gloom among many well-trained Cambodians, who often see no alternative but to leave their native land. Consequently, they are caught in a quagmire of depression.

The Return of Soka Gakkai to Cambodia

There was no Soka Gakkai activity during this period of Khmer Rouge rule and Vietnamese occupation, but with the reopening of Cambodia after 1988, many Cambodians who had been living abroad during this difficult period returned and a growing number of foreigners, many of them involved in relief work, traveled to Cambodia. Two of these people were devout Soka Gakkai members, Seng Vuthi, a Cambodian businessman who had been living in southern California during the worst years of Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese rule, and Joan Anderson, a British relief worker who had been chanting for four years when she first visited in 1990. When asked in 2006 why he returned to his impoverished homeland after developing a successful life in California, he replied, "I am Cambodian and it is my duty and resolve to do what I can to help my people recover from the disasters of the recent past."

When Anderson returned to Cambodia for a four-year stay starting in 1993, she found a group of about seven people chanting. They had begun to meet once a week to chant and study Buddhism together. Vuthi and

Anderson made contact in 1994, by which time Vuthi had introduced several colleagues and members of his extended family to the practice. Several other Cambodians living in the United States and France also told their family members about the practice and encouraged them to try it. By mid-1998 there were approximately fifty actively practicing members, virtually all of them native Cambodians. At this time there was no organized Cambodian SGI-chapter and no discernable assistance from SGI headquarters in Tokyo other than Gohonzon,¹² which was brought from Bangkok, and occasional study materials. Some external support came from a Cambodian committee within SGI-USA based in Los Angeles, which had been translating guidance and study materials from SGI-USA and sending it to Cambodia.

During the early 1990s, however, there was some degree of Soka Gakkai activity in the country. The Soka Gakkai Youth Division in Japan collected and sent two hundred and eighty thousand used radios in response to a request by the United Nations. The hope was that the radios would be distributed to every village to be utilized for educational purposes during the 1993 elections to let people know about the new election system and the virtues of democracy. SGI Youth in Kyushu, Japan collected and sold used postcards to raise enough funds to build two elementary schools in Cambodia that were subsequently named after Soka Gakkai founder, Makiguchi Tsunesaburo. Soka Gakkai aid was part of a massive ongoing effort by many Japanese individuals, corporations, organizations, and government agencies to provide assistance to Cambodia.

Rapid growth in membership started around 2000, so much so that in 2002, SGI built a Cultural Center in Phnom Penh and received a charter from the Cambodian government recognizing it as a legitimate religious organization. I was told in May 2006 that there were 1,006 members in Cambodia, some based in the capital, but many others spread out in rural villages forming an arc around Phnom Penh. I observed very few elderly members, but a substantial number in their late twenties, thirties, and early to mid-forties. There were many very young members as well, in many cases the children of older members. There are also said to be some scattered communities with Soka Gakkai members in the interior of Cambodia, but I only interviewed members from greater Phnom Penh.

¹²The Gohonzon is a mandala said originally to have been inscribed by Nichiren (1220-1282) himself.

By and large, Soka Gakkai's basic structural model has been faithfully reproduced in Cambodia. There is the usual organization with divisions and departments that separate adherents by sex and age, such as a men's division, a women's division, and a youth division. There are rituals centered in prayers (*daimoku*, *gongyō*) before the sacred object (*gohonzon*); there is the custom of "discussion meetings" (*zadankai*) as a feature to attract new members and keep the constituents cohesive; there is also the ever-present invigoration of Ikeda's leadership.

SGI Cambodia like most of its counterparts in Japan and elsewhere is a distinctly lay movement that works without the participation of any priests or formalized temple.¹³ There are no salaried workers except one office manager. Everyone works on a voluntary basis and lives active lives outside of Soka Gakkai, but they meet on a frequent basis either at the cultural center or in smaller community gatherings.

Interviews with SGI Cambodia Members

This study began in 1999 when I was writing a broader book, *The International Expansion of a Modern Buddhist Movement: The Soka Gakkai in Southeast Asia and Australia*, a work that includes chapters on research on SGI in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Hong Kong/Macau, and Australia. I heard about a budding SGI movement in Cambodia and did some extensive interviewing with Joan Anderson and other SGI officials in Tokyo who provided me with several life "experiences" produced by Cambodian members. I published a short section in my book based on these interviews and "experiences" and vowed to one day make a trip to Cambodia to see it for myself. That opportunity came in 2006.

During my visit to Cambodia I visited the SGI Cultural Center in Phnom Penh where I attended various SGI functions and interviewed several SGI leaders. Overall I interviewed about twenty SGI members and read perhaps as many printed "experiences." The clearest statement of SGI objectives came from one of its leaders at the culture center, "We have three key principles: To develop a sense of compassion, to relieve the suffering of others, and to help others find happiness. Each one of our own

¹³The Singapore Soka Association is the only exception to this rule. There is a small temple and priest to meet the spiritual needs of older members who grew up with a tradition of Buddhist priests and temples.

human revolutions (our individual transformations of character) helps to make Cambodia a happier country.”

The Soka Gakkai insists that the very core of its Buddhism is the “human revolution” (*ningen kakumei*) that the believer will experience through his or her deep faith and practice. The practitioner will become stronger, more self-confident, and better able to achieve his or her goals. SGI-C member Che Boramy describes what happened to her when she experienced this revolution: “Although I chanted very little each morning and evening, I began to feel some form of relief [from earlier “sadness” and pain during the Khmer Rouge era] within myself. I overcame my inherent shyness and became a stronger person.” She credits her religious practice with bringing her new close friendships, a closer relationship with her family, and, most importantly, a sense of optimism. She was no longer without any direction in life.

It was a collective meeting with five young middle-aged school teachers at the SGI Culture Center that told me most about the spirit and drive of SGI in Cambodia and provided clues as to why SGI has begun to develop roots in Cambodian society. The following is a composite of the interviews with these teachers using their own words. They all proudly provided their names, but I have chosen to retain their anonymity.

Teacher One (young woman, primary school teacher) said:

I was introduced to SGI by a friend who is a member. We Cambodians live in a highly stressful and conflicted society. Nobody trusts anybody and there is a sense of rage everywhere. But we cannot continue living in a world like this. Since joining I have chanted *nam-myoho-renge-kyo* (devotion to the wondrous Law of the Lotus Sutra) for many hundreds of hours. I have found a melting of old hatreds in my heart and a growing sense of compassion for others. I have found so many like-minded people in SGI – there is a new spirit here of people genuinely wanting to help and care for others. None of us have much money, but together we can forge a new nation – we have a real sense of hope for a better future. I want to teach these values to my students.

Teacher Two (middle-aged male school principal) added:

When the Khmer Rouge genocide occurred in my boyhood, people became desperate and each person had to fight for his own survival. The whole sense of community collapsed. Everybody was suffering and we all lost our families. We had to struggle on our own to survive and we learned to trust no one. Life was little more than a daily struggle just to survive. We really saw each other with bad eyes. But Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches us to live in the present, to overcome the suffering of the past. I want to train a new generation of young Cambodians to love and respect each other.

Teacher Three (middle-aged woman, primary school teacher) stated:

I was influenced to join this form of Buddhism from an aunt who had learned about it in France. As a school of Mahayana Buddhism, it is superior to the Buddhism that we traditionally practice here in Cambodia. There are fewer rules about how we are supposed to lead our lives and a much greater emphasis on compassion. The true Law of Life is that people need to have compassion for each other – which is something really lacking in Cambodia today. I used to be impatient for change and always focused on my own misery, but now I realize that everybody in Cambodia is suffering and I find so much more satisfaction in life by helping my students. We are doing good because of our fervent chanting for peace!

Teacher Four (young woman, primary school teacher) commented:

We learn through this Buddhism that we have to take responsibility for our own actions. If we all just sit around considering our own misery, nothing will ever change in my country, but as a teacher I can teach my students how to help themselves and help others. We have to start somewhere. Many foreigners have come here to help us, but the truth is that we must learn to work together and help ourselves. I even got my own parents to join – and they have become far more communicative and compassionate in their nature.

Teacher Five (young female primary school teacher) said:

It used to be that everybody I knew was in a bad mood. Everybody was obsessed with his or her own misery and with their moving ahead in life on their own. I want to teach my thirty two students to be considerate of others...I don't preach this form of Buddhism in class, but recently two students came to chant with me.

These interviews reflect themes found in other interviews as well as published "experiences." Wherever one goes in Cambodia, there is a pervasive sense of despair. However, at least in the minds of SGI members interviewed by this writer, there has been a real reversal of this process. There is a true sense of hope that things have already gotten better and will get a lot better in the future. It is a slow and arduous process, but by working together with other Cambodians, they can achieve a better life.

This very strong sense of empowerment centers on the individual as an active actor in history and life. It is a "this-worldly" orientation that emphasizes self-improvement and a "do-it-yourself" attitude that is a common theme in Soka Gakkai doctrines taught everywhere. There is an emphasis on the centrality of the individual in that he or she has the power to change his or her own destiny through one's own actions and that one must assume responsibility for one's own life. This attitude is a key reason for SGI's appeal in other Southeast Asian countries and in Brazil where SGI has made many converts.¹⁴

The Need for Empowerment

Cambodians need a lot more than foreign aid to revive their country. Foreign medical supplies, money, and school books are useful, but to survive, Cambodians need to begin believing in themselves again. They need to put the past behind them and to begin working together to rebuild their lives, families, and communities. They need a strong dose of self-

¹⁴See Ronan Alves Pereira, "'Bodhisattvas of the Earth' to Save Brazil or, how Soka Gakkai is Conquering its place among Brazilians" in Ronan Pereira and Hideaki Matsuoka, eds., *Japanese Religions in and Beyond the Japanese Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California-Berkeley/Institute for East Asian Studies, 2007).

confidence so that by working on their own they can succeed as a society and country. They need to learn to trust each other and have faith that they can move away from the past towards a more promising future. So often Cambodians today seem to be walking around in a daze, preoccupied with the question of sheer survival.

The key to Soka Gakkai Buddhism, as it is with much of Japanese Buddhism, is an emphasis on the here and now. Bad karma has brought suffering to the world, but closely adhering to the precepts of Buddhism can help practitioners develop a better life almost immediately. This is especially true in the form of Nichiren Buddhism sponsored by the Soka Gakkai. The late Bryan Wilson once noted:

Nichiren Buddhism is a strongly individualistic religious orientation. One takes responsibility for oneself, and chanting has a powerful, albeit not exclusive, role in self-transformation. Realizing one's true identity, transcending one's karma, coming to terms with reality by using the Gohonzon as a mirror of one's own individuality – All of these central preoccupations reflect the extent to which Nichiren Buddhism focuses on self-improvement and self-help.¹⁵

Many interviewees and “experience” writers in Cambodia agree that changing their karma is the key to their practice and that karma changed in this life can bring great rewards, both tangible and intangible.

SGI Cambodia members remark that Cambodia suffered terribly from the thrust of negative karma during the latter half of the twentieth century; they further believe that their chanting and community work have allowed them to move beyond the horrors that afflicted their country. Members noted that they felt that chanting gives them more control over their destinies and by changing one's own karma, they can gradually remove the overwhelmingly dark karma that has brought such misery to Cambodia. No matter how bad things were in the past, the SGI faithful in Cambodia see a bright future now for those who demonstrate strong faith, work hard for their own career development, demonstrate compassion, and offer a helping hand to others.

¹⁵Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelacre, *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 186-187.

The key is a positive attitude towards life and a sense that they can achieve any goal because every person is master of his own destiny. Adversity is caused by bad karma, but the power of this Buddhism can help one overcome this barrier, there is hope for happiness and success in life even for the most wretched Cambodian.

SGI Cambodia members like those interviewed above feel a sense of real liberation. They have freed themselves from the stress, frustration, anger, and mental deprivation of the past. They may not be that better off materially than some of their non-SGI member peers (although most members I met had steady jobs, were well-educated and lived better than most Cambodians), but they demonstrate a very strong sense of self-confidence. They have clear goals in life and are fully confident that they can attain them within the scope of a normal life. As one member noted, becoming an SGI member was like emerging out of a cold dark tunnel and into the bright sunshine. She had been a prisoner of her and her country's past, but now she had joined a "loving family" whose members genuinely enjoy taking care of each other. There is a genuine sense that things can and will get better. Indeed, it is this sense of optimism and hope for a better future that propels the lives of SGI members in Cambodia.

Another theme evident in some interviews and "experiences" is that Soka Gakkai Buddhism found a greater relevancy in the minds of some believers. I was often told that the old forms of Cambodian Buddhism, the "religion of the elders," were not terribly relevant to the needs and desires of young Cambodians. They claim to have found little solace through their traditional Buddhism and were attracted to this new Buddhism because of its emphasis on individual empowerment and its clear explanations of the causes of life's tribulations.

A Sense of Community

Another factor leading to the success of SGI Cambodia, as is the case in other Southeast Asian countries, is that Soka Gakkai is very skilled in fostering a sense of community – important especially in Cambodia where the sense of community was so badly shattered by three decades of civil war. The concept that the Soka Gakkai in Cambodia is every member's "extended family" is extremely important. One sees in every interview and "experience" that the heart of the movement is a system of nurturing where each member is in essence responsible for the health and welfare of other members. The following statement from another primary

school teacher, a young woman, places the important sense of community into clear context:

Our culture traditionally honored family and community, but the Khmer Rouge ripped apart our families and destroyed our communities. I once felt alone in the world and felt a sense of anger that I should suffer in this way. But SGI-C is all about a community – I now have genuinely kind friends who care about me and who let me care about them. The truly beautiful thing about this Buddhism is that it teaches us about understanding others and caring about our country. I remember so well when this country had no peace, but now we devote a lot of our time together chanting for peace. It is this sense of solidarity and true companionship that I like most about SGI-C.

She made reference to Nichiren's famous 1260 tract, *Rissho Ankokuuron* [On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land] that is in a talk by Japan-based SGI President Ikeda Daisaku and published in an SGI-C brochure. The passage states: "If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?" She added, "Our daily prayers for peace will radiate out from our hearts and cross the land and will help end the awful nightmare our country has experienced."

SGI Cambodia strongly stresses the point that one must be a responsible member of society. Nobody can sit by the wayside and expect benefits to float down like manna from heaven. Some Cambodians [not SGI members] I met in a small village in central Cambodia wondered out loud if I was going to leave some money for the villagers. My translator snapped back, "No way, what have you done to deserve a handout?" Many Cambodians have become so attuned to receiving aid that they have not engendered a strong work ethic into their lives, but SGI Cambodia and its members declare that they have a strong responsibility not only to themselves and their families, but also to their communities and to their country.

SGI's tradition across Southeast Asia of forming small community chapters is a vital part of its Cambodian operation. Members of these local groups often meet in each other's homes, thereby creating a tightly bonded group of members who socialize together on a frequent basis. The new

member of SGI therefore finds a ready-made group of friends that can become a very important source of community strength for the individual.

Cambodian SGI members feel emboldened to work hard for themselves and their country, as is evident from the following “experience” proudly handed to me by Neth Vorleak, the office manager of the Phnom Penh cultural center. Neth was born in a peaceful and prosperous Cambodia in 1959, but tragically lost both her parents and other family members. She survived the harsh life in a Khmer Rouge commune and eventually moved to Phnom Penh where she worked in a government office and met Joan Anderson who introduced her to Nichiren Buddhism. After some hesitation, she started chanting and soon found herself in a good paying job. She credits Nichiren Buddhism and her life as an SGI member for releasing her from the bondage of her earlier life:

Throughout my years of faith, I have realized that this practice advocates that women are not inferior or unclean beings [as found in our traditional Buddhism]. Nichiren declared the absolute equality of men and women in realizing the innate Buddhahood nature within our lives. This is an encouraging fact for women like me, and especially for the women of Cambodia today.

This practice of Nichiren Buddhism has also made me realize that I want to work for the peace and happiness of all Cambodian people...I totally agree with what my favorite Gosho, “On Establishing the Correct Teaching” states: “When a nation becomes disordered, it is the spirits that first show signs of rampancy. Because the spirits become rampant, all the people of the nation become disordered.” Another passage from the same Gosho reads: “If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?” As such, I am very determined to strengthen my faith, and share Nichiren Buddhism with more people in Cambodia, so as to enable more people to practice this wonderful Mystic Law and enable true peace and security in Cambodia.

Proselytization

Another factor in SGI Cambodia’s successful start is that it has not tried to grow too big too fast. Many years ago, Soka Gakkai members in

Japan, the United States, and elsewhere used to proselytize on the street, urging passersby to attend “Buddhist meetings.” The result was the genuine conversion of a few people, but also the signing up of casual members who often drifted away. The Soka Gakkai in its early days in Japan and in the U.S. boasted huge membership numbers and very rapid growth. This assertion was true to some extent, but also on occasion grossly over-inflated.

Today, the Soka Gakkai in Japan, as well as SGI chapters abroad, focus entirely on building a smaller, viable organization of dedicated members. Proselytization most often takes place by members talking to friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Typically, one family member will join SGI-C for whatever set of reasons. Their rapid increase in happiness, health, self-confidence, or a major improvement in job prospects convince others in the family, typically parents, spouses, and other siblings to join. A young member will then persuade their best friend of the benefits of this Buddhism and then the friend will spread the faith to others in their family. Nevertheless, it takes some courage to convert from a native to a foreign faith, even if the base religion is the same. As one member noted, “It is not so easy to convert to Nichiren Buddhism, as it involves facing up to one’s own weaknesses and taking responsibility for one’s life.”

Membership in SGI Cambodia can often appear in geographic clumps where the work of one or more members has paid huge dividends in terms of converting new members. Pat King, an SGI member in California, writing in the SGI publication *Living Buddhism* in October 2003, describes how one isolated village became one of the principal bases for SGI Buddhism in Cambodia:

Where can you find a village with twenty-eight adult SGI members and 186 youth members? It is in the village of Samrong Kaae, Cambodia...located about thirty-three miles southeast of Phnom Penh. How did this joyful blossoming of Nichiren Buddhism occur in a country that had been decimated by thirty years of war where killing and poverty were a way of life?

In 1996, two sisters – SGI-USA members Ponnary So and Phallivan So – determined that *nam-myoho-renge-kyo* should be shared in their native village, Samrong Kaae. It was at their urging that Mr. Seng Vuthi visited the remote village to share Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. At first the villagers were very wary about

any religion that differed from their traditional Buddhism. After much dialogue though, the first SGI discussion meeting was held in Samrong Kaae.

An elementary school principal, Vann Deth Pang, is now the SGI-C leader in the village. He has four daughters and two sons who are all very strong members. Two of his daughters, both school teachers, and a young man traveled every weekend over rough roads for one and a half hours each direction to go to meetings in the capital city. They traveled on a very rickety old motorcycle that often broke down on the way. With this type of dedication, soon a total of nine teachers began chanting and many young men and women were introduced to *nam-myoho-enge-kyo*.

One teenage boy started to chant for his mother to be able to sell all the pickles she had made so they could have enough to eat. He chanted and for the first time his mother sold out every day. With that money they were able to have enough to eat! What a joy! His mother was so delighted that she managed to save enough money to buy him a bicycle. The young man shared his actual proof and more people started to chant.

One young girl chanted for her parents not to fight and also to have enough to eat. After chanting she reported that there was more harmony in her family and more rice to eat. Like the other teenagers in Cambodia, her next goal was to chant for a bicycle. Stories like these spread like wildfire among the youth of the village.¹⁶

Pat King goes on to relate how village SGI leader Pang corralled gang problems in the area by persuading the gang leader and then his followers to chant with him. The villagers are said to have been so impressed that even the chief monk at the local pagoda sent his sons and nephews to chant with SGI faithful. "No one in Samrong Kae is against SGI. The villagers think that SGI has a magical way of helping troubled

¹⁶Pat King, "SGI Brings Hope and Joy to Cambodian Youth," *Living Buddhism* (October, 2003), p.56.

kids. They see changes before their eyes. They see renewed hope and a positive direction for their youth.” I met some teachers from this village and its surrounding area, and in their responses to my questions, they very much echoed the sentiments expressed by King in his article.

Of course, not all new members stay or maintain their enthusiasm. There is a long history of defections and drop-outs, but the fact that SGI-Cambodia grew from only a small handful of members when I first investigated them in 1999 to well over a thousand today is evidence that many new members do stay. The group of members that I interviewed in Phnom Penh consisted of men and women in their thirties, forties, and fifties who had been members for six to twelve years or more.

SGI's Friendly Ties with the Cambodian Government

Another key reason for SGI's success in Cambodia appears to be its friendly ties with the Cambodian government. SGI Cambodian leaders stress the importance of these ties, noting that these “good feelings” date back at least to the early 1990s when the Soka Gakkai in Japan donated the 300,000 radios and other funds to Cambodia. The goal of SGI Cambodia is to win the respect of government and community leaders as a worthy organization because of its active service and its participation in community and patriotic events.

In 2002 when SGI opened its Phnom Penh culture center and received its government charter, Soka Gakkai representatives from Tokyo, led by Soka Gakkai Vice-President Takehiko Sato met then Cambodian King Sihanouk and Queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk at the Royal Palace. The delegates presented the King with a letter from Ikeda Daisaku and a commemorative photograph of Ikeda's meeting with the King in Beijing in 1975. In his letter, Mr. Ikeda acknowledged that the King's strenuous efforts on behalf of the people throughout modern Cambodia's tumultuous years deserved high admiration and respect. Mr. Ikeda closed his letter with a vow to make further efforts to help foster Cambodian youth and to contribute to the country's resurgence and development.¹⁷

SGI Cambodia takes pride in its efforts to reach out to the local community, often ostensibly taking part in a broad range of community events such as cultural festivals. In 2002, SGI held an exhibition of art by local children that included an opening ceremony attended by members of

¹⁷*Soka Gakkai Newsletter*, May 2002.

the government and royal family. Government officials also frequent other SGI events. For example, SGI-Cambodia held its fourth youth general meeting on March 13, 2005 at Samrong Kaae, a village some fifty-three kilometers southwest of Phnom Penh. There were 1,500 people in attendance, including government officials from the local Religious Groups Agency and the Youth Education and Sports Agency, as well as families and friends of SGI-Cambodia members. Youth leaders shared their resolve. Two exchange students from Soka University, Japan, also spoke.¹⁸

These relationships with the community and government parallel efforts by SGI in other Southeast Asian countries. Unlike Japan, where the Soka Gakkai founded its own political party, the Komeito, in the 1960s, SGI abroad is not involved in politics at all.¹⁹ However, there are efforts to reach out to the communities, to take part in local and occasional national events such as cultural festivals on national holidays, and to build friendly relationships with leading cultural and government officials.

Conclusion

SGI attempts to provide members with a clear spiritual package that is easy to understand, but complex enough to require continued study. Its well-coordinated organizational structure and socialization process brings members together frequently, helping thereby to create a sense of belonging. SGI also attempts to instill a sense of confidence in many members through group affirmation and support. These positive feelings, it seems, further ensures their loyalty to the group and to the organization that is liberating them from the horrors of seemingly endless civil war.

Members were virtually unanimous that the quality of their lives had improved greatly after joining SGI Cambodia. Most said they had become calmer, more self-confident, and happier in their work and relationships. Significant numbers said they had become more optimistic and were better able to make clear and informed decisions. Virtually

¹⁸*Soka Gakkai Newsletter*, June 2005.

¹⁹The Komeito (today officially known as New Komeito) has consistently held about five to ten percent of the seats in both chambers of Japan's Diet since the late 1960s and today is a coalition partner of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party. The Komeito became separated from the Soka Gakkai in 1970 and has operated as an independent party ever since, but Soka Gakkai remains an active supporter of the party.

everyone interviewed said they had chanted to realize a goal or set of goals, and they had achieved many of their desired results. Several members said chanting gave them more control over their destinies and positively affected the lives of their neighbors. By changing their own karma as well as that of others, members felt they were contributing not only to the betterment of their own lives, but also to the improvement of their respective communities and country.

SGI stresses that each member has a strong responsibility not only for his or her destiny, but also that of fellow Cambodians. They can take their personal and their nation's destinies into their own hands and they are no longer dependent on other people, authorities, or religions for their survival. This feeling is very liberating for members because it gives them a new worldview and a new way of leading their lives.

SGI Cambodia is not looking for mass conversions and is not embarking on major crusades to expand its membership. It is only a tiny pebble in a much greater sea – a thousand or more members in a nation of thirteen million. But like its counterparts elsewhere in Southeast Asia, it will continue to grow, slowly but surely. It has built a solid foundation that bodes well for the future.

**WHY DID JAPAN FAIL TO ACHIEVE FULL-FLEDGED
DEMOCRACY BEFORE WORLD WAR II?
AN ANALYSIS OF CLASS RELATIONS AND FORCES USING
MARXIAN CLASS THEORIES**

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Introduction

Sustainable democratization started in Japan after World War II. The Allied Occupation between 1945 and 1951 was very important for the development of Japanese democracy. The major policies implemented by GHQ (General Headquarters to occupy Japan) were: (1) the promulgation of a new Constitution, (2) land reform, and (3) the dissolution of the *zaibatsu*. Essentially, full-blossomed democracy in Japan was brought from outside. That is, “The Democratic Revolution” was “A Gift from Heaven.”¹ Before the end of WWII, there were internal forces which fought against the authoritarian regime. However, these forces were not able to achieve democracy, except for a brief period of “Taisho Democracy” in the 1920s. GHQ policies were targeted toward dismantling the major components of the authoritarian regime. These policies weakened the state apparatus as well as landlords and commercial and industrial elites,² which made up the authoritarian regime. As GHQ’s policies accurately identified, in pre-WWII Japan, the state, landlords, and commercial and industrial elites combined their power to establish a totalitarian state which enabled the invasion of other countries.

The purpose of this paper is to obtain a better understanding of the trajectory of pre-war Japanese democracy. For this, Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens’ relative class power model of democracy³ and Moore’s

¹John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), p. 67.

²In this paper, industrial and commercial elite and the bourgeoisie are used interchangeably. Also, the working class and the proletariat will be used the same way.

³Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

theoretical framework and his analysis of Japan will be utilized.⁴ In discussing the foundation of these theories, various studies on class relations and forces in pre-war Japan will be juxtaposed in the analysis.

Theories of Democratization

Social scientists in the West have developed two major lines of theoretical inquiry into class/stratum and democracy.⁵ The first line is to understand the relationship between these phenomena using modernization theory that explains social mobility and stratification. This theory postulates that modernization creates the middle class through increased income and educational levels, and social mobility promotes political democratization in society.⁶ That is, modernization is positively related to democratization. As a research tradition, modernization theory tends to use cross-sectional data to see the level of modernization in various societies; therefore, it is likely to be ahistorical. Although he also subscribes to modernization theory, Tominaga's analysis is different; he looks at changes in society from a historical perspective.⁷ He claims that modernization in the Western and non-Western worlds are different because non-Western societies have undergone the process of modernization experienced by the West in reverse sequence. In the West, modernization started from social modernization followed by cultural modernization, then political modernization, and finally economic modernization.

In the modernization of non-Western societies, economic modernization came first, followed by political modernization, and finally social and cultural modernization. This reverse sequence is the prevailing factor that makes it difficult to transform non-Western societies into

⁴Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966, 1993).

⁵Tamio Hattori, Tsuruyo Funatsu, and Takashi Torii, "Introduction: The Emergence of the Asian Middle Class and Their Characteristics," *The Developing Economies* 41/2 (2003): 129-139.

