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**JAPAN STUDIES REVIEW**
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**EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the fourteenth 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. This issue includes articles, essays, and book reviews covering a variety of topics in Japanese studies.

Seven articles are included in this issue. "Specters of Modernity: Japanese Horror Uncovers Anxiety for a Post-Bubble America" by Michael J. Blouin scrutinizes the Japanese horror film genre and compares and contrasts it with American films, contending that both countries' postmodern national identities manifest themselves in popular cinema.

The next article "Brewing Spirits, Brewing Songs: Saké, *Haikai*, and the Aestheticization of Suburban Space in Edo Period Itami" written by W. Puck Brecher challenges the belief that rural areas in Japan were culturally dependent on cities by using Itami, a small village which became a center for *haikai* poets through the use and production of Saké, as a contradictory example.

Following this is Ronald E. Hall's "Beauty and the Breck: The Psychology of Idealized Light Skin Vis-à-Vis Asian Women," which presents a theory for the Eurocentric ideal standards of beauty that can be found in Asian countries.

On a different note is "Jack London's First Encounter with Japan: The Voyage of the *Sophie Sutherland* and his First Asian Writing," written by Daniel A. Métraux. This article recaps London's trip to Japan in 1893 and how this inspired his first literary efforts.

In "Varieties of Corporate Finance in Japanese Industrialization," Yumiko Morii writes about the differences between pre- and post-war corporate finance of railroads, electric utilities, and the cotton-spinning industry, and how these financial practices varied from industry to industry.

In "Sweet Music from a Strange Country: Japanese Women Poets as 'Other,'" Bern Mulvey examines the poetic works of Japanese women and disputes the conventional that their poetry is non-confrontational and indirect.

The last article, "Bob Dylan's Zen Garden: Cross-Cultural Currents in His Approach to Religiosity" by Steven Heine focuses on Bob

Dylan's first tour of Japan in 1978 where he was exposed to Zen Buddhist temples, and analyzes affinities between the philosophy of Zen and Dylan's multifaceted lyrics throughout various stages in his career.

Included in this year's issue are two featured essays. The first is "Japanese Portrayal in Chinese Martial Arts Films: Heroes & Villains of The East: A Comparison of the Portrayal of the Japanese in Chinese and Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema in the 1970s and 1990s" by Ian Nathaniel Cohen, who examines the portrayal of the typical Chinese villain in Japanese Martial Arts films. "What Skills Should the Student Possess After Courses in Business Japanese?" by Yuki Matsuda discusses the proficiency skills in language and culture that a student demonstrates after taking a course in Japanese for business.

Lastly, this volume includes four book reviews. Daniel A. Métraux reviews Takeshi Matsuda's in-depth examination of Japanese-American relations in *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency*. John Hickman reviews Frances McCall Rosenbluth's examination of low fertility rates in Japan in *The Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility*. Metrauz also reviews Peter Pagnamento and Momoko Williams' historically rich love story, *Sword and Blossom: A British Officer's Enduring Love for a Japanese Woman*. Finally, Kelly M. Foreman's analysis of geisha in *The Gei of Geisha: Music, Identity and Meaning* is reviewed by Jan Bardsley.

**Steven Heine**

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.

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

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# Articles

# SPECTERS OF MODERNITY:
## JAPANESE HORROR UNCOVERS ANXIETY
## FOR A POST-BUBBLE AMERICA

*Michael J. Blouin*
*Michigan State University*

> The fantastic, as an object and even mode of discourse, was closely affiliated with the instantiation of modernity in Japan, and that it has been mobilized to assert a mysteriousness if not exclusivity for modern Japan ever since…such a discourse might have shaped other modernities as well, which have gone unrecognized without the defamiliarization of modernity that an examination of Japan's case performs.
>
> Gerald Figal[1]

The supernatural has indeed become a "mode of discourse" in Japan. Japanese cinema, especially the horror genre of the late 20th century, is obsessed with spectral entities. In contrast, American cinema has never dealt with ghostliness in the same rigorous and self-identifying fashion. In order to understand modernity on a global scale, one might examine how the recent cultural exchange of Japanese horror films and their subsequent Hollywood re-makes represent a true "defamiliarization" of modernity for the former and yet another layer of repression by the latter. This article will look at how the containment of national identity in Japanese popular cinema often features ghostly forces that demonstrate the vacuous nature beneath the surface of this identity. At the turn of the 20th century, Hollywood was not prepared to face these very postmodern anxieties and thus these particular films were re-imagined (I would claim re-repressed) to insert an authentic origin for the haunting. I argue that these specific alterations uncover a shared cultural anxiety: the fear that beneath all of the ostentatious nationalism there is nothing but an empty lacuna. As multiple bubbles collapse and economic hegemony fades for the U.S., these Japanese horror films could potentially shape the way Americans deal with their own postmodern (ghostly) identity.

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[1] Gerald Figal, *Civilization and Monsters* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

First, one must analyze the importance of phantasms in Japanese cultural history. By doing so, the reader will begin to recognize the pattern of dealing with the uncanny that is unique to Japan. I will then focus on how these 'J-horror' films have been re-imagined in the U.S. and why the Japanese mode of representing the uncanny (unlike, say, the Spanish modes of director Guillermo Del Toro) is translated and revised for audiences in the U.S. Finally, I will turn to the future and why, I believe, this exchange will continue to shape how Americans deal with their own repressed anxieties about national identity in the years ahead.

**The "Ghostly" Discourse Surrounding Japanese Identity**

Ghosts are, I believe, the most prominent trope in Japanese cinema. What is "dead" in the modern era for Japan returns not as a didactic reminder or a hypocritical impulse to be purged (as in American horror cinema). Instead, the "dead" eternally return as echoes of a transient selfhood which forever elude the stasis of cinematic frames. Japanese films of the late 20th century, particularly the recent wave of internationally popular horror films, cease to attempt sealing off modernist uncertainty; it is postmodern uncertainty that national identity was constructed against which thus returns from repression in order to thrive.

Japanese identity has been heavily created by both international forces (such as MacArthur and the Occupation's "assistance" in a new post-war Japanese constitution) and national forces. This artifice has been labeled by psychoanalyst Takeo Doi as *tatemae*.[2] During the Meiji Restoration, Japan required cohesiveness as a nation-state, something it had lacked through much of its history. Schools of thought like the Nishida philosophy of the Kyoto School supported such an ideological project. The reaction against this sort of empirical and artificial repression (one may also consider the institutionalization of the regional Shinto shrines here) was immediate.

Marilyn Ivy's *Discourse of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*[3] broadens the concept of modernity and phantasm by arguing that the State project of creating a "whole" Japanese identity (a visible *kokutai*, or national essence) hinges on the uncanny sensation evoked by Japanese

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[2] Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Self*, trans. Mark Harbison (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985).

[3] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourse of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

cultural works, most importantly (although she neglects adequate discussion of the form), film. She writes:

> Despite [Japan's] labors to recover the past and deny the losses of 'tradition', modernist nostalgia must preserve, in many senses, the sense of absence that motivates its desire…[The Japanese] thematize loss in a variety of ways as they work inevitably to recover that loss. That work sometimes takes the guise of mourning, sometimes of recursive repetition, sometimes of rememoration or memorialization. And it also appears in the mode of forgetting, through moments of fetishistic disavowal.[4]

The "work" being done by the spectator, reminiscent of the Freudian *fort-da* game, is a pursuit of the phantoms on-screen; it is the pursuit of a "lost" tradition that must be absent in order for the audience to continually strive towards satisfaction. Steven Heine notes that in modern Japanese society "the center is deliberately displaced and disguised."[5] Ghosts are then essential (and, interestingly, desirable) to the State project because the Japanese subject is left chasing specters endlessly, working towards "reunion" with an artificial past, suspending the knowledge that what they pursue is not real nor can it ever be.

Ivy labels this process "vanishing," defining the concept as follows: "what (dis)embodies in its gerund from the movement of something passing away, gone but not quite, suspended between presence and absence, located at a point that both is and is not here in the repetitive process of absenting… their status is often ghostly."[6] H.D. Harootunian, in much the same vein as Ivy, locates this as a temporal "unevenness." He describes the State project of overcoming modernity as one that attempts to "freeze-dry the moment of cultural unevenness," seeing it as an attempt to "stave off death."[7] The figures being created are not just ghosts within the

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[4] Ivy, *Discourse of the Vanishing*, p. 10.

[5] Steven Heine, "*Ie*-ism and the Discourse of Postmodernism," in *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, eds. Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Steven Heine (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 45.

[6] Ivy, *Discourse of the Vanishing,* p. 20.

[7] H.D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

narrative but also (and this is essential) Derridean ghosts through their unstable representation. All of this stems from an unsettled relationship to the past, to the "origins" of modern Japan. Harootunian views Japanese discourse as:

> An encounter with the realm of the uncanny: the same but yet the not-same, the past that was still present, the modern and its other… the precinct of the uncanny where modern Japan confronts its double, where the present encounters a past that in all respects is similar but is now *out of time*. In modern society this is precisely how the appeal to memory works against the claims of history.[8]

Japanese cinema often asks society to remember something that it cannot, which takes the form of history, a constructed and artificial narrative.

The ghostliness that pervades is thus formed on cyclical loss. Just as one believes they have grasped history, or have seen *kokutai* manifested in an image, it vaporizes into thin air; the camera shifts and the spectator is no longer certain of their position in relation to the cinematic space. The frames of ghost films such as *Ugestu*[9] and *Otoshiana*[10] are consistently violated and found to be unsatisfactory.

**The Shadow Self in a "Lost Decade"**

The apotheosis of the fantastic in Japanese cinema came at the turn of the 21st century with the surge of horror films by directors such as Takashi Miike (*Audition*, *Chakushin Ari*) and Takashi Shimizu (*Ju-On*, *Marebito*). This climactic moment occurred amidst a variety of social anxieties, including the hyper-technologization of everyday existence and the so-called "lost decade" that followed the economic bubble burst of the late 1980s. The Self was called into question more forcefully than ever and the modern schism grew ever more pronounced. Valdine Clemens in her *The Return of the Repressed* writes:

> A 'national brand' of Gothic fiction seems to proliferate whenever the political and economic dominance that a given country has

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2001), p. 316.

[8] Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 321 (emphasis mine).

[9] *Ugestu,* dir. Kenji Mizoguchi (1953).

[10] *Otoshiana,* dir. Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1962

> acquired appears to be passing its peak and about to decline…
> when reevaluation of the national identity seems to take on a
> particular urgency.[11]

In the 1980s, the economy that was impossible to sink, sank; the Japanese economic surge and apparent dominance, after a provocative decade of investment in American real estate, began to slow drastically. There was, apparently, a ceiling to Japanese growth and a number of deficiencies were revealed, including: pressure by foreign countries for Japan to pay and maintain their own military, unsatisfactory living conditions (overcrowding), and an uneven distribution of wealth, among others. This slowdown was accompanied by a self-recognition of Japan's out-of-control Westernization. The question was becoming ever more prevalent: what does it mean to be Japanese?

Films such as *Ringu* and *Chakushin ari* (which, significantly, were both remade in America) embraced this tension through the omnipresent motif of the ghost. The many frames of Japanese society (television screens, most prominently) became portals for the supernatural. Instead of being safe places where "traditional" ideology is contained (as in the early cinema of Japan, as discussed by Darrell William Davis)[12], television screens became (in a self-reflexive fashion) dangerously unstable places where ghosts travel freely between reality and the imagination. The resounding image is of the eerie girl (or *onryō*, "vengeful ghost") with long black hair in *Ringu* who literally crawls out of the screen and into the world of the narrative (threatening always to go one step further and crawl into the sacred space of the spectator).

What is essential to note is the spectator's role as detective (reminiscent of Edogawa Rampo's tales) in these films. The film is clearly unstable, the images shaky and broken apart by static, but the spectator is expected to believe they are gaining clarity as the story of the traumatic past becomes progressively clearer. Miike's *Chakushin ari*[13] expects his

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[11] Valdine Clemens, *The Return of the Repressed: Gothic Horror from the Castle of Otranto to Alien* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 5.

[12] Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[13] *Chakushin ari*, dir. Takashi Miike (2003).

audience, for most of the film, to blame the abusive mother for the viral phone calls; only at the denouement do we realize we have been fooled. It was the perverse daughter that was responsible all along. The past is forever eluding us, and the "origins" of the haunting are just out of reach. This echoes the Japanese tradition of seeking to create and represent the country's "origins" in vain.

American horror cinema has its fair share of MacGuffins but the difference is that in America the origin is always assumed to be real. Americans are always puritanically repressing their own "evil" or "deviance," but the monsters that return from our unconscious are not manifestations of modernist uncertainty (as in Japanese film), but rather of an authentically corrupt self that can be located at an exact moment in a Manichean split (Jason's mother became monstrous because of the inattentive children, Michael Myers became monstrous because of his own sexual frustration).

The "monstrous," as emblematic of a collective, reveals a very different paradigm in American horror film than it does in Japanese film. William Chapman observed in *Inventing Japan* that there has never been a real revolution in Japan.[14] The forces of collectivity permeate Japanese society from religion to politics and there (as of yet) have emerged only minor uprisings that were quickly settled. Contrastingly, America is built on the ideology of the individual versus the collective. The freedom of the subject to take on an oppressive whole is essential to the American way of life, from the Constitution to the American Dream of capitalist triumph thanks to Yankee ingenuity. An American spectator seeks enjoyment in watching an individual overcome the demons of society (look no further than Clover's archetypal Final Girl for example, *Halloween*'s Laurie survives the onslaught of raw sexuality because of her own purity).[15] Fredric Jameson, discussing the detective in a postmodern society in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, argues that Western filmmakers cannot help but pit an individual against a larger system (itself a symptom of late capitalism):

> The journalist-witness, whatever his professional camaraderie is alone; the collective exists on the other side, as his object, in the

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[14] William Chapman, *Inventing Japan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

[15] Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

twin forms of the insurgents and the forces of order…(in this) sadly and evidently seem to lie in some generalized ideological incapacity of North Americans to imagine collective processes in the first place, and their tendency, in consequence, to fall back on the emotional securities of individualizing narrative paradigms wherever possible.[16]

The Japanese individual is much less privileged in Japanese horror films (and, I would argue, the national cinema at large). It is collectivity itself that subsumes the narrative. The haunting of society is ubiquitous.

Miike's *Chakushin ari* provides its spectator with a way to visualize this collective haunting: unsuspecting teens, embroiled in the system that Jameson discusses by relying on cell phones for communication, receive a call that alerts them to the time at which they will die. The death comes in the relatively near future at the hands of a malevolent ghost. The protagonist Yumi acts as the "journalist-witness," attempting to save herself by finding the "origin" of this universal haunting (or "technological plague," another trope one will find pervading Japanese horror). When Yumi does find the corpse of the supposedly abusive parent, the problem is assumed to be settled. Miike, however, complicates this (as he often does) by defying expectations and reversing what the audience was led to believe: it was the abusive daughter all along that was responsible.

These films about "collective hauntings" often involve a (mis)identification of the corporeal as a resolution (a metaphorical return to origins). A reunion with the body, the source (be it mother in *Chakushin ari* or child in *Ringu*), appears on the surface to release the characters and the Japanese spectator from postmodern uncertainty. Yet, it is not over. Yumi is revealed at the very end to be inhabited by the spirit of the evil girl, murdering the detective to whom she has grown emotionally attached. There is thus revealed circularity, an all-pervasive breakdown between the past and the present. One cannot locate the divide itself or the original trauma/abuse. Instead, Miike manifests modern uncertainty on the screen, asking the spectator to play the role of "journalist-witness" only to realize that they themselves are a part of the collective they are trying to understand. The film ends this metaphysical design with the credits

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[16] Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 40-41.

accompanied by an eerie cell phone ring, so faint as to give the effect that someone in the audience is receiving the fatal call.

The American remake *One Missed Call*[17] emphasizes the major differences in American audience expectations. Director Eric Vallette does not jump from character to character to show, as Miike does, how this is an equal-opportunity haunting. The film instead focuses on Beth (playing the Americanized role of Yumi) and follows her alone. Her ingenuity allows her to fight the evil force successfully. The distinction from Miike's film is twofold: Beth is victimized and there is no endless chain of blame but rather a clear cause and effect to be resolved. Beth is identified as the child in an abusive mother-daughter relationship and the conclusion finds her a witness to the detective's murder (in no way is she linked to the deviant spirit of the girl). The mother returns at the close of the film, dressed in saintly white with a splendid maternal glow, to destroy the evil child and restore order. There is clearly a resolution. Beth comes to terms with her own abuse, and is free to forgive. The film ends with the same faint ring to alert the audience to their own implication, but it utterly fails to achieve the same chilling sensation. The reaction is rather one of bemusement or confusion. The individual has triumphed – there is no reason whatsoever to believe that the collective will continue. The narrative and the identity of the characters have been sealed off and framed.

**Takashi Shimizu and the Violation (or Re-Inscription) of Frames**

American horror film attempts to deal with a troubled present by addressing the traumatic moment of the past: the divergence from our original City on the Hill promise, issues of abandonment, issues of abuse, and so on. In essence, American horror is obsessed with the birth of evil and how we can address (and then repress) the seeds we have sown. Japanese horror film attempts to deal with a fatalistic future (the call that alerts the teens to their imminent demise) by understanding the past only to discover that the past cannot be understood (framed). The past invades senselessly upon the present and will continue to do so into the future, not for didactic reasons but because there is no solid identification to locate, only the modern schism. The "monster" cannot be purged or repressed because of its very devastating spectral nature. The present is contaminated with digitalized images of the past that cannot hope to move beyond their "phantasmagoric" elements. When this phantasmagoria has become

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[17] *One Missed Call*, dir. Eric Valette (2008).

divorced from a notion of authenticity within a national past (which it always-already was), it can be seen as nothing more than fantasy (the truth behind Japanese identity and, for that matter, all essentialized nationalisms). The ghosts are not of a specific moment but eternal, linked forever to the temporal restraints of being human. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-on* (2000) and his subsequent hugely successful American re-make *The Grudge* (2004).

    *Ju-on*[18] concerns a house that is cursed by a past disturbance that returns and "infects" anyone who enters. The narrative involves a female ghost with long black hair (no surprise here), Kayako, and her ghost son, Toshio, who both haunt the visitors of the house (and proceed to consume them). The assumed origin of the haunting is the murder of these two figures by a vicious husband who discovers that Kayako is in love with another man. In fact, he claims of Toshio: "That is not my son." The boy, who keeps resurfacing, is a perfect signification of what I have been discussing: a past that is not recognized as "authentic" (he is born of another) but also strangely represents the future, although suspended indefinitely. Toshio can thus be read as floating, the specter of modernity in its visualized form. Neither dead nor alive, neither authentic nor detached, his ghost is always vacillating between the past, present, and future.

    Toshio is often seen with a cat that was also brutally slaughtered and they begin, as the film progresses, to overlap (the boy gives cat-like yowls) and illuminate the repetition compulsion that *Ju-on* is grounded upon. In a scene reminiscent of Hitchcock's *The Birds*, the protagonist Rika wakes to a large number of black cats infesting her bedroom. This uncanny event symbolizes the persistent reemergence of the traumatic moment, over and over, leaving traces of a Nietzchean eternal return. The trauma does not simply return to haunt one person (as in *The Grudge*,[19] where we find Karen navigating this crisis on her own). It has apparently returned an infinite number of times, moving endlessly outside of the domestic space and threatening to spill over into the real world of the spectator. This carries with it what I have labeled "feedback." Whenever Rika gets close to the "source" of the haunting there is a ringing sound or (elsewhere in films such as Shimizu's *Marebito*) the film itself becomes disrupted by static. The output (present) moves too close to the source (past) and thus time lapses on itself and, through its own technologization, can at last be visualized. The

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[18] *Ju-on*, dir. Takashi Shimizu (2000).

[19] *The Grudge*, dir. Takashi Shimizu (2004).

Japanese horror film is always concerned with these issues of temporality and the anxiety that is created when they are found to be merging, repeating themselves and layering back over one another. Every character we encounter, regardless of their affiliation, cannot escape the branching arms of the collective haunting. It becomes dubious that the murder itself was the catalyst for this haunting and not some essential breach in human nature. One is left with the impression that this ghost has been here for much longer than the trauma of Kayako's murder.

Frames play a key role in addressing this essential breach. In the conclusion, when Rika is fleeing from Kayako for the final time, Rika sees her reflection as the image of Kayako. This is yet another trope that we can find in the Japanese horror films of the 1990s and one which accompanies the final revelation: the Japanese subject itself is ghostly. At last, when the ghost is revealed in its full glory, it is not simply of a supernatural realm but it exists everywhere. This spectral being is symptomatic of a large number of factors and speaks directly to the conditions of Japanese society. Here we find an identity that has become "phantasmagoric" in the face of extreme technologization. Economic factors contribute greatly to this transformation. Capitalism threatens the collective with complete Westernization but the Japanese refusal to embrace capitalist lust in its entirety, preserving the (staged) presence of national dignity, is a denial of the animal urges associated with consumerism. Thus, in an interesting paradigm, the Japanese consumer becomes a commodity herself, packaging her own "Japanese-ness" and performing the ritual movements that have been manifested on-screen, actively participating in a filming of the Self that is in line with the filming of the Nation. This identity, however, is not a mere modern invention. Its ghostliness relates directly to the fundamental moment of self-identification, the fear of that fragmentary state that preceded Japan's formation of a cohesive national identity.

The television screen works in similar ways to the mirror. What has been recorded and framed as a distinct history pushes outward into the present and refuses stasis. Contrastingly, in Hollywood's *The Grudge*, American Karen looks in the mirror and sees exactly what we might expect: herself. The American subject is not ghostly but secure in its own identity, even when threatened by forces it cannot understand. Likewise, the detectives of *The Grudge* use scrapbooks to understand the murder and the house's colorful history. The frames of these photographs provide a gateway to the past that is beneficial. *Ju-on*, however, utilizes the photograph as a fragmented piece of history that must be refigured (it is

literally cut up into pieces) and reinterpreted *ad nauseum*. This trope will appear again and again in Japanese horror films, including *Tomie*, a powerful look at female identity in modern Japan. *Ju-on* as a cinematic text acts in this same fashion, its syuzhet being broken into pieces for the spectator to try and re-organize into a coherent whole. *The Grudge*, meanwhile, stays focused on the trajectory of the individual and the American spectator is allowed to view the images with confidence and never question these problems of history and representation.

Freud wrote in his essay, "The Uncanny," that "this uncanny is nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression."[20] Lacan would later contend that this "old-established" moment was before the mirror stage, a moment before the self was understood as a coherent whole (the development of the Ego). Mladen Dolar argues that this moment of understanding the Self as whole is, in fact, the primary repression. In "I Shall Be With You on Your Wedding Night: Lacan and the Uncanny" it states "and it was only in that no-man's-land that [the uncanny] could produce anxiety and doom the subject to utter insecurity, to *floating without a point of anchor*."[21] What has been repressed in *Ju-on* (and thus returns in the form of specters) is this former state of "floating without a point of anchor" which the collective has desperately tried to cover-up by creating a national narrative of "Japanese-ness."