⁶Masanori Nakamura, *Economic Development and Democracy*. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993); and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁷Kenichi Tominaga, *Japanese Modernization and Social Change* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1990).

modernized societies. In this broad scheme of social change, the political arena is described as a transition from despotism to democracy in politics, and from traditional law to modern law in the system of laws.⁸ According to Tominaga, the reverse sequence which is the fate of the late starters of modernization affects the level of democratization negatively. I agree with Tominaga's assessment, but he does not show in detail how this reverse sequence affected various social groups in Japan and resulted in totalitarianism. I think another tradition offers a good understanding of the dynamism of those groups in relation to democratization. This tradition understands the relationship using Marxian class analysis, which views classes as historical change agents that inherently possess conflicts of interest in their struggle for supremacy. Democratization is considered to be the result of this struggle.

In terms of understanding democratization in pre-WWII Japan, the former theoretical tradition does not explain it well. Pre-war Japan modernized rapidly, taking the West as a model. Yet, here modernization did not result in democracy; the society moved in the opposite direction toward totalitarianism. Thus, Marxian class analysis which views social forces as complex and historical is a better analytical tool than modernization theory to interpret democratization in pre-war Japan.

Marxian Class Analysis on Democratization

A comprehensive understanding of class relations and democracy in the Marxian tradition has been developed by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens. They call their theory "the relative class power model of democracy." Building upon a long tradition of discourse about the relationship between capitalist development and democracy, they argue that democratization is a matter of power. They state that "it is power relations that most importantly determine whether democracy can emerge, stabilize, and then maintain itself even in the face of adverse conditions."⁹ In the theory, the working class is identified as the most critical actor in the advancement of democracy. The opposite pole is the landed upper class, the most anti-democratic force. Between these classes, there exist the bourgeoisie and the middle class. Whether democracy or authoritarianism

⁸Kenichi Tominaga, *Theory of Modernization: The West and the East in Modernization* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996), pp. 34-35.

⁹Rueschemeyer, et al., *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, p. 5.

results depends on two factors. The first factor is each class' consideration of benefits or losses after democratization. That is, if the benefit outweighs the loss for the bourgeoisie, they may coalesce with the proletariat. On the other hand, if the loss outweighs the benefit, the bourgeoisie is more likely to cooperate with the landed upper class. The second factor is a class' ability to organize itself and mobilize resources for its interests. If the working class lacks these abilities, achieving democracy is unlikely. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens enhance their class-based model by adding two external influences, state and transnational power structures. The state can be a coalition partner with dominant classes. In this case, the dominant class' oppression by force of the dominated classes can be legitimated in the name of the state. Thus, they conclude that some autonomy of the state from the dominant classes, from the bourgeoisie and especially – where it still exists – from the landlord class, is a necessary condition for democracy to be possible and meaningful.¹⁰ The importance of the transnational power structure is that it affects the power relations of internal class structure. In the case of Japan, when GHQ imposed its policies, the relative power of the classes changed dramatically.

Moore's analysis of modern political systems in selected countries is another important theoretical development in interpreting democratization. He identifies three paths to the modern political mode. The first path is liberal democracy, represented by the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. The second path is fascism represented by Germany and Japan. The third path is communism such as developed in China and Russia. Which path a country takes depends upon five factors. These factors are: (1) the relative power of state to landlord and bourgeoisie; (2) the degree to which the state supports the landlord's repressive agriculture; (3) the relative strength of the rural and urban dominant classes; (4) the alliances of domination between crown and dominant classes; and (5) the peasants chance to resist domination. Social actors in Moore's theoretical framework include the state, landlords, peasants, and the bourgeoisie. His main emphasis is on the relationship between the landlord and the peasant. According to Moore, in Japan, there was a coalition between the landlord and the state which supported repressive agriculture. The bourgeoisie also joined the coalition. The state supported the bourgeoisie through trade protectionism, selling off state factories, and the banning of unions. The peasants chance to organize was

¹⁰Rueschemeyer, et al., *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, p. 64.

low because of repression, as well as tradition and custom which softened the antagonism.

Though Moore's discussion is insightful, his analysis of Japan is weak in two areas. One is his neglect of the role of the working class. In Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens' relative class power model of democracy, they argue that landlords are the most anti-democratic force and the working class is the most important force for democracy. Their historical accounts of various countries suggest that the working class possessed more ability than any other class to organize for democracy. Peasants can be a force for democracy, but historical accounts indicate that they often were passive in regard to democracy. If the working class is the most important force for democracy, as suggested, it is necessary to describe the working class in pre-WWII Japan; and it is this that is lacking in Moore's historical account of Japan.

Another weak point is his conceptualization of the relationship between the landlord and the peasant. He argues that the absence of a peasant revolution in Japan was due to the repression by the state, and fear and dependence of peasants, which created the elaborate Japanese code of deference. The landlord is characterized as a repressor and a parasite. For example, after WW1, the number of landlord-tenant disputes increased rapidly. When landlords were not able to handle the situation through the creation of cooperative unions, they asked the government to oppress the tenants, for example, police would be called upon to put down a dispute by force. Landlords were also parasitic; for example, in 1937, they sold eighty-five percent of their crops, which were mainly cultivated by their tenants. These characterizations are true, yet, they are not the whole picture of the relationship between landlord and peasant. For instance, Waswo points out that the Japanese landlords helped create winter jobs for peasants.¹¹ This account of a positive role of landlords for peasants needs to be integrated in the analysis in order to get a balanced picture of the relationship.

In reviewing the theoretical frameworks of Rueschemeyer et al., and of Moore, it can be said that the Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens' theory is more comprehensive than Moore's theory. Moore's analysis is essentially based on the relationship between the landlord-bourgeoisie-state

¹¹ Ann Waswo, *Japanese Landlords* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

coalition versus the peasant. Rueschemeyer et al. add the working class into the framework. Although their theoretical framework is more comprehensive, unfortunately, they do not have a case study of Japan, in contrast to Moore's extensive Japanese case study. Considering the shortcomings of Moore's analysis, this paper will describe the working class before WWII and reinterpret the relationship between peasants and landlords in pre-war Japan so that it is possible to have a more comprehensive sketch of the condition for democracy in Japan in this period.

The Working Class in Japan

The development of modern capitalism in Japan began with the Meiji government's policies to promote industry.¹² World capitalism was already substantially developed when the Tokugawa regime was overthrown in 1868. The new government perceived only one choice for the maintenance of sovereignty in the presence of the strong nations of the West. The choice was to join world capitalism by promoting industry and building its military guided by the slogan *Fukoku kyohei* (rich country, strong military). Unlike advanced capitalist nations where the proletariat and the bourgeoisie were formed naturally, the post-Tokugawa class formation was rather artificial. In England, urbanization, which was initially accompanied by surplus labor (free labor), coincided with industrialization and technological advancement. However, when the government started industrialization in Japan, the majority of people were still rural. Moore mentions a major difference between Japan and England, which is that "Japan, unlike England, did not undergo on any widespread scale the process of expropriating its peasant, driving them to the cities..."¹³ Thus, the lack of industrial laborers continued to be a major problem for Japan. Furthermore, this non-sequence of the development of free labor also affected the life of the proletariat.

¹²There is a debate about the time when the initial capital accumulation for modern capitalism started in Japan. Some scholars argue that the capital accumulation started when the Meiji government initiated policies to promote industry. Other scholars argue that in the late seventeenth century capital accumulation started in rural areas where the commodification of agriculture and the development of manufacturing started. See Yoshiteru Iwamoto, "Capitalists and Wage Laborers," in *Social History II*, Yoshiji Nakamura, ed. (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishing Company, 1967), p. 302.

¹³Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 280.

Iwamoto identifies three routes to proletarianization in Japan.¹⁴ First, peasants, who comprised 80 percent of the Japanese population, were forced to change their way of life by working in cities when the commercial and money economy developed. This was a typical way of proletariat formation in Western Europe. The difference between Western Europe and Japan was that Japanese workers kept strong ties with families and relatives in rural areas. Second, the changes to the status of vassals initiated by the new government became a route to proletarianization. The Meiji government took away social, economic, and political privileges from the samurai. Third, artisans became part of the proletariat after the dissolution of guilds. The Meiji government's intention is clear in the process of proletarianization. In order to join the world capitalist market, the government had to dismantle the four social divisions (samurai, peasant, artisan, and merchant), which were the basis of Tokugawa feudal society. Moore summarizes the government's activity by saying that "in 1869 the government declared equality before the law for social classes, abolished local barriers to trade and communication, permitted freedom of cropping, and allowed individuals to acquire property rights in land."¹⁵ The classes of proletariat and bourgeoisie that are necessary for modern capitalism were thus intentionally created by the state.

Dismantling the Tokugawa class system freed the peasants from the strict social control of five-man groups, a system of domination that used mutual responsibility to ensure the authority of the Tokugawa regime. However, the creation of the proletariat was not similar to its formation in Western Europe. Many peasants remained in their rural communities. They worked on their land and/or their landlords' land. These peasants who remained in rural communities gradually evolved into wage laborers. There were three routes for this transformation. First, while continuing to work the land, they also commuted to nearby cities to work in factories. Iwamoto says that commuting created conditions for a basic form of wage labor in the early period of the Meiji era. Becoming migrant workers was another way for peasants to become wage laborers. Young women who mainly worked in silk mills were the major component of this type of wage laborer. The third route was for peasants to become proletariat because of the bankruptcy of their farms. Bankruptcy was especially common during the deflation after 1881.

When the Meiji government declared an equality of social classes,

¹⁴Iwamoto, "Capitalists and Wage Laborers."

¹⁵Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 249.

they made a concession to the samurai class. Because the samurai class was the dominant class in the Tokugawa regime, the new government was careful in their dealings with them. After 1883, the government paid cash and bond as compensation to the samurai who surrendered their title. In 1886, the government ordered the samurai to surrender their title in exchange for a uniform national bond. Only the samurai class was compensated by the government. However, the average compensation was 548 yen per person; This amount was not enough to generate interest to live on. Thus, samurai became independent farmers and merchants. However, their lack of experience often brought failure in their new businesses. Many of them became part of the proletariat. In 1868, guilds were dissolved and artisans lost their prerogatives. Worse still, the demand for the products shifted. Initially, the artisans produced goods for the samurai, but the decline of the samurai class meant that there would be less demand for the goods. Changes to the social environment accelerated the proletarianization of this group.

These processes formed the working class in the nation, but the magnitude of the formation and the characteristics of the workers were not sufficient to become a strong political force in Japan. As of 1882, the total number of workers in factories was about 60,000. The total number of workers in state-owned factories was about 10,000, and the private sector employed about 50,000. Most of the state-owned factories were metal and machine industries. In the private sector, the dominant industry was textile; here, seventy percent of the employed were women. In the private sector, there were also the metal and machine industries which employed men. However, these men accounted for only ten percent of all workers in Japan. Most of the male workers were employed as unskilled laborers, such as handymen and mine workers. This data, along with the previous discussion of commuter workers, indicates that the proletariat in the early period of the Meiji Era can be characterized by the dominance of female workers and commuter workers. Female workers were bound by tradition and they had little education. Commuter workers were tied to the landlord-tenant relationship and they were still rooted in rural communities. Thus, the process of formation and the characteristics of the working class in Japan worked against the creation of class consciousness which is important if a class is to become a political power.

In the next two sections, working conditions of workers and their struggles for a better life are discussed based on Iwamoto's data and arguments.

The Working Conditions of the Proletariat

The working conditions of industrial workers were characterized by long working hours and low wages. In 1868, on average people worked ten to twelve hours a day. The determination of the working hour derived from a typical idea of laboring from sunrise to sunset. In state-owned factories, eight to nine hours was the norm. The shorter working hours in the state-owned factories were due to the influence of Western Europe. But this relatively good condition was short-lived. As competition accelerated along with a shortage of skilled laborers, working hours were extended to ten hours. In private factories, conditions became much worse. For example, in Gunma and Nagano prefectures, workers in the silk industry worked for fifteen to sixteen hours a day. A wage level was determined in reference to the wages of a day laborer in craft and in agriculture. For example, at a spinning mill in Osaka in 1882, men received 0.12 yen a day and women received 0.07 yen a day (0.12 yen equals 3.6 liters of rice.). Because of the lack of worker awareness, the extended working hours did not result in the increase of wages. Despite the harsh working conditions, the relation between management and labor was not as conflict-ridden as one might think. The bourgeoisie used family as an analogy, that is, the bourgeoisie were seen as parents and the proletariat as children. This ideology successfully deflected the inherent conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Labor Movement

Around the turn of the century, the working class had grown rapidly and was potentially a strong political force. In 1900, there were 387,796 workers in factories that employed more than ten people. In mining, there were 140,846 workers, and in railways and shipping 166,079.¹⁶ Although the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was deflected by the ideology of pseudo-kinship, after 1897 the proletariat gradually formed a class consciousness. Before 1897, wage laborers in coal mines and factories fought for better a working environment. In some of the spinning mills, female workers also fought for better conditions. However, these disputes were not based on class consciousness. The disputes were the outbursts of dissatisfaction with their daily life conditions. After 1897, the nature of

¹⁶Mitsusada Inoue, Kazuo Kasahara and Kota Kodama, eds., *Japanese History* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishing Company, 1984), p. 273.

disputes changed. The idea of socialism was brought to the movement when Sentaro Joe and Honnosuke Sawada came back to Japan from America with socialistic ideas. Around this year, several socialist organizations were formed such as the Socialist Club led by Sei Kawakami and Shusui Kotoku (1898) and the Social Democratic Party led by Sen Katayama and Shusui Kotoku (1901). Also, workers started to organize by themselves. As identified by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, an ability to organize itself is a critical factor for the labor movement.

Although there was progress in the labor movement, the unionization of workers was not as smooth as one might think. Two factors worked against smooth unionization. The first factor was that factory workers were still dominated by females, who often lacked adequate education. Thus, the formation of class consciousness was not very strong. There was also a cleavage between intellectual socialists and uneducated female workers. Here, we see the internal difficulties that held the proletariat back from becoming a political force. The intellectual socialists failed to form a large-scale political force. Furthermore, the uneducated female workers did not have the chance to reflect on their condition and mobilize for their rights. Although Moore attributes the lack of democratization in Japan to the landlord-peasant relationship, here we see another factor, that is, the failure of an internal drive for organizing among the working class, especially female workers.

The second factor was that after realizing the increase of labor disputes, the government passed the Security Police Law in 1900. This law allowed the government to directly suppress the unionization of laborers and crush the disputes. After passing this law, the labor movement showed a significant decline. It was not until 1905 that the labor movement regained its momentum. In 1907, affected by the recession after the Russo-Japanese War, the number of disputes hit a record high. At the same time, socialist groups repeated many internal fights which created the fragmentation of the movement. In addition to this fragmentation, the government's oppression increased. The execution of 24 socialists by the government put a brake on the socialist/labor movement. This removed the slight chance the working class had for unionization.

The next rebound of the labor movement was after WWI. The war brought an economic boom. However, the distribution of the profit was uneven: the bourgeoisie monopolized the profit, while the living conditions of the proletariat actually deteriorated. This discrepancy between the

proletariat and the bourgeoisie ignited a series of disputes. In 1917, there were 497 disputes attended by 63,000 workers. The number of participants was the highest in the history of Japan. Around this time, the labor movement joined with advocates of “Taisho Democracy.” Together, these groups requested universal suffrage. This movement became a national movement and characterized the Taisho era. Again, after the WWI boom, a recession came. The workers faced the possibility of mass unemployment. Along with the continuous repression from the government and the bourgeoisie, the fear of unemployment reduced the number of disputes. However, “Taisho Democracy” brought universal suffrage in 1925. This reflected progress toward democracy. In the same year, the government also passed the Peace Preservation Law. Later, this law became an instrument to oppress any group which opposed the Japanese military government and its policy.

In sum, the government made a concession to democratic forces by offering universal suffrage. At the same time, the government installed a law which far outweighed the benefit of universal suffrage, thus, opening a door toward the totalitarianism and the invasion of other countries. Here, we have to be cautious about the nature of “Taisho Democracy” from the point of view of the Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens theoretical discussion. “Taisho Democracy” was not a democratic movement of the working class. Rather, it was the bourgeois democratic movement that was made possible by the emergence of a new urban middle class.¹⁷ Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens argue that the middle class is not the genuine supporter of full democracy in every case. It depends on its position between the elites and the masses. In this sense, “Taisho Democracy” was not a full-scale democratic movement.

In concluding this section, we see four characteristics in the working class in pre-WWII Japan. First, the labor movement was affected by a series of wars. Before WWII, Japan experienced three wars: the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and WWI. These wars were followed by economic booms and busts. For example, the boom after WWI made the proletariat realize their miserable position in relation to the bourgeoisie. Thus, after that, labor disputes increased. Second, the workers were not able to have a leading ideology that could guide their movement.

¹⁷Takayoshi Matsuo, “The Development of Democracy in Japan – Taisho Democracy: Its Flowering and Breakdown,” *The Developing Economies* 4/4 (1966): 612-637.

This was due to the internal conflicts of the socialist intellectual elites, as well as the cleavage between the socialists and the mass laborers, who were mostly uneducated. Third, the working class in Japan did not have an opportunity to form a coalition with other classes for democracy, except for a brief period during the era of “Taisho Democracy.” There was a lack of political consciousness that the working class needed to unite with the peasant, another oppressed class. On the other hand, the dominant classes effectively formed a coalition. The coalition consisted of the landlord, the bourgeoisie, and the state. Fourth, Japan’s late development of modern capitalism created a peculiar sequence in the development of free labor. The state created industry first; Then, the workers were supplied haphazardly. In the early period of the Meiji era, most of the laborers were female workers and/or commuter workers who were less likely to organize for democracy. Although Moore emphasizes only landlords and peasants, his generalization can be applied here. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens summarize Moore’s argument: he sees the conditions favorable for democracy – like Weber and de Schweinitz – bound up with the historical constellation of early capitalism.¹⁸ The late development of modern capitalism was thus a disadvantage for the working class in Japan. Tominaga offers a similar conclusion in his discussion of political modernization. He attributes limited democracy, as seen in “Taisho Democracy” and The Liberal Movement in the late nineteenth century, to the late start of Japanese modernization; that is, political modernization was preceded by economic modernization.¹⁹

Peasants and Landlords

During the Tokugawa regime, peasants were chained to land and forced to cultivate crops. It was against the law for them to move to other places or choose another occupation. Although *daimyo* (great lords) issued a cultivation title to peasants, they were prohibited from selling or dividing their land. *Daimyo* heavily extracted rice from the peasants. This rigid system of control had been gradually weakened by the influence of the money economy. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the new government dismantled the domains. Thus, *daimyo* ceased to be the ruler of peasants. This is different from the experience of Western Europe. For example, in

¹⁸Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, p. 23.

¹⁹Tominaga, *Theory of Modernization*, p. 193.

England, feudal lords transformed themselves into new landlords in the process of modernization. However, in Japan, there was a disjunction in the modernization process; the former *daimyo* moved into new businesses such as industry and banking after the dissolution of the domains.

The majority of the new landlords came from peasantry. The money economy in rural areas, which was developed toward the end of the Tokugawa regime, cleared the way for the inroad of the new landlords. Moore summarizes the emergence of the new landlords in this way: "Paternalistic relations were being replaced by the explosive ones of landlord and tenant, as a landlord class emerged out of the peasantry – it would seem rather more than out of the aristocracy – as a result of the advent of commercial farming."²⁰ Commercial farming led to differentiation among peasants. Some peasants became landlords after gaining power through lending money or rice to poor peasants. In the process, many peasants were not able to take advantage of the growing money economy. The deeds issued in 1871 by the Meiji government legitimated the position of the new landlords.

In addition, there were three other ways to become landlords. First, *goshi* became new landlords after the dissolution of *daimyo*. *Goshi* were rural samurai who survived the Warring States period in the sixteenth century. They remained as landlords under *daimyo* during the Tokugawa era. When the Meiji government dissolved *daimyo*, *goshi* survived, remaining in the landlord class. Second, a special kind of peasant became new landlords. These peasants were characterized by large holdings and the usage of *nago* (serfs). These peasants also remained in the landlord class. The third way to become a landlord was by acquiring a title through participating in reclamation projects. In any case, unlike *daimyo* that lived in castle towns, the new landlords lived in rural villages side by side with peasants.

Waswo lists six common types of tenancy in Japan.²¹ The first type was permanent tenancy. This type of tenant usually had a right to cultivate permanently. The permanent cultivation right was obtained through labor in reclamation or through working on the same plot for more than twenty years. These peasants were allowed to pay lower rents. The second type was direct tenancy, which was a result of the advent of the money economy. Landowners pawned their lands for loans, but remained on the lands as

²⁰Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 269.

²¹Waswo, *Japanese Landlords*, p. 23.

tenants. The interest was paid every year and the principal was due in three years. After paying the principal, the tenants regained their property rights. The third type was separate tenancy which was similar to direct tenancy. The difference was that the pawned land was cultivated by the third person, not the original landholders. The fourth type was caretaker tenancy. When a landholder lived in another village, he asked someone living in the village to take care of his plot. The caretaker paid tax and sent rent to the landholder. The fifth type was contract tenancy, which was similar to caretaker tenancy. The tenant assumed a managerial role for lands. He was responsible for rent and taxes. The final type was ordinary tenancy. In this type, landlords and tenants had no special relationships like other types. If the tenants worked long enough in a plot, they might become permanent tenants. When the land settlement of 1868 was enacted, the first five types of tenancy disappeared. Thus, throughout the Meiji era, ordinary tenancy became universal.

The Relationship Between Peasants and Landlords

Moore views Japanese landlords as repressive and parasitic. According to his account, the landlords used the state to squeeze rents out of tenants. He believes that peasant rebellions were low because of the feudal legacy which mitigated open conflict. It is true that landlords were repressive, but they turned to repression when peasants started open conflict after WWI. This implies that Japanese landlords were not always repressive. Moore also views the relationship between the landlord and the peasant as inherently conflict-ridden. In this view, landlords were able to avoid open conflicts for a certain period of time; it is only because they successfully inherited the feudal legacy of quiet acquiescence by peasants. This view derives from Marx's ideology which postulates that ideas legitimate a class's domination of another class.²² The feudal legacy legitimated the landlords' domination and deflected the formation of class consciousness among peasants. It seems that by emphasizing the false class consciousness, Moore tends to minimize the landlord-tenant disputes after WWI. Also, he views the feudal legacy, specifically pseudo-kinship, as a one-way obligation, that is, that the peasants as children have to obey the authority of the landlord (father). Thus, he sees that pseudo-kinship minimized the development of class consciousness.

²² Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

I have a different interpretation of pseudo-kinship. Instead of a one-way obligation, it was a two-way obligation. Thus, the peasants obeyed the landlords; at the same time, the landlords had responsibilities to take care of the peasants (children). Using Waswo's analysis, I would like to elaborate on this point. The Japanese landlords, as parents, had many responsibilities for peasants. The most important responsibility was to protect peasants during a poor harvest. When a poor harvest occurred, mainly due to weather conditions, the landlords were expected to reduce rents. The landlord's offering of jobs such as silk-reeling, rope-making or household servants in winter was critical for the survival of the peasants, especially in poor harvest years. Sometimes, the landlords hired peasants as household servants more than were needed. The landlords also took leadership in their villages. They became mayors and treasurers, and protected the community interests from the opposing interests of the central government and nearby villages. For example, when securing a waterway became an issue between villages, the landlords protected their community (and personal) interests. Another responsibility the landlords took was their contribution to education. When the universal educational system was established by the Meiji government, the cost to construct and to operate local schools were expected to be carried out by the local governments. The landlords shared the cost of education. They also offered scholarships to bright young people in the villages and sent them to colleges and universities. After graduating from colleges, the young people were obliged to work in the villages as innovators, doctors, or teachers for a couple of years. The landlords were often hosts of feasts. For example, on New Years Day peasants' marriages were celebrated at the landlords' expense. As these examples show, the relationship between landlords and peasants was mutual. Waswo highlights that landlords served as the protectors and benefactors of their tenants and of the villages in which they lived.²³

Here, I have shown positive roles played by the landlords. This is a consequence of the historical peculiarity of the emergence of the new Japanese landlords. After the Meiji Restoration, *daimyo* was replaced by the new landlords who resided in their villages and who used to be peasants themselves. The peasants and the new landlords knew each other and lived together in the same communities. The proximity between them created a mutual obligation. Landlords were also responsible for communities. I think

²³Waswo, *Japanese Landlords*, p. 34.

Moore's argument based on Marx's ideology which suppresses class consciousness does not offer a good framework for understanding the relationship between the landlords and the peasants in Japan. Moore's argument is more adequate in its discussion of the relationship between the industrial elites and the working class. In their relationship, the family analogy was used to suppress open conflicts. The bourgeoisie required the proletariat to obey their authority because, in the analogy, the proletariats were children who needed to obey the authority of fathers. In this case, the obligation was one-way. The bourgeoisie did not pay much attention to the welfare of the proletariat. The ideology of pseudo-kinship was effective to suppress open conflicts.

Why was the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat a one-way obligation, in contrast to the two-way obligation of the landlord-peasant relationship? The difference was due to a discrepancy in social proximity between the dominant and the dominated. In factories, workers came from rural areas. This meant that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat did not know each other well. For the bourgeoisie, the workers were strangers and it was unlikely that they would take good care of strangers. Also, they did not form a community. This means that they did not have common interests to share and to defend. The major concern the bourgeoisie had was to extract as much surplus value as possible. The bourgeoisie did not need to take care of the workers for this purpose. On the contrary, this purpose was achieved through greater exploitation of them. Thus, the relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was structured as a one-way obligation, in contrast to the mutual obligation of the landlord-peasant relationship.

The Landlord-Tenant Disputes

Upon describing the mutual relationship between the landlords and the peasants, it is necessary to characterize landlord-tenant disputes. Landlord-tenant disputes swept over the country after WWI. Table 1 shows the magnitude of the disputes. The disputes started to increase around 1921, in this year, the number of disputes increased four times. The table also shows that the year of 1926 was the peak in terms of participation in disputes. In that year, 39,705 landlords and 151,061 peasants participated in 2,751 disputes. The series of disputes were due to the severe depression after WWI. Because the life of peasants had deteriorated, they asked for the securing of cultivation rights and the reducing of rents. The disputes continued until

1935, but, after that year, the movement petered out mainly because the state took a significant role in repressing the movement.

Why did the landlord-tenant disputes occur although I have characterized the landlords as protectors and benefactors? It is because agricultural improvements and the educational attainment of the peasants changed the nature of the relationship.²⁴ Agricultural improvements accelerated the agricultural sector's integration into the modern capitalist economy. This integration, for example, the adoption of a uniform rice inspection made the landlord-peasant relationship contractual. This weakened the personal and familial relationships. The agricultural improvements themselves increased the independence of the peasants financially. This resulted in the weakening of the relative position of the landlords. The universal educational system led to an increase in the literacy rate of the peasants and gave them an opportunity to come in contact with radical ideas such as socialism.

²⁴Waswo, *Japanese Landlords*.

Table 1. The Number of Landlord-Tenant Disputes²⁵

Year	The Number of Disputes	The Participation of Landlords	The Participation of Peasants
1918	256	N/A	N/A
1919	326	N/A	N/A
1920	408	5,236	34,605
1921	1,680	33,985	145,898
1922	1,578	29,077	125,750
1923	1,917	37,712	134,503
1924	1,532	27,223	110,920
1925	2,206	33,001	134,646
1926	2,751	39,705	151,061
1927	2,053	24,136	91,336
1928	1,866	19,474	75,136
1929	2,434	23,505	81,998
1930	2,478	14,159	58,565
1931	3,419	23,768	81,135
1932	3,414	16,706	61,499
1933	4,000	14,312	48,073
1934	5,828	34,035	121,031
1935	6,824	28,574	113,164

Thus, the personal relationship between the landlords and the peasants was transformed into an impersonal relationship. In the process, the landlords discarded their obligation to protect the peasants. The vertical relationship, which was stronger than the horizontal relationship among tenants, crumbled and resulted in large scale landlord-tenant disputes.

Moore minimizes the landlord-tenant disputes because of his emphasis on the inheritance of the traditional past. He says that real class warfare never took hold in Japanese villages. Due to the structure inherited from the past, the landlord's influence spread into every nook and cranny of village life.²⁶ He is hesitant to accept the emergence of class consciousness among the peasantry. But, I think there emerged class consciousness among

²⁵Iwamoto, "Capitalists and Wage Laborers," p. 434.

²⁶Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 306.

the peasants after WWI.²⁷ Unfortunately, when the peasant's movement heightened, the state started crushing the movement by force.

In sum, in the early period of the Meiji era the relationship between the peasant and the landlord was personal and communal. They had mutual responsibilities. Because of the strong vertical ties, there were not many open conflicts. However, the agricultural sector's integration into the modern capitalist economy along with universal education transformed the relationship into an impersonal and contractual one. In the process, the two-way obligation was abandoned. When the severe recession after WWI struck the country, the peasants openly fought against the landlords, who abandoned their obligation. However, it was already too late for the peasants. By this time, the landlords had already formed a strong coalition with the state and the bourgeoisie.²⁸ Thus, the movement did not bring fruitful results for the peasants.

Summary

Democracy in Japan was brought in from the outside when the Allied Occupation implemented a series of policies which transformed the power relation of classes. However, people in Japan had a history of struggles for democracy in pre-WWII Japan. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens teach us that when the working class is strong and the landlord class is weak, there is a greater chance for a country to achieve democracy. On the other hand, when the landlord class is strong and the working class is weak, it is difficult for a country to achieve democracy.

In this paper, it was indicated that the Japanese working class before WWII was weak due to the disadvantage of the late capitalist development of Japan. In rural areas, the peasants and the landlords lived in mutual obligation. This relationship put off the development of the peasant movement until the end of WWI. The agricultural and educational improvements accelerated the agricultural sector's integration into modern capitalism. In the process, the relationship between the landlord and the peasant changed to an impersonal one. When the depression after WWI struck the country, the landlord did not help the peasants as they did before. With new levels of educational attainment, the peasants launched a series of

²⁷Rin Abiko, "Landlords and Peasants," in *Social History II*, ed. Yoshiji Nakamura (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishing Company, 1967), p. 434.

²⁸Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

landlord-tenant disputes. However, as Moore extensively analyzes, the landlord-bourgeoisie-state coalition had already been formed. Thus, the movement was repressed by the state. When both the working class and the peasant class were silenced, the state single-mindedly marched toward the repression of its people and the invasion of other countries. Japanese people had to wait until the end of WWII for full-fledged democracy, when the transnational power structure changed both Japan's internal class relations and the forces for democracy.

NEW TRENDS IN THE PRODUCTION OF JAPANESE LADIES' COMICS: DIVERSIFICATION AND CATHARSIS¹

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Manga, or Japanese comics, has a long history beginning in ancient times, and it forms a prominent aspect of Japanese modern culture affecting entertainment, social norms, education, economy, and even politics. It is cheap and readily available at bookstores, convenience stores, train and subway station kiosks, coffee shops, restaurants, waiting rooms of clinics and hospitals, barber shops, and beauty salons. Many children and students, as well as adults, read manga not only at home, school, or college, but also on trains and subways. Manga certainly is a huge and lucrative mass entertainment business along with *anime*, or Japanese animation, and it reflects very important social and psychological functions. There are various kinds of manga, classified according to the readers' sex, age, content, and genre. Japanese ladies' comics, or *Redikomi*, as they are commonly called, are for young and mature adult women.²

This article examines the production of today's Japanese ladies' comics and the magazines' function as a means of catharsis. Many stories in recent ladies' comics are based on contemporary Japanese women's experiences. Editors and manga artists pay a great deal of attention to TV, radio, internet, and newspapers in order to get ideas for their comic stories. Different magazines revolve around various themes, and there is more diversification among them.

Some publishers ask for readers' contributions, and their comic stories are created based on their everyday life experiences and social situations. An editor and comic artist discuss the contributors' stories,

¹The research for this article was funded by a generous grant from the Japan Foundation of New York.

²Paul Gravett, *Manga The Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2004); Kinko Ito, "Images of Women in Weekly Male Comic Magazines in Japan" *Journal of Popular Culture* 27 (1994); "The Manga Culture in Japan" *Japan Studies Review* 4 (2000); and Frederik Schodt L. *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1988).

modify them in order to protect anonymity, and depict whatever they think may appeal to the readers.

The contributor, by writing of her particular case, experiences catharsis. According to the Britannica Online Encyclopedia, catharsis is defined as “the purification or purgation of the emotions (especially pity and fear) primarily through art.”³ Catharsis is often used in dramaturgical uses as well as in the fields of medicine (e.g., psychiatry) and religion. The writer releases her stress, anxiety, or frustration that derives from her particular case, and she can also get rid of guilty, unpleasant, uncomfortable, afflictive, or negative emotions and feelings which have been building up within her. She is able to see herself and her experience in a more objective manner as an observer when she writes down her experiences. The readers, on the other hand, enjoy reading the comics because they make them realize “that there exist those who could suffer a worse fate than them,”⁴ and this leads to relief. The effectiveness of catharsis has been debated over the years,⁵ but the discharge process such as “crying, shivering, laughing,” etc. can be very pleasant and can lead to positive results such as “clarity of thought, relaxation, and feelings of renewed energy or exhilaration.”⁶

For this article, seventeen randomly chosen Japanese ladies’ comic magazines were studied, and several editors and manga artists were interviewed in Tokyo and Yokohama. The ladies’ comic magazines that were selected contained a total of more than 9,400 pages of comic stories, which were read as artistic and “literary” texts that are subject to a hermeneutic inquiry. They were published by various publishers in Tokyo from 2003 to 2007.

³ “Catharsis,” Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, (accessed in 2008, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/99492/catharsis>).

⁴ “Catharsis,” Wikipedia, February 8, 2008 (accessed 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catharsis>).

⁵ Alan E. Kazdin, ed., “American Psychological Association,” *Encyclopedia of Psychology* 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 49.

⁶ T.J. Scheff, *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual, and Drama* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1979), p. 67.

A Brief Introduction to Japanese Ladies' Comics

The predominant form of ladies' comics is the magazine, and they are published bi-weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, and seasonally. Some women's weekly and monthly journals and magazines have a small section for ladies' comics as well. Publishers often issue special issues in addition to the regular issues. The size of almost all the ladies' comic magazines published in Japan today is about 15cm x 21cm (approximately 6in x 8in), and they are usually from 1 1/2 to 2 inches thick. The prices range from about US\$3.80 to \$6.00. The quality of paper is rather coarse, bulky, and cheap, however, it is congenial to printing with different colors of ink that do not smudge fingers. Many Japanese women purchase a few magazines at a time, and they read them at home.

These magazines are source of disposable entertainment and mostly get thrown away after reading or are passed on to another reader. The inferior Japanese housing situation with very small rooms and no extra closet space, rarely makes the ladies' comics a collector's item as with other Japanese comics for boys, young men, and girls. The categories of stories found in ladies comics include drama, romance/fantasy, and pornography as well as variously themed stories based on the readers' own experiences that were submitted to the magazines. The ratings range from an American equivalent of G, PG, and R to X. The majority of readers are women from their twenties to forties; however, some may start reading them as early as in their middle teens, and others may keep reading well into their fifties and sixties. The authors of comics are mostly female artists, but there are some male artists as well.⁷

Japanese ladies comics emerged in the middle of the 1980s, and are actually the latest addition to the scene of modern Japanese comics that developed after WWII. Their popular predecessors are the so-called *Shojo Manga*, or girls' comics, that started around the end of WWII. Many manga artists who drew girls' comics in those days were men, while female artists

⁷Miya Erino, *Rediisu Komikku no Joseigaku* [Gender Studies of Ladies' Comics] (Tokyo: Kosaido Shuppan, 1993); interview with an anonymous editor-in-chief of a leading ladies' comics magazine (2007); interview with an anonymous editor of *Desire SP* (Tokyo: Akita Shoten, 2007); interview with Takeshi Koike, an editor of *Silky* (Tokyo: Hakusensha, 2007); and Kinko Ito, "The World of Japanese Ladies' Comics: From Romantic Fantasy to Lustful Perversion" *Journal of Popular Culture* 36/1 (2002).

were rather rare because women's occupational and career choices were very limited. Talented female manga artists such as Masako Watanabe and Miyako Maki debuted in the 1950s and many female artists have followed since then.⁸

At first the target readers were elementary school girls. However, as Japanese girls' comics evolved, the readers became older and quit reading or moved onto reading novels for juniors. New types of girls' comics, as well as the new generations of readers, have emerged in the last sixty years or so. Some popular girls' comics such as *Nakayoshi* (Good Friends) and *Ribon* (Ribbon) have been around since the mid-1950s and *Shōjo Furendo* (Girls' Friend) and *Maagaretto* (Margaret) emerged in the 1960s. By this time the majority of artists were female, and some have been quite popular and successful in becoming millionaires while gaining much fame and respect from society in general.⁹

In June 1968, *Shukan Sebuntin* (Weekly Seventeen) debuted as girls' comics for older girls including teenagers, and certain new magazines that targeted the same age group followed. They were not successful commercially, but they played a very important role as a bridge to the emergence of ladies' comics targeting young and adult women.

The mid-1980s was the time when many ladies' comic magazines were established one after another, and became truly popular. Those readers who grew up reading girls' comics were now becoming young adults, and they wanted to read comics appropriate for their age and life situations. They no longer wanted girlish fantasy and romantic comics that mainly took place in conjunction with seasonal events at school and college. Instead, they desired more realistic and often sexual adult material. Girls comic artists, who got married, had children, and tended to retire in their

⁸ Kinko Ito, "Manga in Japanese History," *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. Mark W. MacWilliams. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008); and Yoshihiro Yonezawa, *Sengo Shōjo Mangashi* [The Postwar History of Girls' Comics] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2007).

⁹ *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, *Sengo Shōjo Mangashi*, interview with Mika Tabata, a former editor-in-chief of *JOUR* (Tokyo: Futabasha, 2007) Masako Watanabe, *Mangato Ikite*. (www.futabasha.co.jp, 2007).

thirties, started to draw comics for adult women in response to the new demand.

As with any other publication in Japan today, the sales of ladies' comics have been dwindling since the early 1990s; however, the volume of sales is still very high. According to *2005 Shuppan Shihyo Nenpo* (2005 Publication Index Annual), the sale of regular ladies' comic magazines was 42,450,000 copies and the sale of special or additional issues was 21,960,000 copies, which totaled 64,410,000 copies.¹⁰

The readers of ladies' comics aged over the years, and the content of some of the comic magazines shifted from those that revolved around finding a Prince Charming and getting married to having children and raising them. Many stories now deal with taking care of elderly parents and depict stories of the sandwich generation who have both children and elderly parents to take care of. Even within a single magazine, the female protagonists are not limited to a particular age group or a social category any longer. It seems that the magazines are trying to depict more diverse heroines in order to expand their reader base.¹¹

Themes and Contents for Catharsis

One of the newest trends of Japanese ladies' comics currently taking place is diversification. The ladies' comic magazine publishers need to seek their own niches in a very competitive market. Different comic magazines specialize in certain themes; many solicit the readers' inputs. They ask their readers to answer a survey which is like a popularity contest of manga artists at the end of the magazine. They actively ask the readers to contribute their stories based on their own experiences, whether they are about neighbors, mothers-in-law, husbands, sexual encounters, etc. both in the magazines and on their websites. When the reader's story is adopted for publication as a comic story, the contributor gets paid by the publisher. For example, Bunkasha's *Hontoniatta Shufuno Taiken* (The True Experiences

¹⁰ Zenkoku Shuppan Kyokai, *2005 Shuppan Shihyo Nenpo* [2005 Publication Index Annual] (Tokyo: Zenkoku Shuppan Kyokai, 2005), p. 243.

¹¹ Interview with an anonymous editor, *Desire SP* (2007); interview with Takeshi Koike; interview with Fumie Nozaki, a manga artist (2007); interview with Mika Tabata; and interview with Masako Watanabe, a manga artist (2007).

of Housewives) gives a 10,000 yen cash gift (approximately US\$100), and Take Shobo's *Aino Taiken Supesharu Derakkusu* (Lustful Experiences, Special Deluxe) gives adult goods that are worth 10,000 yen along with a 5,000 yen (about US\$50) bookstore gift certificate. The cash reward is especially nice for the self esteem of those housewives and adds to their own spending money as well.

The themes of Japanese ladies' comics, in general, are about the reality of everyday life as experienced by Japanese housewives, office workers, and college students: love, romance, friendships with women, lifestyles, mother-child relations, and the PTA. Nowadays, certain ladies' comics magazines, many of which are additional issues, have specific themes such as women's medical issues, mother- and daughter-in-law relationships, crimes committed by women, troublesome neighbors, idiotic husbands, addiction to sex, adultery, etc. These ladies' comic stories also cover social problems such as sexism, divorce, domestic violence, injustice, relationship with the in-laws, abortion, prostitution, crimes against women, etc. that are of interest to sociologists.

For example, *Onnano Byoki Supesharu* (A Special on Female Diseases), a special issue published by Take Shobo in November 2003, contains 13 comic stories and 579 pages as well as several other short comic stories with female protagonists who suffer from various diseases such as ovarian cancer, cervical cancer, fibroids, STD, depression, social phobia, Alzheimer's Disease, hot flashes, palate disorder, Crohn's disease, hemorrhoids, brain tumors, dieting, and alcoholism. The magazine also offers medical columns (not comics) on the diseases covered in the comic stories along with more information on infertility, allergies, panic disorder, etc. All the comic stories feature typical symptoms, diagnoses, and treatments with useful and pragmatic medical information and advice. These comics not only offer entertainment, but also provide the readers with medical knowledge which might not be available to them otherwise. In a sense, this kind of special comics belongs to a category of *kyoyo manga*, or educational and informational comics.¹²

¹²Kinko Ito, "The *Manga* Culture in Japan."



Figure 1: A scene from Hitomi Mizuki's "*Egaono Mamade*." (Tokyo: Take Shobo, November 2003). Arisa is a housewife who has lost her daughter to a malignant brain tumor two years ago. She is now diagnosed with the same disease. In these scenes at the doctor's office, Arisa asks her doctor, shivering with fear, "How long can I live?" The doctor replies, "Your best bet is one year. If the treatment is successful, maybe you can live a bit longer."

In this particular medical special issue by Take Shobo, all the stories showcase sick women who have to go through an ordeal of one kind or another. They are very sick to begin with, and continually encounter uncontrollable and uncomfortable social and medical situations. Some heroine's mothers-in-law, for example, are depicted as cold-blooded and demanding while their daughters-in-law suffer. There are also husbands who demand that their wives perform their regular household chores as well as take care of the children, while they run up huge debts gambling. The husbands are often very selfish, and they think that their wives should take care of everything domestic whether in health or in sickness. The sick heroine must have surgery followed by hospitalization and radiation or chemotherapy. Some require a long rest and rehabilitation at home, too. There still exists a high double standard in regard to gender roles in Japan.

Bunkasha's *Dokusha Toko! Biyoseikei Shippaidan* (Contributions From The Readers: Experiences of Failed Plastic Surgeries) was published in September, 2007. This magazine has six comic stories with 262 pages

and is very affordable at 380 yen, or about US\$3.80. All six stories showcase examples of failed plastic surgery that the contributors experienced as the title of the magazine specifies. The majority of the comic's stories deal with the heroine's anxiety, frustration, and stress of being born so ugly, their social alienation, psychological agony, difficulties with maintaining relationships, and their decisions to have plastic surgery. The heroine becomes a new person after the surgery, but the story does not end happily there. She encounters reactions from others, both positive and negative. Usually the reactions are very positive at first, and she is elated. It is a new and wonderful world; then, when it is revealed that "the beauty" is a result of plastic surgery, the comments turn very negative and the people start to bully and insult the heroine. We can observe a deep-seated and sinister type of Japanese bullying in several stories. The heroine's boyfriend or husband blames her and says that she lied to him and lacks integrity. She must also cope with the consequences of her decision and live with them, whether happily or unhappily, for the rest of her life. The comic stories have closure at the end of the story when the heroine comes to terms with her life and plastic surgery.

The readers read these horrible and rather sad stories and come to realize how lucky they are just to be able to have an ordinary day. It could be a dull and boring day, but when compared with these deformed heroines, being able to get up in the morning and spend a day without being sick and miserable with pain, both physical and psychological, is truly a blessing. The distorted faces of the heroines, the tears and sweat that accompany their fear or pain are often depicted in detail. These visual texts make the stories appeal to the readers in a much more powerful manner, inducing pity and fear that they could be next. The heroines are in a much worse situation, but they are trying their best to deal with a particularly bad situation and focus on a realistic solution to the problem. They actually give the readers energy to keep going. The stories cause the readers' catharsis that derives from terror, pity, or fear.

Hontoniatta Shufuno Taiken (The True Experiences of Housewives) published by Bunkasha in June 2005, featured "The Moment When I Wanted Divorce." All of the 14 comic stories with the total of 548 pages were submitted by the readers, except one story which was based on a manga artist's own story. The comic stories depict the worst and most horrible scenarios for divorce. The women are often denied love and affection, and they are abused verbally, emotionally, psychologically, and physically, not only by their husbands, but also by their mothers-in-law or

sisters-in-law. The husband's family often uses the wife as a domestic slave. The husbands are characterized as irresponsible, uncaring, immature, selfish, and cold. They are basically the worst cases of Japanese lazy bastards and jerks. Some are mama's boys who are under their mother's reign and cannot defend their wives. Other men are out of work and are not willing to find a job to provide for their families. Some are not interested in having sex with their wives because they are having an affair or in a condition of perpetual impotence. The husbands from hell are persistent and do not easily let their wives go or give them any freedom. Some stories showcase a lack of communication that leads to misunderstanding and resentment as well as frustration and anger.



Figure 2. A scene from Miu Ichikawa's "*Yumekara Sameta Yume*." In this comic story, Ichikawa depicts Yoko (herself), a manga artist who married a mediocre manga artist. Her husband is vain, lazy, obsessive, and violent. He abuses her physically, emotionally, and verbally. She cannot stand his escalating domestic violence, and tries very hard to get a divorce for her and her daughter's safety and peace of mind. In this scene, her husband has been trying to choke her in his anger and frustration. Suddenly he notices that she passed out.¹³

¹³*Hontoniatta Shufuno Taiken* (Tokyo: Bunkasha, June 2005) p. 26.

Regardless of the story lines, the heroines want a divorce, and some do get divorced, despite the odds. The readers who are not satisfied with their marriage and family may identify with the heroines since the problems they encounter are social facts which a prominent sociologist, Emile Durkheim, calls “normal.” These are phenomena that have existed since the beginning of history, and in every society – they are widespread and common. When there is an abnormal phenomenon which has not existed before or certain rates, such as divorce or crime, go up unusually high, Durkheim calls the social phenomenon “pathological.”¹⁴ In recent years, Japan has been witnessing pathological cases of child and wife abuse, as well as violent crimes such as murders committed by family members. These cases are also featured in many ladies’ comic stories.

Social problems, which had been hidden, ignored, or considered rather “normal” by the majority of people before, have now been emerging. They are everywhere in Japan, and they are being recognized by the mass media, which tend to sensationalize matters. Kasakura Shuppansha publishes the monthly *Katei Sasupensu* (Family Suspense). In July 2005, they published *Tonarino Hanzaisha* (The Next Door Criminal) as an additional special issue. The magazine featured 16 comic stories with a total of 580 pages that contained stories about sexless marriages, adultery, bullying, domestic violence, sexual abuse, abortion, murders, child abuse, internet crimes, high school girl prostitution, etc. Obviously the editors and artists of ladies’ comics find their topics and hints for comics as they read newspapers, novels, books, magazines, the internet, listen to radio broadcasts, or watch TV shows.¹⁵

There are also comics that specialize in manga stories dealing with *kando*, which are positive, touching, and moving emotions. Hiroko Kazama, a manga artist, said in my interview, “Comics is a human business. I want to express human beings and humanism in my stories.”¹⁶

The readers are truly moved by tear-jerking, wonderful, and more serious human stories and dramas. Usually the story deals with women’s

¹⁴Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*. (New York: The Free Press, 1982).

¹⁵Interview with Midori Kawabata, a manga artist, (2005, 2007); interview with Hiroko Kazama, a manga artist, (2007); interview with Takeshi Koike; interview with Fumie Nozaki; and interview with Masako Watanabe.

¹⁶Interview with Hiroko Kazama.

social and psychological experiences and their development as a human being that entail her life, family, work, etc. Other themes include more psychological and psychosocial factors such as independence, co-dependence, dealing with bosses, identity crisis, pursuing careers, aging, senility, compassion for the less fortunate, etc. The lines that the characters speak are often very realistic and contain wisdom that comes only to those who have experienced these specific things. The intricate relationship is also often the key to the success of the story, and, usually, there is a great ending, whether a happy one or a tragic one, that leaves the readers quite touched and moved. Some stories are truly great and are comparable to great literature when it comes to the emotional reaction of the readers. For example, in *Dejiiru DX* (Desire Deluxe) published by Akita Shoten in January 2006, as an extra number, has 11 stories with the total of 597 pages.

Most comic stories feature all-inclusive human love and affection among family members, couples, friends, lovers, co-workers, and neighbors. They cover not only feelings and emotions of contentment but also sad and difficult ones such as the ones we encounter with the sickness and death of our loved ones. The stories often contain happy and comical, as well as serious and tragic elements. For some heroines, bad luck and hard times come again and again like the waves of a tsunami. Beautifully drawn humanism and human love touch the heart of the reader. A box of Kleenex is a must in order to deal with the tears and runny nose! The stories become a catharsis for emotional release. An anonymous editor of *Desire* said, "We want our readers to feel good and heartened after reading our comics. We want to provide them with hope and positive feelings about everyday life. We would like them to feel healed."¹⁷

¹⁷Interview with an editor of *Desire SP*.



Figure 3: A scene from Setsuko Kaneko's "*Omoizaka Mayoimichi*" in *Desire DX*. (Tokyo: Akita Shoten, January 2006) p. 53. In this scene from her childhood memories, her mother is hugging Izumi very tightly. She is apologizing to her by saying, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." She found out that she has terminal cancer and does not have many days left. Young Izumi says to her crying, "No, please do not go to heaven." Her mother's heart is broken because she has to leave her family behind. She hugs all her children to convey how much she loves them, while their father is crying along with them.

Takeshi Koike used to be an editor of a girls' comic magazine before he became an editor of *Shirukii* (Silky, a ladies' comic magazine) at Hakusensha in Tokyo in 2003. *Silky* magazine was founded in 1985. Koike said in my interview, "The contents and themes of our ladies' comics are basically those stories that make readers feel compassionate, gentle, and tender after reading." Koike wants the readers to be reminded of feelings such as falling in love and the happiness a woman felt upon getting married, which she tends to forget as time passes. He said, "Of course, human feelings and emotions entail various kinds and shades. Even when the protagonists hate each other at the beginning of the story, they take care of the problem, and the ending is a very positive one." For Koike, the most important thing about his ladies' comic magazine is that it is not only entertaining, but that it also touches the readers' hearts. They will learn

from a female protagonist, that when she faces a problem, she tries very hard to deal with it instead of blaming others and finding an easy way out. The heroine matures in the process of solving the problem. Koike said, "Many housewives, who are the readers, tend to lose their identity as an individual. They are a 'mother of this child,' 'a wife of that husband,' etc. Their lives revolve around the roles they play, and they lose their own sense of self." They should recognize that their place is here and that they are truly loved by those who surround them. Everyone needs to be supported, and mutual support is the key to happiness. As with all other stories, ladies' comic magazines contend that our social life consists of structures of relations. Thus, the most crucial element of ladies' comics is the relationship that the protagonists maintain.

Silky solicits the readers to contribute their own stories every other month. In general, Koike receives between 100 and 200 stories. Most comic stories in *Silky* have between 40 and 50 pages, and all the protagonists are female. Koike considers that ladies' comics are a reflection of the realities of everyday life of Japanese women, and that they are the products of the time in which we live right now. The freshness of the stories will evaporate soon, and Koike, just like other ladies' comic artists and editors, keeps up with current affairs. He reads different genres of comics (boys', young men's, girls', and ladies' comics), weekly magazines for women, novels, books, checks internet blogs, and watches TV. He needs to know the new trends in society in order to keep the popularity of his ladies' comics, which leads to sales, and eventually, to the survival of the magazine.¹⁸

For the publishers of ladies' comics, the bottom line is sales. When the sale of a magazine dwindles, usually it is the editor-in-chief who gets blamed, fired, or moved to another section of the company.¹⁹ The magazines are truly supported by the readers, and the editors need to be very sensitive to the readers' reactions, support, and shifts in interests. Several ladies' comic magazines have a section for a survey at the end of the magazine. The questionnaire asks the readers to provide information such as their name, address, age, phone number, occupation, and marital status. The publisher also asks them to list the best three stories as well as the worst three stories. The readers are also asked to vote for their favorite

¹⁸Interview with Takeshi Koike.

¹⁹Interview with an anonymous editor of a leading ladies' comic magazine (2007).

artist, and give their comments, reactions, and suggestions. The magazines also solicit readers' input and stories in the same section.²⁰

Midori Kawabata, a manga artist who has many suspense comic stories, told me in my interview that she gets most of her story ideas from TV and the internet. She said she is constantly studying and researching topics for her comics in order to draw satisfactory comics for adult women. Kawabata said, "There may be claims sent to the editorial office when the information given in comics is inaccurate. When a claim comes, the manga artist has to post a note in the next issue apologizing for the errors. Artists with too many claims, as in any business, are not appreciated."²¹

Both the artist and the editor must be very sensitive to what the readers' needs are in order to remain popular. Fumie Nozaki, who draws manga for the humanistic kind of ladies' comic magazines said, "Once, I drew a manga in which a female protagonist was having an affair. Some readers wrote to the editorial office protesting that they did not like the story. I think the readers of *Judy* are good-hearted, healthy, and moral. They did not like the unethical aspect of committing adultery."²²

Ladies' comics, in general, are realistic and down-to-earth. They contain very practical and pragmatic information and advice on legal issues, medical knowledge, domestic technology, social relations, etc. which women can use in their everyday lives.²³ This is partly because many ladies' comic artists consider ladies' comics to be entertainment for adult women who have more social experiences and who are more aware of current affairs. The comic artists are also in their thirties and forties like their readers. Hiroko Kazama thinks that real life experiences, including her own, are very important ingredients of ladies' comics because whether they are about a success or a failure they can teach the readers lessons about life.²⁴ Fumie Nozaki also said in her interview with me that all her living experiences with her husband, daughters, and parents helped her create her stories. Nozaki says that the ladies' comics are more realistic than girls'

²⁰Interview with an editor of *Desire S*; interview with Takeshi Koike; and interview with Mika Tabata.