American audiences are forever repressing this very modern uncertainty beneath layers of identified trauma. In *The Grudge*, director Shimizu locates this Western tendency and provides the American audience with a clear traumatic moment that Karen can deal with and then move on. The predictable return of the supernatural at the conclusion (the boyfriend grabs Karen's arm from beneath the sheet covering his corpse) is ineffective because, once again, the individual has already confronted the troublesome past and suffered for her nation's sins.

In addition, *The Grudge* gives us what *Ju-on* willfully does not Toshio's "real" father. The object of Kayako's desire is Peter, a professor from America. The West, imposing its own physical presence and ideologies on the East, is thus the cause of the family breakdown and the

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[20] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), p. 941.

[21] Mladen Dolar, "'I Shall be With You on Your Wedding Night': Lacan and the Uncanny," *Rendering the Real* 58 (1991): 21.

effective haunting. The American spectator is asked, along with Karen, to confront their own imperialist past and feel the guilt at the sins they have committed. The past, after emerging from its frame to plague us, is safely returned to its place in history at the conclusion of *The Grudge*; Karen's boyfriend is taken as reparations and she has been forced to come to terms with American atrocities. Karen watches the murder of Kayako and Toshio (and the cat) as a horrified witness.

Jameson's argument about the unfortunate Western "journalist-witness" applies very well to Karen. She investigates the "collective" sins in an individualistic narrative as if able to achieve a position outside of the collective. It is in many ways a Christian narrative about suffering and confession. Rika, however, cannot hope to be a mere witness. *Ju-on* is not a film about Rika, but a film about all of Japan (a nightmarish Zen where everything is equally terrorized). This distinction is crucial. It is not the collective haunting the individual but rather the collective haunting the collective. The murderous husband reaches towards us in the audience at the conclusion, aiming to kill the spectator; likewise, Kayako opens her eyes at the last moment of the film to stare directly at each of us. The danger is always threatening to break the plain of cinema/reality and enter into the actual realm of Tokyo. The frame is ultimately compromised.

The distinction between these different hauntings reveals that the uncanny is not a universal concept. While it is clearly linked to modernity and questions of identity, the uncanny varies with the unique national experience of the modern (as open-ended as Freud intended when he concludes his definition of the uncanny experience with "and so on"). Americans individually dread their own deviance from the original promises of the country, while the Japanese collectively dread the stability of their State-imposed collectivity. The final question still remains: why, at the turn of the century, did American producers begin importing these films? Why do they still hold such fascination with audiences in the U.S.?

**The Post-Bubble U.S. Horror Film**

One might surmise that it is purely a novelty item that American audiences crave (an exercise along the vein of Roland Barthes' *The Empire of Signs*)[22]; or, perhaps, it is a way for the spectator to feel safe: it's *them*, not *us*, who has the identity crisis. We know who *we* are as a nation. While these reasons likely hold some truth, I contend that American audiences

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[22] Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

from the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century recognize themselves in these ghost narratives. The original Japanese versions of these horror films are becoming ever more popular in translation. The constant repression of the unstable foundations America was built upon (seen most directly in the remakes of films such *Ju-on*) is beginning to lose its ideological control and the domestic return of hypocrisy from the 1980s slasher films is being replaced by a return of spectral national identity in the 1990s vis-à-vis the import of Japanese horror films. In a decade when violence and sex were becoming ever more prevalent in society and technology was overtaking our lives (read the anxieties of Y2K here), it was not enough to ask how to go back; we were forced to at least begin to ask: what is there to go back to? Was that tradition of "patriotism" ever anything more than an illusion? Following the presidency of George W. Bush and the smoke and mirrors of hyper-patriotism, these questions will only become more problematic (and, I believe, the Japanese horror film will only become more significant). Dale Wright, referring to the West's response for Japanese philosopher Nishitani, portends this important moment: "How will you (the Westerner) respond when you discover that your deepest thoughts – even your new postmodern ones – lack solid foundations and succumb to the dismantling effects of impermanence foretold by the Buddhas of history?"[23] The answer is fascination and anxiety towards the contemporary Japanese horror film by the American spectator.

At the moment, however, the American audience clings to its tendency to perpetually (re)repress what once returned. One need only look as far as the thoroughly Americanized *One Missed Call* to see that the American spectator still wants a trauma they can locate for an individual to face (a perverse little girl's murderous rage) and resolve (the glorious return of the saintly mother and family harmony). The Japanese horror film has introduced the issues into our culture of an artificial history and an artificial collective identity that terrifies the modern Ego and threatens to send the modern subject to a time before the mirror stage; in short, the possibility for a truly "postmodern" horror film. Where we go from here in culturally facing our own ghosts will help define what it means to be "American" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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[23] Dale S. Wright, "Tradition Beyond Modernity: Nishitani's Response to the Twentieth Century," in *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, eds. Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Steven Heine (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 294-295.

**BREWING SPIRITS, BREWING SONGS:**
**SAKÉ, *HAIKAI*, AND THE AESTHETICIZATION OF**
**SUBURBAN SPACE IN EDO PERIOD ITAMI**

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**Itami** [伊丹]: City on the eastern edge of Hyōgo Prefecture; satellite town of Osaka; formerly famous for saké brewing. **–zaké** [伊丹酒]: Saké brewed in the Settsu Itami region; the best saké of the Edo period. **–fū** [伊丹風]: A school of *haikai* from the time of Genroku. Itami residents, following Ikeda Sōtan, freely expressed original concepts in colloquial language. Sōtan's pupil Uejima Onitsura took this poetic style in his own direction.

*Kōjien*[1]

Alcohol has always been a muse for literary and artistic inspiration in Japan, but never had saké's musings proved as socially transformative as in 17th and 18th century Itami, where it converted a community of townsmen into a village-wide poetry salon that remained devoted to the study and production of *haikai* for over a century. Through the concerted efforts of local saké brewers, Itami became widely regarded as a repository of uncorrupted amateur aestheticism at a time when *haikai* in Osaka and elsewhere languished under the bane of commercialization. As a suburban community that used Japan's thirst for alcohol to gratify its own thirst for cultural refinement, Itami's example forces a reconsideration of suburban cultural practice in early modern Japan.

**Introduction**

In pre-modern (pre-1600) Japan, claim to cultural sophistication was directly contingent upon demonstrable association with the capital, Kyoto, and the imperial court specifically. Cultural practice filtered into the countryside via wandering ascetics or the efforts of warriors wishing to bring sophistication to their provincial outposts, but access to "high culture"

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[1] Shinmura Izuru, ed., *Kōjien*, 3rd ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1986), p. 132.

was availed primarily to courtiers, clerics, and, by association, wealthy townspeople (*machishū*) in and around the capital.[2] This urban-rural divide was meaningfully bridged only in the mid-17th century when a proliferation of popular culture created opportunities for cultural custodianship that could be shared by urban and rural commoners alike. The fact that expanding cultural spheres at this time fundamentally changed relationships between city and countryside, however, has been overlooked by historiographical devotion to the truism that outlying areas subsequently remained culturally dependent on cities.

Admittedly, some evidence supports the notion of continuing dependence within many rural areas. The popularity of *tentori* (point-garnering) *haikai* in the provinces – the practice of paying urban-based *haikai* masters to appraise one's compositions, for instance – indicates an inability within outlying communities to secure local access to quality *haikai* training. As Cheryl Crowley notes, *tentori haikai*'s prevalence among provincial students as a means of recreation and social advancement proved lucrative for urban verse markers (*tenja*) and go-betweens.[3] This commoditization of popular culture in rural areas offers further testimony to the notion that *haikai*, in addition to fiction, *kabuki*, and *bunraku*, mounted no real aesthetic or philosophical challenge to the edifice of elite urban high culture. Popular culture, defined by Peter Nosco as "culture that pays for itself," did indeed emerge within urban centers as forms of commerce, for despite objections by purists like Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) and Itami native Uejima Onitsura (1661-1738) who defended the aesthetic principles of amateurism, cultural practice unsullied by commercialism was not a viable option for most.[4] If many provincial communities relied on the leadership of urban culture that needed to "pay for itself," it is argued, then by what means could they possibly develop independent, "purer" cultural practices? The proposition that *haikai* poetics, or any form of commercial culture, was born in urban coteries from where it filtered into other areas

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[2] For an extended discussion of *machishū* and cultural custodianship, see Sandy Kita, *The Last Tosa: Iwasa katsumochi matabei, Bridge to Ukiyo-e* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

[3] Cheryl Crowley, "Depopularizing the Popular: *Tentori haikai* and the Bashō Revival," *Japan Studies Review* 9 (2005): 5.

[4] Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 16.

would seem a foregone conclusion. Rural dependence, moreover, would seem to deny any possibility of localities claiming *haikai* as a source of constructing independent identities.

Taking Itami as a case study, this paper challenges such arguments by detailing how one local identity was transformed from mercantile center to cultural *meisho* (celebrated spot). It offers evidence that select rural and suburban communities possessed sufficient independent cultural energies to reverse their reputations as provincial bumpkins and elevate themselves socially. Itami's example demonstrates that villages found utility in popular culture to recreate themselves as bastions of cultural refinement. Indeed, as a suburban community that used detached aestheticism and cultural accomplishment to forge a strong local identity, Itami was not unique,[5] but as a secular and commercial area its engagement with *haikai* poetics merits special attention. First, its example constitutes an exception to the belief that plebian culture must be – or eventually becomes – generated or motivated by commercial concerns. It also demonstrates that acculturation within non-urban spaces could occur concurrently with, not subsequent to, that in urban spaces. Finally, it proposes that peripheral areas not only developed potentials for qualified cultural independence from the center, but that they established local identities that helped sustain the center. First we will consider how spatial designations informed the development of Itami's dual identity as a suburb and a cultural *meisho*.

### Everything in its Place: City, Suburb, Inaka

Due to the interpenetration of space, power, and cultural custodianship in early-modern Japan, proximity to the urban and political centers validated greater claims to cultural sophistication. Spatial delineations were important for this reason, and amidst rapid centrifugal urban expansion during the 17th and 18th centuries, efforts were made to preserve boundaries between city and countryside. Roughly three-quarters of early modern Japan was governed by *daimyō*, about fifteen percent by

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[5] The nearby towns of Ikeda and Minō, for example, were also *meisho* that self-represented as bucolic, culturally active suburbs. For studies of aesthetic and cultural pursuits within other suburban spaces during the Edo period, see my "Down and Out in Negishi: Reclusion and Struggle in an Edo Suburb," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 35/1 (2009): 1-35; and "Kōetsumura: Of Rhythms and Reminiscence in Hon'ami Kōetsu's Commune," *Japan Review* 22 (2010): 1-27.

the Tokugawa *bakufu*, and an additional ten percent by vassals loyal to the Tokugawa. Land held by the imperial family, temples, and shrines amounted to approximately two percent of the land, or roughly 500,000 *koku*.[6] These power ratios shifted constantly, however, and the ongoing territorial and jurisdictional adjustments led to confusion, disputes, and multiple layers of concurrent governance. In the 1840s, for instance, the 150 square miles surrounding Osaka was controlled by as many as 165 separate authorities.[7]

Historically, the word *inaka* (countryside; provinces) was not a neutral term, but rather a delineation defined by what it was not – the city. The earliest dictionaries defined it as "outside towns and cities" and "removed from the capital."[8] If cities were specific places, *inaka* was everywhere else. It was a non-place where the urbanite ventured only under punishment of exile, or the virtual exile of an appointment to a provincial administrative post. The city and country, then, were complementary but unequal opposites. While they may have been economically and politically interdependent, culturally they were irreconcilable. The rustic was unilaterally inferior to the refined, making *inaka* a pejorative term (the "stinking provinces"), and in most cases provincial residents resigned themselves to this inferiority. The so-called female shogun Hōjō Masako (1157-1225) put it most concisely: "In the countryside, only one person in a thousand, no, in ten thousand is sensible…The countryside is full of idiots."[9] This attitude was qualified only by the emergence of suburbs during explosive urbanization in the 17th century, when pervasive crowding, noise, and environmental disruption caused newly arrived urbanites to long for rustic getaways beyond city borders.[10] Demands for urbanization and economic expansion thus generated parallel demands for suburban spots that offered opportunities for nature appreciation, recreation, and worship at temples and shrines. "Life in [the city] only became viable," Sonoda notes,

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[6] Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

[7] Ravina, *Land and Lordship*, p. 17.

[8] Hidehiro Sonoda, *The Transformation of* Miyako *and the Emergence of Urbanity in Japan* (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2003), p. 117.

[9] Sonoda, *The Transformation of* Miyako, p. 44.

[10] Sonoda asserts that by 1700 the population density of Japanese cities had become comparable to that of Japan's modern cities.

"when balanced by excursions to [the outskirts] and the amusements provided there."[11]

Suburban space was recognized neither administratively nor within the Japanese vernacular, however. Municipal boundaries severed cities from provinces, and the grid of administrative jurisdictions allowed for no overlap or buffer zones between the two. Existing terminology for suburbs (*shigai*; *kōgai*), moreover, signified spaces beyond municipal boundaries but did not include any acknowledgement of independent functionality. It was this official nonexistence of suburbs that in part contributed to their emergence as aesthetic refuges or tourist sites, for although most remained under provincial jurisdiction, some were administratively ambiguous and therefore more conducive to unofficial activities and recreation. The emergence of *meisho* in suburbs, then, was particularly instrumental for several reasons: suburbs were within striking distance of cities; they often possessed the requisite aesthetic, cultural, and religious attractions; and they afforded a degree of egalitarian release from official obligations.

The growing cultural importance of suburbs in early modern Japan corresponded to growing interest in asserting local solidarity and constructing local identities that could be situated within a national context. For Itami, popular culture was a vehicle of doing so. Popular culture paralleled an exploding print culture that had transformational effects on what we call "early modern Japan" for expediency but what more accurately resembled the sort of imagined community articulated by Benedict Anderson, wherein individuals of all social strata share perceptions of their society as a "deep, horizontal comradeship."[12] By expanding knowledge outside one's immediate locale and enabling one to situate oneself within a larger geopolitical sphere vis-á-vis a constellation of urban centers, this corpus of publications became instrumental to the formation of local identities, be they real or imagined.[13] It was with the

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[11] Sonoda, *The Transformation of* Miyako, p. 135.

[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), p. 7. I am indebted to Peter Nosco for this insight.

[13] This explosion of printed materials allowed members of all social classes to lay hands on catalogues of books in print; maps; travelogues of various scopes and foci; guidebooks with daily itineraries; guidebooks with illustrations of famous places; and indexes of temples, shrines, shops, and pleasure quarters. For more on print culture during this period, see Mary

view of establishing for themselves conspicuous membership within this horizontal comradeship that Itami's poets inserted themselves into print culture as active participants.

**Brewing Spirits: From Castles to Casks**

*Itami County*

   Itami County[14] (*Itami gōchō*, Figure 1) overlooked the Ina River about nine miles northwest of central Osaka, but by the late 17th century it functioned as a suburb well within Osaka's commercial and cultural orbit. In spite of the imminent writer Ihara Saikaku's (1642-1693) affectionate depiction of Itami as a "hidden village" (*kakurezato*), its importance as a suburb drew largely from its accessibility. The town lay just a short leg upriver from the port of Denbō in Osaka Bay, a convenience that would be crucial to its exportation of saké. It also occupied the intersection of two important arteries that connected Kyoto and Osaka with points north and west. One, the *Arima-michi*, linked Osaka with provinces to the north, thereby making the town strategically relevant to Momoyama period warlords Oda Nobunaga (1543-1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598). The other, the *Saigoku kaidō* (Saigoku highway), connected Kyoto with Shimonoseki at the western end of Honshu. In 1617, Itami became the fifth relay station from Kyoto along this thoroughfare, assuring its lasting commercial relevance. Itami also lay a short detour north of the *Chūgoku kaidō*, the highway connecting Osaka with Shimonoseki. Although the town eventually acquired notoriety as a center of saké and poetry, since the late 16th century its utility as a gateway to Osaka and a station for regional transportation had furnished it with tangible geopolitical significance.

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Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 2-7.

[14] Itami-mura formed the urban nucleus of Itami County, an aggregate of satellite villages (*mura*) and consisted of several clustered neighborhoods (*machi*) and several temples and shrines. Originally these *machi*, numbering fifteen in the 1590s, were occupationally determined, distinguishable as collectives of fishermen, wood sellers, landless samurai, metal workers, rice merchants, or saké brewers. This number had expanded to twenty-seven by the 1730s, Itami-shi hakubutsukan, ed., *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko: Ōchō bunka 1200 nen no meihō* (Itami: Itami-shi hakubutsukan, 1994), p. 21.
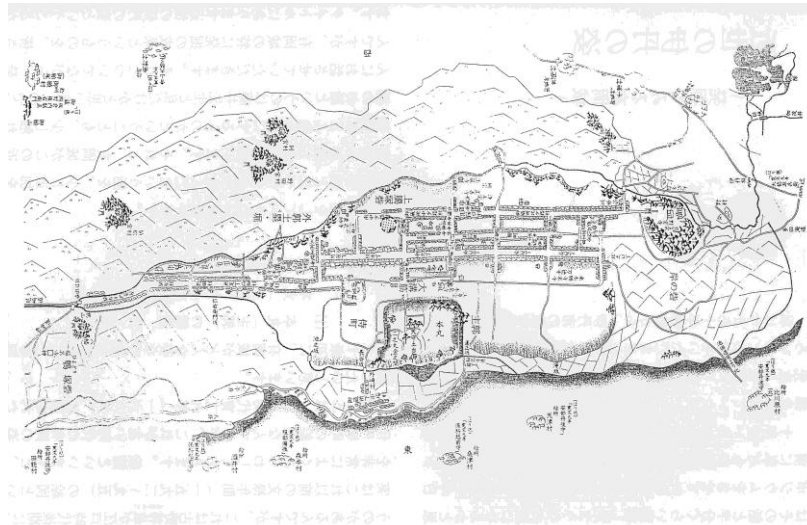
Figure 1. *Itami gōchō-ezu* (Map of Itami County, 1669).

Land apportionment and governance would seem irrelevant to *haikai* and the saké industry, the foci of this paper. In Itami's case, however, the dynamics of governance helped create the conditions that enabled the concurrent growth of mercantilism and aestheticism. Formerly a castle town ruled by Araki Murashige (d. 1579), one of Nobunaga's generals in Settsu, following Nobunaga's death in 1582 it was placed under the direct control of the imperial court. Thereafter, the region was designated a *musoku-chō*, land outside warrior jurisdiction and therefore off limits to samurai.[15] In accordance with Hideyoshi's initiatives to limit castle building and eliminate potential for further militarization within the provinces, the remnants of Arioka's castle were dismantled.[16] Under its new governance, resident samurai (and former samurai) became agriculturists or townsmen, and Itami was transformed from a castle town to a demilitarized

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[15] Fumiaki Adachi, *Itami: shiro to saké to haikai to* (Tokyo: Kindai bungeisha, 1983), p. 276.

[16] Sections of the castle's ramparts have been preserved and are still visible adjacent to Itami station.

protectorate.[17] Though Itami County was reappropriated by the *bakufu* during Ieyasu's 1615 siege of Osaka, it was released in 1661. At that time, the monk Ingen (1592-1673), founder of the Ōbaku sect of Zen Buddhism in Japan, had recently arrived from China and the *bakufu* was searching for a suitable site on which to construct Manpukuji, the sect's head temple. It settled on Gokanoshō in Uji, which happened to be under control of the Konoe clan. In exchange for Gokanoshō, the Konoe agreed to accept the Itami region, which it retained until 1871.[18]

The Konoe were one of the *gosekke*, the five regent houses descended from the Fujiwara clan that occupied the highest rank of court nobility and that had alternately served as Imperial Regents (*kanpaku*) since the 13th century.[19] They also served as occasional Ministers of State (*daijōdaijin*), the highest courtly position under the emperor. For Itami's saké brewers, authority availed the Konoe through proximity to the throne resulted in a degree of protection from Tokugawa interference.

Itami's independence from *bakufu* and *daimyō* control proved beneficial on several levels. The Konoe's responsibilities to undertake social welfare initiatives when necessary, to open its storehouses during famines, and to undertake periodic public works projects such as river bank maintenance were similar to those born by the *bakufu* and *daimyō*. When fires consumed breweries and sections of the city in 1688, 1699, 1702, and 1729 the Konoe provided relief. Konoe governance also proved advantageous from the perspective of taxation. Although lack of population data from 17th century Itami forces speculation about per capita tax burdens, collectively townsmen paid the equivalent of about 1,000 *koku* annually in land taxes to the Konoe.[20] *Kansei hachi-nen Itami saiken-zu* (Detailed map of Itami from 1796) from a century later shows the town consisting of

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[17] Adachi, *Itami*, p. 280.

[18] Itami-shi hensanshitsu, ed., *Itami-shiwa* (Itami: Itami shiyakusho, 1972), p. 116.

[19] In addition to the Konoe, the *gosekke* include the Ichijō, Nijō, Kujō, and Takatsukasa clans.

[20] Shūhei Imai, "*Kinsei toshi Itami to chōnin jichi: sono keizai kino to chiiki no un'ei*," in *Itami rekishi tanbō*, ed. Konishi Shintarō (Itami: Konishi shuzō, 2000), p. 407.

roughly 2,500 households and 9,500 residents. [21] Even allowing for a modest population growth during the 18th century, the annual tax burden divided among this number of households would have constituted no more than a trifle compared with tax rates under warrior control, which varied widely but generally amounted to thirty to forty percent of a village's *kokudaka*, or assessed land productivity.[22]

The most extraordinary dynamic of the relationship between Itami and the Konoe lay at the level of local administration. Itami's town office was not staffed by a Konoe representative, meaning not only that the town was spared from bearing these administrative costs, but that it was allowed to function as a semi-independent civil government. The Konoe formalized this arrangement in 1697 by placing the administrative and judicial affairs of Itami County in the hands of an appointed council of twenty-four elders (*sōshukurō*) – selected from the major brewing houses – which met periodically at the town office, the *Konoe kaisho* (Konoe assembly hall), and members' administrative and ceremonial responsibilities alternated annually. [23] The financial officer was responsible for collecting and remitting taxes to Kyoto; others were placed in charge of planning city affairs such as the annual festival at the Nonomiya shrine where the town's tutelary deity was enshrined. The council determined the dates of brewing seasons, shipping seasons, as well as exacted penalties on non-compliant brewers. [24] It also dispatched to Kyoto monthly reports of the town's political, administrative, and judicial affairs. Council membership, in other words, formalized a pseudo-aristocratic status that variously enjoyed more prestige and authority than village headmen, their counterparts in villages under *bakufu* or *daimyō* governance. *Sōshukurō* were given permission to learn swordsmanship and wear swords as markers of their responsibility as

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[21] Michiko Ishikawa, "*Arioka-jō kara Itami Gōchō e: shuzō no machi Itamigō no seiritsu*," in *Itami rekishi tanbō*, ed. Konishi Shintarō (Itami: Konishi shuzō, 2000), p. 448.

[22] Michael Smitka ed., *The Japanese Economy in the Tokugawa Era, 1600-1868* (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 51.

[23] Evidently anticipating truancy from the outset, the official minutes of the initial assembly from the 10th month of 1697 stipulated that council members must put aside personal affairs and convene when administrative matters so required, Imai, "*Kinsei toshi Itami,*" pp. 417-419.