²¹Interview with Midori Kawabata (2007).

²²Interview with Fumie Nozaki (2007).

²³Kinko Ito, "Japanese Ladies' Comics as Agents of Socialization: The Lessons They Teach," *International Journal of Comic Art* 5/2 (2003): 59.

²⁴Interview with Hiroko Kazama (2007).

comics in terms of content because they depict the everyday life experiences of ordinary women. She wants to keep drawing ladies' comics that are heart-warming and give the readers positive messages about life.²⁵

Vicarious Experience in Occupations and Gender Roles

Japanese ladies' comic stories feature protagonists in many pink collar occupations such as an actress, bar hostess, clerk, cook, elevator attendant, housekeeper, housewife, model, nurse, office worker, prostitute, sales woman, S & M Queen, secretary, sex slave, shop owner, stewardess, stripper, student, teacher, and waitress. Other occupations include attorney, detective, doctor, executive, locksmith, police woman, taxi driver, travel agent, and writer. There are indeed a variety of heroines with different ages, occupations, and social and marital status within a single comic magazine. In many cases, the readers vicariously experience the terrible situations that the woman encounters such as toxic bosses, unfriendly and bullying co-workers, long and exhausting hours of work, and accepting the consequences of mistakes, etc. Certain situations are so bad that the readers feel pity and also relief that they do not have to go through the things that the female protagonist struggles with. Housewifery is often dull and boring and lacks excitement, but it does not have the hardship that comes with pursuing one's career or working outside of the house. This leads to catharsis.

As for gender roles, the women are depicted in very typical gender stereotypes, and are more or less the traditional and domestic gender roles. Many stories revolve around the dilemma and stress of being a working woman and being a wife and mother at the same time without much domestic help from their husbands. Many female characters, both the heroines and the supporting characters, appear as aunts, caretakers, daughters, daughters-in-law, girlfriends, granddaughters, grandmothers, housewives, lovers, mistresses, mothers, mothers-in-law, neighbors, nieces, nymphomaniacs, nurturers, sisters, sisters-in-law, wives, and widows.

Japanese women have made small advances in their jobs and careers, and more and more heroines in non-pink collar occupations are featured in recent ladies' comics. They are more powerful and those women in pink-collar jobs, who are more traditional with more nurturing and feminine traits, also tend to show more active selves. The readers meet

²⁵Interview with Fumie Nozaki, (2007).

these new types of Japanese women as they read the comics. The readers may be frustrated in their everyday life as a bored housewife or a career woman whose male colleagues put her down or insult her because of her sex. However, by identifying with the capable protagonist who is independent, intelligent, and who has problem-solving abilities along with an uncommon assertiveness, the readers can enjoy the social situations depicted in the comics as bystanders. Readers are also free to use the tactics in their actual social interactions. It seems that Japanese women are gaining more power in their intimate relationships; they know what to do with their lives without sacrificing themselves and some attain recognition as career women or community leaders, at least in the world of Japanese ladies' comics.

Closely related to the notion of gender roles in Japan are the notions of obligations in human relationships that many protagonists find very difficult or that contradict their true feelings. There are different terms for obligation in Japanese that are unique to the social relationships.²⁶ For example, a female protagonist owes *on* to her parents, who had her and raised her. *On* is a passively incurred obligation that needs to be repaid, but there is no time limit. She can return *on* to her parents by getting married and having her own children, not to mention giving gifts and spending time together with them. She owes *gimu* to her children, it is an obligation that is "compulsory" in nature, as a parent she needs to take care of her children, love them, and socialize them. The protagonist owes *giri* to her in-laws, this obligation must be repaid in full and there is a time limit. In many ladies' comic stories, the protagonist is caught between these different obligations that she needs to attend to, and she suffers because often times it is not her desire but her social obligation that takes a priority. She wants to do certain things first, but it is impossible and the dilemma occupies the center of the story.

Pornographic Japanese Ladies' Comics

Many ladies' comics in the pornography category depict women as sexual and sensual animals; therefore, anything sensual and sexual goes into the stories! Four-letter words, very derogatory names and terms for female body parts, and onomatopoeia of the sounds of the sexual act appear very

²⁶Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1986), pp.114-143.

often. The women initially have some hesitation to go into the sexual act or relationship with a man (or men) even though they admit that they think of it. Gradually they are exposed to the ultimate joy of sex, including oral and anal sex as well as bondage. Incest, orgies, self-eroticism (especially with certain devices), and voyeurism are often popular themes. However, a recent censorship issue makes the publishers very careful about the depiction of sex and violence.²⁷

Asako Shiomi said in my interview with her that she enjoys drawing both dramatic and emotional ladies' comics as well as pornographic comics. She debuted as a girls' comic artist in 1970, but now she draws exclusively for ladies' comics. Shiomi's comics always contain an extraordinary sexual fantasy not found in everyday life and an imaginary setting. Shiomi said in her interview:

The Japanese women are not really open to their sexuality. I want my readers to explore their sexuality in a safe place called ladies' comics where they do not have to take responsibilities for their sexual encounters. It is the world of fantasy, and I want to depict the ultimate female carnal pleasure in my comics where male characters serve the needs of a female protagonist. Men are there to serve her, not the other way around, as in comics for men.²⁸

In the world of ladies' comics, some protagonists are loved by multiple men or have relationships with much younger and more handsome men. The heroines are sensually seductive, sexually aggressive, and assertive in the search for the ultimate joy in sex. They experiment with their sexuality, and the good-looking men are mere sexual "tools" for them. This is the complete opposite of men's comics in which women are often depicted as convenient sex objects and slaves at the mercy of Japanese men.²⁹

²⁷Interview with Asako Shiomi, a manga artist (2007); interview with Mika Tabata (2007); and "The World of Japanese Ladies' Comics: From Romantic Fantasy to Lustful Perversion."

²⁸Interview with Asako Shiomi (2007).

²⁹"Images of Women in Weekly Male Comic Magazines in Japan."



Figure 4: A scene from Asako Shiomi's '*Fuyuno Sange*.' (Tokyo: Futabasha, 2004), p. 13. In this scene, the female protagonist, Natsuo, remembers her first kiss when she was a teenager. She visited her uncle and was kissed by her handsome cousin who was engaged. After this incident she went to her cousins' bedroom because she could not sleep. With the bedroom door slightly open she eye witnessed her cousin and his fiancée engaging in S & M. Shiomi writes Natsuo's thoughts as: "The kiss was somewhat sensual and as she was being kissed, she felt an aching desire in the innermost part of her body. It was a scary sensation." It is not only the visual images, but also the sensual wording of the narrative that adds sensuality to Shiomi's comics.

Pornographic ladies' comics range from romantic soft porn to hard core S & M and other types of sexual acts. For example, the innocent and pure protagonist gets raped or gang-raped. She is initiated into anal sex or S & M, etc. both involuntarily and voluntarily. The heroines eventually reach the climax of ultimate carnal pleasure. There is always a struggle of the psychological sort in the process though. The female protagonist who gets raped feels ashamed and betrayed by other human beings at first, and this is what her mind feels. Her body, on the other hand, cannot forget the pure pleasure of hot and lustful sex which her husband can never provide her, and her body always reminds her of the unforgettable sexual encounter. She

starts to crave the excitement again. Some women take revenge and even kill the men who violated them.³⁰

Today's Japanese women are more liberated in terms of their sexuality, and many have sex at a much earlier age than ever before. The protagonist's sexual encounter and actions are legitimate because it is a consequence of true love, or maybe the illegitimate affair was due to the lack of love, appreciation, attention, and affection shown by her uncommunicative and unappreciative husband. On the other hand, the tradition that a decent Japanese woman must be demure and submissive dies hard. Many Japanese women are very ambivalent about their sexuality, and suffer from the gap between the prescribed role of a decent wife and the real self that craves good sex. The ladies' comics can release such repression and let the women enjoy and explore their sexuality in an imaginary and safe place called the world of ladies' comics – this leads to their catharsis.

Summary

Japanese ladies' comics is a form of entertainment that appeals to one's emotions and sexuality as a connection to social, intellectual, and human existence. They cover a wide range of stories that depict ordinary women's everyday lives. They provide the readers with the wonderful world of fantasy, romance, and sex as well as pragmatic social, psychological, legal, and medical advice for women. The key element in ladies' comics is relationship. Women's social life revolves around structures of relationships pertaining to love, family, work, etc.³¹

The heroines and characters that dominate in the Japanese ladies' comic stories are usually housewives and their family, young women who are in the marriage market, and sometimes career women. The protagonists are rather simple, ordinary, and common women. The superhero characters such as Cat Woman, Wonder Woman, and Hawk Woman in American comics never appear as protagonists in Japanese ladies' comics.

With the advent of new technologies, the ladies' comics are even available on the internet and cellphones. Readers can easily download

³⁰Kinko Ito, "The World of Japanese Ladies' Comics."

³¹Kinko Ito, "Growing Up Japanese Reading Manga," *International Journal of Comics Art* 6/2 (2004), "Japanese Ladies' Comics as Agents of Socialization: The Lessons They Teach."

comics at a cheaper cost, and some editors worry about the future of ladies' comics not using the medium of paper. As with many other publications in Japan, the sales of ladies' comic magazines are slowly dwindling, and both the editors and artists are very concerned. The publishers are very sensitive about the needs of the readers and pay a great deal of attention to their reactions, comments, and support.³² The bottom line for the publishers is sales. In order to find a niche in a very tight market, many publishers are now focusing on certain themes and topics for their publication. Diversification characterizes today's Japanese ladies' comics both on the level of the magazine, and within a single magazine with different types of heroines. Many publishers solicit contributions from readers, and when their stories are adopted, a gift of one kind or another is given.

Life is full of surprises, but, at times, it can get repetitive, dull, and boring. Many Japanese women suffer from social alienation both at home and at work as well as psychological stress, frustration, and problems that seem to have no answers or solutions. The ladies' comics are cheap and readily available mass entertainment for Japanese women, and they function as a catharsis for feeling a bit of happiness found in everyday life situations as the readers read the stories and get into the world of ladies' comics that ends in emotional and psychological release as well as an escape from reality. A reader ends up feeling a bit of happiness as she finishes reading ladies comics thanks to a catharsis.

³²Interview with Akiko Miyazaki, a manga artist, (2007); and interview with Mika Tabata.

**DISASTER-RELIEF CONFUCIAN-STYLE:
NINOMIYA SONTOKU'S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH
TO LATE-TOKUGAWA POVERTY**

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Introduction

Assessing Confucianism as a socio-political system of learning, the mid-Tokugawa thinker Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703-1762) recorded the following:

A canine once observed, ‘We dogs are born of the *ki* 氣, of the pots and pans of people’s homes. We eat leftover scraps of human food and their uneaten rice. We help our masters by barking at suspicious shadows and thieves. We do not cultivate but greedily devour our masters’ leftovers because we are born dominated by the sideways *ki*. Since this is the role provided us by the true [way] of heaven, it is not our failing. But there are many in the world of [artificial human] law who are our imitators: the Confucian scholars and sages from one generation to the next, from age to age including...Confucius 孔夫子 (551-479 B.C.E.), Mencius 孟子 (372-289 B.C.E.)...and in Japan, Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (ca. 573-621) and generations of scholars on up to Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657) and Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728). All of them appropriated the fruits of the labors of the many, fruits produced in accord with heaven’s way, yet they appropriated them without doing any cultivating themselves. They greedily devoured the surplus of the many...They were born of an unbalanced *ki*, and so they gather the suspicious shadows of their unbalanced feelings and unbalanced thoughts into books. They create words and writings as tools to take the way of heaven into their own hands...None of the countless passages in their books tell of the way of the true [way] of heaven; their writings are nothing more than arbitrary and willful falsehoods’.¹

¹ Toshinobu Yasunaga, trans., *Ando Shoeki: Social and Ecological Philosopher in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (NY: Weatherhill Press, 1992), p.

Shōeki's sharp criticisms of Confucian thought presumably issued from his personal experience of a succession of famines in his home region in northeast Japan, famines that resulted in, among other things, widespread infanticide. That Shōeki would blame the ruling samurai elite and the philosophical thought often associated with it, Confucianism, is not entirely surprising. In Shōeki's mind, apparently, farm families were starving because an "unproductive class of consumers" was "expropriating the products of the peasants' labor without doing any work," i.e., without engaging in "direct cultivation" (*chokkō* 直耕). Shōeki's critical wrath was not restricted to Confucianism: Buddhism, Daoism, and Shinto were equally to blame in his mind.²

It is clear that Shōeki lived well before Ninomiya Kinjirō 二宮金次郎, or Sontoku 尊徳 (1787-1856), as he would be known. Ninomiya's life and thought became, even within his own day, a powerful testament to the exceptional willingness of those with training in Confucianism to do more than pontificate about goodness and the need for ensuring the well-

143. Shōeki's works were only discovered in the late-nineteenth century by Kanō Kōkichi 狩野亨吉 (1865-1942) who pioneered, in the late-1920s and 1930s, studies of this otherwise unknown egalitarian thinker from the mid-Tokugawa. For a classic English language study of Shōeki, see E. H. Norman, *Andō Shōeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism* (Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan, 1949). Herman's scholarship in general is the focus of a lengthy study by John Dower, *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of E. H. Norman* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1975). Another noteworthy piece of western language scholarship on Shōeki is Jacques Joly, *Le naturel selon Andō Shōeki: un type de discours sur la nature et la spontanéité par un maître-confucéen de l'époque Tokugawa, Andō Shōeki, 1703-1762* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1996). Japanese studies of Shōeki have flourished in the postwar period, most likely because the Confucian thought that Shōeki so enjoyed lambasting had been widely appropriated by militarist ideologues during the 1930s and early 1940s.

²Maruyama Masao, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. Mikiso Hane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 253-254. While the contents of this volume first appeared as a series of essays, they were republished in a monograph entitled *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* 日本政治思想史 研究 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppansha, 1952), p. 255.

being of all. Ninomiya's example was so moving that in Meiji times, Ninomiya *jinja* – which commemorate his Herculean efforts toward reviving poverty stricken agricultural regions – appeared, first in Odawara and then in scattered sites from one end of Japan to the other. In the early-twentieth century, Ninomiya was elevated as a moral paragon for young Japanese school children. Bronze statues of him, walking bent over carrying firewood on his back so that he could hold a book he was reading, were commonly found in front of schools throughout Japan.³ In the late 1980s, the Monbusho even discussed the notion of reintroducing the ideas of Ninomiya through the erection of new statues for school grounds that no longer had them.⁴

While Ninomiya was hardly a doctrinaire Confucian – indeed he described his own teachings as a kind of medicinal mixture of Shintō, Confucianism and Buddhism⁵ – even a brief look at his life shows that Confucian notions were fundamental to his work toward improving the socio-economic lot of humanity. In his unrelenting efforts to restore failed

³ Roger Goodman, *Children of the Japanese State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 123.

⁴ Stuart Pickens, *Sourcebook in Shintō: Selected Documents* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p. 225.

⁵ For Ninomiya's characterization of his teachings, see Naramoto Tatsuya and Nakai Nobuhiko, eds., *Ninomiya-ō yawa* (Old Ninomiya's Evening Dialogues), in *Ninomiya Sontoku/Ōhara Yūgaku*, Nihon shisō taikēi, vol. 52 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973), p. 233; for an English translation of this passage, see Tadaatsu Ishiguro, ed., *Ninomiya Sontoku: His Life and Evening Talks* (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1955), pp. 92-95. For another translation of this work, see Isoh Yamagata, *Sage Ninomiya's Evening Talks* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970). The *Ninomiya-ō yawa* 二宮翁夜話, here translated as *Ninomiya's Evening Dialogues*, was written by Fukuzumi Masae (1824-1892), one of Ninomiya's closest disciples and later founder of the first Meiji-period Hōtokusha. An abridged, modern edition of the *Ninomiya-ō yawa* is in Nakamura Yukihiro, ed., *Andō Shōeki/Tominaga Nakamoto/Miura Baien/Ishida Baigan/Ninomiya Sontoku/Kaihō Seiryō* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1971), pp. 303-348. For a recent study of Ninomiya, see Eiji Takemura, *The Perception of Work in Tokugawa Japan: A Study of Ishida Baigan and Ninomiya Sontoku* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997).

farming villages – essentially sites of socio-economic disaster – Ninomiya's efforts echoed important tenets of basic Confucian texts, especially the *Great Learning* 大學 (C: *Daxue*, J: *Daigaku*, hereafter, the latter) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 (C: *Zhongyong*, J: *Chūyō*). For those hoping for exotic, even esoteric solutions to the socio-economic disasters that befall humanity either due to natural or human causes, or both, Ninomiya's thought, a kind of philosophy of disaster-relief, offers little. Rather than abstruse answers or mysterious otherworldly solutions, Ninomiya advocates, simply put, human work, engaged in with tireless determination, not for one's own sake, but rather for that of all of humanity. If such other-oriented, unrelenting efforts are offered, then one's virtue (*toku* 徳) will be repaid (*hō* 報) with plenty. To cast this anachronistically, selfless hard work for others was Ninomiya's way of managing federal emergencies.

Biographical Sketch

Ninomiya Kinjirō was born in Sagami Province, or present-day Kanagawa-ken, to a peasant family clearly on the decline. According to a biographical account recorded by disciples, Ninomiya's father had a fondness for alcohol, one catered to by the ever-filial Kinjirō, who worked to earn the money needed to provide sake for his self-indulgent parent. Eventually orphaned at 16, he was then raised somewhat exploitatively by a self-centered uncle who could not tolerate the prospect of Ninomiya eking out rape seed oil to read by during the evening hours. As a result, Ninomiya was forced to carry a copy of the *Daigaku*, reportedly one of his favorite texts, with him during the day so that he could multitask by reading while walking to work, etc. After leaving his uncle's house, Ninomiya's unrelenting industry enabled him to recover his deceased father's homestead and turn it into a profit-generating holding. This turnaround captured the attention of local administrators who soon conveyed the word to the *daimyō* of Odawara 小田原 domain. With persistent requests to duplicate his approach to reviving lethargic peasant holdings that were no longer producing tax income, administrators of Odawara persuaded Ninomiya to help them reinvigorate the peasant economies of a number of farming villages. These successes prompted Mizuno Tadakuni 水野忠邦 (1794-1851), a senior Tokugawa administrator, to entrust Ninomiya with agrarian renewal in Shimōsa Province or present-day Chiba-ken and Sōma domain or Fukushima-ken, and ultimately, an extensive swath of farming villages in Nikkō 日光.

Ninomiya's successes in reviving peasant agrarian economies were the result of his instructing farmers in successful agricultural techniques, and his advocacy of selflessly giving all that one earns, with the understanding that it is by giving aggressively to others – heaven, earth, and humanity – that what one has received from them might be repaid (*hōtoku* 報德). Ninomiya added that it is by giving to others that one comes to receive in turn abundantly. Along with repaying virtue, Ninomiya emphasized the importance of diligence, sincerity, humaneness, and compassion as ethical keys to socio-economic recovery. Due to his unflagging emphasis on hard work, the obligation to give to others, and the importance of working together at the local level rather than expecting help from the center, Ninomiya was elevated as a paragon of virtue not long after his death, a status that he retains in many circles even today.

The *Daigaku*

According to the *Hōtoku ki*, a biographical account of Ninomiya by a disciple, Tomita Kōkei, the first book that Ninomiya supposedly read was the *Daigaku*. A brief work, the *Daigaku* circulated throughout most of Chinese literary and philosophical history prior to the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279) as a chapter in the *Liji* 禮記 (J: *Raiki*), or *Book of Rites*. It was in the Song that successive Confucian scholars, in an effort to redefine the textual basis of their learning, elevated the *Rites* chapter to book status, and designated it the first of a four-book curriculum, including also the *Analects of Confucius* (C: *Lunyu* 論語 J: *Rongo*), the *Mencius* (C: *Mengzi* 孟子 J: *Mōshi*), and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. The last text was, like the first, formerly a chapter of the *Rites*, now elevated to book status, and the subject of repeated commentaries. The *Mean* was cast as the most “final” of the four books, or *shishu* 四書 (J: *shisho*), largely due to its metaphysical themes. The *Daigaku* on the other hand was praised as “the gateway to learning,” signifying its role as the most primary and fundamental text of the new philosophical canon. In part because of their reconfiguration of Confucian literature, the Song scholars came to be referred to, especially in the West, as “Neo-Confucians,” highlighting the extent to which their understanding of Confucian learning differed significantly from the ancient teachings of Confucius and Mencius.

Ninomiya is reported to have carried the *Daigaku* with him everywhere he went, reading it while walking, and often reading it out loud. Even during his trips into the forested mountains to gather firewood,

Ninomiya supposedly had a copy in hand. While these accounts should not be accepted in their entirety, there appears to be an element of truth in them given the importance of the *Daigaku* for connecting, in a tight logical progression, self-cultivation with bringing peace and order to the entire world. In the later statues depicting Ninomiya carrying firewood and reading a book, there can be little doubt that the book he was carrying was indeed the *Daigaku*.

Ninomiya's lifework, helping peasant-farmers to recover their farming operations and restore their villages, was apparently based on his commitment to the logic of activism outlined in the *Daigaku*. The text opens stating:

The way of great learning consists of illuminating luminous virtue, loving the people, and abiding by the highest good. 大學之道在明明德，在親民，在止於至善 ...

Those ancients who wanted to illuminate luminous virtue throughout all below heaven, first ordered well their states. 古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國

Wanting to order their states, they first regulated their families. 欲治其國者，先齊其家

Wanting to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. 欲齊其家者，先修其身

Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. 欲修其身者，先正其心

Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. 欲正其心者，先誠其意

Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. 欲誠其意者，先致其知

The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. 致知在格物

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. 物格而後知至

Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. 知至而後意誠

Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. 意誠而後心正

Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.

心正而後身修

Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated.

身修而後家齊

Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed.

家齊而後國治

Their states being rightly governed, the entire world was at peace.

國治而後天下平

From the Son of Heaven down to the masses of humanity, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything. 自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本⁶

Mention of the *Daigaku* in the *Hōtoku ki* was more than just textual name-dropping: in his *Evening Dialogues* (*Ninomiya-ō yawa* 二宮翁夜話), Ninomiya explains how sages were "inordinately avaricious" individuals in their wants and wishes for the well-being of others. Although a dedicated student of the *Daigaku*, Ninomiya often paraphrases, roughly, what he considered its gist. Thus, Ninomiya explains the desires of the sages as consisting in their longing:

...to make the ten-thousand people happy by ensuring that they have enough food, clothing, and shelter. It is their desire that the people amass great good fortune. The way to do this is to open up the states (*kuni* 国), develop natural resources, give good government by wise statesmanship, and relieve the masses from

⁶The *Daxue* has been translated any number of times. For a philosophically sensitive rendering of the opening portion of the *Daxue*, see Irene Bloom's translation in William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume One, 2nd Edition* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 330-333. Most translators have been conservative in their glosses, endorsing established renditions rather than pioneering wholly different interpretation. However, one example of the latter is Andrew Plaks, trans., *Ta Hsüeh and Chung Yung (The Highest Order of Cultivation and On the Practice of the Mean)* (NY: Penguin Books, 2003). Several modern Japanese editions of the *Daxue* are available, including Shimada Kenji, ed., *Daigaku/Chūyō*, in *Chūgoku kotensen*, 6 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978); and Uno Tetsuto, ed., *Daigaku* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1999).

distress. Thus does the way of the sages aim at good administration of the state (*kokka* 国家) by wise statesmanship as well as the enhancement of happiness of the people at large. These ideas are clearly evident in the *Daigaku*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and other writings...⁷

Ninomiya's appeals to the *Daigaku* were not, apparently, random phenomena. Numerous allusions to the *Daigaku*, the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean* in particular occur throughout the *Evening Dialogues*. Another significant passage is dated to Kōka 弘化 1 (1844), shortly after the Tokugawa shogunate had commissioned Ninomiya to bring uncultivated lands belonging to the Nikkō Shrine, into cultivation. Here Ninomiya, responding to congratulations from followers, notes that his "fundamental desire" (*hongan* 本願) is "to open up the uncultivated fields of people's minds by cultivating the good seeds of humaneness (*jin* 仁), justice (*gi* 義), propriety (*rei* 禮), and wisdom (*chi* 智), received from heaven, and then sowing the harvest repeatedly, spreading the good seeds throughout the country." Ninomiya adds, "if the uncultivated portion of one person's mind is opened up, there is no need to worry if there are uncultivated fields extending for thousands of acres" because of the power of that one mind spreading to others, and then bringing all under cultivation. In concluding, Ninomiya observes that "in the *Daigaku*, it is written that the aim of learning is to illuminate luminous virtue, to renew the people, and to abide in the highest goodness. 'Illuminating luminous virtue' consists in opening up people's minds...If we can establish regulations (*hō* 法) which enable people to abide in the highest goodness, we will be repaying the blessings (*on* 恩) received from our parents."⁸

Ninomiya did not always, however, agree with the *Daigaku*. The latter is well-known for addressing the balance between self and material things, and favoring the absolute integrity of the self. The *Daigaku* explains:

⁷Naramoto and Nakai, eds., *Ninomiya Sontoku/Ōhara Yūgen*, p. 226-227; and Ishiguro, ed., *Ninomiya Sontoku*, p. 91.

⁸Naramoto and Nakai, eds., *Ninomiya-ō Yawa*, pp. 154-155; and Ishiguro, *Ninomiya Sontoku*, pp. 118-121.

The ruler first is careful regarding his own virtue. If he maintains his virtue, he will have the support of people. If he has the support of people, he will have land at his disposal. If he has land at his disposal, he will have wealth. If he has wealth (*zai* 財), he will be able to use it. Virtue is the root, while wealth is the branch. If he regards the root as superfluous and the branch as essential, then he will struggle with the people and teach them to steal...A humane person (*jinmono* 仁者) establishes his personhood (*hatsumi* 發身) by using his wealth (以財), but the inhumane person (*fujinmono* 不仁者) establishes wealth by using [prostituting] himself.⁹

Ninomiya does not entirely concur with this, noting that even if one has the right sense of purpose, but no resources, what indeed can one do? Surely Ninomiya's gracious realism here was based on work with the poor. He observes that for those who have right intentions, a humane mind, and are deferential to their parents, but have no resources, there is indeed a way which involves using themselves [sacrificing themselves] for the development of wealth. Ninomiya insists that if one's sense of purpose is correct, then even if one does "use himself for the sake of establishing wealth," he should not be called "inhumane." The reason is that "using oneself for the sake of establishing wealth" is "the way of the poverty stricken" while "establishing oneself by using one's wealth" is "the way of the well-to-do." Ninomiya admits that if the poverty stricken, after gaining wealth by means of using themselves, then proceed to use the wealth they acquired to acquire even more wealth, such behavior should be called "inhumane." But he adds "unless a person has acted inhumanely toward others, they should not easily be called inhumane."¹⁰

It might seem farfetched that Ninomiya, or anyone for that matter, would take the *Daigaku* seriously as a philosophical statement addressing disaster relief. Yet, the text was sufficiently respected that no less a critic than Andō Shōeki occasionally voiced pointed opposition to Confucianism as a whole by targeting the *Daigaku*. Though Shōeki's criticisms do question the significance of the *Daigaku*, because he targets it for critique suggests its very importance nevertheless. In one passage Shōeki remarked:

⁹De Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Volume One, 2nd edition, pp. 332-333.

¹⁰Naramoto and Nakai, eds., *Ninomiya ō yawa*, pp. 223-224.

The sages say, “Control yourself, order your families, govern your realms, and bring peace to all below heaven.” The scholars of the world esteem these words. But do they truly have any value whatsoever? When there is a bad harvest, it is the scholars who eat greedily without cultivating, who are the least able to control themselves. Suffering from starvation, they must either extort food from the masses who cultivate or die of starvation themselves...¹¹

Another indication of the importance of the *Daigaku* in Tokugawa thought, especially as it related to disaster relief, is found in Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619-1691), the seventeenth-century scholar who was placed under house arrest for his “offensive work,” in the *Daigaku wakumon* 大學或問 (Questions and Answers on the *Daigaku*), a text addressing the socio-economic and political issues of the day in a forthright, openly critical manner.¹² That Banzan chose the *Daigaku* framework for his analysis of the ills of his day and ways to solve them reflects, most surely, what Ninomiya saw as well: that the *Daigaku* is a fit vehicle for the expression of a systematic political approach to bringing peace and prosperity to the realm. The fact that Banzan ran into official trouble for having written his *Daigaku wakumon* suggests that the Tokugawa shogunate also saw the potentially

¹¹Translation adapted from William Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur Tiedmann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume Two, 1600-2000*, 2nd Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 423. For another, lengthier iteration of Shōeki's critique of the *Daigaku*, see Shōeki, Shizen shineido, kan 6, in Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英 and Shimazaki Takao 島崎隆夫, eds., Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益/Satō Nobuaki 佐藤信淵, *Nihon shisō taikai* vol. 45 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1977), pp. 228-229.

¹²For a translation study, see Galen M. Fisher, “Kumazawa Banzan: His Life and Ideas,” and “*Dai Gaku Wakumon*: A Discussion of Public Questions in the Light of the *Great Learning*,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Second Series vol. XVI (May 1938), pp. 221-258, 259-356. A modern edition of the *Daigaku wakumon* is in Gotō Yōichi 後藤陽一 and Tomoeda Ryūtarō 友枝龍太郎, eds., *Kumazawa Banzan*, *Nihon shisō taikai* vol. 30 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), pp. 405-463.

problematic nature of the text over which they would have preferred to have monopoly interpretive rights.

The Working of Humaneness and Utmost Sincerity

Upon agreeing to supervise restoration of the poverty stricken and fiscally dysfunctional villages assigned to the *daimyō* of Odawara, Ninomiya remarked, "only humane methods can restore peace and abundance to these poor people."¹³ Ninomiya's reference to "workings of humaneness" (*jinjutsu* 仁術), alludes to the *Mencius* 1A/7, where Mencius explains to King Xuan of Qi that his sense of pity for an ox about to be led to the sacrifice reflects the "workings of humaneness" that otherwise, generally take the form of protecting the people; an expression of virtue that makes one fit to be a king.¹⁴

Yet when speaking in more comprehensive terms, Ninomiya defined his "way" (*waga michi* 我が道) as "utmost sincerity" (*shisei* 至誠) and "real practice" (*jikkō* 實行), adding that it can be "extended to birds, beasts, insects, fish, grasses, and trees." Admitting that "talent, wisdom, and eloquence" might persuade people, Ninomiya remarked that those characteristics "cannot persuade birds, beasts, insects, fish, grasses, and trees." Emphasizing the effectiveness of his teaching, Ninomiya observed that if acted upon, it will "make plants grow and prosper, no matter whether the plant is rice, wheat, vegetables, orchids, or chrysanthemums." Ninomiya goes on to reason that while there is an "old saying" which likens sincerity with divine spirits (*shin* 神), it is not incorrect to equate sincerity directly with divine spirits. Concluding, Ninomiya explains that even if one possesses wisdom and learning, without sincerity and real practice, one will not bring things to completion.¹⁵

¹³Quoted from Uchimura Kanzō, "Ninomiya Sontoku – A Peasant Saint," in Tadaatsu Ishiguro, ed., *Ninomiya Sontoku: His Life and "Evening Talks"* (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1955), p. 15.

¹⁴Hong Ye et al., eds. *Mengzi yinde* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 3. The gloss, "working of humaneness" is borrowed from Irene Bloom's translation of this passage in de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Volume One, 2nd edition, p. 121.

¹⁵Naramoto and Nakai, eds., *Ninomiya-ō Yawa*, pp. 191-192; Ishiguro, *Ninomiya Sontoku*, pp. 89-90.

The “old saying” that Ninomiya refers to is nothing other than a passage in the *Doctrine of the Mean*. The relevant passage, interestingly, relates “absolute sincerity” to the ability to foreknow. It states:

[Those who follow] the way of utmost sincerity 至誠之道 are able to foreknow (可以前知). When a country 國家 is about to flourish, there are sure to be lucky omens. When a country is about to perish, there are sure to be unlucky omens. These omens are revealed in divination and in the movements of the four limbs... Therefore those who embody utmost sincerity are like divine spirits 故至誠如神.¹⁶

Rather than likening those who manifest “absolute sincerity” to divine spirits, Ninomiya clearly goes beyond the *Mean* in equating them.

Following the above passage, the *Mean* describes the limitlessness of “utmost sincerity” by stating:

Sincerity is the beginning and end of things 誠者物之終始. If not for sincerity, there would be nothing 不誠無物...Sincerity not only completes the self, it is that by which all things are completed 所以成物也...Utmost sincerity (至誠) is ceaseless (至誠無息)...In its vastness and depth, it matches earth. In its loftiness and luminosity, it matches heaven. In its infinity and eternity, it is unlimited...Within all its vastness, grass and trees grow, birds and beasts dwell, and stores of precious things are discovered...Within its immeasurable depths, dragons, fishes, and turtles are produced and wealth becomes abundant...Only those who embody utmost sincerity can order and adjust the great relations of mankind,

¹⁶*Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 24. The *Mean* has been translated into English several times. The present translation is adapted from that of Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 108-112. Modern Japanese translations of this ancient Chinese classic include Shimada Kenji 島田虔次, ed., *Daigaku/Chūyō* (ge 下), Chūgoku kotensen vol. 7 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978); and, Uno Tetsuto 宇野哲人, ed., *Chūyō*, Kodansha gakujutsu bunko vol. 595 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983).

establish the great foundations of humanity, and know the transforming and nourishing operations of heaven and earth.¹⁷

Ninomiya's allusions to the *Mencius* and *Doctrine of the Mean* reveal how his concerns for the well-being of humanity and the world at large were often articulated in relation to distinctively Confucian texts rather than Buddhist or Shinto writings.

The Way of Man and the Way of Nature

Andō Shōeki's often scathing critiques of Confucianism and other philosophies were the pugnacious half of his own position, advocating the direct and personal involvement of all members of society in the cultivation of grain (*chokkō* 直行). Like Ninomiya, Shōeki's concern was to reinvigorate the agricultural communities suffering tragically from exploitative mismanagement that reduced many to shocking levels of poverty. Unlike Ninomiya however, Shōeki was hardly a supporter of the Tokugawa political order. If anything, he was an agrarian anarchist who believed that if the artificial and inhumane fetters of the political realm were done away with, a natural way of life with its own spontaneous economic system (*shizen shin'eidō* 自然真営道), often described both literally and metaphorically in terms of "the hearth," would emerge, providing the best life for all. Yet Shōeki's idealistic advocacy of a merger with natural processes and the living truth of the agrarian way ultimately, produced little more than a perhaps wonderful utopian vision. When he tried to realize his plans in Akita, where he had been born and raised, his efforts ended in failure.

As if directly aware of Shōeki's claims, and intent on pointedly opposing them, Ninomiya repeatedly endorses "the way of man," i.e., the artificial way that involves purposeful, goal-oriented behavior over appeals to what is natural. While Ninomiya might have heard of Shōeki's thought, it is not very likely since there is virtually no evidence whatsoever of it having achieved any significant circulation during Tokugawa times or thereafter. Rather, the problem that both Shōeki and Ninomiya addressed dates back, in philosophical texts, to late-Zhou 周 (1122-1256 BCE) times

¹⁷*Doctrine of the Mean*, chapters 25-26, 32.

in ancient China.¹⁸ Responding to Daoist criticisms charging that Confucius' thought was not based on the natural way, Mencius explained morality as a natural expression of the four beginnings of ethical awareness rooted in the human mind, and argued at length that human nature was, at birth, morally good. In Mencius' view, if humanity could preserve and follow its natural endowment, ethical goodness would prevail.

A later Confucian, Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 310–238), denied all of this, asserting that human nature was in fact evil at birth, and that it is only by means of sustained artificial effort in the form of self-cultivation through study, learning, and ritual practice that humanity can attain the goodness that it ideally characterizes. Xunzi also asserted, contrary to Mencius' view of heaven as a providential moral force in the world, that heaven was amoral and that its operations could not be fathomed. Rather than try to understand it, the best that people could do was to focus attention on the way of humanity, which was thoroughly artificial, so that they would be prepared, one way or the other, for the vicissitudes of the natural world, such as floods, droughts, etc. While later Song dynasty Neo-Confucians followed the Mencian position, making it part of the very core of Confucian orthodoxy, Xunzi's ideas remained quite well known, though they were most typically cast as a significant heterodoxy.

Ninomiya's position on humanity's relation to the natural world is strikingly similar to Xunzi's. In Xunzi's view:

The operations of heaven are constant. They are not so because of a [sage like] Yao nor are they brought to naught because of a [tyrant like] Jie. Respond to them with good government and there

¹⁸ Tetsuo Najita, "The Conceptual Portrayal of Tokugawa Intellectual History," in Najita and Scheiner, eds., *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period, 1600-1868: Methods and Metaphors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 16. Najita suggests that Ninomiya "received from Ogyū Sorai, Dazai Shundai, and others" his ideas regarding the efficacy of artificial human effort in the creation of wealth. While Sorai and his followers did distinguish the way of nature from the artificial way of humanity, they drew upon Xunzi's ideas too. Sorai even wrote a commentary on the *Xunzi*. Since Ninomiya does not explicitly refer to Sorai or his followers, but does allude closely to Xunzi, it might be that the more remote source was the effective one.

is good fortune. Respond chaotically and misfortune will result. If you encourage agriculture and are frugal in expenditures, then heaven cannot make you poor...If you practice the way and are not duplicitous, then heaven cannot bring you misfortune. Flood or drought cannot make your people starve, extremes of heat or cold cannot make them fall ill...but if you neglect agriculture and spend lavishly, then heaven cannot make you rich...If you turn your back on the way and act rashly, then heaven cannot give you good fortune. Your people will starve even when there are no floods or droughts. They will fall ill even before heat or cold come to oppress them...Yet you should not curse heaven because things develop in this way. Accordingly, the person who can distinguish between the activities of heaven and those of man is worthy to be called the highest type of person.¹⁹

Unlike earlier Confucians, such as Confucius and Mencius, who viewed heaven as a providential force that would respond to the moral goodness, or lack thereof, of rulers and their people, Xunzi holds that the way of heaven proceeds regardless of the deeds of humanity. Rather than try to fathom heaven or affect its operations, Xunzi held that we can do no better than to focus on the concerns of humanity – farming and frugality – to ensure that whatever heaven brings, we are ready.

Like Xunzi, Ninomiya understood that the efforts of humanity could certainly ensure a fair existence, no matter what heaven and the workings of nature brought. With forethought and effort, people could weather many of the worst natural calamities without extreme suffering.

¹⁹ *Xunzi yinde* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), p. 62. Translation adapted from Burton Watson, *Xunzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 79-80. A more recent translation of this classic albeit heterodox work is John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 3 vols., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988-1994). In the first volume of this valuable study, Knoblock includes a chapter within the “Introduction” entitled “Man and Nature” (pp. 67-85) discussing the natural and the artificial realms. The same theme is explored in a book-length translation-study, Edward J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the Tian Lun* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

But Ninomiya makes these points in prose that is far more exaggerated than Xunzi's: he likens "the natural way of the principles of heaven" to "the way of the beasts" (*chikudō* 蓄道) – something, he states, everyone despises. Unlike the beasts, who roam the outdoors weathering the elements without making provisions to shield themselves, people build homes, store food and clothing, and live in an artificial way that is far removed from the dreaded, beast-like way of nature. As much as anything, Ninomiya extols the artificiality of agriculture as one of the most perfect expressions of the way of humanity, since without the purposeful work that makes for farming, there would be no harvest.²⁰

Ethical Relativism

A ready advocate of basic Confucian-style work-ethic values such as diligence (*kin* 勤) and frugal living (*ken* 儉), Ninomiya was, surprisingly enough, a skeptic on ethical issues as basic as the existence of good and evil. Few Confucians, indeed, ever questioned the reality of good (*zen* 善) and evil (*aku* 悪), that moral distinction being the most fundamental to their philosophical readiness to evaluate the self, society, and those who govern. Moreover, Confucians typically followed Mencius in affirming, without significant equivocation, that human nature was good at birth. Ninomiya, however, unequivocally advances the opposite, stating:

Discussing good and evil is very difficult to do. If we address the fundamentals here, then we must conclude that there is neither good nor evil. As we distinguish one thing as good, another thing emerges as evil. Originally, good and evil are things established by the partialities (*watakushi* 私) of the human self (*jinshin* 人身). They are entities that [emerge from] the way of humanity. For this reason, if humanity did not exist, there would be neither good nor evil. Because humanity exists, there is subsequently good and evil. Therefore, while some people will deem the reclamation of land as good and the loss of fields to wild overgrowth as evil, swine and wild deer see the former as evil and the latter as good...Thus, it is

²⁰Ishigurō, *Ninomiya*, pp. 107-108. See Naramoto and Nakai, *Ninomiya-ō yawa*, p. 124.

difficult to distinguish what can be deemed good and what might be judged evil.²¹

Ninomiya's reluctance to recognize good and evil, even if only as ethical leverage relative to injustice, combined with his elevation of "the way of concession" or "deferring" (*jōdō* 譲道), leaves him some distance from the mainstream of Confucian thought, addressing the socio-economic and political issues of the day.

From Propaganda to the Protestant Ethic

One of the more curious aspects of Maruyama Masao's study of Tokugawa intellectual history is its relative silence regarding Ninomiya, i.e., apart from a lengthy note²² detailing the relevance of Ninomiya to the thematic framework of Maruyama's study, that of nature and artifice in the development of political modernity in Japan. Given Maruyama's opposition to the ideology of "national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道徳) prevalent in the late 1930s through 1945, and the fact that Ninomiya's life-story and thought were incorporated into it, perhaps this is not surprising at all. Regardless of how practical Ninomiya's work with the peasants might have been, and how valuable his thoughts might have been to the wartime agrarian elements, the inclusion of Ninomiya in statements of imperial-nationalistic propaganda such as *Kokutai no hongi* 國體の本義 (Fundamental Principles of Our National Essence, 1937)²³ must have made Ninomiya a less than compelling subject of study for Maruyama.

Viewed from another angle, Ninomiya's emphasis on hard work, industry, purposefulness, and preparedness are relative to the often volatile forces of nature conjured in the mind of Robert Bellah; an expression of a

²¹Ishigurō, *Ninomiya*, pp. 126-127. See Naramoto and Nakai, *Ninomiya-ō yawa*, p. 133.

²²Maruyama, *Studies*, p. 301, note 51. See *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū*, pp. 308-309.

²³John Owen Gauntlett, trans., and Robert King Hall, ed., *Kokutai no hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 169. Anon., *Kokutai no Hongi* (Tokyo: Monbusho, 1937). Also see Robert K. Hall, *Shūshin: The Ethics of a Defeated Nation* (New York: Columbia University Teacher's College, 1949), p. 204.

peasant work ethic that could be construed as an analog of the Protestant work ethic.²⁴ There can be little doubt that Ninomiya's thinking encouraged a work ethic, but whether it led, in any meaningful way, to the development of capitalism is surely open to question. Emphasizing their historical setting, Thomas Havens observes that Ninomiya's teachings fully accommodated and occasionally even catered to the interests of the Tokugawa socio-economic system, without solicitation or early reward. They never broached a word of discontent with the larger political order or to the degree to which it justified exploitation or even oppression of the peasantry.²⁵

Considered from this vantage point, the ultimate significance, positive and negative, of Ninomiya's humane and yet politically obliging efforts to address agrarian crises of his day perhaps resides in the extent to which his work not so much encouraged capitalism as it did simple obedience and hard work to make the best of things, whatever they might be, without making absolute ethical claims about the overall value or virtues of the system which precipitated the crises. Ninomiya's popularity, arguably evident in the numerous statues of him carrying firewood and reading a book, the *Daigaku*, was not, in the end, so much an indication of the success of his socio-economic teachings as it was his clear utility as a political example of working hard for the existing order, i.e., being an industrious yet devoted, bent-backed subject.

²⁴Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (New York: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 127-131.

²⁵Thomas Havens, *Farm and Nation in Modern Japan: Agrarian Nationalism, 1870-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 25-27.

**SACRED PARIAHS:
HAGIOGRAPHIES OF ALTERITY, SEXUALITY, AND
SALVATION IN ATOMIC BOMB LITERATURE**

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Woman was the embodiment of respectability;
even as defender and protector of her people she
was assimilated to her traditional role as woman
and mother, the custodian of tradition, who kept
nostalgia alive in the active world of men.

George L. Mosse
*Nationalism and Sexuality*¹

Introduction:

The eponymous protagonist of the television drama *Yumechiyo Nikki*, or the Diary of Yumechiyo, is 34 years old, and has been diagnosed with leukemia. Her illness is attributed to her exposure, while still a fetus in her mother's womb, to the atomic bombing of 1945 in Hiroshima. With only three years to live, Yumechiyo must travel twice a year to a hospital in the city, several hours by train from her small village. Keeping her sickness a secret, she continues her life as a geisha and as a caretaker for other geisha. Despite its grave themes – the plight of the geisha, leukemia, and the atomic bombing – or perhaps because of its dramatic seriousness, the *Yumechiyo* story, by renowned screenwriter Hayasaka Akira, enjoyed wide popularity upon first airing in Japan in 1981. The show began with five episodes from NHK, a Japanese public television station, and was followed by two sequels, a movie, and numerous theatrical productions. No other atomic bomb narrative had garnered so much attention in popular media until then.

Feminist thinker, Maya Morioka Todeschini, has rightly pointed out that the story of Yumechiyo, like other such stories, aestheticizes the female victims' sufferings, while also portraying their sufferings as

¹George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 97.

necessary for their moral and spiritual growth – a combination that lends romantic appeal to the characters through the evocation of nationalistic nostalgia.² In fact, the movie analyzed by Todeschini spent more time on a romantic relationship between Yumechiyo and an artist who appeared in the second season of the TV series.³ Thus, I examine primarily the first TV series of *Yumechiyo*, whose screenplay is now in print and readily available, reflecting its popularity. While acknowledging Todeschini's critique of *Yumechiyo*, I want to avoid viewing the popularity of this fictive narrative as merely the result of a simple-minded audience being manipulated into seeing Yumechiyo as a representation of A-bomb "maidens," as Todeschini's interpretation may suggest. Instead, I will explore the possibility of different readings of *Yumechiyo*, so that its popularity among the Japanese audience is not merely reduced to sexism alone.

The significance of Todeschini's argument lies in pointing to the aestheticization of female victims as well as the romanticization of their diseases, preventing us from a deeper understanding of the individual victim's plight. Following Todeschini's argument, I drew upon hagiographical tropes in medieval popular accounts as a prototype to read *Yumechiyo*. I find that through this the survivor's ethical sensibilities are better understood, thereby better relating us to them. With this hagiographic lens, I argue that the story of *Yumechiyo*, in fact, reflects some of the survivors' ethical sensibilities – an ethic that does not seek to impute responsibility to victimizers, but rather pursues critical self-reflection as a means of reconciliation. The hagiographical trope will reveal to us a new understanding of the survivors' ethical sensibilities, covered by melodramatic plots. The audience is not merely contributing a chauvinistic

²Pastoral scenes in *Black Rain* written by renowned writer, Ibuse Masuji, are thoroughly examined by John Whittier Treat: "So successful is the dissolution of one of the greatest atrocities of the century into stories of baby carp and other nostalgic signs of a long-gone pastoral, that the novel's translator can say that its theme is precisely opposite what the public assumes," in *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 296. This observation is applicable to *Yumechiyo*.

³Both in TV series and film, Yumechiyo was played by a famous actress, Yoshinaga Sayuri. Some may argue that she herself embodies the nostalgia that will be discussed later in the paper.

understanding of women portrayed in the media, but is also seeking a way to come to terms with the Other who experienced the unprecedented event of the bombing.

To this end, by employing philosopher Edith Wychogrod's argument, I will explain why I take it to be hagiography, and also comment on the ethical import of hagiography in a postmodern era that explains Todeschini's argument in light of the problem of representation. I will briefly illustrate the story of *Yumechiyo* and then analyze it by utilizing the archetype of "popular" narratives in medieval times. In doing so, I hope to delineate its problems and the survivors' ethics.

Hagiography and Postmodern Moral Theories

Hagiography, or sacred biography, differentiates itself from historiography in its amalgamation of "the 'mythic' and 'historical' elements."⁴ Although what constitutes "mythical" versus "historical" is certainly a contested issue, for the purpose of this essay, I focus on what I take to be the "mythic" element and its relation to hagiography. As the editors of *The Biographical Process* state, what is worth examining in hagiographical literature lies in the analysis of the "mythical ideal," rendering one's life experience extraordinary, while giving rise to a new idea of "holy" for a sacred biography: "Given that the mythical ideal remains somewhat fluid at the time the sacred biography is written or compiled, the selection of biographical material is an extremely vexing problem. A single reported episode may have a constitutive effect on the resulting mythical ideal."⁵ In its intractable blending of biography and fictive narratives, the mythical ideal generates a structural foundation for hagiography.

How then, might hagiographies founded on the mythical ideal enhance ethical discourse particularly in our time? Edith Wyshogrod argues that postmodern ethics, emerging in response to the genocides and other atrocities that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed, must take seriously the question of how we define the concept of alterity and deal

⁴ Frank E. Reynolds and Donald Capps, eds., "Introduction" in *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion*, (Mouton: The Hague, 1976), p. 1.

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

with the Other.⁶ What allowed humans to commit genocide and other atrocities, claims Wyschogrod, was the failure to reflect deeply on one's relationship with alterity. Wyschogrod therefore suggests that postmodern ethics should lie in "the sphere of transactions between 'self' and 'Other' and is to be constructed non-nomologically."⁷ This non-nomological thought stands in contrast to ethical systems that engage in "the investigation of the norms of conduct."⁸ Such ethical systems, as opposed to non-nomological ones, thus tend to treat the Other as another self, consequently and inevitably converting the concerns for the Other into the pursuit of self-interest.

Wyschogrod's further reflection upon the relationship between self and the Other is expressed as follows; "If, on the other hand, saintliness is a total emptying without replenishment, there is no subject to engage the Other. In either case the alterity of the Other disappears, and is reduced to the homogeneity of the same. This paradox opened up by saintly selflessness will seem to dissolve once the relationship between power and powerlessness in saintly existence is clarified. Powerlessness will be viewed as renunciation and suffering, the expressions of self-negation in saintly life, whereas, by contrast, the field of moral action will be interpreted as requiring empowerment."⁹ This dialectic relationship to the Other – one's awareness of power over the Other, renunciation of it, and being powerless as a way to relate to the Other to sustain the hagiographical structure.

Towards the end of evolving a postmodern ethics that seeks to develop new conceptions of self and the Other, and the given understanding of saints' relations to the Other, it is a natural outcome for Wyschogrod to recommend turning our attention to hagiography, where saintly lives

⁶"The Other, both individually and collectively as the precondition for moral existence, is the Other in her or his corporeal being. The saintly response to the Other entails putting his/her own body and material goods at the disposal of the Other." Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. xxii.

⁷Ibid., p. xv.

⁸Ibid., p. xv.

⁹Ibid., p. 33-34.

exemplify “compassion for the Other, irrespective of cost to the saint.”¹⁰ Narratives of saintly embodiments of radical altruism and practices of self-negation dramatically display the refusal to make the Other a mere extension of the self, and instead put the saint’s “own body and material goods at the disposal of the Other.”¹¹ Exhibiting altruism and practices of self-denial, the saints’ lives “unfold in tension with institutional frameworks,” which generally advocate nomological moral behaviors. Wyschogrod claims that saints’ manifestations of negation – negation of self by renouncing their power, as a means to alleviate or relate to the negation of the existence of the Other – undermines the order of institutional frameworks and perhaps any social structures, which presupposes the pursuit of individual self-preservation over the preservation of the Other.¹² Such behaviors that go beyond or even nullify such social norms appear to be inexplicable, however they appeal to us as the mythical ideal, as a manifestation of saints’ extraordinary concerns and care for others, at the expense of their – social or even physical – self-preservation. Calling into question institutional orders – be they ecclesiastical or social – hagiography challenges those social values which are often taken for granted.

In these features of hagiography, Wyschogrod finds resources for new approaches to ethical thinking. She argues that the mode of behavior manifested by saints must not be taken as “a nostalgic return to premodern hagiography, but as a postmodern expression of excessive desire, a desire on behalf of the Other that seeks the cessation of another’s suffering and the birth of another’s joy.”¹³ Even when religious institutions endorse hagiography for the purpose of controlling the common people, the life stories of saints manage to offer unfathomable care for others that go beyond the institutional constriction. The sacred biography is not simply used by authorities, but persistently reveals its own resistance to the limits enforced upon it. Hagiography, in sum, contributes to contemporary moral theory by displaying ways in which altruism is put into practice. At the same time, hagiographies exhibit antinomian behavior through their

¹⁰Ibid., p. xxiii.

¹¹Ibid., p. xxii.

¹²*Saints and Postmodernism*, p. xxiii.

¹³Ibid., p. xxiv.

relentless negations of self.¹⁴ With this in mind, I want to turn to Todeschini's critique on *Yumechiyo* and a hagiographical interpretation of it.

***Yumechiyo* as a Representation**

The story of *Yumechiyo* begins in full melodramatic form. The protagonist is returning from the hospital on a train crossing a high iron bridge into her village, evoking a sense of remoteness from the convenience of city life.¹⁵ Another passenger on the train is a detective who is pursuing a murder case. The main suspect of the case is Ichikoma, one of the geisha under Yumechiyo's care. Yumechiyo's village has been infested by the *yakuza*, or Japanese mafia, who want to turn it into a resort area. Yumechiyo's former fiancé comes from the city to persuade the villagers, including Yumechiyo and his own mother, not to persist in the old way of business. In the meantime, Yumechiyo protects Ichikoma and abets in her escape, while the only medical doctor of the village flees with one of Yumechiyo's geisha after it is discovered that the doctor has been practicing medicine without a license. As with any soap opera, there is no grand finale to this melodramatic plot; rather, the story is indefinitely protracted through characters' arrivals to and departures from the village, interweaving their pasts and the present.