[24] Michiko Ishikawa, "*Itami shuzōgyō to Konishi-ke*," in *Itami rekishi tanbō*, ed. Konishi Shintarō (Itami: Konishi shuzō, 2000), p. 309.

peacekeepers and protectors of the village.[25] This de facto samurai class was further legitimated as such in 1768 when head councilman Konishi Shinuemon (7th generation) received permission from the Konoe to open a fencing school, the Shūbukan. Training *rōnin* and townsmen to defend the county constituted an additional step toward securing local independence. This combination of economic protection and administrative freedom helped create conditions favorable for Itami's saké industry.

*Itami* saké

Itami was one of twelve towns that formed Settsu's saké brewing belt, and at the start of the Edo period its brewers were already well known as having acquired a high level of technical knowledge. Enterprising brewers transported small quantities to Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo, expanding Itami's name recognition.[26] *Seishu* (clear saké) was invented in Kōnoike-mura, a northern section of Itami, and Yamanaka Shinroku (1571-1650) from Kōnoike is cited by history books as the first to commercialize it.[27] Exhibiting extraordinary foresight, Shinroku first took his saké to Edo in 1599 when Tokugawa Ieyasu was still a regent to Toyotomi Hideyori and Edo was little more than a military outpost. When he established a system for transporting saké from Osaka to Edo by ship in 1619, which he determined to be faster and cheaper than land transport, other brewers followed suit.[28]

After 1661 Itami shifted to large-scale saké production under the promotion and protection of the Konoe family. Brewers had always operated alongside artisanry and agriculture, and by the Genroku period (1688-1704) they steered the county's administration and dominated its economy.[29] The industry stimulated supporting industries like barrel-

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[25] Itami shiritsu hakubutsukan, ed., *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko*, p. 21.

[26] From the Kyoto shop curtain advertising *Itami-zaké* depicted in the *Miyako mandayū-za byōbu* (1670s) folding screen, it is evident that Itami saké had established itself early in the Kyoto market, Kakimori bunko, ed., *Morohaku no haikai: genroku no shuto itami no bunka* (Itami: Kakimori bunko, 2004), p. 5.

[27] Shinroku was the son of the samurai commander Yamanaka Shikanosuke (d. 1578) but as a merchant changed his surname to Kōnoike and dubbed his shop, Kōnoike-ya, Adachi, *Itami,* p. 284.

[28] Ishikawa, "*Itami shuzōgyō to Konishi-ke*," pp. 308-310.

[29] Ishikawa, "*Arioka-jō kara Itami Gōchō e*," p. 435.

makers, carpenters, and weavers, all licensed by the Konoe, as well as the supply and transport infrastructure for raw materials and finished products.[30] In 1697, the town claimed thirty-six breweries and double that number in 1715, most of which were clustered together in rows of two-story buildings west of the castle ruins. From Itami, casks were transported by horse to Kanzaki, by boat to the port of Denbō, and then loaded onto "barrel barges" (*tarukaisen*) bound for Edo and other northern ports.

An array of brands and labels were exported to suppliers active in Edo. In the 1730s, Itami's *kudari-zake* (saké bound for Edo) exceeded 180,000 casks valued at about 64,800 *koku*, and demand pushed this quantity progressively higher. Shipping was expedited in 1784 when Itami brewers finally received permission to use boats on the Ina River, ostensibly enabling door-to-door water transport that delivered saké to its destination in a week or less.[31] Because of problems resulting from the flood of saké into Edo, between 1792 and 1794 imports were limited to 50,000 barrels. Pre-restriction levels recovered immediately, however. In 1804 exports to Edo peaked at 277,704 barrels valued at roughly 99,970 *koku*, which yielded brewers about 30,000 *koku* in profit.[32] Each subsequent year saw Itami's exports exceed 200,000 barrels, about 31 percent of Edo's total saké imports.[33]

All breweries, Itami's included, were subject to taxes and production limits set by the *bakufu*, but Konoe involvement provided Itami's saké industry with occasional protection. In 1657, the *bakufu* promulgated a system requiring brewers to purchase *shuzō kabu* (brewing stocks), which functioned as brewing licenses and stipulated whether the saké was to be exported to Edo or sold locally. Brewing taxes were exacted on production rather than profits and varied depending on the type of saké and the type of stocks. Some types were taxed more than others, and some were tax exempt. Those possessed by most Itami brewers were so-called

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[30] Itami-shi hakubutsukan, ed., *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko*, p. 21.

[31] Ishikawa, "*Itami shuzōgyō to Konishi-ke*," p. 309.

[32] It should be noted that money lending to *daimyō* provided the town with an additional source of income. Itami regularly lent large sums to over twenty *daimyō* around the country, loans that were repaid with rice from domanial storehouses that brewers then used to produce sake, Itami-shi hensanshitsu, ed., *Itami-shiwa*, pp. 92-93.

[33] Adachi, *Itami*, pp. 90-91, 286.

*hakumai* (white rice) *kabu* that were exempt from *bakufu* taxation.[34] In order to assure an adequate food supply, this system also imposed production limits by balancing the ratio of rice allocated for saké production with the annual or seasonal availability of rice.[35] Though such regulations applied to Itami brewers as well, occasionally the Konoe were able to acquire exemption from this regulation.[36] In 1806, for example, when unprecedented supplies of saké triggered restrictions on production in order to prevent a drastic drop in prices, Itami breweries responded with intense opposition. Exercising its political leverage, the Konoe dispatched a delegation to intercede, securing for itself the authority to set saké prices and manage productivity.[37] As a rule, however, the Konoe backed *bakufu* regulations by imposing production limits. Noting that prices fluctuated according to supply and demand, and citing challenges from competitors in other regions, the Konoe proclaimed that Itami brewers should pursue quality over quantity and ship only their highest grade saké to Edo.[38]

This strategy yielded extraordinary success. Itami-zaké's popularity derived from its quality, not from its production volume. It was dry, relatively high in alcohol content, and acquired a distinctive bouquet from fermentation in casks made of fragrant *sugi* (Japanese cedar). In *Saikaku oridome*[39] (Saikaku's tail end, 1694), periodic visitor Ihara Saikaku praised Itami's breweries for the care they took during the brewing process. He noted the meticulousness with which they inspected the water and rice, that male workers duly changed their sandals when entering the warehouses, and that women, considered defiled, were banned from the premises altogether.[40] In 1740, *Itami-zaké* was awarded top honors by the Tokugawa family, an honor that thereafter enabled it to lay claim as the country's superior brew.[41]

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[34] Ishikawa, "*Itami shuzōgyō to Konishi-ke*," pp. 306-308.

[35] Falling rice prices hurt samurai, paid in rice; rising prices hurt townspeople, who purchased rice.

[36] Imai, "*Kinsei toshi Itami*," p. 408.

[37] Itami-shi hakubutsukan, ed., *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko*, p. 22.

[38] Ishikawa, "*Itami shuzōgyō to Konishi-ke*," p. 305.

[39] *Saikaku oridome* has been translated by Peter Nosco in *Some Final Words of Advice* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1980).

[40] Ishikawa, "*Itami shuzōgyō to Konishi-ke*," p. 302.

[41] Adachi, *Itami*, pp. 90-91, 286.

By the 1670s, as saké was converting Itami into a commercial landmark, affluence and qualified administrative independence were creating fertile ground for aesthetic pursuits that would transform it into a cultural *meisho*. The town's nascent *haikai* salon, its accessibility, and its reputation as a community willing and able to host imminent visitors made it attractive as a suburban getaway among poets from Kyoto and Osaka. Such was Itami's situation when *haikai* master Ikeda Sōtan (1636-1693) came to town.

### Brewing Songs: Aestheticism and *Itami-fū haikai*

*Itami-fū haikai*

Sōtan arrived in Itami in the spring of 1674 and, it is claimed locally, became so enchanted with the saké there that he decided to stay indefinitely. The guest of honor during that visit was not Sōtan but his master Matsue Shigeyori (1602-1680), a leading representative of the Teimon School, who had been invited by Itami brewer Kawaji Nobufusa.[42] After about ten days, Shigeyori returned to Kyoto and Sōtan settled into a house, the Yaunken, which thereafter functioned as the town's *haikai* academy. Devoted more to saké and poetry than to family, Sōtan lived in Itami for the next twenty years without marrying. Throughout, his Yaunken stood as a beacon marking *Itami-fū haikai* upon the cultural landscape.[43]

Shigeyori was one of the more liberal and rebellious leaders of the Teimon School and Sōtan's poetics took his master's irreverent style a step further. Said to be a thick, sturdy man, blunt, and a heavy drinker – descriptors similar to those attributed to *Itami-fū haikai* itself – Sōtan was energized rather than turned off by the rough, provincial poetry he encountered there. After settling in Itami, his poetry gravitated toward

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[42] Interest in *haikai* as an alternative to *renga* fueled the formation of the Teimon (or Teitoku) School around Matsunaga Teitoku (1571-1653) in the first half of the seventeenth century. Teitoku's desire to justify the genre's existence as a viable poetic form yielded a somewhat codified, conservative poetics that were later rejected by more recreational poets. In 1673, Nishiyama Sōin (1605-1682) initiated the Danrin School in Osaka, whose playful, witty verses made *haikai* practice more conducive to widespread participation.

[43] Okada Rihei, *Saikaku, Chikamatsu, Itami* (Tokyo: Yagi shoten, 1997), p. 78.

boldness, puns, and clever language usage – an unrestrained approach that proved well suited to his brewer colleagues. Finding *haikai* and drinking complementary pastimes, Sōtan made saké part of *haikai* practice by instilling the boisterousness of intoxication within the poetry itself. Weighing semantic content over form, he did not shy away from adding extra syllables in order to complete a worthy witticism. Here Sōtan needs nineteen rather than the customary seventeen syllables, and so reverses the standard 5-7-5 sequence to 7-5-7:

> *fumarekeri hana*              trodden blossoms
> *guchi oshika*                 open your drunken mouths and
> *ima ichi-do sake* [44]        bloom just once more

In addition to the heterodoxical line progression, the verse derives humor from Sōtan's play on *saké*, which, as above, could be read as the imperative "bloom again," or as "more saké please!" Sōtan was so celebrated locally that he could enjoy a free drink at any brewery in town. His ode to saké:

> *ka no ichi mo*               in this mosquito-ville
> *tsuboiri shite ya*           one can get a drink anywhere
> *saké no yō* [45]             sweet intoxication of wine

*Itami-fū haikai* was bold, heterodoxical, cheerfully direct, indiscreet, and made use of Chinese words and colloquialisms. Commonly described by secondary sources as "frank and open-hearted" (*gōhō rairaku*), it was an unapologetic poetry that, during Sōtan's lifetime, was content with its recreational function. Not aspiring to the depth or loftiness that *haikai* acquired later under Uejima Onitsura (1661-1738) and Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), its objective was a momentary cleverness that did not rely on extensive knowledge of classical poetry. This verse composed by Itami brewer Konishi Bayō (1653-1732) is representative:

> *ushi no tsuno ya*            a bull's horn
> *tanishi no kara no*          perfect place to hang
> *oku tokoro* [46]             a snail's shell

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[44] Adachi, *Itami,* p. 149.
[45] Sōtan's pun on *ka* (mosquito) and *kano* (this) provides the humor.

Here, interest is generated by the poem's juxtaposition of the two animals, not only of their scale but of a perfect union achieved by the menacing and pointed with the round and fragile. Such an offhanded incorporation of the two is unexpected, absurd, and thus, humorous. The first line's extra syllable only enhances its eccentricity.

Such characteristics, it is noted, appear consistent with the wordplay typical of Danrin School poetry, ascendant in Osaka from about the time Sōtan arrived in Itami. For some commentators aiming to locate *Itami-fū haikai* within the cultural field, this fact, combined with Itami's proximity to Osaka, has constituted sufficient evidence to indicate Osaka's dominant cultural impact on Itami. It is true that proximity to Osaka facilitated the absorption of newer plebian cultural influences and enabled visits by Danrin founder Nishiyama Sōin (1605-1682) and literary superstar Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693). It is also the case, however, that Sōtan had originally claimed affiliation with Kyoto's Teimon School and that commercial and administrative alliances with Kyoto had continually exposed Itami to the capital's aristocratic elegance. Evidence of a hybrid cultural identity derived from these dual cultural loyalties has generated discussion about whom to credit with the development of *Itami-fū haikai*.

Ishikawa Shinkō has suggested that while the Danrin style of Sōin and Saikaku did influence Itami's *haikai* establishment, it did so only after the more classical poetic practices typical of Kyoto culture had become established there. The affinity for *kyōka* (comic verse) among Itami brewers mirrors the same affinity among Teitoku school poets from Kyoto. Custom dictated that when a Teitoku master critiqued and returned a student's verse he attached a *kyōka*. Itami poets imitated this practice, and their *kyōka* are included in works like *Kokon ikyokushū* (Collection of old and new comic verses, 1665). As *kyōka* was much less popular among Osaka Danrin poets, this aspect of Itami's cultural practice indicates influence from Kyoto.[47]

Records of *renga* and *waka* gatherings in Itami dating from the early 17th century, moreover, testify to cultural activities predating Sōin's

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[46] Teruko Segawa, "*Onitsura to Itami-fū haikai: Itami no bungei katsudō*," in *Itami rekishi tanbō*, ed. Konishi Shintarō (Itami: Konishi shuzō, 2000), p. 140.

[47] Ishikawa Shinkō, "*Morohaku no haikai*," in *Morohaku no haikai: genroku no shuto itami no bunka*, ed. Kakimori bunko (Itami: Kakimori bunko, 2004), pp. 66-68.

popularization of culture from Osaka in the 1670s.[48] The lasting impact of Kyoto culture is also suggested by the enduring popularity of tea ceremony (*chanoyu*) in Itami. As an aristocratic form of leisure for Momoyama courtiers, clergy, and warriors, the aesthetics of *chanoyu* were subsequently popularized among townspeople in Kyoto and Itami. Arioka Dōtan (1662-1730s), for example, modeled his *Chanoyu hyakutei hyakkai no ki* (Record of a Hundred Tea Ceremonies at a Hundred Cottages) after Kyoto-based Sen no Rikyū's *Hyakkaiki* (1590-91). Compiled between 1681 and 1720, Dōtan's compendium reveals that in form and style, tea ceremonies around Itami were conducted as they were by Rikyū School devotees in Kyoto.

Through poetry and tea, then, Kyoto was a continuing fountain of aesthetic inspiration for Itami's cultural salon. Roughly twenty-five miles distant via the *Saigoku kaidō*, the capital was well within striking distance for determined pleasure-seekers. Reference in Saikaku's story "*Tsu no kuni no kakurezato*" (A Hidden Village of Settsu, from *Saikaku oridome*), to a wayward prodigal son from Itami commuting to Kyoto's Shimabara pleasure quarters, therefore, is entirely plausible.

> Here, the province of Tsu [Settsu], is the place where long ago a family first started brewing *Itami morohaku*.[49] It is said that the inherent happiness of the head of this family, a petty man, was earning his five *kanme*[50] of silver each and every year. As time passed his children grew into adults. The oldest, who stood to inherit the family fortune, was clever, but rejected the archaic ways of his parents. Infatuated with prostitutes, he would dress himself in the newest fashions and covertly hurry back and forth in his palanquin to the Shimabara [pleasure quarters in Kyoto].[51]

Chastisement of moral corruption among the wealthy and powerful is a hallmark of Genroku fiction, and it is indeed likely that Itami's suddenly acquired wealth ignited the scorn of less fortunate urbanites. The above

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[48] Shinkō, "*Morohaku no haikai*," p. 66.

[49] *Morohaku*, produced from polished white rice, was Itami's highest quality saké.

[50] One *kanme* (1,000 *monme*) was a unit of weight equaling about 8.3 pounds. Five *kanme*, about 83 *ryō*, would be a middling sum for a townsman of this period.

[51] Adachi, *Itami*, p. 150.

statement, certainly associates the town's affluence with a culture of hedonism and indulgence by depicting Itami saké brewers as a clique of *nouveau riche* yokels living in dissipation.

Itami's reputation as a town of wealthy playboys is also showcased in Chikamatsu Monzaemon's hit *bunraku* play *Shinjūten no Amijima* (Love Suicides at Amijima, 1721). Tragic paper merchant Kamiya Jihei and the prostitute Koharu plot their love suicide as Jihei's rival, the wealthy bully Tahei, competes for Koharu's affection. In the opening scene a fellow prostitute encounters Koharu and inquires about her relationship with Jihei.

> Prostitute: I've also heard that you're to be ransomed by Tahei and go live with him in the country – Itami, was it? Is it true?
> Koharu: I'd be much obliged if you'd please stop talking about Itami![52] The close relations between Jihei and myself, I'm sorry to say, are not as close as people suppose.[53]

Later, Tahei's villainy, and Itami's by extension, are reiterated by Jihei:

> The other day, as my brother can tell you, Tahei – they call him the Lone Wolf because he hasn't any family or relations – started a fight and was trampled on. He gets all the money he needs from his home town [Itami], and he's been trying for a long time to redeem Koharu.[54]

Chikamatsu vilifies the injustice of the leverage afforded to the wealthy, and his specific reference to Itami in this context suggests that the town's wealth had already earned it an unfavorable reputation around Osaka. Itami and *Itami-fū haikai*, therefore, endured an ambivalent image in the region. Though buoyed by the celebrity of its saké and of the cultural capital held by figures like Sōtan and Onitsura, it also attracted the resentment of the less fortunate.

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[52] Chikamatsu's pun on the word *itami* (pain) allows us to hear Koharu's exhortation as a plea to stop exacerbating her anguish.

[53] Donald Keene, trans., *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 172.

[54] Keene, *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu,* p. 189. Here, Itami appears in Chikamatsu's original but is omitted from Keene's translation.

*Onitsura*

  *Haikai* held great promise as an equalizer in Edo period society, for its lexicon and language usage were shared by men and women of all classes. As this poetic form afforded all with opportunities for cultivation, salons and poetry circles (*za*; *zashiki*) also afforded relatively equal opportunity for participation. Individuals like Uejima Onitsura, from Itami, and Matsuo Bashō, headquartered in Edo, however, felt that this potential was blocked by the rowdiness and coarse humor that permeated much of contemporary *haikai* practice. The continued relevance of the maxim, "In the east there's Bashō; in the west there's Onitsura," is due not only to the enduring fame of both men, but also to the legacy of their mutual efforts to raise *haikai* poetics from vulgarity (*zoku*) to aesthetic mindfulness and elegance (*ga*).[55]

  By the end of Sōtan's life (1693), the jocular irreverence that had characterized *Itami-fū haikai* since his arrival was no longer universally appreciated. Some purists did not recognize it as poetry, referring to it as "Itami's mad style" (*Itami no kyōran-tai*).[56] Such criticisms resonated first with Onitsura, who became the town's most celebrated native son precisely because he endeavored to elevate its *haikai* to respectability, and later among others within the salon. It was in direct response to such concerns that residents like Onitsura's kinsman Uejima Aondo (d. 1740) came to describe *Itami-fū* as first-rate (*ichiryū*) *haikai* and compare it to bamboo shoots from Saga, known for growing thick and sturdy.[57]

  Onitsura encapsuled his mission in the term *makoto* (sincerity) and the conviction that "there is no *haikai* without sincerity" (*makoto no hoka ni haikai nashi*). *Makoto* legitimated *haikai* as a serious poetic form while simultaneously rejecting the artificial humor and strangeness that had dominated *haikai* practice in Itami. In his treatise *Hitorigoto* ("Soliloquy," 1718), Onitsura avers that acquiring *makoto* required training and self-cultivation.[58] He also asserted that it was "a quality more important to the

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[55] Kakimori bunko, ed., *Hokusetsu no fūkō: bunjintachi no Itami, Ikeda, Minō* (Itami: Kakimori bunko, 2000), p. 60.

[56] Segawa, "*Onitsura to Itami-fū haikai*," p. 140.

[57] Itami-shishi hensan senmon iinkai (ed.), *Itami-shishi*, vol. 2 (Itami: Itami-shi, 1968), p. 668.

[58] For a translation, with commentary, of *Hitorigoto*, see Cheryl Crowley, "Putting *Makoto* into Practice: Onitsura's *Hitorigoto*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 50/1 (1995): 1-46.

*kokoro* [heart/mind] rather than the *kotoba* [wording] of the poem."[59] For the aspiring poet, bringing *makoto* into one's heart/mind and living according to it enabled one's *haikai* to be a true reflection of oneself and of nature.

The details of Onitsura's life and poetry fill many books and so will be limited here to only those that illuminate how his personal patterns of identity construction and representation pertained to the town's own such endeavors. Onitsura was a self-made man both poetically and professionally, and he elucidated these dual identities as poet and samurai in his autobiographical writings. *Fujiwara Munechikaden* (Biography of Fujiwara Munechika, 1724)[60], appropriately written in *kanbun*, resurrects a distant genealogical connection between the Uejima clan and the Fujiwara family.[61] The theme indicates that he did not readily accept the decline of the Uejima clan, now saké brewers, to townsmen status and wished to elevate its standing to the level of his warrior ancestors. The text recounts how, at age twenty-six (1687), he traveled to Edo for an audience with the *daimyō* of Tanba and, after being turned away, how he was finally accepted into service as a samurai retainer. He returned to Itami in 1695 to care for his mother and then resumed samurai service between 1708-1718. Though hired for his knowledge of medicine, the autobiography claims that he was employed for possessing a samurai's honor.[62] It also relates that he neither earned money from *haikai* nor took pupils, but enjoyed it only as a hobby. Living as a samurai, it would not be fitting that he engage in a pastime that aspired only to play and comedy.

While not in service, of course, Onitsura lived and self-identified as a poet. The statement, "In Itami, the place of my birth, people have long loved *renga* and *haikai*," from the autobiographical *haikai* collection *Satoe nana kuruma*[63] (Satoe's Seven Vehicles, 1727), embraces both his common status and replaces his part-time samurai identity with pride in his town's

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[59] Crowley, "Putting *Makoto* into Practice," p. 5.

[60] Other genealogies cite Onitsura's given name as Hidenori; this text is the only known record of the name Munechika.

[61] The Uejima clan originated in the 14th century as a branch of the Fujiwara family. Onitsura's grandfather Naomune had moved to Itami in the mid-1590s and become a saké brewer.

[62] Okada Rihei, *Kinsei ni okeru itami bungaku no tenkai* (Itami: Kakimori bunko, 1990), p. 140.

[63] Satoe was one of Onitsura's pseudonyms.

local culture.[64] Though Onitsura travelled widely and opted to live outside of Itami for much of his life, he did not abandon the local pride manifested in this statement. In no way was his pride in Itami's affinity for poetry, moreover, meant to camouflage its local industry. For Onitsura, as for Itami residents, no antagonism or contradiction divided saké-making and *haikai*; the two were equally integrated components of the town's identity. Industry both enabled and complemented the town's image as a *meisho*. *Nihon sankai meisan-zue* (Illustrations of Specialties from Japan's Mountains and Seas, 1799) notes that workers washing their saké mashing sacks in the Ina River after completing a new brew was the sight typical of life in Itami.[65] Apparently Onitsura had the identical thought:

> *shizu no me ya*            a humble maid
> *fukuro arahi no*           washing her sacks
> *mizu no iro*               the color of water[66]

In the following description of Itami, similarly, Onitsura views saké breweries and natural beauty as complementary to one another.