Describing the story of Yumechiyo as an "A-bomb soap opera" and an "A-bomb tear jerker," Todeschini maintains that *Yumechiyo* "contains all the ingredients for commercial success: a long-suffering beautiful heroine who dies fashionably...; romantic love and sex; traditional dance, song, and popular theater; intrigue, female suicide, and murder."¹⁶ In her analyses of such A-bomb "maiden" movies (including the well-known

¹⁴Wyschogrod states: "although hagiographic texts endorsed by religious traditions are often idealized biography or autobiography, saints' antinomian acts provide an intratextual counter-discourse to the constructed artifacts of already well-developed theological and institutional frameworks," in *Saints and Postmodernism*, p. 37.

¹⁵The beginning of this drama, with the use of the tunnel and Yumechiyo's occupation, reminds the viewers of *Yukiguni*, a famous work by Kawabata Yasunari.

¹⁶Maya Morioka Todeschini, "'Death and the Maiden': Female *Hibakusha* as Cultural Heroines, and the Politics of A-bomb Memory," in *Hibakusha Cinema*, ed. Mick Broderick (London: Kegan Paul, 1996), p. 225.

Black Rain), Todeschini attributes their popular success to their exploitation of female *hibakusha* (or survivors): the A-bomb stories fashion their experiences into “culturally and politically sanctioned narratives”¹⁷ by imposing cultural stereotypes upon women in general as silently suffering innocents, and upon female *hibakusha*, whose individuality is dismissed in favor of romanticized victimization through glamorized suffering.

The central point of Todeschini’s critique is that the story of the A-bomb maiden aestheticizes radiation-related sicknesses by suggesting that women’s external beauty corresponds to inner virtues developed through silent suffering.¹⁸ The *actual* suffering experienced by the historical “Hiroshima Maidens,” who were invited to the United States in 1955 for free plastic surgery to treat their bomb-induced disfigurements,¹⁹ would prove this point: A-bomb maidens portrayed in fiction have to be physically intact, as if their outward appearance confirmed their inner beauty.²⁰ Todeschini further argues that the theme of such short-lived innocent beauty evokes in readers’ minds the “*mono no aware*, or the ‘suchness’ and ‘sad beauty’ of existence.”²¹ This notion is associated with the eighteenth-century philosopher Motoori Norinaga, whose school of National Learning provided the theoretical underpinnings of the Japanese nationalism that led to wars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this way, these A-bomb maiden stories evoke nationalistic memory, exhibiting “symbolic alignment with ‘tradition,’ and the supposed ‘essence’ of premodern Japan.”²²

¹⁷Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁸Once, tuberculosis or pneumonia was the favored disease in romantic novels as a maidens’ ailment, until they became curable sicknesses in English literature.

¹⁹For more information, see Rodney Barker, *The Hiroshima Maidens: A Story of Courage, Compassion, and Survival* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985).

²⁰For example, Yumechiyo never appears as a suffering patient from chemotherapy. She merely becomes more fragile. As is observed in *Black Rain*, the protagonist Yasuko loses her hair, but no subsequent scenes show further loss of her hair or any physical manifestation of radiation sickness, except her becoming thinner and paler.

²¹“Death and the Maiden,” p. 232.

²²Ibid., p. 241.

While I agree with Todeschini's critique of the distortion and dangerous misuse of the *hibakusha* women's experiences, the question of A-bomb maiden's representation requires several points to be clarified for further discussion. One such question is whether *hibakusha*'s experiences themselves, regardless of their gender, have ever been appropriately represented in media. While the population of Hiroshima city in 1944 shows only a slightly higher percentage of women to men (52% to 48%),²³ visual representation of *hibakusha* focuses predominantly upon women and children. Under such circumstances, where victimization is often represented by de-masculine figures, we must consider, on the one hand, what can be an appropriate representation of *hibakusha* men's experiences. On the other hand, *hibakusha* women's experiences are certainly different from those of men.

A journalist and a *hibakusha* herself, Seki Chieko gives some examples of different experiences between men and women in post-A-bomb life: first, a *hibakusha* wife's miscarriage is often solely attributed to her history of experiencing the atomic bomb, while a non-*hibakusha* wife's miscarriage is hardly associated with her *hibakusha* husband.²⁴ Second, acknowledging men's suffering from burns and keloids, Seki concludes that generally speaking, social expectation for and emphasis on women's external beauty places higher pressure on women with scars.²⁵ Third, the 1970s census demonstrates that the number of women who are engaged as day laborers in Hiroshima (5.8%) is higher than that of the national average (2.7%). From the data, Seki speculates that more *hibakusha* women tend to stay single than their male counterpart.²⁶ Each example above is not necessarily unique to the *hibakusha* women. Still to this day, a number of women feel responsible for their miscarriage; scarred women can be avoided in courtship while the scars on men can be read positively as a sign of courage. Nonetheless, these examples exhibit the uniqueness of *hibakusha* women's experiences, as a result of the atomic bombing induced

²³Seki Chieko, "Genbaku saigai to josei" ["The A-bomb Destruction and Women"] in *Onna ga Hiroshima o kataru* (Women speak about Hiroshima) eds. by Esashi Akiko, Knou Mikiyo, Seki Chieko, and Horiba Kiyoko (Tokyo: Inpakuto shuppankai, 1996), p. 205.

²⁴Ibid., p. 214.

²⁵Ibid., p. 215.

²⁶Ibid.

discrimination against them. Experiences of ineffable sufferings from an unprecedented event may hardly be appropriately represented in the media, and neither *Yumechiyo* nor hagiographical reading of it will rectify the misuse of *hibakusha* women's experiences. Thus, I only hope that interpreting *Yumechiyo* by means of hagiographical plots discloses a new approach to ethical thinking about the experiences of the atomic bombing.

The fact that *Yumechiyo* was exposed to radiation while still in her mother's womb creates an extreme case of innocent suffering. Consequently, as Todeschini claims, "the portrayal of heroic, 'innocent' survivors allows for a 'symbolic reconciliation' of the various political, social and moral tensions and ambiguities in Japanese public memory surrounding the A-bomb experience, with regard to the dropping of the bomb, conditions that led up to it, and the social position of survivors in Japanese society."²⁷ However, the *Yumechiyo* story does not simplistically and unambiguously portray the suffering of an innocent, but in fact elucidates the moral complexity of human beings, which cannot be crudely categorized as either innocent or wicked.

For example, in the first TV series, *Yumechiyo* abets her fellow geisha, murder suspect Ichikoma, not from her conviction of Ichikoma's innocence, but perhaps from her responsibility of being a guardian for all the geisha under her wings. This creates a moral dilemma between compliance with public authority and complicity in Ichikoma's plight. Helping Ichikoma's absconding, *Yumechiyo* exhibits her ambiguity, rather than her innocence, as a heroine. Meanwhile, Numata, a member of the *yakuza*, turns out to be a *hibakusha* who was helped by *Yumechiyo*'s mother when he lost his parents to the atomic bomb. When Numata realizes that the geisha house that his group is trying to purchase is that of *Yumechiyo*, he offers incense at the Buddhist altar to pay respect to *Yumechiyo*'s late mother, and suffers a spell of vertigo upon standing up. Seated on a tatami mat, Numata says, "This is because of the Pika. The effect won't go away after these many years." (The Pika is an onomatopoeia for the flash of the atomic bomb, thus refers to the bomb itself.) *Yumechiyo* asks if he has had himself checked up at a hospital. He responds, "No one wants to see me live long." Numata is a *hibakusha*, and yet, in contrast to the stereotype, he is neither morally virtuous nor heroically courageous, but is as weak and corrupt as anyone else.

²⁷Ibid., p. 244.

In addition, Kihara, the village's kindhearted doctor, flees with one of Yumechiyo's geisha after authorities discover that he has been practicing without a license. Again, the tension between public authority and personal human relationships resurfaces: the most helpful and sympathetic doctor in a rural village is a lawbreaker. In the end, detective Yamane lets Ichikoma get away, burns the evidence of Kihara's illegal practice, and resigns from his job. Thus, the main characters in *Yumechiyo*, including the long suffering protagonist, are far from being simplistically righteous, just, or innocent, but are morally ambiguous, caught between social norms and non-nomological compassion. Focusing upon Yumechiyo's "innocent" suffering alone does not acknowledge the complexity of the *hibakusha*. Thus, Todeschini's analysis of this popular drama does not recognize the moral vicissitudes of its characters, simplifying them in a way that fails to take into account the ethical insights – non-nomological self renunciation – afforded by a hagiographical understanding of Yumechiyo's story.

Yumechiyo – Sacred Pariah

The sort of moral ambiguity present in the *Yumechiyo* story is also evident in the lives of saints. Because of their extreme altruism and practices of self-negation, saints' behaviors often go beyond those institutional norms that demarcate right and wrong, good and evil, innocent and wicked. Fascination with the lives of saints, like that of the *Yumechiyo* story, derives from their power to nullify social and ethical norms through their extraordinary acts of altruism toward the end of alleviating the suffering of the Other. In addition, examining hagiographies in Japan reveals that saintly figures transgress not only social norms and metaphysical demarcations of good and evil, but also physical boundaries through transfiguration.

In reading *Yumechiyo* from a hagiographical lens, it is important to keep in mind that most hagiography on holy women in medieval times were written by men, and it is almost inescapable to reconstruct a women's saintliness through men's perspectives, as Catherine M. Mooney, European medieval historian, states. Even though Mooney specifically refers to Christian tradition in medieval Europe, the problems and questions she poses may not be greatly dissimilar to those found in Japan. "Given the patriarchal and misogynistic cast of medieval society and, in particular, the medieval Church," asserts Mooney, "many scholars have increasingly expressed skepticism regarding these sources, noting that male-authored depictions of holy women, however sincerely intentioned, are likely to

reveal far more about men's idealized notions of female sanctity and its embodiment in women's lives than they reveal about the female saints themselves."²⁸

Similar remarks were made by Japanese historian, Janet R. Goodwin: "For the most part this was a male discourse...Largely missing from the discourse are the women's own voices."²⁹ For example, the *Kenkyū gojunreiki* (建久御巡礼記) describes the origin and history of temples located on the route to a high-ranked woman's pilgrimage. We know the record was compiled by a monk named Jitsuei in 1191, but we can only speculate who this "high-ranked woman" was, even though this record was dedicated to her.

In this record of pilgrimage, however, a mythical story of an empress appears,³⁰ in which Buddha manifests himself as the marginalized leper. In this story, the suffering and the marginalized was not a woman. On the contrary, the highly respected woman witnessed a transformation of the lowly to the holy – the trope we are examining. The protagonist of this prominent Japanese folklore/hagiography,³¹ of which there exist numerous variations, is Empress Kōmei, who opens a public bath in a time when bathing is considered a luxury available only to the affluent. She even offers to wash the first person to visit her bath. The first person who appears is a leper, who demands that the empress wash him with her own hands. The

²⁸Catherine M. Mooney, "Voice, Gender, and the Portrayal of Sanctity" in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 3.

²⁹Janet R. Goodwin, "Shadows of Transgression: Heian and Kamakura Constructions of Prostitution," *Monumenta Nipponica* 55/3 (2000): pp. 327-368, 328.

³⁰The story of the empress is recorded in *Konjaku monogatari*, and other documents compiled in the twelfth through sixteenth centuries. Historian Abe Yasurō examines the similarity of this plot to that of Xuánzàng's story (in *The Journey to the West*) in the *Konjaku monogatari*. Abe Yasurō, *Yuya no kōgō: chūsei no sei to seinaru mono* [Empress of the bathhouse: sex and the sacred in the medieval era] (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 1999 [1998]), pp. 31-38.

³¹In some documents, this episode is one of the tales (*monogatari*), while others go into more detail of the Empress' life as a sacred person. Abe Yasurō, *Yuya no kōgō*, p. 25.

empress reluctantly acquiesces, and washes him, admonishing not to tell anyone for fear of being marginalized for having come into contact with a leper. But at this moment, the leper transforms into a Buddha ascending to Heaven.³² This story not only shows the ambiguity of the Empress's character as simultaneously merciful and concerned with self-preservation; it also portrays the unsettling proximity of the holy and the unholy: The marginalized sufferer is, in fact, a sacred being, and through this encounter the marginalized enables the empress herself, albeit reluctantly, to be remembered as a saintly figure.

Japanese hagiography is indeed rich in representing the marginalized of society – the sick, the poor, and female prostitutes – and in recapturing them differently. Hagiographical interpretations thus, not only offer further insight into the question of the popularity of the “A-bomb maiden” genre, and in particular, the *Yumechiyo Diary*, but also promote more nuanced analyses of Japanese ethical sensibilities in the face of tragic events. Without merely identifying actual *hibakusha* with saints or saintly figures, and thus eschewing their individual sufferings, let us examine how hagiographic tropes and structures facilitate a better understanding of the ethics of the *hibakusha*.

From the Lowly to the Holy

The pattern of empowering the unholy and thereby deconstructing the boundaries of worldly hierarchies permeates Japanese hagiographies. Interestingly, as time passes, the dichotomy of the holy/unholy were left exclusively upon women, whose social status itself becomes increasingly ambiguous. In this connection, an examination of the historical attributes of geisha provides further insight. Following Todeschini's argument, Yumechiyo's occupation as a geisha may be interpreted as another apparatus for aestheticization and evocation of nostalgia. It is undeniable that the word or term “geisha” certainly evokes in the audience's mind a single image: women's subjugation to men. The image of geisha serving men has been romanticized, particularly in Western European and North American contexts, primarily because of the enigmatic and “exotic” nature of the occupation – geisha are skillful entertainers, attention-givers, and not

³²*Yuya no kōgō*, p. 20. Another version is that the leper demands that the empress suck the puss out from his wound.

simply prostitutes. However, I would like to remind that Yumechiyo is one of the two villagers (the other person is also a woman who owns an old-fashioned hotel in the village), who does not give in to the threat that *yakuza* imposed upon most of the villagers. Confronting the *yakuza* and a detective – representations of hierarchical organizations in two different worlds – Yumechiyo is far from submissive.

A historical survey of the origin of geisha, or a female entertainer, helps us to understand the complexity of their occupation. Traditionally, there are a number of ways to refer to female entertainers in Japan, including *asobime*, *asobibe*, *shirabyōshi*, and *yūjo*, to name a few. This variety of nomenclature reflects the varying range of their skills and associations. Similarly, the social status of these female entertainers is uncertain, at least prior to the Middle Ages of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

As for the status and the origin of the female entertainers, Goodwin summarizes that opinions among scholars divide into two factions, those who argue that those female entertainers were marginalized and voiceless and others who point to their association to the high ranks in society.³³ While Goodwin agrees with neither factions, she argues in her article that “attitudes toward female entertainers were always ambiguous, ranging from delight to dismay at any given time.”³⁴ On the other hand, Bernard Faure claims that those women’s missions had a religious medium: “The term *asobi*, used concurrently with *ukare* (also read *yū*) in the medieval period, implied an artistic talent related to music, song, and dance. But it would also be misleading to read the *yū* or *yūjo* as mere entertainment. The term *asobi* seems to have first meant *a ritual to console the soul of the departed* (and those of his relatives).”³⁵ Faure continues to assert that “because they served ‘sacred beings’ (the *kami* and the emperor himself), they participated to a certain extent in sacredness. These specialists of ‘deep play’ (*asobi*) took on all of the meanings of the word *asobi* itself, with its broad semantic field, ranging from the religious to the sexual and artistic

³³Goodwin, “Shadows of Transgression,” p. 329. In other versions of the plot, bodhisattva *Monju*, or Manjushri replaces Buddha. *Yuya no kōgō*, p. 29.

³⁴Ibid., p. 329.

³⁵Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 252.

domains.”³⁶ Seeking the origin of the female entertainers and overly romanticized and fantasized association of them to the sacred was critically refuted by Koyano Atsushi.³⁷

While historically the status of female entertainers is still uncertain, the closeness of those women to the sacred was commonly expressed in literature. The following Goodwin statement helps us to facilitate our discussion: “from mid-Kamakura on, one image of them [female entertainers], as transgressors against social norms, became dominant.”³⁸ If the mythical ideal is constituted of non-nomological behavior, in “transgressing against social norms,” thereby female entertainers transcend the conventional morality of good versus evil. Such behaviors are a threat to the authority, yet as we have seen, they can also be the expression of self-renunciation to care for others.

We will now turn to one of those narratives where a saint, encountering a marginalized female entertainer, reaches a higher plane of enlightenment. In this plot, the boundaries between the holy and the unholy came to be obscured, and thereby unveil the ambiguity of the categories, as those women reveal themselves as a manifestation of the holy. This functions in a way similar to a popular account in Christianity in which

³⁶Ibid., p. 255.

³⁷Koyano Atsushi, “‘Sei naru sei’ no saikentou” (Re-examine the “Sacred Sex”) in *Nihon Kenkyū* 29/2 (2004): pp. 301-323. Also, by the same author, *Nihon Baishun Shi: Yūgyōnyofu kara sōpu rando made* [History of Japanese Prostitutes: from wandering female entertainers to women in the contemporary sex industry] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2007). Instead of arguing whether or not their occupations were originated in religious rituals, Koyano asserts that combining sex and sacred is the *kyōdō gensō*, or collective fantasy. (The term, *kyōdō gensō* is originally introduced by philosopher Yoshimoto Takaaki’s monograph, *Kyōdō gensō ron*, or Discourse on Collective Fantasy, published in 1968. It refers to a state as a political entity or superstructure in the Marxian sense. Here, Koyano uses it as a constructed idea that has no historical ground, yet is widely shared and supported as a fact). Koyano argues that the idea of “sacred sex (*sei naru sei*)” is imported in the early twentieth century from Euro-American academic discourse, much after those folklore and hagiography in question were compiled. “*Sei naru sei*,” p. 315.

³⁸“Shadows of Transgression,” p. 329.

Mary Magdalene came to be identified with “the woman sinner,” who was eventually saved by encountering the Savior despite (or because of) her sinfulness. Female entertainers in Japanese hagiography are transformed into sacred beings. They are, in fact, the saviors, not the saved.

As Goodwin states, by the end of the Middle Ages, the status of these female entertainers was diminished, as seen in the fifteenth century Noh play *Eguchi*. Here the *yūjo* no longer holds the privileged social status associated with being a spiritual mediator between the sacred and the profane. Rather her initial position of lowliness sets the stage for a transgression of ontological boundaries, as the *yūjo* becomes holy.³⁹ The *Eguchi* story is based on the legend of a tenth-century Buddhist saint, Shōkū shōnin, who had a burning desire to see the bodhisattva Fugen, or Samantabhadra. He had a dream that directed him to visit a *yūjo* instead. Eventually, Shōkū shōnin is able to see the *yūjo* as an avatar of bodhisattva Fugen. The movement from lowly to high in the juxtaposition of the *yūjo* and the bodhisattva appeals to the audience, while this hagiographical trope suggests the ambiguity of moral, spiritual, and religious manifestations in this world, which inevitably leads to the uncertainty of the norms that moral, spiritual, and religious authorities draw upon.

Such hagiographical tropes are re-imagined in Yumechiyo’s multifaceted social stigma. Grave enough in the context of Japanese society to place her on the bottom of the social hierarchy – she is a *hibakusha* who is barren, and suffers from a terminal illness, and a geisha in a rural village – her stigma relegates her to the role of a pariah. At the same time, these very qualities anticipate a transformation into the holy, a fact attested to by the statue of Yumechiyo as a bodhisattva that has been constructed by the people of the village upon which the village in the Yumechiyo story is based.⁴⁰ The popularity that this melodrama has garnered thus lies not solely in its provocation of chauvinistic and nationalistic sentiment alone, but also in its appeal to the audience’s ethical imagination, in its attempt to understand, and perhaps respond to, the Other’s suffering.

³⁹*Yuya no kōgō*, pp. 150-151.

⁴⁰In the postscript to a pocket book edition, the screen writer Hayasaka Akira proudly reports that “(In the village) Yumechiyo statue was erected, Yumechiyo kan’non [a Buddhist bodhisattva] was built, and a big Yumechiyo hall was established.” Hayasaka Akira, *Yumechiyo nikki* (Tokyo: Shinpūsha, 2003), p. 265.

The Yumechiyo story trades in hagiographical tropes in which the lowly become holy through their “excessive desire...on behalf of the Other,” by seeking to end the suffering of the Other, and promoting the “birth of another’s joy.” The characters of this story, neither morally perfect nor totally corrupt, are agents of the nullification of worldly moral norms through the extension of compassion to the suffering of the Other. But more importantly, such transformation is made possible when one dares to transgress boundaries set up by social norms such as at the moment when the Empress touches the leper, a Buddhist monk comes to see *yūjo*, and detective Yamane stops going after “criminals.” The transformation, then, occurs on both ends: Empress Kōmei, Shōkū shōnin, and Yamane, encountering the unholy Other outside of their environment, once preoccupied with self-preservation within a framework of social norms, come into contact with the “holy” through their renunciation of social “power.”

Conclusion

In this essay, I have suggested that reading *Yumechiyo* in light of its use of hagiographical tropes, not only helps to explain the popularity of the television series, but also yields ethical insight. The transformation of pariahs into saints is only made possible, in Japanese hagiographies, when the individual – the Empress at the public bath or Buddhist sage in the Noh play *Eguchi* – overcomes the impulse of self-preservation by coming into contact with the lowly Other. The Other, as in those narratives, invites us to reveal the meaninglessness of boundaries between self and the Other, culminating in the lowly becoming the holy. In fact, the actual A-bomb survivors, despite difficulties enduring the marginalization, in their testimonies deconstruct the boundaries of the victims and victimizers: survivors do not focus upon persecuting the perpetrators of crimes. Rather, they frequently reconcile their experiences of the atomic bombing by reflecting upon their own shortcomings: I too have done wrong, so I am not in the place to condemn others.⁴¹ Instead of imputing responsibility or

⁴¹Ms. Emiko Okada, who was 8 years old at the time of the bombing, critically reflects upon herself that she was unaware of discrimination against Koreans before the bombing, and that she wished to have been a brave soldier if she were a boy. Public testimonies given in Chicago, IL on October 22-25, 2007. Another *hibakusha*, Nagano Etsuko, blames herself

pursuing retaliation, these survivors seek reconciliation through sharing their testimonies to prevent the future suffering of others.

The reach and applications of this self-critical attitude, however, remain in question. For example, how does the hagiographical model speak to situations in which Japanese people have been the primary perpetrators, such as the cases of Unit 731, Nanjing massacre, comfort women, and other atrocities? This question challenges ethicists with the meanings of accountability and moral responsibility within a religious tradition that recognizes institutional and social dichotomies as illusory, as with self and other. Nonetheless, the denial of dichotomization – the holy and unholy, the victimizer and the victim – runs deep in the *hibakusha*'s ethic involving reconciliation. The *hibakusha*'s self-critical reflections in the face of human-made tragedy thus merit consideration as a model for an ethic of reconciliation, requesting us to come into contact with their suffering, and for evolving an alternative account in which a pariah will transform into a saint.

by recounting that the reason that her little brother and sister died from the bomb was because she insisted on returning to the city before the bomb in *White Light/Black Rain* (directed by Steven Okazaki, 2007). Rev. Shigenobu Kōji, who lost his sisters and father from the bombing and after-effect radiation, states that even he would have pressed the button to release the bomb if he were a pilot of the Enola Gay. Public talk given by Rev. Kōji, on December 4, 2007 at Kōryūji (Hiroshima, Japan). Even the inscription on the memorial in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park does not refer to those responsible: "Errors won't be repeated. Please rest in peace."

Featured Essay

DŌGEN AND PLATO ON LITERATURE AND ENLIGHTENMENT¹

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To compare Dōgen and Plato might seem quixotic, given the vast conceptual and cultural gulf between them. Plato, a fourth-century B.C.E. Athenian, has come to exemplify rationalist Western philosophy, whereas Dōgen, a thirteenth-century C.E. Japanese Buddhist monk, is a key figure in the development of Japanese (Sōtō Zen) Buddhism. Moreover, Plato, a well-known target of Derrida, is an opponent of postmodernism, which he confronts in thinkers such as Protagoras. Thus, Plato accepts the principle of identity as axiomatic and, as an epistemological rationalist, he affirms an isomorphism between human thought and reality. In contrast, Dōgen foreshadows post-modernism by denying the correspondence between language and the world and while also rejecting the logical principle of identity. Dōgen, in a sense, deconstructs the Platonic self and a Platonically meaningful language.² Both, within their philosophical worlds, are iconoclasts.

This article shows that despite their different philosophical commitments, Plato and Dōgen are strangely alike. First of all, both are virtuoso litterateurs, known for innovative advances in their respective genres of expression. Each appreciates poetic expression aesthetically and sees it as vital for the path towards enlightenment. At the same time, both deny the value of literature and have predominantly non-literary aims. Paradoxically, each cautions us that literature is dangerous.

¹Earlier versions of this article were presented at The Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (December 2005), at the FAU Conference on Asian Philosophy and Ideas (March 2006), and at the Annual meeting of the Rocky Mountain Division of the American society for Aesthetics (July 2006). I thank the members of the audiences for their questions and comments.

²For a study that implies a dissenting view, see Kiyotaka Kimura, "The Self in Medieval Japan: Focusing on Dōgen," *Philosophy East and West* 41/3 (1991): 327-340.

The similarities of Plato and Dōgen go beyond their apparent ambivalence about literature. In particular, they reflect on the same foundational philosophical questions, in some cases, resolving them similarly. They disagree, however, about the nature of enlightenment and how to achieve it. For Dōgen, enlightenment requires meditation and attentive sensitivity to the details of daily life, whereas for Plato, enlightenment requires intellectual dialogue, contemplation of abstract concepts, and ignoring quotidian tasks and details. Both thinkers begin from the same point, namely, skepticism about the phenomenal world and the precision of natural language. Why do they veer off in such radically different directions? My focus here is on their views of language and its role in finding enlightenment. By exploring their common terrain, we shall see where they part ways and how each expresses his ideals. Given their shared fascination for poetic language, it is crucial to look first at their identities as authors.

Plato and Dōgen as Writers

Plato's *oeuvre* spans fifty years of creative activity, which many scholars divide in terms of early, middle, and late periods. The early works center on the character of Socrates and, arguably, reveal a philosophical alliance with the historical Socrates. The middle works express the views generally associated with Platonism—the theory of Ideal Forms, confidence in philosophical enlightenment, and a focus on the inseparability of philosophical life and method. The late works express Plato's critique of his Platonism while anticipating Aristotle's philosophy. In representative dialogues of each period—assuming one accepts this taxonomy—one finds abundant use of irony on the part of both Plato as author and Socrates as character. In all of his works, Plato displays a dazzling virtuosity with language, evincing an appreciation for structural clarity and semantic richness.

Much of his work is experimental, as for example, his understated modes of characterization, his layering of narrative voices, and his allusions to earlier and contemporaneous Greek authors. Occasionally, he exhibits a sense of comedy as well as tragedy. In fact, at the end of the night depicted in the *Symposium*, the character of Socrates defends the maverick view that the good tragic playwright must also be able to write comedy, and the good comic playwright must also be able to write tragedy. Plato's *oeuvre* suggests that Plato holds himself to this ideal.

One of the most puzzling aspects of Plato's work arises from its poetic brilliance. Plato argues throughout his creative life that poetry is evil or, at best, a type of sophistry. Aesthetically *pleasing* poetry is especially bad, for it fractures the psyches of the audience members by fostering in them emotionality, aestheticism, and, most dangerously, false beliefs. Plato sees poetry as falsehood, illusion, barely the palest reflection of reality.