> *mae ni shuka arite kiku no shitatari wo nagashi*
> *ushiro ni matsu takō shite kojō no mukashi wo misu*
> *tsukihana wo wagamono gao no makura ka na*[67]

> before me a row of wine shops dispensing spirits
> behind, pines grow thickly and an old castle invokes antiquity
> the moon and blossoms – pillows that I make my own

*The Itami salon*

　　　Onitsura's era corresponds to a period that Okada Rihei calls Itami's "golden age," for it was at this time that the town's saké brewers functioned collectively as a vibrant salon.[68] This period falls roughly between Sōtan's establishment of the Yaunken in 1674, the pillar of Itami's

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[64] Segawa, "Onitsura to *Itami-fū haikai*," p. 137.

[65] Adachi, *Itami*, p. 124.

[66] This verse is engraved on a memorial tablet in front of the Itami saké brewing hall, Adachi, *Itami,* p. 125.

[67] Kakimori bunko, *Hokusetsu no fūkō*, p. 60.

[68] Okada, *Kinsei ni okeru*, p. 76.

salon during his lifetime, and the completion of *Arioka haikai isshiden* (Reclusive *haikai* poets of Itami, 1723). This text by Morimoto Hyakumaru (1655-1727) is the most comprehensive effort to record and honor the membership of Itami's salon from the last quarter of the 17th century through the first quarter of the 18th century. The seventy-seven *haikai* poets included in the work cannot be considered an exhaustive list, for this number corresponds roughly to the number of Itami's operating breweries, nearly all of which complemented their commercial affairs with poetic pursuits. As the text omits the names of several dozen poets known to have been active during this period, certainly the salon's actual number exceeded one hundred.

About half of the seventy-seven poets included in *Isshiden* are noted in the text as accomplished in several from a remarkable spectrum of artistic forms. Those mentioned include: *waka*, *haikai*, *renga*, *kyōka*, calligraphy, Zen sutra-copying, *nō* recitation and performance, wind instruments, string instruments, *kemari* football, flower arrangement, *go*, painting, and tea ceremony.[69] This cultural eclecticism is probably not exaggerated, for Saikaku had made a similar observation thirty years earlier. Again in "*Tsu no kuni no kakurezato*," Saikaku wrote of the extraordinary aesthetic accomplishments of a middle son from Itami – one who, like Onitsura, would inherit neither the fortunes nor the responsibilities of the family business:

> The middle-born son escaped the attentions of his parents, and being bright did not adhere to the trails blazed by those before him. In general he learned musical instruments and the four styles of Nō chanting directly from the masters. For *renga*, he went to stand before Shinzaike (head of the *renga* school) and for *haikai* went to Baiō (Saikaku's teacher, Nishiyama Sōin) in Naniwa [Osaka]. For flower arrangement he went to learn at Ikenobō [at the Rokkakudō in Kyoto]. In the case of *kemari* football, he received the highest honor of wearing the purple *hakama*; he learned the Way of tea from Kanamori (a school of tea ceremony developed by Kanamori Sōwa [1584-1656]); in reading the classics, he received the Way of (the Confucian scholar) Utsunomiya. At the Go board he earned high ranks, and with the short bow he (painted the bull's-eye with gold leaf) under the tutelage of [Imai] Itchū. As for incense, he

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[69] Okada, *Kinsei ni okeru*, p. 77.

> learned to teachings of Yamaguchi Enkyū and became a knowledgeable master. In addition to these, he learned *biwa* and *koto* under Hayama, *kouta* from Iwai, the Gidayū style of *jōruri* chanting, comic improvisation from Yasuichi, and imitations from Kichihyoe….He was widely known and admired as a multi-skilled individual.[70]

The Itami's salon's cultural diversity is more noteworthy, perhaps, than its establishment of *Itami-fū haikai*, which was praised by some and snubbed by others. It suggests an artistic independence that recalls an important aspect of *Itami-fū haikai*: its non-allegiance to any particular poetic school or philosophy. The salon did not seek to define or codify its *haikai*, and members trained at and maintained interest in competing *haikai* schools. At least one member of the salon, Kitagawahara Zashin (dates unknown but a contemporary of Onitsura), professed a strong inclination for Shōmon (Bashō) School *haikai*. He cited Bashō's writings in his *Fūkōshū* (Collection of beautiful scenes, 1704) and the following year invited the prominent Shōmon leader Kagami Shikō (1665-1731) to Itami.[71] A verse composed by Zashin on that occasion reveals an affinity for Bashō's style *haikai*:

> *sakatsuki mo*          hearing saké cups
> *kakkō kiku*            and cuckoos
> *asa no koto*           morning things

This poem evokes Bashō's style of creativity and penchant for nature appreciation. Zashin's surprising grouping of saké cups and cuckoos produces a light, fresh, and heightened sense of attention that is then further elevated by their designation as morning sounds. The alliteration of 'k' syllables also creates aural appreciation by mimicking a cuckoo's call. Finally, *sakatsuki* (saké cup) and *kakkō* (cuckoo), references to Itami and summer, duly mark the place and season of the composition. The verse, then, celebrates Itami as a place where saké and bird songs are so endemic as to be commonly enjoyed, even in the morning.

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[70] Okada, *Saikaku, Chikamatsu, Itami*, p. 6; parentheses indicate Okada's notations.

[71] Okada, *Kinsei ni okeru*, p. 49.

In the ninth month of 1701, the *rōnin* Ōtaka Gengo (1672-1703) arrived in Itami disguised as a townsman. Gengo was one of the forty-seven samurai who swore to avenge an injustice suffered by their lord Asano Naganori (1667-1701), the *daimyō* of nearby Ako domain (present-day Hyōgo prefecture).[72] Six months earlier Lord Asano had attacked his superior, Kira Yoshinaka (1641-1702) who had insulted him, and was subsequently ordered to commit ritual suicide. Expecting retaliation, Kira put Asano's retainers, now *rōnin*, under surveillance. By the time of his covert appearance in Itami, Gengo was already well known as a poet and a tea adept, and earlier had published a volume of his poetry under the sobriquet Shiyō. Once in town, he joined a poetry gathering at Onitsura's house.

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|---|---|---|
| *kaku yama wo* | tugging upward | |
| *hittatete saku* | on every mountain | |
| *shioni ka na* | asters in bloom! | Shiyō |

Onitsura echoes Shiyō's *shioni* (asters) with *shiore* (bow; droop), both of which alliterate with Gengo's sobriquet.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *tsuki wa nashi* | moonless night | |
| *ame nite hagi wa* | bush clover bowing | |
| *shioretari* | under the rain | Onitsura[73] |

Bush clover, a pink or purple flower that blooms in later summer and autumn, the season of Gengo's visit, links with asters, which also have pink blossoms and bloom in the same season. The following year, Gengo and the forty-six other loyal retainers carried out their vendetta, for which they also received orders to commit *seppuku*.

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[72] Itami and Ako are both in present-day Hyogo Prefecture. Itami's independence from warrior governance may well have enhanced its attraction as a place of political asylum. In the final years of the Edo period, Itami attracted bands of imperial loyalists (*shishi*) supporting the restoration movement. Controlled by the courtier Konoe family, Itami represented both a rare swath of territory retaining administrative allegiance to the imperial court and theoretical immunity from *bakufu* scrutiny, Itami shiritsu hakubutsukan, *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko*, p. 22.

[73] Adachi, *Itami*, pp. 154-155.

The salon's succession of prominent guests[74] reveals it as an important consumer of culture within the Kansai region. Successfully hosting a succession of prominent cultural icons, attending poetry gatherings, drinking tea and saké while exchanging verses with these celebrities, as well as keeping published records of those experiences, all greatly reinforced the town's self image as a legitimate and independent community with a distinct cultural identity. It was also due to such communities that popular culture in early modern Japan was able to "pay for itself." Itami's brewers brought masters of the myriad arts to their houses to interact with and learn from, and were delighted to extend lodging to celebrity *bunjin bokkyaku* ("ink guests") who financed their travels with poems or instruction. Itami's appetite for the arts reveals how prominent *bunjin* carved out livelihoods by taking advantage of demand for their celebrity.

Not only was Itami a voracious consumer of culture, it was also a prolific producer, as is clear from its publishing activities. Many of the *haikai* collections produced during this "golden age" are not extant, but accounts of at least thirty survive from the years 1678-1737.[75] In addition to these, *haikai* collections that announced the New Year were produced nearly every year beginning in 1678. Publishing immortalized individual and collective talents, but it also afforded opportunities for greater

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[74] In addition to Sōin, Saikaku, and those already mentioned, these included Sōin's disciples Konishi Raizan (1654-1716), Ikenishi Gonzui (1650-1722), and Hōjō Dansui (1663-1711); Matsuo Bashō's disciple Kagami Shikō; and the painter Ōoka Shunboku (1680-1763). Although certain promotional documents from Itami claim that Matsuo Bashō also visited Itami, Bashō only skirted the town as he traveled along the *Saigoku kaidō* to Kyoto in the fourth month of 1688 (Itami-shi hensanshitsu, *Itami-shiwa*, pp. 112-113). Promotional documents also overstate the town's relationship with prominent playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), who never visited Itami but did correspond several times with the affluent brewer Konishi Shin'uemon. Only a dozen or so of Chikamatsu's letters survive, and two of these pertain somehow to Shin'uemon. Though details are omitted in these documents, Chikamatsu had acted as an intermediary in a negotiation for Konishi, for which he received a cask of *saké* as compensation. The letters are reports about the negotiation and a thank-you note, Adachi, *Itami*, p. 153.

[75] Kakimori bunko, *Morohaku no haikai*, p. 80.

participation and advancement within the salon. Those selected to edit volumes and pen prefaces reveal the salon's changing leadership. When Onitsura and salon leader Morimoto Hyakumaru both left Itami for Kyoto in 1703, Shiinomoto Saimaro (1656-1738), a pupil of Saikaku and Sōin and friends with Bashō, stepped in to help unite the group. In that year he wrote the preface to *Chiri no kaori* (The Fragrance of Dust), and the fact that the volume was produced without a single verse by Onitsura, Okada asserts, had a revitalizing effect on the group's collective work.[76] Although originally a devotee of the Danrin style, long associations with Onitsura and Bashō compelled Saimaro to adopt their cause of elevating the sophistication and elegance of Itami poetry.[77] Saimaro remained a central presence in subsequent publications. In 1718 he compiled, edited and penned the preface to *Senyōshū* (One Thousand Leaves), which, as he explains in the preface, was meant to honor the highly regarded *Manyōshū* (Ten Thousand Leaves). Saimarō also edited a sequel to this volume in 1730.

Another who rose within Itami's cultural circles was Arioka Dōtan (1662-1730s), remembered primarily for his *Chanoyu hyakutei hyakkai no ki* (Record of a hundred tea ceremonies at a hundred cottages, preface 1699) compiled between 1681 and 1720. Dōtan was an established presence in tea circles in the Kansai region and his volume chronicles one hundred of the over one thousand tea ceremonies he attended between the ages of 19 and 65. An imitation of Sen no Rikyū's *Hyakkaiki* (1590-91), the text records the host, guests, and tea utensils used at each event. From these records emerges evidence of a core membership – individuals like the perennial participant Morimoto Ranshō who owned a large collection of valuable tea utensils – and in many cases this tea coterie overlapped with the membership of the town's *haikai* circle.[78] Though Dōtan does not mention his own role in popularizing tea within Itami, the fact that in 1720 he handed this work over to his students, the second and third sons of Onitsura's kinsman Uejima Aondo, indicates that he had been teaching it in

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[76] Okada Rihei, ed., *Itami bungei shiryō: itami shiryō sōsho* vol. 1 (Itami: Itami shiyakusho, 1975), p. 404.

[77] Rihei, *Itami bungei shiryō: itami shiryō sōsho,* p. 408.

[78] Itami-shi hensanshitsu, *Itami-shiwa*, p. 111.

town. Clearly, saké, *haikai*, and tea were enjoyed together as complementary components of the Itami salon.[79]

It is important, finally, not to understate the perceived value of training in *haikai*, tea, and the myriad arts. As noted, cultural pursuits offered both recreation as well as a venue for self-improvement. But among salon members, they also carried sufficient promise for self-advancement to eclipse the perceived necessity for a formal education. For, in interesting contrast to the considerable energies Itami directed toward nurturing a community of literati, the town recognized no need for an educational institution until the 19th century. Children were either educated at home or in informal groups by parents, siblings, or tutors, learning enough to conduct business affairs and enjoy contemporary literature.[80] Some of the residents acquired sufficient education to experiment with Chinese poetry (*kanshi*) and prose (*kanbun*), and a select few boasted sufficient training in *kanshi* to publish their compositions in poetry collections. *Arioka isshiden*, itself written in *kanbun*, notes that a number of its entrants had studied Chinese. Several Itami residents also enrolled at the Kaitokudō, an academy for commoners established in 1724 in nearby Amagasaki, where they learned classical Confucian texts.[81] It is also likely that Sōtan taught classical literature at the Yaunken. Such options existed, in part, because Itami possessed no *hangaku* (domain schools for samurai children) and no other private academies until the 19th century. It finally established two *terakoya* (temple schools) in 1804 and 1818, which continued operating into the Meiji period. It was only in 1838 that Konoe Tadahiro received and acted on a petition from Itami residents to open the town's first *gō-gakkō* (school for commoners). This school, the Meirindo, brought in an outside schoolmaster but operated through donations from breweries and townsmen.[82] For all but the final decades of the Edo period, therefore, the cultural capital garnered from *haikai* was deemed more useful and desirable

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[79] Okada Rihei, "*Chanoyu hyakutei hyakkai no ki*, in *Morohaku no haikai: genroku no shuto itami no bunka*, ed. Kakimori bunko (Itami: Kakimori bunko, 2004), pp. 69-70.

[80] Uchibori Mutsuo, "*Enoki no ki no shita ni: terakoya kara shogakkō he*," in *Itami rekishi tanbō*, ed. Konishi Shintarō (Itami: Konishi shuzō, 2000), pp. 370-371.

[81] Okada, *Kinsei ni okeru*, p. 75

[82] Itami-shi hakubutsukan, *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko*, p. 22.

than that of institutional education, a fact that underscores the importance placed on cultural accomplishment within commoner society.

The above casts light on the emergence of suburban aesthetic space in early modern Japan, particularly its relationship with cities and its engagement with plebian culture. Itami's example demonstrates that although suburbs, being neither urban nor provincial, were spatially ambiguous, functionally they played a number of conspicuous roles. It reveals, first, that acculturation within non-urban spaces could occur concurrently with, not subsequent to, that in urban spaces. Indeed, not only did Itami occupy the leading edge of the *haikai* boom, its practice of *renga*, *kyōka*, and tea ceremony either predated or accompanied their popularization in Osaka. This indicates, second, that acculturation in Itami enjoyed a degree of cultural independence from neighboring urban centers. Not content to follow, Itami capitalized on poetry's popularity to develop a native strain of *haikai* and then to reinvent itself as an industrial and cultural *meisho*. Finally, as both a consumer and producer, Itami contributed to the expansion of popular culture in the region by helping it "pay for itself." Within the salon, however, Itami residents adhered to the mandate of amateur aestheticism by rejecting any comingling of consumerism and art. Never was the practice or publication of *haikai* in Itami motivated by commercial concerns. Commercial saké brewing and the staunch anti-commercialism required by *bunjin* aesthetics were by no means an unlikely partnership, of course. A longstanding relationship between alcohol and art in East Asia made this phenomenon natural, even predictable, for local brewers.[83]

Itami's successful transformation is atypical, for it was achieved only through a convergence of specific conditions. Collective participation in cultural activities required the sort of surplus wealth afforded by the town's lucrative saké industry. Communal devotion to such activities also required qualified and charismatic leadership. Ikeda Sōtan supplied the cultural prestige and charisma necessary to mobilize a local following and

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[83] Itami's turn to *haikai* was also natural given its service to the Konoe, who, occupying the highest rung of court society, were among the circle of companions that practiced *waka*, *renga*, tea ceremony and other cultural activities together with the emperor. The Itami City Museum, for example, possesses a *waka* scroll penned by the Fushimi Emperor (1265-1317) that was given to Konoe Iehiro (1667-1736) in 1690 to use as a writing model, Itami-shi hakubutsukan, *Konoe-ke yōmei bunko*, p. 26.

focus its collective energy on *haikai*. Onitsura's fame further enhanced Itami's cultural currency. The extraordinary synergy that coalesced between Sōtan, Onitsura, and *Itami-zaké* strengthened the town's name recognition enough to position it as an important *meisho* within the region.

Although Saikaku's complimentary description of Itami as "the hidden village of Tsu" was largely metaphorical, it did hold great aesthetic appeal for town residents. Their gravitation toward the *bunjin* ideals of amateurism and detachment demonstrated a clear intention to connect alcohol, aesthetic reclusion, nature appreciation, and free living with the purpose of recasting Itami as a community of cultivated hermits. This confluence of circumstances engendered a dynamic *haikai* salon that, through publishing and vigorous involvement within regional cultural spheres, was able to sustain its identity as a suburban aesthetic space for the next century.

**BEAUTY AND THE BRECK:**
**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF IDEALIZED**
**LIGHT SKIN VIS-À-VIS ASIAN WOMEN**

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## Introduction

Influenced by Western culture, Asian women worldwide have internalized a pathological appreciation for Eurocentric standards of beauty. Travelers to India, Pakistan, Japan, Korea and the Americas will be struck by the various applications utilized by such women in their efforts to conform to light skin as the ideal mark of beauty. Unmentionable, however, is the disdain among these women for relatively darker skin. The existence of such contempt is invisible to the casual observer and is immune to dispute in the aftermath of racism and Western colonization.

Akin to the emergence of Western influence is light skin as a prerequisite to perceptions of feminine beauty, which is a demonstration of the increasing significance of skin color among non-European populations. That significance is subject to a tendency to assess feminine beauty in proximity to Caucasian light skin. Given the canonization of Western influence .however, this tendency is deemed questionable on civil grounds. Hence, in the midst of an expanding global population, it is imperative to consider "colored" skin color in lieu of "white" skin with ontological depth. Succinctly put, aesthetic assessments of skin color will require significant cultural modifications to incorporate that of Asian women (Germain, 1991). Supposed modification will allow for deviations from Caucasian ideals and similar traits deemed less relevant.

The aforementioned modification is best illustrated via analogy. Asian and Caucasian women who reside in the West are obviously similar in genetic structure. Both occupy a common existential space and both rely upon nourishment from the environment of that space to evolve. But their environmental evolution within that space may differ significantly: for Asian women, skin color has become critical, whereas for those of European descent, though relevant, it is all but inconsequential (Frost, 1989).

Thus, analysis of commonality in some respects may co-exist with acute contrasts in others. As pertains to Asian women, perceptions of feminine beauty by those who would assess without reference to light skin

would be in error. The most significant consequence of this error has been a tendency to underestimate the impact of skin color because an analogous impact does not necessarily pertain to women of European descent. As a result, what is known in the U.S. about Asian women is less accurate than in reference to Eurocentric women because for Asian women Western science misses the crux of their existential experience. Without intervention such an inaccurate account will help sustain light skin as the standard of idealized feminine beauty among Asian women (Arroyo, 1996).

The objective of this paper is to illustrate the impact of skin color as an alien standard of beauty among Asian women. It will empirically substantiate the significance of skin color among Asian women simultaneous to its omission by mainstream interests. Of particular concern is the devastating impact of skin color upon the ability of Asian women to regard themselves as beautiful in the context of alien Western traits. It is an oversight that provides a rationale for the introduction of skin color into the scholarly literature which may then accommodate the evolution of a more comprehensive knowledge base. Via the introduction of skin color issues, the intelligentsia will have at their disposal an intellectual tool commensurate with an increasingly diverse American society. The incorporation of skin color as it pertains to the ideal standards of feminine beauty will provide an unadulterated representation of knowledge without regard to any single perspective, political whim and/or intellectual preference.

**Ideal Standards of Feminine Beauty**

The ideal standards of feminine beauty in the U.S. define the beauty of Asian women in a Eurocentric context. That is, all matters which pertain to anything other than a Eurocentric phenotype are determined to be less than ideal. Following WWII and the colonial liberation of Asia and Africa, the consciousness of non-European people worldwide changed dramatically (Barik, Katare & Seth, 2001). This had an impact upon accepted traditions heretofore unchallenged. In the aftermath, Eurocentric traditions as the ideal standard of feminine beauty have been subjected to persistent challenges from people of color (Ngozi, 1997; Kebede, 2001). Those challenges are no doubt fundamentally justified in the necessary evolution of society. The script is that Asian women must challenge established traditions, which by their very nature have denigrated all but Eurocentric phenotypes, i.e., skin color (Potocky & Rodgers-Farmer, 1998; Cox, 2001).

The modern standard ideal of feminine beauty is a post-colonial tradition that has dominated the American conscience (Monteiro, 2000). This otherwise obvious assumption is not the least subject to challenge. Standards of beauty are no doubt a recapitulation of the colonial world-order, which has been sustained by a Western geo-political tradition since the era of Europe's global imperialism. What is more, as part of a geo-political tradition, American standards of beauty originated largely in the contexts of Western experiences. Thus, until recently, all mainstream representations of feminine beauty hailed from France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and the U.S. Furthermore, despite the trek toward diversity feminine beauty remains a bastion of Eurocentric operatives (Iida, 2000). Commensurate with said operatives, ideal standards of beauty evolved in correlation to Eurocentric norms, Eurocentric preferences and Eurocentric skin color, i.e., Eurocentric standards. Hence, it was virtually inevitable that Asian and other women of color in the U.S. and elsewhere would idealize the Eurocentric standard of feminine beauty and, in their desire, emulate the celebrated attributes of the "Breck Girl."

Western fantasies of idealized feminine beauty are not irrelevant to the Breck Girl as pertains to Asian women. Around 1936, an American businessman named Edward Breck inherited a shampoo company started by his father in Springfield, Massachusetts (Minnick, 2000). In his first order of business he contracted the services of a Mr. Charles Sheldon who was a commercial artist living in the area at the time. In the beginning, what Sheldon represented as Breck Girls depicted "provocative, even sensual, female poses executed in pastels, with soft focus and haloes of light and color to create highly romantic images of feminine beauty and purity" (Minnick, 2000). Sheldon was succeeded by a Mr. Ralph Williams, who depicted in his art what he envisioned as perfect feminine beauty that has been sustained over numerous decades. Women who represented the essence of Western beauty were characterized by blue eyes, blond hair and skin so light it appeared alabaster-like to the observer. All three traits are noted by the absence of color. Light skin having the most dramatic impact, it became the Western standard of what the ideal in feminine beauty should look like. For any woman not born with such traits, products could be obtained to bleach the hair and skin so that even the darkest of women could attain some approximation to the idealized traits of the light-skinned Breck Girls. This phenomenon lives on today in the sale of cosmetic contact lenses and bleach creams to effect Caucasian blue eyes and light skin.