Interestingly, however, Plato's dialogues were seminal for the development of philosophical writing in Greek antiquity. Drama, being a form of popular culture, was then a powerful form of political rhetoric. Plato may have been experimenting with the use of drama as philosophical rhetoric, as well as an artistic means of defending his views of metaphysics, logic, epistemology, politics, and ethics. The dramatic form allows him to probe modes of reasoning and to show, not simply to describe, the process of acquiring philosophical understanding or, failing that, falling into an abyss of ignorance. Aristotle's extant philosophical writings, while not dialogues, reflect Plato's dialogical practice and dialectical commitments. Plato's influence pervades the Western literary traditions from Aristotle through St. Augustine to the Renaissance and romanticism to the present.

Dōgen's works extend from approximately 1231 to 1253. Many scholars classify his works as falling into early and late periods, which they describe variously in terms of extreme or cataclysmic shifts. Recently, however, Steven Heine has argued cogently – and, apparently leaving no stone unturned – that this taxonomy is flawed.³ Dōgen, as Heine argues, has a multifaceted *oeuvre*, which reflects a multiplicity of viewpoints, purposes, and literary projects. Heine proposes that, for the sake of understanding Dōgen's thought and writings, it should instead be analyzed in terms of early, middle, and late periods, of around ten years each. The transitions one detects are correlated with events that made different demands on Dōgen as an author, teacher, administrator, and human being. For example, in Dōgen's late period, he produced the *Chiji shingi*, which indicates, as Professor Heine explains, "[Dōgen's] plans for integrating the lay

³See Steven Heine, "The Dōgen Canon: Dōgen's Pre-*Shōbōgenzō* Writings and the Question of Change in His Later Works," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24:1-2 (1997): 39-85; and his more recent *Did Dōgen Go to China? What He Wrote and When He Wrote It* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2006).

community into the structures of monastic life.”⁴ Therefore, while some view this work as uninspired, Heine is suggesting that we examine the purpose for which it was written, which was to emphasize to the monks the importance of donors and the best way to interact with them. With this in mind, the *Chiji shingi* becomes either a remarkable administrative guide or a set of memos.

Dōgen’s influence on Japanese letters is as seminal as Plato’s is on Western philosophical writing. First of all, Dōgen boldly incorporated the Japanese vernacular (*kana*) into Buddhist writings where one would have expected to see *kanbun*⁵, or Chinese writing meant for Japanese readers. Moreover, as Heine puts it, Dōgen “was the first disseminator of *kōans* in the history of Japanese Zen.”⁶ In disseminating, however, he was not uncritical. Like Plato, Dōgen has a subversive streak so that he unceasingly challenges accepted views and interpretations of his predecessors.⁷ His output includes poetry (both *waka* and *kanshi*), meditation manuals, sermons, collections of *kōans*, and commentaries on *kōans*. Heine emphasizes that Dōgen, in each of his creative periods, experiments with literary forms and language, and that many of his works show meticulous care was taken when writing and revising.⁸

Dōgen’s writings obviously reveal a resourceful, creative mind, ever alert to new demands made on his discourse by the flux of his life. Despite new purposes and circumstances surrounding his work, his output is consistently literary. As Heine remarks about Dōgen’s late period:

It is also important to understand the complexity of the late period in that Dōgen never abandoned his interest in poetic creativity and lyricism, as is reflected in a profuse use of [among other things] the symbolism of plum blossom imagery in various kinds of prose and poetic writings.⁹

⁴Steven Heine, *Did Dōgen Go to China?*, p. 193.

⁵I am grateful to Professor Heine for discussing this point with me.

⁶Steven Heine, “The Dōgen Canon,” p. 55; see also Steven Heine, “Kōans in the Dōgen Tradition: How and Why Dōgen Does What He Does With Kōans,” *Philosophy East and West* 54/1 (2004): 1-19.

⁷Steven Heine, *Did Dōgen Go to China?*, p. 195.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 224.

Despite Dōgen's care with language, his evident aesthetic sensitivity, and his commitment to poetry, he disparages poetry. As Heine discusses elsewhere,¹⁰ Dōgen describes poetry as "worthless," a waste of precious time, which will impede our progress towards enlightenment. Dōgen thus presents us with a paradox about poetry much like Plato's.

Both writers, however, use paradox in their work, and it is the confrontation with paradox that both poets find necessary for enlightenment. So, one must use poetry in order to abandon it. For both, then, the poet's aesthetic ability is key to engaging the audience members and then to persuading them to reject the aesthetic in order to gain enlightenment. For Plato and Dōgen alike, the poet can guide the audience away from the aesthetic by using paradox.

Poetic Language

Dōgen and Plato both express nihilism about natural language in the literary form (as well as in content) they develop. Each shows that enlightenment or philosophical understanding begins in confusion, a confusion which involves knowing that one is confused. Their discourses are designed to bring the reader, student, or dramatized interlocutor to that state of feeling lost. As if to bring the reader to a new level of bewilderment, both use their chosen poetic forms to condemn all poetic expression, occasionally using metaphors of toxicity to describe its effects.

Plato's use of the dialogue form, which he did not invent but certainly brought to a new level of sophistication, reflects his view of perceptual knowledge and the misleading nature of language. Socrates, the usual protagonist, exploits a stunning array of rhetorical tricks, irony, and logical fallacies to reduce his interlocutors' claims to contradiction. The character of Socrates (as opposed to the historical Socrates) embodies one of Plato's chief objections to poetic narratives, namely that they exploit the power of language in order to seduce, betray, and deceive. In Plato's *Symposium*, the character of Alcibiades, describes Socrates as "outrageous as a satyr...more amazing than Marsyas, who bewitched with his flute... [except that Socrates] can do the same thing...with mere words." Alcibiades goes on to confess, "Whenever I hear him, my heart throbs and I

¹⁰Steven Heine, "The Zen Poetry of Dōgen," notes accompanying public lecture at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, April 2004.

weep, more than if I were in a religious frenzy" (215e).¹¹ In the *Laches*, Nicias, a great general, describes Socrates as "entangling" his interlocutors and hanging them out to dry (188a). Socrates' stinging technique becomes somewhat less combative and polemical as Plato's views evolve, but Plato never really abandons it, except perhaps very late in his creative life.

In the *Theaetetus*, he distinguishes between a debate or virtuosic display and a conversation or serious joint pursuit of knowledge (167e-168c). The former exploits the ambiguity in natural language, while the latter involves an effort to uncover the philosophical language that mirrors reality. Plato views poetry as a type of rhetoric, referring often to the battle between philosophy and rhetoric, or between philosophy and poetry. This battle between poetry and philosophy is one battle in the war between the (anti-) metaphysics of particulars and one of universals, or between nominalism and realism. The dialogues present both literary and logical arguments against the fundamental reality of perceptual particulars.

Turning to Dōgen, he did not invent the kōan, but brought it from China in order to adapt it to Japanese Zen Buddhism.¹² Dōgen comments on and refines the kōan, which is an apparently illogical but tautly constructed form of discourse. He offers novel interpretations of traditional Chinese kōans, bringing to mind the Platonic Socrates' deft, irreverent interpretations of traditional philosophical arguments and literary passages. The kōans deal with simple, concrete cases, and lead one to a point of utter confusion, which is not resolved explicitly in the discourse.

Plato rhetorically leads us beyond the words and texts to increasingly abstract levels of understanding until we reach the limits of language, and, all being well, have a rationally intuitive grasp of the Forms. This is a theory of reality consisting of unchanging, eternal elements, each of which is self-sufficient. Plato takes it as axiomatic that the knowing self is distinct from what is known. Numerical plurality is therefore real for Plato. Dōgen rhetorically makes us look closely at the world of particularity so as to intuit the oneness and fluidity of reality and the illusion of the separateness of our egos. He therefore denies the duality between consciousness and the object.

¹¹Translation from Greek is mine.

¹²Heinrich Dumoulin, James W. Heisig, and Paul F. Knitter, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Japan* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2005).

The Phenomenal World

Dōgen and Plato both caution that we are easily seduced by appearances, of which natural language is a part. They offer similar arguments for their mistrust of the senses. In *Genjōkōan*, Dōgen refers to the perspectival basis of perceptual unreliability, such that a shift in perspective changes the content of appearances:

When you ride in a boat and watch the shore, you might assume that the shore is moving. But when you keep your eyes closely on the boat, you can see that the boat moves.¹³

Moreover Dōgen states:

When you sail out in a boat to the middle of an ocean where no land is in sight, and view the four directions, the ocean looks circular, and does not look any other way. But the ocean is neither round nor square; its features are infinite in variety. It is like a palace. It is like a jewel. It only looks circular as far as you can see at that time. All things are like this.¹⁴

In many of his dialogues, Plato articulates similar concerns about the perspectival nature of sense data. In Plato's attack on poetry in Book Ten of his *Republic*, he refers to the well-worn example of the straight stick, which appears bent when immersed in water. It is only by measurement that we can judge whether the stick is bent. Therefore, because we have no *perceptual* criterion for privileging one perspective over another and sense perception tethers us to *some* perspective, perception cannot be a reliable source of knowledge.

Plato argues expansively against the thesis that perception is knowledge in his *Theaetetus* (153a-164b), offering among other objections, versions of the dream and madman arguments that we find in Descartes. Plato points out that we often experience perceptual error, as for instance,

¹³Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, trans. Robert Aitken, etc. (NY: North Point Press, 1985), p. 70.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 71.

when we perceive a person in a dream, only to awaken and realize that the person does not exist.

Plato reasons that objects of knowledge must be permanent, for knowledge itself is certain and non-changing. But, he argues, objects perceived by the senses are constantly changing. Therefore, if we assume that perception is knowledge, the things we perceive as real are constantly becoming something else. Thus, the endurance of perceptible things is an illusion. Permanence exists only in the transcendent realm of the Platonic Forms, which we grasp through rational apprehension. Plato concludes that enlightenment requires one to transcend the realm of sense perception and to rely on reason, eventually to grasp Being by means of rational intuition.

After expressing their shared distrust in sense perception, Plato and Dōgen part ways. Plato argues that rational apprehension is non-perspectival, whereas Dōgen rejects that. As we shall see, Dōgen does not allow for this because he is less optimistic than Plato that language has a logical foundation. Given his belief that rational insight is non-perspectival, Plato aspires to what Thomas Nagel calls a “view from nowhere,” a god-like, purely rational standpoint, which constitutes enlightenment.

Dōgen accepts that nothing is permanent, except the principle that everything is in constant flux. All mental activity, for Dōgen, is perspectival. His refusal to go beyond the senses shows his kinship with the empirical and pragmatic traditions. Dōgen denies it is possible for anyone to have a “view from nowhere.”¹⁵

Natural Language as Illusory

How does perceptual illusion undermine natural language, which both philosophers believe misleads the “un-evolved” or “un-awakened” to take words at their face value? On first consideration, words refer to things in the world. Moreover, in order for us to use language to communicate, the meanings of terms must be relatively stable (allowing that meaning transforms non-arbitrarily as social linguistic conventions change). Because things in the phenomenal world do not remain the same over time, the referents of words cannot be stable.

¹⁵For insight into how this bears on Dōgen’s phenomenology of time, see Robert Wicks, “The Idealization of Contingency in Traditional Japanese Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39/3 (2005): 90-92.

That is, both Plato and Dōgen deny that the principle of identity holds for the perceptual world. Both see perceptual things as, by nature, in constant flux and having no fixed properties at any one time. A thing's phenomenal properties are dependent on the mind perceiving them.

Plato articulates the same point in his *Symposium*, among other places:

Although...we assume a man is the same person in his dotage as in his infancy, and we call him the same, every bit of him is different, and he is constantly becoming a new man, while the former man is ceasing to exist, as you can see from his hair, his flesh, his bones, his blood, and all the rest of his body (207d).

Dōgen and Plato, then, agree that the principle of identity does not describe the phenomenal world.

They part ways, however, as to whether we should reject this principle *tout court* and adopt instead, a principle of universal flux. For Dōgen, one is enlightened when one realizes that flux is the only permanent, universal principle, whereas for Plato, one is enlightened when one sees that this principle does not apply to the truly real. That is, for Plato, the enlightened one, or philosopher, grasps the permanent, transcendent Forms. Because, Plato contends, a person can awaken to the Forms, the human soul must be as real and enduring as the Forms themselves.¹⁶ Plato thus maintains that both the human self and the world of the Forms conform to the law of identity – that is, Forms and souls remain the same over time.

Regarding the question of personal identity over time, Dōgen disagrees with Plato. What the enlightened grasp, for Dōgen, is that the self is in flux, just as Plato maintains that the human body is. In *Genjōkōan*, Dōgen says:

Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it is ash, you do not return to birth after death. This being so, it is an

¹⁶For just how different this is from Plato, see Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-body Theory*, Thomas P. Kasulis ed., trans. Nagatomo Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 117.

established way in Buddha-dharma to deny that birth turns into death. Accordingly, birth is understood as no-birth. It is an unshakable teaching in Buddha's discourse that death does not turn into birth. Accordingly, death is understood as no-death. Birth is an expression complete this moment. Death is an expression complete this moment. They are like winter and spring. You do not call winter the beginning of spring, nor summer the end of spring.¹⁷

David Loy has interpreted this passage as shedding light on Dōgen's view of the self:

Because life and death, like spring and summer, are not *in* time, they are timeless. Also, if there is no one non-temporal who is born and dies, then there are only the events of birth and death...then there is no real birth and death. Such is the consequence of the nonduality between me and that most uncomfortable attribute of all, "my" birth/death.¹⁸

Dan Lusthaus, addressing this same image, remarks:

No thing (i.e., permanent essence/self) passes from tree to firewood to ash. Each moment is a unique, impermanent configuration...No self "transforms" from one thing to another, no permanent substratum violates impermanence. Each thing sheds its "self" each moment, its "self" being its momentary configuration as what it is and its relation with everything else. Substratum violates impermanence.¹⁹

¹⁷Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 70.

¹⁸David Loy, "Language Against its own Mystifications: Deconstruction in Nāgārjuna and Dōgen," *Philosophy East and West* 49/3 (1999): 245-260.

¹⁹Dan Lusthaus, "Dōgen on Water and Firewood: His 'Logic of Nothing at All has an Unchanging Self' in *Genjōkōan*," American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Meeting, New York, December 2005. Quoted with author's permission, p. 8.

For Dōgen, if the permanent self is an illusion, then indexical terms like “I” or “you” become illusory, for they suggest that when we use them, they refer to specific enduring individuals with attributes. There is neither a referent that persists through time, nor a subject with real, distinguishable properties.

Dōgen detects another problem in natural language; he says in *Genjokōan*, “To carry yourself forward and experience a myriad things is a delusion.”²⁰ This suggests that plurality or duality is illusory, and so, reality is monistic. Therefore, linguistic terms, of which there are many, fail to refer to real things.

Plato himself faces a similar problem. He inherited a metaphysical monism from Parmenides, who argues that plurality is impossible because to say “x is not y” implies that x includes non-being (in its not being y). Plato tackles the argument and solves the problem with his well-known theory of Forms. For Plato, there is an ideal, conceptual language, with one – and only one – term for every Form. The natural language used in common parlance is messy, ambiguous, and misleading. Plato alludes to this philosophical language in his *Republic* and *Cratylus*. One of the philosopher’s goals is to uncover this language through rigorous conceptual analysis.

Both Plato and Dōgen, then, disparage natural language because of its relation to the sensory world. The starting point for enlightenment, for both, is seeing how imprecise and deceptive ordinary language can be. Both believe further that the initial step requires a willingness to confront paradox, and this is found, as we see above, most clearly in their respective poetic forms.

The crucial difference is that Plato, starting from his rationalist foundation, infers that natural language must be concealing the elegant ideal language. Dōgen, on the other hand, sees natural language as a dynamic system with no reference to permanent meanings. More precisely, Dōgen sees language as a cultural artifact that gives shape to meaning through its usage.²¹ As Thomas Kasulis tells us:

²⁰Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 69.

²¹Thomas P. Kasulis, “Zen and Artistry,” *Self as Image in Asian Theory and Practice*, eds. Roger T. Ames, Thomas Kasulis, and Wimal Dissanayake (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 357-371.

Zen suggests that meaning is a construction out of emptiness (*mu*). Yet...meaning is not an arbitrary construction. It arises out of the contextualizing of the rawly given...[it] takes form in the interplay between the possibilities within the experiencer and within the givenness.²²

Dale Wright fleshes out this hermeneutical idea of language in Zen thought:

Language is far more than a tool for...expression and communication. The language that the Zen master “uses” to teach his students would also be what he is teaching. Learning “Zen” would depend upon learning Zen language and the appropriate distinctions built into it...language is not a “veil” preventing vision; it is a “window” which opens vision.²³

The ambiguity and indirection of poetic language make literature well suited for contemplative thought. Dōgen wants us to grasp the contradictions within the practice of natural language without trying to fit them into a logically consistent system.

Enlightenment and Desire

Not surprisingly, Plato and Dōgen disagree over the goal of knowledge, though interestingly, not its nature. Both believe the path to knowledge or enlightenment is an arduous process which requires transcending one's own limited perspective and desires. Plato describes this by means of a vertical metaphor of ascent, which Dōgen would reject. Both view enlightenment as an immediate, non-discursive grasping of the nature of things. It is something that one must be led to, for the real cannot be described in language. For Plato, apprehending a Form is an immediate, unanalyzable epistemic act, an experience of rational intuition. It cannot be expressed in language, but is achieved by the arduous discursive endeavor of dialectic (which Plato depicts variously at different stages in his development). To appeal to the metaphor of the veil, philosophical dialectic

²²Ibid., p. 371.

²³Dale S. Wright, “Rethinking Transcendence: The Role of Language in Zen Experience,” *Philosophy East and West* 42/1 (1992), p. 125.

is a process of uncovering. In Socrates' speech in Plato's *Symposium*, he explains that when one has grasped the Forms (with the "faculty capable of seeing it"), one is in contact "with truth, not a reflection of truth." Plato classifies people in terms of how they direct erotic energy. In the *Republic*, he draws an invidious contrast between people who love wisdom with those who love the arts, sensuality, or victory. For Plato, enlightenment involves grasping axiomatic truths, whereas for Dōgen, all insight is on a par.

Dōgen also indicates that attaining enlightenment or Buddha nature is a complex enterprise. It involves seeing the insignificance of transitory things of the material world and the emptiness of objects of desire. In *Genjōkōan*, he contrasts the Buddha with a merely sentient being by saying: "Those who have great realization of delusion are Buddhas; those who are greatly deluded about realization are sentient beings."²⁴ A Buddha is without self-consciousness; he transcends his illusory self so that, "when Buddhas are truly Buddhas they do not necessarily notice that they are Buddhas. However, they are actualized Buddhas, who go on actualizing Buddhas."²⁵

A Buddha, realizing that all things are Buddha nature, annihilates the ego, but this is not an achievement that lasts because there is no stable self. The idea of personal continuity is an illusion. Professor Lusthaus analyzes Dōgen's remark in *Genjōkōan* about "the logic of nothing at all has an unchanging self." Lusthaus says:

Realization is not something gained and clung to, but something perpetually relinquished,²⁶ [and] enlightenment itself is neither permanent nor final, nor full disclosure beyond its horizon. Insight and blindness inhabit the same gaze, though the truly blind can't see that.²⁷

A Buddha, like Plato's Socrates, knows that he does not know and that he must continue his quest. However, *unlike* Plato's Socrates, the Buddha feels compassion for the majority who live with the illusion of understanding. Life for both involves the practice of their chosen methods.

²⁴Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 69.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Dale S. Wright, "Rethinking Transcendence," p. 6.

²⁷Ibid., p. 7.

For Plato, it is in principle possible for intellectual – and only intellectual – desires to be truly satisfied (*Republic* 9).

Dōgen denies that any satisfaction endures through time because the self (like everything else) is constantly renewed. The principle of identity, for Dōgen, is false. Thus, as Lusthaus emphasizes, the Buddhist monk must maintain constant vigilance so that every moment brings a *renewed* awareness.

Surprisingly, the practical implications for daily life are quite similar for both Plato and Dōgen: both paths to enlightenment require a life of simplicity and minimal worldly pleasures; for neither one would this be onerous. In Dōgen's case, however, enlightenment includes experiencing beauty and importance in the simplest aspects of life. With regard to the beauty of the ordinary, Yuriko Saito observes:

[Dōgen] identifies Buddha nature with grasses, trees, bushes, mountains, rivers... By far the most vivid examples he cites...are a donkey's jaw, a horse's mouth...in short, those objects and phenomena, which are commonly shunned...for being...unpleasant. One of the bounds to be overcome in Zen enlightenment is our "natural" tendency to appreciate the perfect, the opulent, and the gorgeous, while being dissatisfied with the opposite qualities.²⁸

For Plato, enlightenment excludes enjoying such experiences. In the *Republic*, for example, Plato speaks with contempt for the "lovers of sights and sounds." If one has cultivated intellectual desires, she will have neither the energy nor interest in the things that satisfy the others. In both cases, however, the enlightened one must re-enter the vortex of material and social affairs. Plato's philosopher must descend to take part in the state, a small sacrifice for the privilege of contemplation. She is motivated to participate not by compassion, but by prudence "in order to avoid being governed by someone worse." Similarly, there are times when a Buddha must enter the fray out of compassion for sentient beings. Plato's ethic, however, is not one of compassion, but rather of self-interest.

²⁸Yuriko Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55/4 (1997), p. 381.

Both are sensitive to the realities of embodied human existence. Dōgen's Buddha, however, delights in it by living fully in the moment. As he says, again in *Genjōkōan*, "When you see forms or hear sounds fully engaging body and mind, you grasp things directly."²⁹ Thomas Cleary, in commenting on *Genjōkōan*, remarks that *zazen* practice is crucial, precisely because of the inadequacy of intellectual knowledge. To attain enlightenment, one must be mindful in the practice of daily life – for instance, cooking, washing, and gardening.

For Plato, such practices are distractions that slow down our ascent. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates speaks of the focus on daily life as enslavement. In his *Republic*, the members of the enlightened class have no need to deal with quotidian tasks, because the other citizens take care of all worldly concerns, whether they involve cooking, building, gardening or finances. While the philosophers, like the Zen master, must descend to the social realm in order to promote their enlightened self-interest, the philosopher ignores material existence to the extent that embodiment and social reality allows. Concrete reality, in all its fascinating particularity, holds no allure for Plato, who instead finds it a distraction that appeals to the unenlightened. The Platonic philosopher transcends society, even when she is in its midst. Dōgen sees it differently.

To see what underlies their differences, we must look to their notions of desire. For Dōgen, it is never fulfilled because it is only momentarily satisfied, to arise again. Given the flux of existence, no desire can ever be gratified and put to rest. As Lusthaus emphasizes, for Dōgen, the self is constantly changing, thus, the idea of fulfilling a desire becomes absurd.

For Plato, however, only *some* kinds of desires are incapable of being gratified. The psyche, Plato maintains, has three parts: appetite, emotion, and reason, with desire (*eros*) residing in all. The desires of appetite and emotion need constant replenishment because the pleasure we have in satisfying one of these desires (for wine, for sex, for aesthetic pleasure, the company of a friend, etc.) is temporary. Gratifying these desires is like scratching an itch, which brings only momentary relief. The desires of intellect, in contrast, do not need replenishment. Once one reaches a new level of understanding, one remains there until propelled upward by continued desire for more knowledge. Once one reaches the

²⁹Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop*, p. 70.

supra-phenomenal realm, there are no perspectival limits. In Book Nine of his *Republic*, Plato argues variously (one might say this is the real subject of his *Republic*) that satisfying intellectual desires is exquisitely pleasurable, far more so than satisfying other desires. Thus, the desires of the intellect are beneficial in driving us to pursue knowledge. Plato does not see us slipping, like Sisyphus, back to where we started, as Dōgen does. In principle, it may be possible to reach an enlightened state of non-desire, for Plato, but only when one has become disembodied. Then the entire realm of Forms becomes transparent.

Plato's theory of desire rests on his dualist metaphysical realism and correlative notion of the self. Ultimately, however, Plato grounds his theory of desire and enlightenment in his acceptance of the principle of identity, which is arguably the groundwork for his entire metaphysical theory. Plato accepts the principle of identity because he can fathom neither contradiction nor a reality that cannot be discovered through rigorous logical analysis. Dōgen's theory rests on what we might call his "anti-metaphysical phenomenism" whereby everything, including the self, consists of shifting phenomena. His rejection of permanent identity makes it impossible to accept logical necessity. Our concepts thus become based on a pragmatic contingency.

Conclusion

In comparing Dōgen and Plato, we can see their respective commitments more distinctly. This raises new philosophical questions however. For Plato, one wants to know whether reason admits of rational validation, as implied by his commitment to the Principle of Identity. For Dōgen, one wants to know whether one can use rational methods to undermine a rational system. Or, as Thomas Kasulis poses it, "How does the quest for emptiness not degenerate into...nihilism?"³⁰ Interestingly, for all of their differences, the problems facing both philosopher-poets are problems of self-reference. One might fruitfully speculate that the differences between the two iconoclasts, Plato and Dōgen, reflect the differences in the underlying values of their respective cultures, which each

³⁰Ibid., p. 369.

strives to refashion. Their success at doing so has made them representatives of their traditions and evermore fascinating thinkers.³¹

³¹I am grateful to my research assistant Susan D'Aloia for her editorial assistance and to my colleague Henry Ruf for our discussions of Dōgen. Thanks also to Steven Heine for extensively discussing Dōgen with me.

Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache: Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. 241 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-3774-4 (pbk), \$22.95.

Reviewed by Natsuki Fukunaga

A cyborg cat set against a futuristic Tokyo introduces the world to Takayuki Tatsumi's *Full Metal Apache: Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America*. The body of the cyborg cat is semi-transparent; therefore, the boundary line between the body and the background is vague. It is this blurred boundary line which is one of the themes of Tatsumi's book. In this book, noted Japanese science fiction critic and professor Takayuki Tatsumi compares pop culture, literature, and science fiction novels in Japan and the United States with a focus on five different areas: theory, history, aesthetics, performance, and representation. Tatsumi's historical analysis of literature and art theories provides a new perspective on the complicated relations between Japan and the United States.

As a main discussion, Tatsumi emphasizes using a necessary tool, the concept of "creative masochism," to understand the complexity of the relationship between Japan and the United States in postmodern society. Tatsumi argues that postwar Japanese identity is beyond the traditional binary opposition of Orientalism and Occidentalism; instead, it is best described by creative masochism as "a sensibility across which the cultural clash of Orientalism and Occidentalism plays out" (p. 28). This creative masochism includes the self-reflexive identity that was created from the situation of being passive and dependent on the United States after World War II. Tatsumi suggests that creative masochism reflects "the history of postwar Japanese mental condition" (p. 167), and it helps one understand postwar Japanese industrialization as a radical transformation from distraction to creation, instead of copying what the United States offers.