In the mind of every Western male, the Breck Girl represented the ultimate ideal. The artists who created her did not do so without conceptual influence. Instead they found their inspiration in the person of Ms. Roma Whitney (Minnick, 2000). Ms. Whitney was one of the original Breck Girls. She was selected in 1937 at the youthful age of seventeen. She was considered such an example of perfect feminine beauty that her face was chosen in 1946 by the Breck company to help launch their first national advertising campaign. By 1951 her face became the registered trademark for Breck company products. Men gazed at her blonde mane and light skin while the women of her day looked on. No one ever considered the devastating effects her image might have upon the self-esteem of Asian or other women of color.

The Breck Girl as the vision of feminine beauty did not produce a Western male counterpart, although, most women had some idea of what an attractive man should look like. The Breck Girl was more likely the fantasy of Western males as seen through the artists who created her. There will always be debate as to how certain preferences came about, but that they exist in the ideal of light skin is usually accepted without question. The standardization of light skin as ideal of Western feminine beauty seems to be a post Breck Girl phenomenon.

**The Psychology of Light Skin**

"Fair skin is considered an asset in Asian countries such as India," says Rachna Gupta, a 38-year-old part-time interior designer (Leistikow, 2003). About once a month, she visits her local beauty salon in south Delhi for an application of Jolen Creme Bleach. The package states that it "lightens excess dark hair," but Rachna has it applied to her face to lighten her skin. "It's not good for the skin," she insists, "but I still get it done because I am on the darker side and it makes me feel nice. Aesthetically, it looks nice" (Leistikow, 2003).

Corporate executives in the bleach cream business are likely confident that the obsession by Indian women with light skin will continue. As a result, beauty business enterprises in America and Europe are in an intense struggle for a share of the bleaching market business. Brands such as Avon, L'Oreal, Lancome, Yves Saint-Laurent, Clinique, Elizabeth Arden, Estee Lauder, and Revlon have their own line of bleaching products. As with most lucrative business ventures, there also exists less expansive imitations of the more expensive products such as "Cure and Lovely." The Delhi-based Center for Advocacy and Research, an agency which keeps track of media and accounts of public opinion, moved to accuse the business of being engaged in "unfair trade practices" by "using a social stigma to sell their products." Some businesses responded by pulling advertisements off the air. Then began the "Fair and Lovely Foundation," in an effort to "encourage economic empowerment of Asian women across India." Women in India would be provided financial assistance for education and business. The company's marketing manager announced that her corporation was committed to the women "who, though immensely talented and capable, need a guiding hand to help them take the leap forward" (Leistikow, 2003). What is more, Hindustan Lever Limited, which is one of India's most prominent manufacturing and marketing firms, halted two of its media ads for Fair and Lovely Fairness Cold Cream. Their actions came after an extensive campaign conducted by the All India Democratic Women's Association. More concern on the part of women has resulted in a change in culture as pertains to skin bleaching. In an Asian country such as India where the skin color industry amounts to sixty percent of bleaching sales, profits have reached $140 million in a single year. The parent company is owned by Europeans and located in London (Leistikow, 2003).

In many Asian languages the words "fair" and "beautiful" are often used synonymously (Banerjee, 1985). Asian folklore places a high value on light skin. For example, the ideal bride, whose beauty and virtue are praised

in the songs sung at weddings, almost always has a light complexion. An Indian girl who is dark-skinned is often a problem for her family because of the difficulty of arranging a marriage for her. Marriages among educated Indians are sometimes arranged through advertisements in the newspapers; even a casual examination of the matrimonial columns shows that virginity and a light skin color are among the most desirable traits that men and their families look for in a young Indian bride, especially the middle class. In a society where purity of descent is associated with a wide diversity of physical types, these features may be in short supply. Those who do not correspond to the ideal must be accommodated. Among some Indians, a dark-skinned girl has a low value in the marriage market. But, at the same time, a dark-skinned girl may be preferred by her local group which is not exposed to global trends. Wherever physical differences cut across caste lines – and they frequently do – the factor of culture can carry greater weight. That is sure to confuse outsiders. And while there is clearly a preference for light skin in almost all sections of Indian society, it is difficult to define the social implications. The best evidence is to be found in the choice of marriage partners. The choice of a light-skinned bride or groom must be made, however, within limits that are strictly defined by considerations of other kinds, such as culture, group, locale, etc. Thus, in certain parts of India women are very light-skinned and have features that are positively valued. However, this does not seem to negate the fact that a bride, be she light-skinned, would not normally be acceptable in every household. Ultimately, skin color of a particular kind is somewhat important to Indian Asians, but other characteristics are not irrelevant.

Light skin has much greater weight in choosing an Indian bride than a groom. In the case of the groom, qualities such as wealth, occupation, and education play an important role. Skin color is important but secondary. To marry off a dark-skinned son is not so much of a problem in either case for a middle class family, for he can more easily acquire other socially desirable traits, unlike skin color which is set at birth. For Indian grooms, the norms for attractiveness relative to light skin in America and in the "old country" are no less important than they are for women – but for different reasons. In general, those who have light skin may be regarded as more strikingly handsome (Banerjee, 1985). But that belief alone does not necessarily determine their overall appeal because it may not coincide with group norms for masculinity or sex appeal. However, consistent with the greater value placed upon light skin, Asian men in India who have darker skin are viewed as more sinister and threatening by both the upper and

lower caste populations. One such example are the scores of dark-skinned male film stars, who play the role of villain while their lighter-skinned counterparts play the role of leading man or hero (Banerjee, 1985).

Asian-American women, like many dark-skinned African-American women, may be saddened by their appearance. Society demands physical beauty in women much more so than in men. Since the perception of feminine beauty closely correlates with the way a woman looks, light skin has emerged as an ideal among both male and female Asians because they are Americans who obviously do not have it and require it to feel acceptable. Thus, the skin color issue among Asian-Americans is germane to American culture and its obsession with light skin. It was facilitated by the importation/migration of Asians that began when they were brought over to work on the railroads in large numbers. Having a long history in America, Asian ethnics have idealized light skin because they were powerless to contest the influence of the dominant population. But, unlike that population, the idealization has resulted in conflict because their contrast in skin color is immediately and undeniably verifiable upon sight. Furthermore, Asians have few options where their features are concerned. Therefore, the issue of skin color and eye shape for Asian-Americans has undoubtedly become very important. It is not merely applied by Euro-Americans – however subconsciously – to assess the aesthetic appeal of other groups, but by Asian-Americans to assess the beauty of Asian women as well. B. Sung, a Chinese scholar of Asian-American studies, inferred this notion by way of research contained in one of her books, entitled *Interracial Marriage Among Chinese-Americans* (1990).

Among Asian women, the Japanese felt disdain for dark skin and preference for light skin long before any significant contacts with Europeans (Hall, 2003b). While most had never encountered Africans personally, they felt their culture inferior and the women less than beautiful. Thus, the Japanese thought of light skin as the ideal of feminine beauty and dark skin as ugly. Their response to the light skin of Europeans and the dark skin of Africans was a historical norm intimately woven into Japanese beauty standards eventually exacerbated by Western influence. Skin color as far as the Japanese are concerned is historically a sign of refinement or barbarity. Perhaps for this reason, they refer to their skin color as "shiroi," which translated means "white" (Wagatsuma, 1968).

In Japan, "white" and/or light skin has long been an essential trait of feminine beauty. As per a Japanese proverb: "white skin makes up for seven defects" of a woman (Wagatsuma, 1968). For those who are light-

skinned, this will enable such defects to be ignored. Under the auspices of cultural influences, many Japanese women took advantage of concoctions to give their skin a light appearance. Around the Nara period (710-793), ladies of Japanese royalty did not hesitate to apply white powder to their faces (Wagatsuma, 1968). They also colored their cheeks in the form of red so-called beauty spots applied between the eyebrows and the exterior corners of their eyes and lips (Wagatsuma, 1968).

Asian women in Pakistan are no less given to the Eurocentric standards of feminine beauty. One example is a Pakistani woman who is a well educated, 23 year-old named Nasim Jamil (IRIN, 2004). While she is young and attractive she is not at all satisfied with the way she looks. "I am not fair enough," she commented to a local news organization. She further maintains that "White is best. When you ask Pakistani women what their idea of an ideal woman is, they will tell you that she should have fair skin." This is fact according to Fozia Yasmin who works for the Pakistani nongovernmental organization who reported to the IRIN news organization. At least 50 percent of women Ms. Yasmin has encountered have sought her out for concerns about their skin color. Her company employs three practitioners who offer workshops in colleges for building self-esteem in the lives of women who dislike their skin color. "You see advertisements for skin creams everywhere you go in this country," which is not at all uncommon. As women who reside in an Islamic nation they are expected to look their best without exception while simultaneously required to be subservient to men (IRIN, 2004).

**A Descriptive Analysis**

Among contemporary Asian women there is significant empirical evidence regarding the role of light skin in perceptions of idealized feminine beauty. Among Japanese women, skin color is a significant but seldom publicized aspect of society because it is not polite to discuss this. Using a sample of college students enrolled at a women's institution of higher education in Osaka, Japan, the following null hypothesis was formulated to provide a context for investigating the problem: "There is no relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals." The sample consisted of 117 participants contacted by the author during the traditional school year. Respondents had a mean age of 20 years. A self-report instrument available in Japanese was administered for assessing skin color. Called the Cutaneo-Chroma-Correlate, this instrument was developed and previously pilot-tested by the author to determine the relationship

between skin color and various aspects of bias relative to sections "A" "B" and "C." Section "B" (of the CCC) was used in this paper to appraise the respondent's personal values pertaining to skin color (Hall, 2000). In differentiating responses, a designation of lightest was noted as 5, light as 4, medium as 3, dark as 2, and darkest as 1. The results are contained in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
PRETTY SKIN IS

|  | Frequency | % | Valid% | Cumulative% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid |  |  |  |  |
| 1 Lightest | 14 | 12.0 | 12.2 | 12.2 |
| 2 Light | 75 | 64.1 | 65.2 | 77.4 |
| 3 Medium | 22 | 18.8 | 19.1 | 96.5 |
| 4 Dark | 3 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 99.1 |
| 5 Darkest | 1 | .9 | .9 | 100.0 |
| Total | 115 | 98.3 | 100.0 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Missing System | 2 | 1.7 |  |  |
| Total | 117 | 100.0 |  |  |

Table 2
THE SKIN COLOR OF PRETTY WOMEN IS

|  | Frequency | % | Valid% | Cumulative% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid |  |  |  |  |
| 1 Lightest | 11 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 9.5 |
| 2 Light | 79 | 67.5 | 68.1 | 77.6 |
| 3 Medium | 24 | 20.5 | 20.7 | 98.3 |
| 4 Dark | 1 | .9 | .9 | 99. 1 |
| 5 Darkest | 1 | .9 | .9 | 100.0 |
| Total | 116 | 99.1 | 100.0 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Missing System | 1 | .9 |  |  |
| Total | 117 | 100.0 |  |  |

*Summary of Results*

As per Table 1, most students (76.1%) responded "lightest" or "light" when questioned about pretty skin. Only 3.5% responded "dark" or "darkest". However, 18.8% of student participants responded "medium" to pretty skin. Less than 1% thought of "darkest" skin as being pretty.

As per Table 2, most students (76.9%) responded "lightest" or "light" when questioned about the skin color of pretty women. Only 1.8% responded "dark" or "darkest" and 20.5% responded "medium" as pertains to the skin color of pretty women. It would appear that light skin is in fact a prerequisite of ideal feminine beauty among the Japanese sample selected. Hence, as per the data it is plausible to reject the null hypothesis: "There is no relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals," and accept the alternative: "There is a relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals."

**Conclusion**

The aforementioned results of idealized feminine beauty as pertains to Asian women should leave no doubt as to the significance of skin color in their lives. In mainstream America and elsewhere in the West, skin color is a less salient issue (Bonila-Silva, 1991). Whatever the existential differentiation between the mainstream and Asian women, skin color is rendered less significant for non-Asian women.

The imposition of alien standards of beauty upon Asian women is universal and extends to their physiological as well as psychological well-being. Without exception, perceptions of feminine beauty are an environmental social force that disrupts Asian women's well-being in ways irrelevant to men. The literature acknowledges sexism among the list of societal pathologies, but the idealization of light skin vis-à-vis Asian women has been all but institutionalized (Solomon, 1992). Greater focus upon diversity in feminine beauty would enhance the ability of society to purge itself of sexism and, perhaps, oppression.

To educate the populace about the significance of skin color will require its introduction into mainstream literature. Discussions of skin color have up to the present been all but overlooked on the basis of cultural taboos and maintaining polite professional discourse, in particular where women's physiological attributes are concerned. Some of the prohibitions include assumed implications of skin color which are little more than myth. Disqualifying myths from polite conversation in fact sustains Eurocentric standards of idealized feminine beauty.

Acknowledgement of the skin color issue ultimately minimizes the potential for conflict and complies with the genesis of a new era in rescuing the self-esteem of Asian and other women of color. It is increasingly evident that, at least among women of color, skin color is not only pertinent to self-esteem but their overall well-being. Its acknowledgement is a necessity in a world fast becoming not only less Eurocentric physiologically but intellectually as well. The subsequent diversity has facilitated assertions on the part of all women of color to redefine who they are and the crux of their human worth.

Lastly, the minimal documentation of skin color issues in mainstream literature is challenged via the idea that all populations have aspirations and the desire for a better quality of life. In the wake of Eurocentric standards of feminine beauty applied to Asian women, that motive is the driving force for social interactions. While Eurocentric standards remain dominant, those who espouse them are not necessarily malicious. Various institutions including higher education have become critical vehicles to sustaining dominant group ideals. Thus, in a post-colonial society, what suffices as feminine beauty is more often in association with the views of those who control power. For this and other reasons, the significance of skin color among Asian women continues to be overlooked. The future viability of their self-esteem rests on the willingness of society to accommodate alternative standards that incorporate the skin color and other physiological traits of Asian women universally. Subsequently, the Breck Girl would then fade into the myths of yesterday's Americana.

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# JACK LONDON'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH JAPAN: THE VOYAGE OF THE *SOPHIE SUTHERLAND* AND HIS FIRST ASIAN WRITING

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Jack London (1876-1916) was the most famous and most widely read American novelist and short-story writer a century ago. London electrified his readers with his adventure stories in the Yukon, California and across the Pacific. London was also a celebrated journalist whose book, *People of the* Abyss, is a classic study of the slums of the city of London. What is far less known is Jack London's intense interest in Asia. He was the only American reporter to accompany the Japanese army as it marched through Korea and Manchuria to confront Russian forces in 1904. His many lengthy dispatches provide the best journalistic coverage of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). After the war, he wrote a series of essays that predicted the rise of Japan as a great power, its eventual invasion of Manchuria and China, China's socialist revolution, and China's rise as the world's leading economic power by the late twentieth century.

London's many literary biographers always neglect the fact that it was London's visit to Japan in 1893 as a teenage sailor that inspired him to become a writer, and that his first literary efforts focused entirely on Japanese themes. London first encountered Japan when he joined the crew of the sealing vessel the *Sophie Sutherland* on its voyage from San Francisco to the cold waters of the Bering Sea north of Japan near the Russian coast in search of seal skins. The *Sophie Sutherland* made a brief stop at the harbor of Futami at Chichijima, part of the Japanese-administered Bonin Islands,[1] on its outward voyage and stopped for up to three weeks at Yokohama on their return voyage. The trip inspired three of London's earliest short stories, all of which were Japan-based, as well as one of his most significant novels, *The Sea Wolf.*

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[1] The Japanese-administered Bonin or Ogasawara Islands (*Ogasawara Shotto)* are an archipelago of over 30 subtropical or tropical islands, some 1000 km directly south of Tokyo in the Pacific Ocean. Administratively, they form one of the villages of Tokyo. The total area of the islands is 84 sq. km.

**Jack London and the Voyage of the *Sophie Sutherland***

The *Sophie Sutherland* was one of the last sealing vessels to leave San Francisco en route to the once very lucrative seal hunting grounds in the Bering Sea north of Japan.[2] To sign on as an able-bodied seaman one had to be at least nineteen or have three years of experience. London was only seventeen with limited experience sailing in San Francisco Bay, but he had already acquired a reputation as a tough longshoreman and additional crew were hard to find. Nevertheless, London's toughness as a fighter and his ability to adapt himself to his new environment allowed him to quickly find a welcome place among the more experienced crew members.

Fifty-one days after leaving California, the *Sophie Sutherland,* weighing eighty tons with a crew of twenty-two, including two Japanese,[3] approached the Bonin Islands, arriving 15 March 1893. To London, it may have seemed like a scene from Stevenson's *Treasure Island* or Melville's *Typee*, novels which greatly influenced him in his later writing. He described his first encounter with the islands in his novel, *John Barleycorn:*

> We completed our run across the Pacific, lifted the volcanic peaks, jungle clad, of the Bonin Islands, sailed in among the reefs to the land-locked harbor, and let our anchor rumble down where lay a score or more of sea-gypsies like ourselves. The scents of strange

[2] The ruthless harvesting of seals in the northern Pacific was initially potentially as profitable as the Yukon gold rush was to those willing to make the strenuous effort to search for seals in the early spring months as far north as the Bering Sea. Garments made from seal fur were the rage in Europe at the time and a good quality pelt could fetch as much as sixteen dollars. The result was that between 1886 and 1911 the north Pacific fur seal almost went the way of the American passenger pigeon or the buffalo. According to some estimates, the seal population there dropped from several million to less than a quarter million by 1912. London, reflecting back on his voyage, wrote in *The Sea Wolf*: "It was wanton slaughter, and all for woman's sake. No man ate of the seal meat or oil. After a good day's killing I have seen our decks covered with hides and spattered with the sanguinary color; and the men, like butchers plying their trade, naked and red of arm and hand, hard at work with ripping and flensing knives, removing the skins from the pretty sea-creatures they had killed."
[3] The *Ghost* of *The Sea Wolf* is also an eighty-ton schooner holding twenty-two men.

vegetation blew off the island. Aborigines, in queer outrigger canoes, and Japanese, in queer sampans, paddled about the bay and came aboard. It was my first foreign land; I had won to the other side of the world, and I would see all I had read in the books come true.  I was wild to get ashore.[4]

London, commenting in his 1897 article, "Bonin Islands: An Incident of the Sealing Fleet of '93," tells how Japan had firmly seized the islands after the Meiji Restoration of 1868: "Japan, having aroused from her lethargy, began her onward march towards the civilization which at the present time causes the whole world to look upon her with astonishment and admiration, and woke to the fact that the possession of these islands was not a trivial matter." The natives were a pitiful bunch, London thought, semi-barbarous people pushed aside by the "progressive Japanese" who fully dominated the colony and relegated the few surviving natives to pitiful out-of-the-way grass huts. The luxurious scenery (volcanic peaks, dense forests, shimmering waterfalls, and a "little coral beach of purest dazzling white") offered London a stark contrast to the misery of the original inhabitants of the island.[5]

London relates what happened when his ship, together with fifteen or so other sealing vessels including a British schooner out of Victoria, British Columbia, suddenly interrupted the tranquil life of the Japanese colonials and the natives on their peaceful island:

> When the inhabitants recovered from their first surprise at the unexpected invasion, they realized the great possibilities and profits to accrue from their intercourse with the strangers. With the typical energy of their enterprising race, they launched boldly into the hitherto unknown channels of commerce. The plantations were ransacked, and their joyful proprietors came aboard with whole boatloads of…[tropical fruit and other local produce]…Whew! How things boomed! The simple Japanese must have thought that the millennium had come. And how they scrambled in the mad

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[4] Quoted from the online version of Jack London's novel, *John Barleycorn,* http://london.sonoma.edu/Writings/JohnBarleycorn.

[5] Jack London, "Bonin Islands: An Incident of the Sealing Fleet of '93," in Irving Shepard, ed., *Jack London's Tales of Adventure* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1956), pp. 59-63.

rush for wealth! To them, it seemed as though the white sea-rovers were made of gold, and even their vessels laden with the precious metal. Prices went up faster than a hot air balloon…The Japanese are shrewd speculators…!

London and his shipmates finally got ashore and really hit the town, drinking heavily, dancing in the streets, and causing considerable destruction. His last memories were of singing "a rollicking sea song" with a group of other sailors:

> From up and down the street came far choruses of sea-voices similarly singing, and life is great, and beautiful and romantic, and magnificently mad. And next, after the blackness, I open my eyes in the early dawn to see a Japanese woman, solicitously anxious, bending over me. She is the port pilot's wife and I am lying in her doorway. I am chilled and shivering, sick with the after-sickness of debauch. And I feel lightly clad. Those rascals of runaway apprentices…they have run away with my possessions. My watch is gone. My few dollars are gone. My coat is gone! So is my belt. And yes, my shoes…[6]

A contemporary Japanese newspaper confirmed the alcoholic depravity of the excited *gaijin:*

> As the visiting vessels were unusually much more this year, some of the islanders have made great unexpected profits. Above all, alcoholic drinks, even bad beer and cheap potato spirits for home use, were sold out at once.[7]

London's ship and the other sealing vessels soon left their haven in the Bonin Islands and headed north to the Bering Sea. London, reflecting back on this expedition much later in his novel, *The Sea Wolf,* wrote:

> We ran to the north and west till we raised the coast of Japan and picked up with the great seal herd. Coming from no man knew

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[6] London, *John Barleycorn*. .
[7] "Foreign Vessels at Ogasawara," *Mainichi Shimbu* (12 May, 1893); quoted in Sachiko Nakada, *Jack London and the Japanese: An Interplay between the West and the East* (Tokyo: The Central Institute, 1986), p. 3.

where in the illimitable Pacific, it was traveling north on its annual migration to the rookeries of the Bering Sea. And north we traveled with it, ravaging and destroying, flinging the naked carcasses to the shark and salting down the skins so that they might later adorn the fair shoulders of the women of the cities.[8]

After completing their sealing, the crew of the *Sophie Sutherland* sailed their vessel to Yokohama where they discharged their cargo of 3850 sheets of seal-skin, collected provisions for their long voyage home to San Francisco, and had time to sample the local sites. London described his initial stay in Japan in his 1913 book, *John Barleycorn,* an autobiographical indictment of his excesses in drinking:

> I was eager to be ashore and see Japan, but the first day was devoted to ship's work, and not until evening did we sailors land. And here, by the very system of things, by the way life was organized and men transacted affairs, John Barleycorn reached out and tucked my arm in his. The captain had given money for us to the hunters, and the hunters were waiting in a certain Japanese public house for us to come and get it. We rode to the place in rickshaws. Our own crowd had taken possession of it. Drink was flowing. Everybody had money, and everybody was treating. After the hundred days of hard toil and absolute abstinence, in the pink of physical condition, bulging with health, over-spilling with spirits that had long been pent by discipline and circumstance, of course we would have a drink or two.
>
> It was the old story. There were so many drinks to be drunk, and as the warm magic poured through our veins and mellowed our voices and affections we knew it was time to make invidious distinctions – to drink with this shipmate and to decline to drink with that shipmate. We were all shipmates who had been through stress and storm together, who had pulled and hauled on the same sheets and tackles, relieved one another's wheels, laid out side by side on the same job-boom where she was plunging into it and looked to see who was missing when she cleared and lifted. So we drank with all, and all treated, and our voices rose, and we remembered a myriad acts of comradeship, and forgot our fights

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[8] London, *The Sea Wolf* (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 603.

and wordy squabbles, and knew one another for the best fellows in the world.