Tatsumi applies the concept of creative masochism to literature and art theory as well. In Chapter Eight, Tatsumi analyzes a science fiction novel, *Virtual Light*, written by William Gibson, who often uses Japan as a setting for his science fiction novels. *Virtual Light* begins in Tokyo but then moves to San Francisco where the Bay Bridge has been disabled and closed to motorized traffic following a huge earthquake. Former hippies and homeless people gather to live on the bridge, and eventually a "bridge" community is created. This bridge has lost its original function as a

transportation system, is re-appropriated, reused, and thus, the existence of the bridge becomes a symbol of reconstruction in this novel. Tatsumi points out that Gibson describes two recycling aspects in *Virtual Light*. One is reusing a space after the earthquake, and transforming it into a community. Another is the recycling of the Japanese art theory called “Thomasson,” a term coined by Japanese avant-garde, Neo-Dada artist, Genpei Akasegawa in the 1960s. This term comes from the description of a baseball player from the United States, Thomasson, who was expected to play an active part in Japanese baseball but failed to do so. Later, the term Thomasson was used to describe “hyper art,” something that exists without any particular purpose and seems to be useless, but it exists in order to be found as an art that was not created intentionally. This kind of art makes you wonder and gives you opportunities to deconstruct the status quo. Tatsumi suggests that the bridge in *Virtual Light* symbolizes Gibson’s attempt to “bridge” the distance between Occidentalism and Orientalism, San Francisco and Tokyo. These two recycling aspects share the unintended creativity that arises from the negative, passive situation as found in creative masochism.

Tatsumi discusses another example of creative masochism in Japanese society in Chapter Eleven. The scrap metal thieves, people who stole scrap metal from a destroyed weapon factory in Osaka during the 1950s and 1960s, are called “the Apache.” The Apache risked their lives to exchange the scrap metal for money. These metals, which may have been used for killing, were reused and contributed to the industrial reform in Japan. Therefore, the Apache is an example of creative productions emerging from a devastating situation. Tatsumi suggests that reanalyzing an existing theory and reconstructing its usage according to the appropriate time period, described in Japanese art theories such as Thomasson and the Apache, has an important role in Cyberpunk literature.

Cyberpunk emerged from a literary subgenre of science fiction, and it describes hard-edged, high-tech that is beyond the existent science fiction. Tatsumi also analyzes the Cyberpunk movement that arose in the 1980s in the United States and accelerated the spread of avant-garde works in the popular culture. According to Tatsumi, avant-garde artists and art products were found at different times in Japan and in the United States. However, Tatsumi finds a synchronicity between American and Japanese works in post-Cyberpunk literature. Tatsumi indicates that this radical and highly chaotic approach in Cyberpunk provides a space for creative negotiations between non-Western and Western countries. Therefore, it is not surprising Tatsumi argues that most avant-garde art is found in the

science fiction genre including popular culture such as literature, film, and anime in the postmodern society.

In *Full Metal Apache*, Tatsumi introduces provocative ways of reading texts and works of art by connecting literature in Japan and the United States. Readers can learn about several art theories including Thomasson, Neo-Dada, and the Apache while enjoying the analysis of science fiction writers such as William Gibson and Richard Calder. Tatsumi also offers readers an excellent list of Japanese literature and art by Kunio Yanagita, Yasutaka Tsutsui, and Shuji Terayama. Although this book is a challenging theoretical piece, it should appeal to a wide audience ranging from scholars specializing in literature, literary criticism, cultural studies, popular culture theory, science fiction literature, film studies, Asian studies, and Japanese-U.S. relations and history to a general audience who enjoys readings in these fields.

Full Metal Apache offers readers an interesting look at the possibilities of the postmodern society we live in and its future. Tatsumi's challenge of deconstructing simple binary oppositions in our society reveals the intertwined and fuzzy relations between Japan and the United States, as metaphorically represented in the cyborg cat on the front cover of this book.

Ian Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. 245 pp. ISBN: 0-8223-3692-0 (pbk), \$22.95.

Reviewed by Xuexin Liu

This book is a lively ethnographic interpretation of Japanese hip-hop based on findings from the author's intensive fieldwork in studying various aspects of the hip-hop movement. The author draws the ethnographic material from an array of sites termed *genba* (referring to all-night dance clubs, actual sites of the Japanese hip-hop scene), where hip-hop is enacted by a myriad of diverse committed groups and where the performative and social networking features are observed. The author's idea of *genba* is crucial not only for the ethnographic description and interpretation of hip-hop Japan, but also for the central analytical themes of the book. Sites of *genba* are the places where the author's fieldwork takes place. As described in the book, a particular site of *genba* is such a place where collective activities of record companies, media, artists, fans and so on have performative effects and where the complex global and local

linkages that operate in different artists' work can be observed and analyzed. Rather than employing dichotomous analytical categories such as global/local, producer/consumer, complicit/resistant to study the hip-hop phenomenon in Japan, the author proposes a method of investigating the interaction among various factors, such as culture industries, creative artists, and active fans, which drive new cultural styles. As assumed in the book, it is the intersecting power lines and their connections, rather than oppositions, that produce transnational popular culture. The opposition between globalization and localization is such a simplistic or false dichotomy that it fails to provide insight into how culture is changing in Japan, what hip-hop means to young Japanese, and how culture is changing worldwide today. To describe and explore the hip-hop movement in Japan, the author suggests that *genba* offer a transparent window through which some cultural processes and performative and media contexts can be studied for broadening our understanding of the mutual construction of global and local cultural forms beyond any single dichotomy to include other factors such as record companies, media, artists, and fans in dynamic feedback loops.

With these larger issues in mind, this ethnography captures the contexts in which hip-hop is developed in Japan and how rap songs with their diverse messages are performed in various *genba*. It aims to give an insider's view of how hip-hop is integrated into Japanese popular culture with its distinctive and diverse features. For the reader to understand these contexts, the author organized the book into seven successive chapters, each of which details the development and different aspects of hip-hop in Japan by focusing on a central analytical theme. In addition to some descriptions of break-dancers, deejays (DJ's), and graffiti artists in hip-hop Japan, the author concentrates on Japanese rappers and their lyrics because it is rap that has become the most commercially successful in Japan, and is most deeply intertwined with the Japanese language. Taken together, these chapters reveal the paths of cultural globalization through *genba* and describes the ways diverse groups produce what the author calls "hip-hop Japan."

Chapter One, "Yellow B-Boys, Black Culture, and the Elvis Effect," shows how Japanese hip-hop enthusiasts debate the significance of racial differences and transracial alliances and discusses why race forms a part of Japanese hip-hop. According to the author, Japanese rappers create their own distinctive approaches to race and protest in Japan, and they identify themselves in a differently configured racial matrix in the context of a possible transnational cultural politics of race.

In Chapter Two, "Battling Hip-Hop Samurai," Condry describes the three eras of hip-hop in Japan. The first era (1984-1994) reflects Japanese hip-hop enthusiasts efforts in clarifying what hip-hop is for a Japanese audience. The second era (1994-1995) witnesses the opposing viewpoints of party rap and underground hip-hop and what Japanese hip-hop should be. The third era (after 1999) demonstrates regional and stylistic approaches to hip-hop in Japan.

Chapter Three, "*Genba* Globalization and Locations of Power," elaborates and extends the idea of *genba* globalization by showing how hip-hop performances in various sites of *genba* demonstrate cultural flows and media power. This chapter explores the motivations for diverse hip-hop in Japan and the contrasts between party rap and underground hip-hop regarding their respective fans, language, gender, and markets.

Chapter Four, "Rap Fans and Consumer Culture," is a discussion of Japanese hip-hop fandom in terms of the *otaku* (isolated and obsessed fans) as symbols of Japan's popular culture. The author situates the discussion in the context of consumerism in Japan.

Chapter Five, "Rhyming in Japanese," examines the relationship between the uniqueness of the Japanese language and identity as implicated by Japanese rappers.

Chapter Six, "Women Rappers and the Price of Cutismo," discusses the important role of women emcees in Japanese hip-hop with a focus on female artists' language and identity.

Chapter Seven, "Making Money, Japan-Style," examines the market of hip-hop in Japan by investigating the determining role of the artists and the controlling power of big media in promoting hip-hop and its market.

These chapters show several important findings. First, cultural globalization and localization can proceed simultaneously, and transnational flows do not necessarily result in homogeneity of world culture and processes of localization do not simply make foreign styles distinctively domestic. The opposition between globalization and location turns out to be a false dichotomy that fails to capture the interaction between transnational flows and cultural settings, the connection between hip-hop scenes and a wider diversity of styles in Japan and worldwide. Second, the contingent and networked interaction between the power of culture industries and the organic creativity of underground artists and active fans plays a significant role in developing and promoting hip-hop in Japan and throughout the world.

This book provides particularly interesting insights into Japaneseness and its interaction with hip-hop globalization. It offers a groundbreaking transcultural study of popular culture through ethnographic explorations of the local. The author's ground-level observation of diverse hip-hop in Japan and relevant analytical themes offer sharp insight into the transnational flows of cultural influence and their social and cultural outcomes. This book is fascinating, authoritative, and informative to those who study the history and development of Japanese popular culture and the evolvement of today's world popular culture.

Hideaki Matsuoka, *Japanese Prayer Below the Equator: How Brazilians Believe in the Church of World Messianity*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007. ISBN: 0-7391-1379 (hbk), \$60.00.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux

Many observers in the West tend to view the concept of globalization as the spread of Western culture to the rest of the world, but the situation is in fact far more complex. Many of my American college students have become passionate about aspects of modern Japanese pop culture and today, several new Japanese religions such as Soka Gakkai, Seicho-no-Ie and the Church of World Messianity have found strong support from hundreds of thousands of non-ethnic Japanese throughout the world. Professor Matsuoka Hideaki's *Japanese Prayer Below the Equator: How Brazilians Believe in the Church of World Messianity* is a fascinating case-study of this Japanese religion's rapid growth in Brazil.

The Church of World Messianity (*Sekai kyūsei kyō*) is a prominent Japanese "new religion" founded in 1935 by Okada Mokichi (1882-1955), who derived many of his new faith's teachings from Oomoto kyo, an older "new religion" he belonged to at an earlier date. Greatly influenced by traditional Japanese Shinto, the heart of the religion centers around the concept of Jhorei (loosely translated as "God's Healing Light"). Okada is said to have received a divine revelation which empowered him with Jhorei, permitting him to channel the light of God into other people to remove illness, poverty, and strife throughout the world. World Messianity's aim is to "realize Heaven on Earth," which means "a world without sickness, poverty and war" (p. 50).

While the Church of World Messianity (COWM) is far smaller than large Japanese new religious organizations like Soka Gakkai, its claims of a following of 800,000 in Japan and Brazil make it one of the larger new religions in Japan. Like several other of Japan's New Religions, World Messianity has made a major attempt to proselytize its faith in Brazil, which has one of the largest expatriate Japanese populations anywhere. Seichon-ye and Perfect Liberty claim 2.5 million and 350,000 members respectively, placing them ahead of the 300,000 members claimed by COWM.

Berkeley-trained Japanese anthropologist and psychiatrist Matsuoka Hideaki has done extensive fieldwork in Brazil focusing on why a Shinto-based Japanese religion would find acceptance in a vastly different culture in Brazil. Contrary to what one might think, COWM has the highest percentage (sixty percent) of non-ethnic Japanese out of all the Japanese new religions in Brazil. A key reason for this development is that starting in the 1950s, the first COWM missionaries from Japan immediately focused on propagating their faith to non-Japanese communities. Conversions came slowly, but increased very sharply in the 1980s and 1990s, once COWM began developing strong roots in various Brazilian communities.

Matsuoka lists five factors that have contributed to the strong success of new Japanese religions in Brazil:

1. Adoption of Portuguese
2. Training of non-ethnic Japanese-Brazilian clergy
3. Adoption of the Brazilian way of life and thinking
4. Support from Japanese headquarters
5. Respect for the relationship between Brazilians and Japanese and/or Japanese culture.

The fact that COWM closely adheres to one through four on this list can partially explain its success in Brazil.

Cultural adaptation, however, is not the only reasons why these Japanese religions achieve success. My studies of Soka Gakkai activities in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Australia and Canada indicate that the Gakkai's emphasis on individual self-empowerment to attain one's goals in life and achieving benefits (including greater happiness) here and now have won it a large following among better-educated, younger, and more self-motivated natives. Matsuoka makes a similar discovery about COWM. He

quotes Brazilian followers who are attracted by the religion's doctrine "that human beings can change their lives by themselves" (p. 161).

Matsuoka's work is valuable not only because of his study of COWM in Brazil, but also for his extensive introductory analysis of the history and significance of Japanese new religions in general. Because of these extensive background comments, this study is accessible not only to the specialist, but to the general reader as well. The research and bibliography are superb and the writing is clear. The author's experience of being on a COWM pilgrimage bus that was hijacked by four thieves and the surprising reaction of the pilgrims to this situation makes for fascinating reading. The only really disappointing section of the book is the very brief conclusion which fails to really discuss the significance of many of Matsuoka's findings.

Jeffrey Lesser, ed., *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese-Brazilians and Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8223-3148-9 (pbk), \$21.95.

Reviewed by Ronan A. Pereira

The book organized by historian Jeffrey Lesser is a collection of nine chapters written by scholars from different nationalities and fields. It deals with ethnicity and identity issues of migrants with Japanese ancestry in Brazil and Japan.

Lesser opens the book with a chapter that provides an overview of the history of what he calls the "identity building and homemaking" of Japanese and their descendants. Facing mixed messages and reactions from the Brazilian society at large, this minority group constructs and uses a multifaceted identity that clearly expresses its desire to find a legitimate niche within the Brazilian nation. As Lesser points out, the Japanese had, in general, a success story in Brazil, and indeed managed to create an image of a people who went to Brazil to contribute to its development in different fields. Notwithstanding, many Nikkeijin feel out of place in Brazil and feel Brazilian for the first time after going to work in Japan as *dekasegi*, ethnic Japanese people who have migrated to Japan. While others feel like foreigners in Brazil as much as in Japan.

Shuhei Hosokawa focuses on the attempt made by the late journalist Rokurō Kōyama (1886-1976) to unite the divided postwar Japanese-Brazilian community and, at the same time, find a legitimate

space for it within the Brazilian culture and society by postulating an ancestral link between the Japanese and the Tupi, a Brazilian native group that has been almost completely annihilated and that became a symbol of Brazilian nativism. Relying less on modern linguistics and charging his findings with a romanticist and nostalgic view, Kōyama sustained the Japanese-Tupi connection not only in terms of physical resemblance and cultural similarities (e.g. respect for the ancestors), but also, and above all, of linguistic compatibility and common Polynesian origin. The result is that Kōyama's "Tupi-Japanese-Brazilian world articulates the sociopolitical, affective, and ideological conditions of the Nikkeijin community. It is 'true fantasy' embedded in the mythicohistorical consciousness of a minority group" (p. 40).

Koichi Mori's chapter on the Okinawans and their descendants calls attention to an important issue, which is the internal diversification of Japanese diaspora in Brazil. In spite of discrimination and unfavorable circumstances that led to a temporary ban to Okinawan migration to Brazil in 1919, they became the most numerous among the pre-war Japanese immigrants and nowadays represent almost ten percent of the Japanese-Brazilian community. Mori shows that some Okinawan leaders reacted to the discrimination and stereotypes propagated by mainland Japanese precisely through the logic and discourse of the dominator. That is, the subjugation of Okinawa to the Japanese nation supposed a concerted effort to eliminate the pre-modern and "primitive" aspects of Okinawan culture in face of the modernity of Japan. Accordingly, Okinawan immigrants had no better choice than to get rid of these "backward" elements and strive to make themselves better "Japanese" at the same time as searching to be incorporated and accepted in the Brazilian society. The centennial history of the Okinawan Brazilians shows episodes of negation and revival that led to the formation of a repertoire of cumulative identities that has been employed on a regular basis, depending on the social context.

The starting point for Joshua Hotaka Roth's article is the absentee-balloting system instituted for the first time by the Japanese government in 1999 for Japanese citizens living overseas. Contrasting to the American context where immigrants' cultivation of "nostalgia for ancestral homeland" may be easily subject to stereotypes and accusations of "equivocal loyalties," Roth states that, "In the Brazilian context, voter registration for Japanese elections expressed both a strong identification with Japan and a means of effectively engaging the Brazilian context" (p. 104). This identification, the author says, is charged with contradiction and

ambivalence as many *issei* (first generation) feels like the legendary Urashima Taro, that is, on traveling back to Japan after prolonged residence in Brazil, they feel somehow distant from and frustrated with the profound changes of postwar Japan. In addition to the Roth's arguments, it is a fact that the American "politics of ethnicity" is something alien to Brazilians. Moreover, Japanese absentee ballots have not even been noticeable in Brazil's public opinion. First because, despite the constant possibility of being subject to criticism and xenophobia, the impact of the phenomenon is minimum as it is reduced to a small fraction of the Japanese-Brazilian community. Next, because this community has long conquered a positive image in Brazil as contributors to its development and possessors of desirable cultural traits and links to the model nation Japan.

Chapters by Karen Tei Yamashita, Ângelo Ishii, Takeyuki (Gaku) Tsuda, Keiko Yamanaka, and Daniel T. Linger consider the phenomenon of *dekasegi*, each one from a different perspective. The first underlying question is why members of the Brazilian urban middle class decided to go to Japan beginning at the end of the 1980s as low-prestige factory workers. Next question is how they have been coping with this situation and redefining their identity.

Ishii identifies the macro context for the *dekasegi* phenomenon in the "increasing globalization of labor market that combined with chronic Brazilian economic crises and a labor shortage in Japanese industry" (p. 76). Defining the phenomenon as a personal, political, cultural, and ideological construction, Ishii finds a primarily economic motivation as the most recurrent one among these Brazilian migrants. For some, this is manifested as "an attempt to construct in Japan a typical Brazilian middle-class life;" for others, the migration "was more a way to prevent a decline in social status" (p. 77). Yet Linger and others suggest that, for some, the experience of *dekasegi* becomes a way to solve identity issues. This is evident in the case of Linger's interviewee Moacir, an unmarried sansei (third-generation) who identifies himself with everything Japanese and makes a self-conscious and ardent effort to connect to Japan, and to eventually become a Japanese citizen.

What about the situation of *dekasegi* life and working conditions? The authors depict a scenario of hardship at work, a host of personal or collective malaise and psychological disorder (such as ethnic disorientation, hallucination, aggressive and delinquent behavior, and others), lower status and negative image of blue-collar workers, and impossible upward mobility in Japan. With much humor, Yamashita highlights the cultural and social

differences resulting in a conflictive relationship between the *dekasegi* and their host society. However, Yamanaka shows that problems have arisen on both sides of the equation. That is, when the Japanese government established in December 1989 new “long-term resident” visas to people of Japanese ancestry without Japanese citizenship up to the third generation, it expected to supply Japanese industry with much needed inexpensive labor force, reduce illegal immigration, ward off unwanted foreigners (from South and Southeast Asia) and, above all, preserve “racial” and class homogeneity. The Nikkeijin, however, brought in a distinct and alien culture and identity which became the basis for socio-cultural enclaves in cities such as Hamamatsu and Oizumi. Many Nikkeijin also expected to have privileged access to Japan’s highly advanced economy and technology, but were disappointed as they were treated as lower-class migrants from a third-world country. Or, as Tsuda indicates, the *dekasegi* became an immigrant minority that is marginalized ethnically and socially due mainly to cultural, linguistic, behavioral, and occupational differences with the Japanese. Parenthetically, Yamanaka found out that an increasing feminization of Nikkeijin migration provides various benefits for the Japanese side. Being placed mainly in factories, this non-citizen underpaid workforce not only diverts demands for organizational and cultural reforms to eliminate gender inequity, but also exempts “both employers and the state from responsibility to provide them social welfare, social security, and health benefits” (p. 187).

Some *dekasegi* seek to solve their social alienation and marginalization by returning to Brazil as a way to recover self-esteem and solve professional/class identity conflict. Conversely, others extend their stay in Japan while redefining their identity, establishing cultural markers, and setting aside time and space to ritually celebrate their “Brazilianness” and criticize the host society. As Ishii states, they combine a blue-collar, “‘poor,’ hard-work routine on weekdays tempered by the re-creation of a ‘Brazilian way of life’ and a ‘middle-class, decent lifestyle’ on weekends and holidays” (p. 82).

Similarly to their forefathers who went to Brazil as temporary sojourners, most *dekasegi* intended to return to Brazil after making enough money to restart their lives in a better situation. However, Tsuda notes that the settlement process of these Brazilians is quite advanced with many deciding to remain in Japan indefinitely or even permanently, even though they tend to cling to their separate Brazilian identity and culture. Such a decision was reinforced by the fact that the *dekasegi* realized in the past

decade that the days of their negative image as “losers” in the 1980s and 1990s are over. They became the object of economic and political interest in both countries because of their large number and the amount of money they represent (in 1996, they remitted \$2 billion USD to Brazil and contributed annually to an estimated \$250,000 USD in taxes to Japanese government).

Tsuda concludes that “migration is not always a transitional rite of passage that separates migrants from their home society in order to incorporate them into the host society” (p. 153), as he has found different patterns among the *dekasegi*. Linger goes even further as he questions the ideological charge of terms such as “diaspora,” specifically when applied to Japanese-Brazilians. At best, he adds, Japanese-Brazilians are “a dual diaspora, suspended between two possible homelands” (p. 211).

Although the nine chapters have a balanced proportion of analyses of Nikkeijin in Brazil and Japan, the book certainly provides a better understanding of the *dekasegi* situation. In general, the book is consistent and informative, in tune with Lesser’s other books, which are becoming a reference often quoted in the studies of Japanese-Brazilian studies. I could only find minor typos and a few doubtful statements. For instance, on page 49, the annexation of Okinawa by Japan is said to have happened in 1897 when it should be 1879 (clearly a typo!). Also, on page 11, Lesser contradicts information provided by other authors when he affirms that, “What the Shindo Renmei¹ did *not* promote was a return to Japan.” It is true that some Renmei leaders declared to the Brazilian police – possibly as a way to get shielded against police repression to their organizations – that all they wanted was to unite Japanese and Brazilians to work together for the advancement of both countries. However, the late anthropologist Francisca Vieira² found messianic features in such a secret and nationalistic society as

¹*Shindō Renmei* [League of the Way of the Emperor’s Subjects] is one among other organizations that were established during the World War II as a response to the material deprivation and spiritual disorientation experienced by the Japanese-Brazilians in the 1930s and 1940s.

²Francisca I.S. Vieira, *O japonês na frente de expansão paulista* (São Paulo: Pioneira/EdUSP, 1973), p. 239, n. 21. Takashi Maeyama also published a book exploring the millennial features of these secret societies. *Imin no Nihon Kaiki Undo* [Return to Japan Movements among the Japanese Immigrants] (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1982).

she came across references about ships that would take the immigrants back to Japan, a victorious nation where they would suffer no more oppression or deprivation.

As happens to many collective books, there is a need to find the connecting axis for the papers. The title of this work suggests the very fluid concept of “home” as an umbrella for papers with different approaches and conclusions. The editor opens the introduction with a careful reasoning: “Is home a place or a state of mind? Is it both? Does a person have multiple homes or just one? Can home change rapidly, like the weather, or is the process of homemaking and home breaking a constant one?” (p. xiii). The fact is that “home” partially overlaps here other traditional concepts such as homeland, identity, and ethnicity, without much elaboration. A particularly good aspect of the discussions is that they show the internal diversity of the Japanese-Brazilian identity. Overall, however, the book organized by Jeffrey Lesser is valuable food for thought, particularly when one hundred years of Japanese immigration is celebrated in Brazil.

Yuji Ichioka, *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History*. Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma, eds. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. xxviii + 360 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8047-5147-6 [ISBN-10: 0-8047-5147-1] (cloth), \$50.00.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux

Yuji Ichioka (1936-2002) has prepared a brilliant volume of essays on Japanese-American history in the 1920s and 1930s. *Before Internment* is a sequel to Ichioka's 1988 work, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrant, 1885-1924*.

Carefully edited by two gifted historians, Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma, this posthumous work examines the cultural divide between and the intergenerational experiences of the native-born *Issei* and American-born *Nisei* communities between World War I and Pearl Harbor.

Ichioka's essays introduce us to a kaleidoscope of individuals and topics which when read together present an intense look at the problems and conflicting issues facing Japanese immigrants and their children in the prewar era. They had to confront intense pressure from white society, which overwhelmingly rejected them on racial grounds. “This racial animus toward the Japanese, unlike that toward the blacks, included a white fear

that Japanese had superior traits, which made them formidable opponents against whom Americans could not compete” (p. 25).

Ichiooka brilliantly places the Issei and Nisei within the context of the anti-Japanese era in which they lived:

On the one hand, Japanese immigrants constituted a powerless racial minority. Denied the right of naturalization, they were unable to participate in the American political process to defend themselves. On the other hand, the anti-Japanese forces commanded overwhelming power and influence. They included among their number organized labor, the American Legion, various native groups, local Granger organizations, many local and state politicians, and much of the news media. In the face of such racist opposition, often of a violent nature, Japanese immigrants could only appeal to an abstract sense of American justice and fair play (pp. 252-253).

Issei and Nisei also had to contend with conflicting loyalties between their country of origin and their new home, at a time when the United States and Japan were spiraling towards war. Many influential Americans shared an inherent distrust of Japanese-Americans, fearing that they were a potentially subversive element in American society that would come to the aid of Tokyo in the event of war. Ichiooka demonstrates that some of these fears were not unfounded because there were a number of Japanese-Americans who supported and, in a few cases, even worked for their mother country before and after Pearl Harbor.

The focus of the book is on the Nisei generation that grew up between the wars. Ichiooka studies in great detail the attempts by Issei and by the Japanese government to teach Nisei about their native culture and language. They created Japanese language institutes and offered scholarships so that Nisei could tour Japan, but as a whole, Nisei were far more influenced by American cultures and values which they encountered in public schools. Ichiooka notes that these schools “so successfully socialized the Nisei to American values that the Nisei became largely acculturated to American culture and society” (p. 46). As a result, many Nisei faced an intense cultural dilemma in the days before Pearl Harbor, when Japan was fighting a brutal war in China:

Issei leaders expected them to champion Japan's case in China and chastised them when they did not. On the other hand, if they stood up in defense of Japan, their loyalty to the United States came under a cloud of suspicion, making any public rationalization of Japan's side in the Sino-Japanese War impossible (p. 46).

Ichioka demonstrates the complexity of Japanese-American life and their relationships with both Japan and the United States through a series of beautifully researched individual studies. We meet Dr. Honda Rikita, a former Japanese soldier and doctor, who later set up a highly successful medical practice in Los Angeles. His suicide, while undergoing FBI questioning after Pearl Harbor because of his alleged pro-Japanese sympathies, gave the Japanese great ammunition to substantiate their portrait of the US as a racist society. We are introduced to the infamous 1941 Tachibana Espionage case as well as the case of Kazumaro Buddy Uno, a Nisei who migrated to Japan in the 1930s to become a pro-Japanese journalist and propagandist. We also encounter Louis Adamic, an American writer who embraced the inclusion of all minorities into the American mainstream, including Japanese, as well as James Yoshinori Sakamoto, a journalist who first sought to build a bridge between the US and Japan and who then became a fervent American nationalist after Pearl Harbor.

Ichioka was well-placed and trained as a scholar when writing this book. A founder of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and adjunct Professor of History at UCLA for many years, he first coined the term "Asian American" to unify previously diverse Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino groups. Ichioka's first book *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrant, 1885-1924*, received positive reviews and several awards.

Before Internment is a majestically researched and written masterpiece that describes Issei and Nisei life between the wars in a brilliant manner. The only real flaw is a rather annoying repetition of various incidents and biographies, but the editors ask for our indulgence. Ichioka was unable to finish the work before his sudden and untimely death and Chang and Azuma have decided not to tamper with the integrity of Ichioka's work, even if it was only about ninety percent done. An introduction and an epilogue by the editors place the book in the context of the times.

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