Well, the night was young when we arrived in that public house, and for all of that first night that public house was all I saw of Japan – a drinking place which was very like a drinking place at home or anywhere else over the world.

We lay in Yokohama harbor for two weeks, and about all we saw of Japan was its drinking places where sailors congregated. Occasionally, some of us varied the monotony with a more exciting drink. In such fashion I managed a real exploit by swimming off to the schooner one dark midnight and going soundly to sleep while the water police searched the harbor for my body and brought my clothes out for identification.

Perhaps it was for things like that, I imagined, that men got drunk. In our little round of living what I had done was a noteworthy event. I enjoyed several days of fame Among the Japanese boatmen and ashore in the pubs. It was a red letter event. It was an event to be remembered and narrated with pride. I remember it today, twenty years afterward, with a secret glow of pride. It was a purple passage, just as Victor's wrecking of the tea-house in the Bonin Islands and my being looted by the runaway apprentices were purple passages…

We hove up anchor to a jolly chanty, and sailed out of Yokohama harbor for San Francisco. We took the northern passage, and with the stout west wind at our back made the run across the Pacific in thirty-seven days of brave sailing. We still had a big pay-day coming to us, and for thirty-seven days, without a drink to addle our mental processes, we incessantly planned the spending of our money.[9]

It is impossible to believe that London spent all of his time in Yokohama Harbor bars because his short stories about Japan reveal a good knowledge of local scenery, Japanese homes, and a basic understanding of Japanese cultural history. His early short stories provide rich details of traditional Japanese cultural life. The narrator of these tales travels by train, visits Japanese homes and makes frequent use of the rickshaws in common use in the Meiji period (1868-1912) in Japan. He befriends the rickshaw

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[9] London, *John Barleycorn.*

drivers and takes special notice of beautiful Japanese women. He visits numerous cultural sites traveling by rickshaw. He claims to visit Tokyo, Yokohama and Kamakura, where he spied the Daibutsu, a huge statue of the Buddha. He befriends a sad rickshaw driver in the stories and attends the dances of a beautiful geisha. These are not the stories of a drunken teenager who passed out every night in a Yokohama bar, but rather of a young man with a fascination for the new country which he was visiting very briefly on this occasion. It is also evident that he was reading extensively about Japan – almost certainly the works of Lafcadio Hearn – from a young age and that he had developed an interest in the country.

The three short stories London composed on Japan mark the very beginning of his literary career. In 1895, while a student at Oakland High School, he penned two stories for the school's literary magazine, *The High School Aegis*: "Sakaicho: Hona Asi and Hakadaki" (19 April, 1895) and "A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay" (27 May, 1895). He wrote the story "O Haru" for another publication in 1897.

This Japanese trilogy is an early indication of London's deep and lifelong curiosity about ethnic and racial others. They are also notable because of London's obvious great admiration for the Japanese. It is through these stories that we see the image of Japan that London portrayed to his reading public, as well as the phenomenal that he was already exhibiting as a teenager.

### Sakaicho, Hon Asi and Hakadaki

"Sakaicho" is the short, ultimately tragic and haunting story of Sakaicho, a *rickshaw* man, who spends a week taking the narrator on a tour of local sites around Yokohama and Tokyo. The life of a *rickshaw* man was tough – it involved running long distances up and down hilly streets and thoroughfares transporting one or more individuals for a small amount of money. Because of intense competition from other *rickshaw* men, the prices they charged were low and the profits minimal. There were an estimated 40,000 or more rickshaws in operation in the Tokyo region during the heart of the Meiji period. Because of their hard and stressful lives, many men like Sakaicho died before the age of forty.

The story begins with Sakaicho and the narrator becoming close friends after a week of touring together.[10] Sakaicho invites him to his house

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[10] Sachiko Nakada writes: Sakaicho is one of the rickshaw men waiting at the wharf for foreign sailors to take them to the city of Yokohama. (His

for an authentic Japanese meal and the chance to meet his wife Hona Asi and their son Hakadaki. The narrator accepts with gusto:

> Ah! The magic of these words…Food! Dinner! What a relish they conveyed to me, who was as hungry a sight-seer as had ever trod the by-ways and thoroughfares of Yokohama. All morning I had wandered from tea-house to temple, through bazaar and curio-shop, "up hill and down dale," till now I was as famished as the most voracious shark that ever cut the blue waters of the tropic sea with his ominous fin, while in search of breakfast. In fact, I felt like a veritable man-eater, and this unexpected invitation of my jinrisha man was most opportune. And, of course, I accepted.

Sakaicho and his hungry American guest traversed through a very poor section of Yokohama until they reached a small dilapidated hut where they encountered Hona Asi, Sakaicho's wife.

Concerning the economic life of Sakaicho's family, London writes: "He owned his little home and two jin-riki-shas, one of which he rented out at fifteen cents a day. His wife, a true helpmeet, worked industriously at home hemstitching silk handkerchiefs, sometimes making as high as eighteen cents a day."

Hona Asi said that she was only 27, but her face was so haggard that she looked at least 40. "Toil and worry had stamped her naturally pretty face, and left it wrinkled and sallow." The party smoked together briefly and then sipped weak green tea served by Hona Asi. Then Sakaicho and the narrator sat back for a true Japanese feast.

In accordance with Japanese custom, Hona Asi did not eat with the men. Rather she waited on them, removing the top of a round wooden box and ladling out two bowls of steaming sweet smelling rice, presenting a multitude of plates with delicious and intricate Japanese delicacies. The "savory odors" arising from the different dishes whetted the narrator's appetite and pushed him to jump into the meal. They had miso soup, boiled fish, stewed leeks, pickles and soy, sushi, *kurage* (a form of jellyfish), and endless cups of tea. "The soup we drank like water; the rice we shoveled

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name seems to have been derived from the name of a block near the wharf, "Sakaichô.") He spoke to London in Yokohama English, "Jock, you like come see my house? – not far – you come see my wife – come 'chopee – chopee,'" Nakada, *Jack London and the Japanese,* p. 5.

into our mouths like coals into a Newcastle collier; and the other dishes we helped ourselves out with the chopsticks which by this time I could use quite dexterously." They also merrily sipped sake from tiny lacquered cups.

The narrator, noting that he normally found the Japanese to be a shrewd people with a keen interest in making money, is surprised with the generous hospitality of Sakaicho and a bit floored when he adamantly refuses the guest's generous offer of payment for the feast. He is also struck with the kindness and hospitality of his hosts and notes the inherent goodness of the Japanese as a people.

After the meal Sakaicho relates his hard struggle for life to his guest. Here we see, for perhaps one of the first times, London's obvious sympathy with the working classes, who had to struggle and labor against great odds merely to survive. London was only nineteen when he wrote this story, but the descriptions of Sakaicho's abode and struggle to survive parallel those of characters found years later in *People of the Abyss* and other pieces by him. One can clearly see the leanings that would make London an active socialist only a very few years later. Adopting a melancholy tone to his writing, London describes Sakaicho's life:

> In his queer broken English, he told me of his youth; his struggles, and his hopes and ambitions. His boyhood had been spent as a peasant in the fields, on the sunny slopes of Fujihama;[11] his youth and early manhood as porter and driver of hired jin-rike-shas in Tokio. With great economy he had saved from his slender earnings, till now, having removed to Yokohama, he owned his little home and two jin-riki-shas, one of which he rented out at fifteen cents a day. His wife, a true helpmeet, worked industriously at home hemstitching silk handkerchiefs; sometimes making as high as eighteen cents a day. And all this struggle was for his boy – his only child. He was now sending him to school, and soon, when he would own and rent out several jin-riki-shas, the boy would receive instruction in the higher branches, and mayhap, some day, he would be able to send him to America to complete his education. "Who knows?"

Later that afternoon the narrator meets the son, Hakadaki, "a sturdy rollicking little chap of ten." The narrator, truly enjoying the

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[11] Probably Fuji-yama or Mt. Fuji.

encounter, slipped a Mexican dollar coin into "his sweaty little paw" before leaving.

A week later, after returning to Tokyo from a busy dose of sightseeing in Tokyo and Mt. Fuji, the narrator searches in vain for Sakaicho all over Yokohama. At last he hires another rickshaw to do some last minute sightseeing and shopping, and is cruising through the countryside near Yokohama when he encounters a funeral cortege with two coffins. "A solitary mourner followed, and in the slender form and bowed head I recognized Sakaicho. But O! how changed! Aroused by my coming he slowly raised his listless head, and, with dull apathetic glance, returned my greeting." The narrator later learns that Sakaicho's wife and boy had died in a major fire that had swept through their neighborhood.

After the Buddhist funeral the narrator sadly returns to his ship. The joy and excitement surrounding the visit to Japan are gone, for there is great sadness over the grief suffered by his friend, the hardworking and kindhearted Sakaicho. "And, though five thousand miles of heaving ocean now separate us, never will I forget Sakaicho nor Hona Asi, nor the love they bore their son Hakadaki."[12]

This tale is a sad but surprisingly unsentimental reflection on London's first visit to Japan. London presents detailed information about Japanese cuisine as well as a very accurate portrait of a humble Japanese dwelling and the lives of ordinary working people of the period. It is clear that he had conversed with common people in Japan, had visited their homes, and fully empathized with their struggle to survive. One might find similar depictions in the later writing of Lafcadio Hearn, but Hearn had not yet published much of his most enduring work. We also see the nurturing of another feature of London's writing – the sad or unhappy ending which comes as an unexpected twist.

**The Tale of "O Haru"**

London's "O Haru"[13] is the sad and rather haunting tale of a beautiful geisha, O Haru. It is not clear where he got the material or the idea

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[12] This story of the fire is based on a true incident in Yokohama. On 17 June 1893, two weeks before London's arrival, a raging fire destroyed more than 1600 homes in Yokohama. The fire started in Motomachi 5th St, not far from the wharf. London certainly saw the ruins of the fire. Nakada, p. 6.

[13] Jack London, "O Haru," http:/www.jacklondons.net/writings/Short Stories/o_haru.html.

for this story, but it is one of his best early pieces. The start is slow and not that well focused, and the personage of the narrator is unclear—we don't know just who is telling the story. The story picks up speed as it moves along and ends with a dramatic crash. Like the story about Sakaicho, "O Haru" ends with a tragic twist that catches the reader by surprise. The parallel themes of racial and gender oppression come together when O Haru's husband spurns her for a Caucasian girl.[14]

The story begins with a superb description by London of the role and art of the geisha in Japanese society:

> The *geishas* or dancing girls are the brightest, most intelligent, and most accomplished of Japanese women. Chosen for their beauty, they are educated from childhood. Not only are they trained in all the seductive graces of the dance and of personal attraction; but also in singing, music, and the intricate etiquette of serving and entertaining; nor are their minds neglected, for in wit, intelligence, and repartee, they excel. In short, the whole aim of their education is to make them artistically fascinating. In class, they occupy much the same position as do our actresses, and though many are frail beauties that grace the tea house festivals, here and there will be found gems of the purest luster.

London then introduces us to the most accomplished dancer and most beautiful geisha of all, O Haru. The daughter of a samurai, she had achieved great fame and fortune as a dancer. She was much desired by some of the wealthiest men in the land who would have given up much of their fortunes even to have her for one night, but she staked her love and future on a proud but penniless son of a samurai, Toyotomi. To her great regret, her great love had gone to America a decade earlier, promising to gain fame and fortune there before returning to Japan to marry her.

London waxes considerable attention on O Haru's beauty:

> To the Occidental she could not but appeal, while to the Japanese she was the ideal of beauty. Her figure, slender, long-waisted and narrow-hipped, was a marvel of willowy grace, rendered the more

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[14] Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London's Racial Lives: A Critical Biography* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 9.

bewitching by the ease and charm of her carriage. Her bust was that of a maid's – no suggestion of luscious charms beneath the soft fold of her kimono – rather, the chaste slimness of virginity. Long, slender, beautifully curved, the neck was but a fitting pedestal for the shapely head, poised so delicately upon it. Her hair, long, straight and glossy black, was combed back from the clear, high forehead – a wondrous dome to the exquisite oval of the face.

Her exquisite dancing, her moves and gestures, only added to her luster:

The expression, never the same, the shifting mirror of every mood, of every thought: now responsive to vivacious, light-hearted gayety; now reflecting the deeper, sterner emotions; now portraying all the true womanly depths of her nature. Truly was she "O Haru, the dream of the lotus, the equal of Fugi [Fuji] and the glory of man!"

O Haru appears on stage clad in the armor of the samurai of Tokugawa Japan. She dances the role of Oishi Kuranosuke, one of the ronin heroes of the samurai epic *Chushingura.* Oishi's lord had been disgraced by a minister of the Shogun and was forced to commit *seppeku* when he raised his sword in anger at the minister. Oishi is one of the lord's forty-seven who a year later assassinate the minister and then commit *seppeku* themselves. O Haru dances the whole story:

Fired by the wild rush of her father's blood, her slender form seemed to vibrate with intensity of Oishi's emotion, seemed to suffocate with the scorching heat of his passion…The last scene, the *hara-kiri*. All hopes, all joys of life forgotten, Oishi follows his lord into the nether world. A flash of steel, the simulated death thrust in the abdomen, and the dance is over.

O Haru, despite her samurai heritage, was an impoverished orphan who sold herself to the master of a geisha house. She had learned all the dances and graces of a geisha and made her master wealthy because of all her public performances that wealthy men paid dearly to marvel at. Toyotomi desired her as well and spent everything he had to purchase her from her geisha house. She agreed to marry her new master, but he told her

that she must wait, that he wanted to go to the land "of the white barbarians, promising to come back, rich and powerful, and marry her."

Toyotomi, however, stayed away for over a decade, but she remained faithful to him despite invitations to marriage from many men rich and famous. Finally her lover returned from the land of the "barbarians" and had in fact married her, but to her horror he was a changed man. She had given him her fortune, but he ignored her and spent his time carousing in tea houses chasing women of disrepute.

> Toyotomi had come back with a foreign standard of beauty and no longer found his wife at all attractive. "He would come home drunken and surly and criticize her walk, her carriage, her narrow hips, her flat breast, slim face and slanting eyes; then rave in ecstasies of delight over the Occident beauties. Buddha! That such could be. That her Toyotomi could admire those fierce, masculine creatures, that strode, long-stepping, like men; that had great hips and hums like actual deformities. Those repulsive creatures, with their large mouths, high noses, and eyes deep-sunk in horrid sockets beneath fierce, heavy brows. These creatures, so terrible, that when they looked on a Japanese baby it must burst into tears of fright. Those animals, who were so loathsome, disgustingly mouthing themselves and their men – Toyotomi called it kissing and had tried to teach her. Ach! How could it be!

O Haru, in a state of deep depression, visits a temple with a large statue of the Buddha – perhaps the great Kamakura Daibutsu which London surely must have visited when docking at Yokohama. A young priest blesses her and tells her the life story of the Buddha and of his discovery of the great truth. "Self, the mere clinging to life, was the evil: self was the illusion, whereby the soul endured the pain of countless incarnations: self was to be annihilated, and when destroyed, the soul passed to Nirvana. Nirvana, the highest attainable sphere, where peace and rest and bliss unuttered soothed the soul, weary from many migrations…"

O Haru returned to her home, pulled out the samurai sword that belonged to her father, and prepared for her evening dance. The pavilion was packed when she arrived to see her dance program that was to end with her favorite, the "Loyal Ronin." She danced with more intensity than ever before, especially when the "low crescendo" of the finale commenced. She takes out her father's blade and vigorously kisses it. "The audience

shudders expectantly. She is to follow her lord into the nether world, into the silent Nirvana. Her body sways in rhythmical undulations: her face is aglow with heavenly rapture: she poises for the blow. Now – the music rolls and crashes – swift, that deft, upward thrust – swift the mighty gush of blood. And the sweet silence of the lotus-time night is rent with the sobbing agony of many voices: "Woe! Woe! Woe! O Haru, the divine O Haru is no more!"

London wrote this story four years after his return from Japan and soon after his return from the Yukon. He had turned to writing full time and was beginning to sell a number of his stories to noteworthy magazines and journals. Perhaps by then, through his reading of essays and books by Lafcadio Hearn, he had gained a sympathetic appreciation for Japanese culture. He admires and respects his heroine, allowing her to maintain her honor and sense of self-worth through her ritual suicide.

London's understanding of Japanese culture is also remarkable. The concept of regaining one's honor, which Toyotomi had stripped from O Haru when he betrayed her love for him, is central to Japanese culture. London also appreciates the position of a geisha as a gifted artist, but even more remarkable is his understanding of the key tenets of Buddhism – the idea that one can reduce or eliminate suffering by letting go – in this case the annihilation of the self.

### "A Night Swim in Yeddo Bay"

"A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay," written for *Aegis* in May of 1895, is the third of London's trilogy of stories centering on Japan after his voyage on the *Sophie Sutherland*.[15] The story is based on an incident when London's crew stopped in Yokohama returning from their sealing expedition in the Bering Sea. One night after a bout of heavy drinking, London decided to swim back to his ship anchored far out rather than engaging a "sam pan" (small water taxi). He stripped off his clothes, swam to the ship and probably went to sleep in his bunk. The Yokohama harbor police, assuming London had drowned, searched the harbor in vain.

London's narrator is an old sailor named Long Charlie who spins his yarn while sitting in a Yokohama saloon. Long Charlie relates how he got drunk one night in Yokohama, hired a "sam pan," but found he had no money to pay for the passage. When a small Japanese boy, probably the son

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[15] Jack London, "A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay," http://www.jack londons.net/writings/ShortStories/night_swim_yeddo_bay.html.

of the boat's owner, demands that Long Charlie hand over his shirt in payment, the sailor refuses and, jumping clumsily into the water, swims back to his vessel. The harbor patrol, assuming that he had drowned, returns his clothes to the ship and searches for his body.

London effectively catches the voice of Long Charlie and builds his character through the first-person narration. London again provides the reader with a very positive portrait of Japan through the words of Long Charlie:

> Yes, a mighty nice set of people are them Japs, for all their being half civilized, which I deny, and say right here that for smartness, push and energy, learning, honesty, politeness and general good-naturedness, their like can't be beat. And when it comes to comparing to our people, for real moral goodness and purity, why, we ain't in it…An enterprising people, they are…They're always longing to be, as they call it, Europeanized or Americanized. They're only too quick to discard their old habits and way of doing things for the newer and more improved customs and methods of ours. Why, take the simple matter of dress, for instance. From the lowest beggar in the street to the highest dignitary in the land, they all want to be European in their dress. Pretty near all that can afford it dress like us, and sometimes those who can't put themselves to pretty shifts in order to do so.

**Conclusion**

These three stories, while lacking some of the incredible mastery of much of London's later stories, such as "To Build a Fire," show the innate talent of London as a very young writer at the start of his career. He very effectively develops the personalities of his main characters while deftly bringing the reader into the story. The frequent unexpected endings of his stories – the forlorn face of the grief-stricken Sakaicho only shortly after spending a marvelous day with the narrator or the image of the beautiful O Haru plunging a sword into her abdomen while she dances in front of a huge cheering crowd – adds greatly to the power of London's narrative.

London's stories are a refreshing break from the intense anti-Asian racist dogma found in the California press at the time. London admires the Japanese for their hard work, discipline, and drive for success. But his characters are far more than mere stereotypes. They are fully human with

feelings of joy and anger, happiness and sadness, ambition and drive. We can relate to the poverty of Sakaicho and his wife and the vast hopes they placed in their son. We feel the wretchedness and sense of betrayal experienced by O Haru when her husband spurns her. And through the eyes of Long Charlie we see the dramatic moves by the Japanese to modernize and westernize their country during the Meiji period.

London's initial trip to Japan in 1893 provided invaluable material for his early stories and provided him with enough background information to permit his brilliant portrayal of not only Japanese, but also Chinese and Korean societies a decade later when he returned to Asia to cover the Russo-Japanese War.

# VARIETIES OF CORPORATE FINANCE IN JAPANESE INDUSTRIALIZATION

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## Introduction

Many economic historians have argued that corporate finance in Japan was based on bank loans. This financial practice was closely related to corporate groups called *keiretsu,* which appeared after World War II. They were organized by major companies through interlocking stockholding and strong ties among firms within groups.[1] A main bank was included in each *keiretsu*, which played a role as a major financier for group companies. The bank not only supplied funds but also provided newly emerging modern firms with managerial skills and organizational techniques. Furthermore, the bank monitored the firms; when the firms were not well managed, it interfered with management of the firms. This Japanese corporate finance system seems to fit the Gershenkron's newcomer model; Japan as a latecomer of industrialization would need bankers' support for its economic growth.

This paper shows how corporate finance in the early industrialization of Japan was different from that of post-war Japan and the Gershenkron's model, and how various corporate financial practices were carried out from industry to industry. In particular, it focuses on major industries – railroads, electric utilities, and cotton spinning. Although Japanese government had attempted to establish a modern banking system since the late nineteenth century, these three major industries relied heavily on the securities markets with indirect support from banks. On the other hand, their financial practices were not the same. Different industries developed different financial practices from each other.

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[1] J. Rogers Hollingsworth, "Continuities and Changes in Social Systems of Production: The Case of Japan, Germany, and the United States," J. Rogers Hollingsworth and Robert Boyer, eds., *Contemporary Capitalism: The Embeddedness of Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 265-310.

**Corporate Finance in the Railroad Industry**

Although railroad construction was initiated by the government until the 1870s, private railroad companies appeared after 1880. The government took seriously that railroads were indispensable for industrial development, but was not able to finance the construction of the nation–wide railroad system by itself.[2] The only way to construct railroads all over Japan lay in the reliance on private enterprises.

The capital required for the railroad industry was huge. According to Noda, the average capital of the major railroad companies was 30 to 75 times as much as that of the other corporations.[3] Miwa and Ramseyer also show that average paid-in capital of railroad companies overwhelmed the other large industries, including electric utilities and cotton spinning.[4]

|                  | 1890  | 1892  | 1894  | 1896  | 1898  |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Railroads        | 3,253 | 3,711 | 3,034 | 3,383 | 3,665 |
| Electric utility | 168   | 152   | 120   | 145   | 141   |
| Cotton spinning  | 143   | ---   | 271   | 379   | 456   |

**Table 1: Industry Comparison** – Source: Miwa and Ramseyer, "Banks and Economic growth," p. 143. Paid-in Capital Per Firm (in 1000's of yen)

Most of the capital required was long-term funds because it was mostly used to construct facilities in broad areas and to purchase rolling stocks in the railroad industry. This huge capital requirement was mainly financed by common stock.[5] From 1884 to 1898, the proportion of common

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[2] Iwakura Tomomi was a politician as well as a court noble from the late Tokugawa period to the early Meiji Period. He organized the Iwakura Mission to inspect Western institutions and culture, Iwakura Tomomi, *Iwakura-ko jikki* (1968), p. 1014.

[3] Masaho Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi* [History of the Establishment of Japan Securities Market] (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1980).

[4] Yoshiro Miwa and J. Mark. Ramseyer, "Banks and Economic Growth: Implications from Japanese History," *Journal of Law and Economics*, (2002): 143.

[5] Japanese firms including railroad and others rarely used preferred stock they used preferred stock mostly during financial reconstruction because the Commercial Law prohibited the use of the preferred stock at the time of promotion, Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* pp. 146-155.

stock to gross assets (equity ratio) of the railroad industry was 88 to 100 percent.[6]

However, in the early years, it was not easy to invite subscriptions of railroad stock. The public was suspicious of the profitability of the business because the railroad industry was quite new and it became the country's biggest business.[7] For that reason, politicians and old feudal loads along the railroad trucks often forced local capitalists to subscribe railroad stock.[8] Also, the government needed to support railroad companies to facilitate the sale of stock. In particular, it often guaranteed dividends, offered subsidies, rented out land gratis, granted the exemption of land tax, and provided technological support.[9]

The difficulty in distributing stock to the public was not limited to the promotion period of the companies. Whenever the railroad companies exhausted the funds from the capital stock they needed to increase capitalization. Usually, new stock was allocated to existing shareholders at par value. At that time, there were not many investors who had ample funds to subscribe new issue; the existing shareholders were the only reliable investors. In order to attract them, the companies had to provide shareholders with premiums through par value issue.[10]

In the late 1880s, however, railroad stock came to be widely held by the public through a railroad stock boom. The prospects of the profitability of the railroad business and the reduction of interest rates as a result of the establishment of modern financial institutions at that time turned many middle-class people to stock speculation.[11] In fact, railroad stock was a major dealing in the Tokyo Stock Exchange; half the amount of stock trade in the late nineteenth century was railroad stock.[12]

Although the main source of funds in the railroad industry was common stock, the companies also came to rely on bond issues. The use of bonds increased rapidly after the depression of 1890. Because the decline of

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[6] Equity ratio is the percentage of stock capital to gross assets.

[7] Iwakura, *Iwakura-ko jikki,* p. 1014.

[8] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* pp. 61-62.

[9] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* p. 51.

[10] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* pp. 106-107.

[11] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* p. 69.

[12] Tokyo Kabushiki, *Torihikijo, Toyko kabushiki torihikijo gojunenshi* [The 50th Anniversary of the Tokyo Stock Exchange] (1928).

stock prices discouraged people to invest in stock at that time, the companies had to rely on bonds, which promised the payment of interest to investors.[13]

Unlike stock, however, bonds were not distributed widely to the public. Although banks sometimes contributed to invite subscriptions of bonds, a small number of institutional and individual investors held them. Because there were no collateral loans before the Railway Collateral Law and the Collateral Bond Trust Law were promulgated in 1905, many investors were not willing to buy unsecured bonds. The lack of the investors often led to the allocation of bonds to major shareholders.[14]

In spite of the huge demand for capital, railroad companies were not eager to rely on foreign capital. One of the reasons was the policy of the exclusion of foreign capital in the early Meiji period. In 1869, American A.L.C. Portman, who had been granted a license to build a railroad between Tokyo and Yokohama in the end of the Tokugawa Period, was deprived of it by the Meiji government. Since then, no foreign capital had been introduced to the industry before the Russo-Japan War of 1905.[15] As a result of Japan's victory in the war, railroad companies took an increasing interest in the introduction of foreign capital along with the industrial development and the rise of the international standing of the nation. In 1906, two railroad companies, the Hokkaido Colliery and Railway and the Kansei Railway, achieved Sterling bond issues.[16] These were the first and last foreign bond issues in the industry because major railroad companies were nationalized in that year.

In contrast to the importance of stock in railroad finance, the role of banks was indirect. Banks did not make any loans to railroad companies but made stock collateral loan (*kabushiki tanpo kin'yu*) to shareholders. That is, shareholders could borrow money from banks by depositing their stock as collateral. In turn, the collateral stock was discounted by a central bank, the Bank of Japan. Although banks did not underwrite stock, they participated in the bond underwriting business after the 1890s. For example, the Kyushu Railway, one of the biggest railway companies, issued

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[13] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* pp. 81-87.
[14] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* pp. 92-96.
[15] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* p. 174.
[16] Japan Industrial Bank, *Gaisai shoshi* [History of Foreign Bonds in Japan], pp. 46-49.

¥1,500,000 bonds in 1893. A syndicate of twenty banks underwrote this issue.

In 1906, as mentioned above, the Railway Nationalization Law was promulgated, by which all railways except the ones to serve local transportation were nationalized.[17] As railroad stocks disappeared as a result of nationalization, investors began to turn from railroads to electric utilities. Electric utility stock was suitable for investment; as a public utility, the stable growth of the business was promised by the increase in demand as the economy grew.

**Corporate Finance in the Electric Utilities Industry**

The electric utilities industry emerged from the early 1880s in Japan and grew rapidly. The paid-in capital in the industry was only ¥20,000 yen in 1886. It grew ¥87.7 million in 1907 after the Russo-Japan War, and ¥762.1 million after World War I. Then, it reached ¥3,180.8 million in 1930. The growing business required long-term funds because electric utility companies needed to construct facilities to generate, transform, and transmit electric power. These facilities have to be big enough to meet the demand for electricity at the peak because electricity was not a storable product.[18] In spite of the demand for huge funds, unlike railways, the government did not provide the companies with any support or protection; they were privately operated enterprises from the beginning.[19]

The huge financial needs in the industry were mainly met by stock capital before World War I. Although there are no time series data about the equity ratio in the industry, Miwa and Ramseyer show that the equity ratio in 1910 was 83 percent. Also, debt-to-equity ratio shows us the importance of stock. As Table 2 shows, from 1903 to 1914 the role of stock relative to bonds and loans in electric utilities finance gradually decreased, but stock continued to be a major financial source.

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[17] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* p. 289.

[18] Nakayama Ichirō, Watanabe Ichirō, Kotake Sokuichi, and Kawada, Nitsuo, *Denryoku hyakunenshi* [The 100 year History of Electric Power] (Tokyo: Seikeisha, 1980), p. 43.

[19] Electric utility industry was dominated by private companies until 1938 when the government established the Nihon Hassoden Co. [Nihon Electricity Generation and Transmission] to control the electric power business under a war regime.

|       | Paid-in Capital | Bonds and Loans | Debt-to Equity Rate |
|-------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1903  | 24,101,894      | 1,806,678       | 7.5%                |
| 1904  | 35,405,006      | 2,054,167       | 5.8%                |
| 1905  | 43,793,077      | 2,516,700       | 5.7%                |
| 1906  | 63,386,268      | 2,636,115       | 4.2%                |
| 1907  | 87,685,443      | 5,681,713       | 6.5%                |
| 1908  | 104,998,339     | 8,924,278       | 8.5%                |
| 1909  | 120,422,539     | 14,886,108      | 12.4%               |
| 1910  | 169,201,354     | 23,993,264      | 14.2%               |
| 1911  | 243,458,276     | 37,536,645      | 15.4%               |
| 1912  | 286,634,539     | 51,985,391      | 18.1%               |
| 1913  | 397,780,115     | 79,388,413      | 20.0%               |
| 1914  | 460,355,240     | 98,697,414      | 21.4%               |

**Table 2: Electric Utilities** – Source: *Denki Jigyo Yoran*, p. 402, Table 52.

Despite huge amounts of stock issued in the industry, similar to railroads, stock was not widely held by the public at first. When electric utilities companies were promoted, stock was usually sold to descendants of samurai, as well as, the nobility, national banks, rich merchants, and powerful local politicians.[20] When the companies attempted to increase capitalization, most of the new stock was allocated to the existing stockholders before 1903.

After the Russo-Japanese War, stocks of the industry for the first time came to be widely distributed to the public. This transformation is in part explained by the huge idle capital brought about through nationalization of railroads in 1906, and in part by technological progress. As companies facilitated the use of hydraulic power instead of thermal power, they needed much more capital to implement hydraulic facilities. This growing financial need had them rely on the general public.[21]

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[20] Nakayama, et. al, *Denryoku hyakunenshi,* p. 89.
[21] Kikkawa Takeo, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon* [The Developemnt of Japanese Electric Industry and Yasuzaemon Matsunaga] (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku shuppankai, 1995), p. 4.

In contrast to stock, bonds were not important financial sources in the early twentieth century. Before the Russo-Japanese War, it accounted for only 2 percent of total assets. Even after the legal framework to issue collateral bonds were prepared through the issue of Collateral Bond Trust Law, bonds accounted for only 9 percent of the increase of capital.[22] In fact, there were no major companies to use bonds except the Ujikawa Electric Company before World War I.[23]

Bonds issued before World War I were domestic, not foreign, bonds. In fact, there were several plans to issue foreign bonds in the electric industry, but all failed. For example, the Tokyo Electric Light and the Osaka Electric Light Companies were planning to issue foreign bonds in the early twentieth century. However, foreign financiers were suspicious of the profitability of the business due to the relatively high cost of electricity to that of gas and destructive competition among many electric companies in Japan.[24]

Similar to railroad finance, the role of bank in electric utilities finance was limited before World War I. Bank loans were not an important financial source; they accounted for only 8 percent of the increase in capital from 1893 to 1903, and 13 percent from 1904 to 1914.[25] Also, stock underwriting was non-existent. In addition, because bonds were not an important financial source in the industry, the banks' role as underwriters and trustees was not active. In fact, the majority of the small amount of bonds issued in the industry was not underwritten. The activity as trustees was concentrated on a specialized bank in law, the Industrial Bank.[26]

Corporate financial practices in electric utilities companies were radically changed after World War I. In spite of the rapid increase in capital

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[22] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* pp. 22-23, table 1.

[23] The company issued debenture bonds bearing 10 years from 1912, in Japan Industrial Bank, 1969, p. 708).

[24] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* p. 39.

[25] After the Russo-Japanese War, in particular, Mitsui Bank was involved in financing Tokyo Electric Light Company, Mitsui Bank; *Mitsui Bank 80 nenshi*, p. 413.

[26] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* pp. 66-75; and Industrial Bank was established in 1900 to finance long-term funds for industries under the special law.

stock, the importance of capital stock gradually declined. The proportion of capital stock to the increase in total capital accounts for 67% from 1919 to 1924, and 41% from 1925 to 1930.[27] Instead of capital stock, the role of bonds increased rapidly in the 1920s. The proportion of bonds to the increase in paid-in capital rose to 21% from 1919 to 1924, and 35% from 1925 to 1930. Kikkawa explains the reasons that led the companies to bonds issues. First, in the 1920s, the use of bonds was more cost-effective than that of stock. While interest rates lowered to 6 to 7%, dividends were around 10% at that time. Second, it was the beginning of the 1920s that the bonds market was firmly established in Japan. Third, bond issues were suitable for meeting the exceptionally huge demand for capital of the growing industry. Finally, the stable growth of the business constantly required capital from bond markets.[28]

More importantly, the electric utilities industry turned to the use of foreign bonds in the 1920s. It began with the Sterling bond issue of the Tokyo Electric Light Company in 1923 and ended with Dollar bond issue of the Taiwan Electric Power in 1931. In total, foreign bonds were issued in the industry sixteen times, amounting to ¥523 million during the years. The issues of foreign bonds in the industry were huge. In 1929, Matsushima states, foreign corporate bonds in the industry reached 76% of all of the foreign corporate bonds in Japan, and more than 40% of the bonds issued by the electric utilities industry were foreign bonds.[29]

The use of foreign bonds was advantageous to electric utilities companies. The maturity periods of foreign bonds were usually much longer than those of domestic bonds. While maturities of domestic bonds were two to seven years, that of foreign bonds were usually more than twenty years. Also, companies sought exchange gains from yen revaluation through foreign bond issues. Because most foreign bonds were issued when the yen was devalued, the companies expected the profits from the revaluation of yen.[30] The boom of foreign bonds issued was further

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[27] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* pp. 22-23, table 1-1.

[28] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* pp. 58-65.

[29] Harumi Matsushima, "Denryoku Gaisai no Rekishiteki Igi," *Shakai Keizaigaku* 26/6 (1961): 92.

[30] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* p. 119.

facilitated by the revision of the Commercial Laws in 1927; it increased the upper limit of bonds issue from the amount equivalent to paid-in capital to twice the amount of paid-in capital.[31]

As the role of bonds in electric utility finance increased, banks helped the companies issue bonds more than before. Major banks such as the Mitsui Bank, the Mitsubishi Bank, the Yasuda Bank, the Sumitomo Bank, the Daiichi Bank, and the Industrial Bank began to underwrite bonds from the 1920s.[32] During the financial depression of 1927, Kikkawa states, the six banks underwrote more than half the bonds issued in the industry. Despite risk and financial burden of underwriting business, these underwriters tended to avoid forming syndicates during the 1920s.[33] Their avoidance of syndicates is in part explained by the banks' intention to construct strong ties to electric companies. In fact, particular relationships between banks and the companies existed in the 1920s; the Mitsui Bank tied with the Tokyo Electric Light and the Toho Electric Power, the Mitsubishi Bank with the Daido Electric Power, the Sumitomo Bank with the Ujikawa Electric, the Yasuda Bank with the Tokyo Electric Power, the Daiichi Bank with the Kyoto Electric power, and the Industrial Bank with the Daido electric power.[34]

In addition, banks facilitated collateral bonds issues as trustees. Especially the Mitsui Bank and the Industrial Bank dealt with more than 60 percent of the entire electric utilities collateral bonds. Also, only these two banks were allowed to deal with collateral trust of foreign bonds.[35] When the Industrial Bank was established, the Meiji government decided on its policy that private companies should use the Industrial Bank as a trustee as much as possible when they would issue foreign bonds. With this policy, the government attempted to prevent private companies from tying with the foreign capital market directly, fearing that scattering importations of

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[31] Matsushima, "Denryoku Gaisai no Rekishiteki Igi": 101.

[32] Foreign bonds were underwritten not by Japanese financiers, but by foreign investment bankers, such as Guarantee Trust & Co, Dillon, Read & Co, and Lee Higginson & Co in the United States, and White Hall Trust and Razard Brothers & Co in Great Britain.

[33] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* pp. 70-71.

[34] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* p. 73.

[35] Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* p. 74.

foreign capital would harm credit in Japanese economy.[36] Meanwhile, the participation of the Mitsui Bank in trusteeship of the foreign bonds issue began after 1925. Although foreign bonds issues were in boom in the 1920s, the Mitsui Bank was the only ordinary bank that was allowed to deal with trust business due to its credit in foreign countries.[37]

When securities of electric utility companies came to be held widely in the public, those of the cotton spinning industry also gained popularity for speculation purposes. Unlike electric utilities, the securities of the cotton-spinning industry were not suitable for investment because of the price fluctuation of raw materials (raw cotton) and of the final products (cotton yarn) in the markets.[38]

**Corporate Finance in the Cotton-Spinning Industry**

Until the 1870s, the cotton-spinning industry was home-handcraft manufacturing in Japan. To facilitate the modernization of the based-on industry and to increase productivity under the industrial development policy (*shokusan kogyo seisaku*), the government attempted to introduce machinery production to the industry. It established the government factories as a model, sold the spinning machines imported from Britain, and made loans to newly established private spinning firms. However, in the early 1880s, the cotton-spinning industry was still small. Average firms had 2000 spindles only.[39] Because capital required in such a small firm is not big, the founder and his family members could manage to finance the business without relying on securities.[40]

Surprisingly, large-scale spinning firms appeared without government supports in the 1880s. The Osaka Spinning Company was the first to set up as many as 15,000 spindles.[41] In three years, the number of

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[36] Japanese Industrial Bank, *Shasai shoshi*, p. 18.

[37] Mistui Ginko, *Mitsui Ginko Hachijunenshi* (Tokyo: Mitsui Ginko, 1957), p. 221.

[38] Noda, *Nohon shoken shijo seiristushi,* pp. 321-2; and Kikkawa, *Nihon denryoku no hatten to Masunaga Yasuzaemon,* p. 22, table 1-1.

[39] Takamura, Naosuke, *Nihon bosekigyo shi* [History of Japan Cotton Spinning Industry] (Tokyo: Hanawa shobo, 1971), pp. 39-45.

[40] Yamaguchi Kazuo, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū: orimono kin'yu hen* [History of Japanese Finance: Textile Finance] (1974), pp. 3-6.

[41]Takamura, *Nihon bosekigyo shi,* pp. 63-65.

the firms with 10,000 spindles or more increased to ten. The spindles of these companies accounted for 74 % of all the spindles in the industry.[42] As the size of the firms grew, financing long-term capital was a critical issue in the industry.

The increasing fixed capital in the industry was financed mainly by stock instead of funds from the founder and his family. The equity ratio in the cotton-spinning industry was much lower than those of railroad and electric utilities companies; it accounts for 50 to 60 % (Table 3). This is explained by the difference of the financial structures between industries. Unlike the other two industries, cotton-spinning firms required huge amounts of working capital to purchase raw materials.

|  | 1890 | 1893 | 1894 | 1898 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of companies | 10 | 24 | 26 | 62 |
| gross assets | 7,505,000 | 16,555,000 | 21,654,000 | 53,114,000 |
| paid-in capital | 4,761,000 | 9,137,000 | 11,212,000 | 29,271,000 |
| fixed assets | 4,578,000 | 10,289,000 | 13,427,000 | 37,132,000 |
| fixed/gross Assets | 61.0% | 62.2% | 62.0% | 69.9% |
| Equity Ratio | 63.4% | 55.2% | 51.8% | 55.1% |

**Table 3: Cotton Spinning I** – Source: Takamura, *Nihon Boseki Shi*, vol. 2 p. 17.

Stock of cotton-spinning companies was not widely distributed before 1906. When companies were promoted, it was sold to rich local merchants, landlords, and politicians without using markets, similar to the process for railroads and electric utilities companies.[43] When they needed to increase capitalization, most of the stock was allocated to the existing shareholders through the efforts of promoters; it was not easy to sell stock due to the riskiness of the business. Therefore, financial power and social status of the promoters played a very important role for the sale of stock. In other words, promoters' wealth determined the amount of stock they would subscribe by themselves, and their social status affected the reputation of the stock.[44]

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[42] Takamura, *Nihon bosekigyo shi,* p. 111.

[43] Yamagichi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* pp. 3-6.

[44] Masaki Hisashi, *Nihon no kabushikikaisha kin'yu* (Tokyo: Mineruva shobo, 1973), p. 25; Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* p. 69; and Miwa

After the nationalization of the railroads, the stock of spinning companies was widely distributed to the public. Similar to electric utilities, part of the idle funds brought about by the nationalization of the railroads was directed to speculation of cotton-spinning stock. According to Yamaguchi, in 1914 fifteen industrial firms were listed in the Tokyo and Osaka Stock Exchanges, of which twelve were cotton-spinning companies.[45]

Bonds were much less important than stock in cotton-spinning finance before 1907. Bonds were used only when companies were unable to increase capitalization. These bonds were not discounted by the Bank of Japan and were rarely listed on markets. They were mostly allocated to existing shareholders.[46]

After the Russo-Japanese War, however, huge amounts of cotton spinning bonds came to be issued, which were used for the expansion of facilities. The newly issued bonds were often distributed to new investors through public offerings by banks. The reason for this bond boom is explained by three factors. First, the Collateral Trust Bond Law of 1905 alleviated the risk of bonds. Second, as the scale of the business increased, firms required more funds than before. Finally, the risk of bonds was reduced by establishing syndicates consisting of bankers and stockbrokers.[47]

These bonds were domestic bonds; no foreign bonds were issued in the cotton-spinning industry before and after World War I. Foreign investors were not willing to take the risk of industrial securities. In fact, business was not stable due to fluctuating market prices of raw materials and final products, and it did not have properties suitable to put in pledge, unlike the railroads and electric utilities.[48]

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and Ramseyer, "Banks and Economic Growth: Implications from Japanese History," p. 141

[45] Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* p. 55.

[46] Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* pp. 116-117.

[47] Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* p. 118.

[48] However, foreign capital was not absent, for example, in 1907 Kanebuchi Boseki succeeded in lending ¥2,000,000 with interest of 7.5 percent from the French Commerce and Industrial Bank without any pledge. This was not a bond issue, but note discounts, *Kanebo hyakunenshi* [History of Kanebo], pp. 116-117.

As the business came to be profitable, the companies accumulated reserves, which were used to finance part of fixed assets from time to time. Table 4 shows that while the proportion of stock to total long-term capital decreased from 88.2 % in 1902 to 57 % in 1914, reserves increased from 11.8 % in 1902 to 24.8 % in 1914. To a lesser extent, bonds also increased; it was not used in the early years, but now accounted for 18 % of long-term capital in the industry. In other words, the decline of the role of stock was compensated mainly for the increase in reserves. This trend was further accelerated after 1914.

|  | Paid-in capital/fixed capital | Bonds and loans/ fixed capital | Reserves/fixed capital |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1902 | 88.2 | 0 | 11.8 |
| 1904 | 84.1 | 0 | 15.9 |
| 1906 | 64.4 | 7.0 | 28.6 |
| 1908 | 62 | 12.5 | 25.5 |
| 1910 | 57.5 | 19.1 | 23.4 |
| 1912 | 58.8 | 17.3 | 23.9 |
| 1914 | 57.0 | 18.2 | 24.8 |

**Table 4: Cotton Spinning II –** Source: Takamura, *Nihon boseki shi*, vol. 2, p. 120.

While railroads and electric utilities companies used only a small amount of working capital, spinning companies needed it more in order to purchase raw materials. At first, cotton-spinning companies relied on bank loans to finance a huge amount of working capital because they could not use credit for the purchase of raw cotton. For example, The Osaka Spinning Company usually borrowed from the Dai-Ichi Bank, the Sanjyu-Ni Bank, the Gojyu-hachi Bank, and the Hyaku Yonju-hachi Bank. The Kanebuchi Spinning Company, on the other hand relied on the Mitsui Bank.[49]

After the depression of 1897, instead of bank loans, cotton-spinning firms came to obtain credit from trading companies under special

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[49] Takamura, *Nihon bosekigyo shi,* p. 99; and Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* p. 21. The president of the Dai-Ichi Bank was Eiichi Shibusawa, who was one of the promoters of Osaka Boseki. Also, the House of Mitsui had interests in Kanebuchi Boseki.

contracts called *Tokuyaku*. At that time, the firms faced difficulty in receiving loans from banks because the Bank of Japan decreased liquidity by reducing loans and bills discounted. Under the contract, the firms were allowed to pay with promissory notes for raw cotton to the trading companies they contracted. Instead, they had to buy raw cotton from the trading companies exclusively. The adoption of special contracts was advantageous to both parties. While the trading companies secured the markets of raw cotton, the firms were relieved from financial burdens.[50]

After the Russo-Japanese War, however, the issue of promissory notes diminished. As retained earnings were accumulated, the funds used for working capital increased. Now, promissory notes were more likely to be used as an effective financial tool rather than a necessary means. For example, in 1914, the issue of notes increased temporarily because the discount rate was lower than the interest rate.[51]

During World War I, an oligopolistic industrial structure appeared in the industry. The three biggest companies were the Toyo Spinning Company formed through the merger of the Mie Spinning Company and the Osaka Spinning Company in 1914, the Dai-Nihon Spinning Company through the merger of the Amagasaki Spinning Company and the Settsu Spinning Company, as well as, the Kenebuchi Spinning Company, which had expanded through mergers and acquisitions since the 1890s.[52] In 1918, the three companies produced 51.1 % of cotton yarn production.[53]

Making high profits, these big cotton-spinning companies were directed to self-finance. By the end of 1918, their reserves accounted for 56.9 % of all the reserves in the industry. Using three-quarters of their reserves, they could have paid off all borrowed capital.[54] Thus, along with the emergence of oligopoly, the major cotton-spinning firms achieved financial independence.

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[50] Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* p. 35; and Takamura, *Nihon bosekigyo shi,* pp. 69-73.
[51] Yamaguchi, *Nihon kin'yushi kenkyū,* pp. 59-65.
[52] *Kanebo hyakunenshi,* p. 92, 164.
[53] *Kanebo hyakunenshi,* p. 164.
[54] *Kanebo hyakunenshi,* p. 164.

Again, the role of banks was not direct. For long-term finance, they made stock collateral loans to individuals.[55] After 1907, banks began to underwrite cotton-spinning bonds, but the amount of bonds issued was still small. The Kanebuchi Spinning Company was an exception that created close ties with a bank. Takayasu Mitsui, the president of the Mitsui Bank, grasped control over the company by owning more than half the stock issued in 1889. During the recession of 1890, the Mitsui Bank also made loans of ¥600,000 to ¥700,000. However, this close tie between the Mitsui Bank and the Kanebuchi Spinning Company was loosened in the 1920s when banks came to create syndicates to finance the industry. On the other hand, banks lent short-term funds to cotton-spinning firms in the early years, but this was temporary. As explained above, their financial activity was replaced by trading companies that could provide them with credit, and later major spinning firms were able to rely on self-finance.

**Conclusion**

Unlike the postwar main banking system as well as the Gershenkron theory, the three major Japanese industries in early industrialization relied heavily on stock finance. In all three industries, the ownership of common stock was widely distributed to the public. On the other hand, the role of banks was indirect; they made stock collateral loans to facilitate stock sales and support bond issues as underwriters and trustees.

In spite of the similarities among the three industries, each industry had its own corporate financial practices. The railroad industry could issue domestic and foreign bonds from the early years due to their credit and government support. It was the predecessor of modern corporate finance. On the other hand, electric utilities companies increased bond issues after 1905. Their reliance on foreign bonds in the 1920s was noteworthy. They created ties with banks, but the main role of banks was to support bond issues. Meanwhile, the cotton-spinning industry required consideration of short-term as well as long-term finance. While the industry relied on stocks and bonds for long-term capital, it used bank loans and then credit from

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[55] Yoshiro Miwa and Mark J. Ramseyer, "Corporate Governance in Transitional Economies: Lessons from the Prewar Japanese Cotton Textile Industry," *Journal of Legal Studies* 39 (2000): 181-182.

trading companies for short-term capital. However, as the industry formed an oligopolistic structure, major firms were directed to self-finance.

Scholars have argued that economic systems are different from nation to nation. This persistence of national patterns has been attributed to the notion of path dependency, that is, to the national history and culture embedded in society. This theory seems true when we look at post-war Japan when the economic system reflected group-oriented culture. However, this national pattern is not unitary and unchanging. As this paper shows, the companies in the three major industries did not belong to corporate groups; the role of the main banks was usually nonexistent, and the role of banks as financiers was limited. Although the modern banking system had been established in late nineteenth-century Japan, the reactions of firms to financial institutions and opportunities were diverse and did not always conform to the notion of a singular Japanese culture.

# SWEET MUSIC FROM A STRANGE COUNTRY: JAPANESE WOMEN POETS AS "OTHER"

*Bern Mulvey*
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"The word I see most often in connection with contemporary Japanese women's poetry is *yureteiru*, shaking. The poetry is not unstable and certainly not indifferent, just shaking – in flux and reaching for a landing point, however impermanent."

Malinda Markham[1]

One peculiarity of the Japanese language is the clear demarcation between active and passive, transitive and intransitive. In English, for example, a house can *shake* from an earthquake and a person's actions or words can *shake* the very foundations of a society – i.e., though the relationships denoted between *actor* and *acted upon* in these sentences are different, the verb (including spelling) is the same. In Japanese, however, only *yusuburu* can suggest the latter usage, making Markham's choice (in the quoted text above) of the term *yureteiru* particularly suggestive. *Yureteiru* is always without an object, and at least implies the acted upon, the influenced, the recipient of another's actions or words.

Markham's observations about Japanese poetry – particularly the poetry written by women – partake in a long critical tradition. For a variety of reasons, researchers (both Western and Eastern) have consistently sought to characterize the Japanese in general, and Japanese women in particular, as anything but "active," anything but aggressive, dynamic, confrontational, or forceful. On the contrary, Matsumoto, Reischauer, Sakaiya, Smith,[2] among many others, have described the Japanese as indirect, discrete,

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[1] Malinda Markham, "To Translate the Shaking: Contemporary Japanese Women's Poetry (and Coaxing it into English)," *Antioch Review* 62/1 (2004): 6.

[2] Michihiro Matsumoto, *The Unspoken Way* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1988); Edwin O. Reischauer, *The Japanese* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1977); Taichi Sakaiya, *What is Japan? Contradictions and Transformations* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993); and Patrick Smith, *Japan: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997).

consensus-building and non-confrontational. As seen in critical observations by Henderson, Jackson, Miner, Okakura, Rimer, and Tanizaki, this depiction extends to literature as well, for Japan has long served as a kind of anti-West – the antithesis of a society ostensibly too logic- and profit-driven for its own good. Pepper speaks for many of these writers when he comments on the Japanese artistic sense:

> Where the Japanese seek suggestiveness, the Westerners resort to statement. Where the Japanese revel in irregularity, the Westerners seek regularity. And similarly with simplicity versus complexity, and perishability versus permanence.[3]

His description is one of not just aesthetic distance but diametric opposition, something repeated again and again in the literature. Sometimes the results of this cultural and artistic stereotyping have been unintentionally amusing, such as when Johnson and Dillon go so far as to advise Western job-seekers not to make "eye contact" during job interviews to avoid appearing "aggressive."[4] However, as Ma also has noted, "Western stereotypes of Japanese women remain firmly entrenched in print, broadcast, and film media";[5] moreover, academic commentary in this vein too often serves to reinforce various ongoing and destructive stereotypes, such as the Western idea that "Japanese women are still little more than compliant, doll-like objects of fantasy."[6]

Given the critical consensus, it may seem counterintuitive that I hope to offer a "Japanese" challenge to what I see as the "othering" in its literature. As the translated poems discussed below suggest, the narrow institutional focus on a single aesthetic overlooks the flowering of alternative poetic styles in Japan after 1890; more importantly, it ignores the powerful –

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[3] Stephen Pepper, "On Donald Keene's 'Japanese Aesthetics,'" *Philosophy East and West* 19/2 (1969): 323.

[4] Wayne Johnson and Ken Dillon, "Job Hunting in Japan: The Resume and Interview," *The Language Teacher* 20/11 (1996): 27-30. The second in a 3-part article series ostensibly explaining the "Japanese mind" to job seekers – suffice it to say their advice should be taken with a grain of salt. Indeed, the third installment in the series may perhaps be the most singular example of "othering" in the history of job search literature.

[5] Karen Ma, *The Modern Madame Butterfly* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1996), p. 22.

[6] Ma, *The Modern Madame Butterfly*, p. 17.

indeed, confrontational – themes and dynamic, forceful language that have been a mark of poetry by Japanese women for much of the last century.

Here, a distinction must be made between traditions involving "structure" (including form and vocabulary requirements) and "aesthetic" (the often culturally specific "meta-artistic" beliefs which inform decisions about tone, theme, narrative method, etc.). Several writers[7] have noted the variety of structural conventions extent in modern Japanese verse. Until the Meiji period, Japanese poetry was almost invariably written in one of the tradition of forms (chiefly tanka and haiku), featuring alternating 5-7 syllable patterns and the required seasonal 季語 references and other examples of so-called "poetic" language 雅語. Donald Keene provides several humorous examples of writer adherence to these rigid conventions, concluding, "It would be hard to conceive of an English poet writing in 1850, with no intention of fraud, verses which might have antedated Chaucer, but in the Japan of the nineteenth century the language of the *tanka* was with few exceptions a thousand years old."[8] Beginning in the mid-Meiji period, however, and intensifying after a series of essays[9] by Kawaji Ryuko (referred to by Ooka as the "originator of Japanese colloquial verse" 口語詩の創始者),[10] these language and structural requirements increasingly came under attack from a younger generation of writers who felt the traditional constraints to be, among other things, crippling to writer creativity. Keene, whose various translations and critical commentary have long made him the

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[7] Mitsuhiko Kaneko, "Dai San Kou Kaisetsu" [Editor's Notes to Book Three], *Nihonjin shijin zenshū*, ed. Mitsuhiko Kaneko (Tokyo: Sōgen bunko, 1953); and Makoto Ooka, *Tōji no kakei: nihon gendaishi no ayumi (Fukkoku shinpan)* [The Family Tree of a Libertine: Steps toward a Modern Japanese Poetry (New Revised Edition)], 2nd edition (Tokyo: Shichōsha, 2004).

[8] Donald Keene, *Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (New York: Kodansha International, 1981), p. 132.

[9] Ryuko Kawaji, *Jiyuushi no riron to kōka* [The Theory and Impact of Free Verse] (Tokyo: Waseda bungaku, 1917), pp. 50-58; and Ryuko Kawaji, "Shinritsukaku: Waga (Shi)" [New Rules: Our Own (Poetry)] in *Nihon shijin zenkan* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1925), pp. 2-4.

[10] Ooka, *Tōji no kakei,* p. 18. Note, however, that Kawaji himself makes no such assertion; on the contrary, Kawaji acknowledges (1917, 50) that the debate preceded his essay "by nearly ten years" 興つてから約十年, at least implying recognition of Yasano's achievements as well.

preeminent source in English on Japanese literature, has repeatedly [11] acknowledged the wide range of influences and poetic structures/forms in Japan after 1890. (That representative poems from these alternative voices so rarely make an appearance in his anthologies is a different issue, leading – unfairly in my opinion – to his often being cited [12] in support of assertions of a single "Japanese" aesthetic.) Ooka also has written extensively on the proliferation of these nontraditional poetic forms and movements; as he demonstrates, a number of Japanese poets (e.g., Hagiwara Sakutaro, Miyoshi Tatsuji, Takamura Kotaro and Kaneko Mitsuharu), influenced partly by overseas writers and partly by their own desires to add "emotional verisimilitude" 実感的真実性, "confessional" 自己主張 and "revelatory" 顕在的 elements to their work, created new free verse forms devoid of the rigid syllabic, rhythmic and stilted language requirements of the traditional forms. Interestingly enough, Ooka's study of the rise of this Japanese colloquial free verse 口語自由体 was prompted at least in part by what he sees as the "slight" of Keene's (and other Western writers) omission of them. [13] Again, while some of Ooka's criticisms vis-à-vis Keene seem unjustified, his comments underline the prevalence and impact of these Japanese free-verse writers, not to mention the very real paucity of attempts to showcase their work in English.

Critical consensus vis-à-vis the so-called "Japanese aesthetic," on the other hand, has been nearly monolithic; indirectness and understatement, the idea that complete revelation in art is equivalent to sterility and must be avoided, have long dominated the discussion. Tanizaki, for instance, argues that shadows – i.e., the absence of revelation – have traditionally played an important role in Japanese art and architecture, in the same way that pauses – i.e., the absence of conversation – continue to be a crucial element in inter-Japanese communication. [14] Nishida equates the aesthetic experience with achieving a state of "muga" 無我 or "selflessness," writing that "この真理は吾人が己を離れ能く物と一致して得たる所のもの" [For true art

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[11] Donald Keene, *Modern Japanese Literature* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1957).

[12] In Ooka, *Tōji no kakei*; and Pepper, "On Donald Keene's 'Japanese Aesthetics.'"

[13] Ooka, *Tōji no kakei*, pp. 34-36.

[14] Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, "In Praise of Shadows," in *Aesthetics*, eds. S. Feagin and P. Maynard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 62-66. Note that the Japanese original appeared in two parts published in 1933-1934.

is that place where we can attain separation from ourselves].[15] According to Nishida, art is an "absolute background," a place of "nothingness" wherein one's consciousness, divested of self, can expand infinitely. Rimer echoes Nishida's ideas regarding the nature and usage of this "place," observing that "The intent of Japanese literature is to provide the reader with a means to develop himself."[16] Finally, Okakura argues that the mark of the true artist is knowing how to create this place, especially where to stop, when and where to leave a work incomplete. For artists must avoid at all times both "completion" and "repetition," seeking through intentional ambiguity of thought and/or incompleteness of action to allow "each guest in imagination to complete the total effect in relation to himself."[17] Hence, so-called flaws (by Western standards, at least) are not only allowed but encouraged because of the emotional responses they can instigate. Such imperfections, Okakura writes, are what trigger the imaginative responses so crucial to aesthetic appreciation, for they allow participants the freedom to fancy, elevating in their imaginations the artist's efforts to the level of art – for "true beauty can be discovered only by one who mentally completed the incomplete."[18]

Furthermore, critical acknowledgments of the nature and extent of contributions by women writers to the development of modern Japanese verse, including both structural and aesthetic changes, remain extremely rare. Ironically, Ooka's own book is symbolic of this oversight. In an exhaustive 300-page study discussing nearly one hundred Japanese poets writing over a period of eighty years, women authors make their debut on page 271. Moreover, outside of one brief excerpt from a poem by Tomioka Taeko,

[15] Kitaro Nishida, *Bi no Setsumei* [An Explanation of Beauty] (1900), http://www.geocities.co.jp/CollegeLife-Cafe/4055/kitaro_nisid a/binosetu mei_ht.htm.
[16] J. Thomas Rimer, *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1988), p. 14. See also K. Iwaki, "Nishida Kitarou and Art," in *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001); and Michael Marra, "Introduction," in *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).
[17] Kakuzo Okakura, "The Tea Room," in *Aesthetics*, eds. S. Feagin & P. Maynard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 61; note that the original appeared in 1906 as *The Book of Tea*.
[18] Okakura, "The Tea Room," p. 60.

Ooka includes no verse from a female poet, nor any discussion of their aesthetic ideals or methods. Instead, in a single sentence on page 273, he merely lists the names of eighteen of the most important women authors of the era. While he does then praise them collectively for their ostensibly "sunny" 向日的 writing styles and positive, "constructive" 建設的 themes, he also asks repeatedly and dismissively asks, "Has any female poet in modern Japanese letters achieved a transcendental moment in their poems where the reader is transported beyond the page into a state of rapture?" 詩の中で忘我の恍惚境に陶酔する瞬間を生みだしている女性の詩人は、我々の現代詩の中にいるだろう.[19] Ooka's answer, repeated several times through page 276 (where he concludes his discussion of them), is "no."

Standing in direct contrast to the above, however, are the following poems, themselves but a sampling of the large number of similar poems written and published by Japanese women over the last one hundred years. The first is by Yosano Akiko. Written and published at the height of Japan's 1904-5 war with Russia, the poem accordingly predates both Okakura's famous treatise[20] on the so-called "Japanese aesthetic" and the publication of "自由詩の理論と効果" [The Theory and Impact of Free Verse],[21] Kawaji's seminal essay calling for the development of an indigenous free verse utilizing colloquial language. It remains perhaps the most widely anthologized poem by a woman writer in Japan today:

> Love, You Must Not Go To Your Death
>
> Ah, younger brother, I cry for you,
> do not go to your death.
> Born the youngest though you were,
> you can still surpass our father in mercy,
> though he makes you grab the sword,
> though he teaches you to kill,
> as if you had been raised 24 years
> only to kill and to die.
> Even among the shopkeepers of Sakai
> our old shop is one of honor,

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[19] Ooka, *Tōji no kakei*, p. 274.
[20] Okakura, "The Tea Room."
[21] Kawaji, *Jiyuushi no riron to kōka*.

and so you, love, born to carry on our father's name,
you must not go to your death.
Whether Port Arthur's fortress is razed
or not          what does it matter?
You must see this      we are shopkeepers
it is not our way.

Love, you must not go to your death.
The emperor, he does not
cross the sea to fight,
to spill the blood of others,
to die like a beast on a trail.
All die for an emperor's praise
who if truly worthy
would not force death on others.

Ah, younger brother, you must not go
to war and to your own death.
Autumn passes, will our father outlive
the season's change? And our mother,
who saw you off in grief,
in agony, calling to you,
can she protect our house? In the midst
of the emperor's so-called peace,
your mother's hair turns white.

In the shadow of store curtains, she bends down and cries,
your new wife, so frail and young,
do not forget her, think about her.
Think about this young girl,
torn from your side after only 10 months.
In this world, she has only you,
who else is she to rely on?
My love, you must not go to your death.[22]

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[22] Cited from Akiko Yosano, *Kimi shi ni tamau koto nakare* [Love, You Must Not Go To Your Death], ed. Sachihiko Kitagawa (Tokyo: Iwasaki shoten, 1997), pp. 8-10. Note that, unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

The aesthetic contraventions here should be readily apparent. Certainly, there is no "intentional ambiguity of thought"; Yosano's poem, written during the Russo-Japanese war, is unabashedly clear in its message: a poignant attack against both this war and the impulse to war. Repetition serves as an important rhetorical conceit. The refrain, "My love, you must not go to your death" both opens and closes this poem, serving as both a structuring device and as a sort of moral chorus, a direct appeal to her brother not to participate. The symmetrical structure, combined with the unambiguous revelation of the poem's intent, obviously limits the spectrum of plausible reader interpretations, seemingly negating the poem's ability to satisfy Nishida's requirement that art stand as a "place of nothingness." However, the clearest violation of the aesthetic appears in stanza three, with its overt criticism of the emperor. There is nothing of Tanizaki's ideas of "silence" or "shadow" here; in lines such as "The emperor, he does not/cross the sea to fight," Yosano baldly accuses the emperor of the twin crimes of hypocrisy and insincerity.[23] Her criticism continues in the fourth stanza with the ironic reference to "the Emperor's peace"; in a stratagem used by certain countries even today, the Japanese government had justified its invasion of Russia as necessary to "preserving peace," an idea Yosano strongly rejects. That this poem appeared before the publication of Okakura's influential treatise demonstrates the presence of alternative voices and styles in Japan even at that time, ones which did not fit comfortably under his definition of a single, so-called "Japanese" aesthetic.

The language/structural innovations are more difficult to represent – let alone discuss – in English. That the poem is neither tanka nor haiku is established, if nothing else, by its length. However, while the innovations of her "new style" were extremely controversial at the time of first publication, the impact in English is lessened by differences between the languages themselves.[24] Standard Japanese is unaccented and has exactly five vowel

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[23] See Vera Mackie, "Motherhood and Pacifism in Japan 1900-1937," *Hecate* 14/2 (1988): 28-49 for a discussion of the media criticism which greeted this poem's publication, including calls for "the nation's punishment."

[24] See Janine Beichman, *Embracing the Firebrand: Yosano Akiko and the Birth of the Female Voice in Modern Japanese Poetry* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002) for an extensive discussion of the Japanese critical reception – e.g., pp. 181-185.

sounds; the sound system, moreover, is expressed through the main syllabaries in terms of syllables rather than isolated vowels or consonants. Accordingly, alliteration in the Western sense is not valued (or really understood), and a stressed rhythm impossible. Instead, as mentioned above, Japanese poets have traditionally used so-called poetic language to establish context and mood, and alternating syllable "units" – chiefly groupings of 5/7 syllables – to create a "rhythm" pleasing to the Japanese ear. Yosano keeps to the syllabic count – e.g., 親は刃を / にぎらせて / 人を殺せと / 教えしや (oya wa katana wo/nigirasete/hito wo korose to/oshieshiya ) – although her chosen vocabulary, subject matter, and artistic presentation are decidedly nontraditional.

　　　　Almost as forthright and confrontational is this second poem by Yosano, published in 1910 yet eerily prophetic of the horrible war that would begin less than thirty years later:

### A CERTAIN COUNTRY

A country that takes joy only in rigidity,
in ritual, yet how rash,
how enslaved by whim.
Like impatient China
a self-absorbed and short-sighted country,
a country lacking the resources of America
yet obsessed with becoming America.
A country incapable of questioning,
its men too stooped by fatalism.
A country which congratulates itself,
which repeats without thought,
*Ban-Banzai* [25]

Interestingly enough, the practice for many years in both Japan and in the West has been to characterize Yosano as merely a "woman writer"[26] or a

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[25] Yosano, *Kimi shi ni tamau koto*, p. 11.

[26] Mokichi Saito, *Meiji taishō tanka shi* [A History of Meiji and Taishō Tanka] (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1950), p. 83; the explicit and implicit sexism in Saito's statements are effectively skewered by Beichman (e.g., pp. 3-5, 109, 177).

writer of "romantic" verse.[27] As recently as 1980, Yoshida Sei'ichi, the influential scholar of modern Japanese literature, argued that Yosano was a romantic poet "whose central subject matter was love and who therefore wrote all her best poetry in youth."[28] However, Beichman's own study, examining Yosano's poetry prior to 1904, demonstrates convincingly that even her early work went well beyond this stereotype. In the second poem above, Yosano's theme and images are both directly articulated and transparently critical, though her target this time is not limited to government policy. Instead, she disparages the "fatalistic" Japanese national ethos, especially the acquiescence of its citizens, without whose support no government could long stay in power. Accordingly, the poem is an additional example of a non-tanka, non-haiku poem without seasonal references and other examples of poetic language, one taking on a challenging, even confrontational, theme. Given the enduring popularity of both poems (the former was even made into a song), it seems clear that a large Japanese reading audience existed – and exists – for work written to this aesthetic.

Ibaragi Noriko, winner of the Yomiuri Shinbun Prize for literature and, until her death in 2006, arguably Japan's preeminent living female poet, similarly breaks from traditional Japanese poetic conventions.

### GIRL'S MARCH

I like bullying boys.
I really like making them whine.
Just today, I knocked Jirou about the head in school.
He said *Ouch* and ran away, tail between his legs.

A hard-headed boy, Jirou
put a dent in my lunch box....

Pa says  I mean Father the Doctor says
girls shouldn't race about, act wild.
Inside each of our bodies is a special room,
so we must go quietly, softly.

Where's my room, do you think?

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[27] Keene, *Modern Japanese Literature*, p. 152.
[28] Beichman, *Embracing the Firebrand*, p. 4.

Tonight, I'll look for it....

Grandma's pissed  Ms. Dried Plum
tells me girls who don't eat all their fish get kicked out,
they don't last three days as brides before they're returned.
*Eat everything but the head and the tail*, she says.

Well, I'm not marrying
so you can keep your darn fish bones!

The old baker started yelling,
*Women and socks have gotten tough! Women and socks!*
The women behind the counter were laughing at him.
Of course women have become strong—there's a reason for it.

I, too, am going to be a strong woman.
Tomorrow, who should I make cry?[29]

  This poem deviates from the Japanese aesthetic in a number of important ways. Lines such as "I like bullying boys/I really like making them whine" and "Well, I'm not marrying/so you can keep your darn fish bones!" are certainly difficult to reconcile with Tanizaki's assertion that Japanese "prefer the soft voice, the understatement,"[30] not to mention seem to be devoid of the kind of ambiguity of meaning advocated by Okakura. The revelation implicit in the ending declaration – "I, too, am going to be a strong woman" – is another apparent violation, both in its directness and completeness. Indeed, the assertion's outspokenness would appear to negate its ability to serve as the proper backdrop for the reader's imagination, at least as delineated by Nishida, Okakura, and Tanizaki. However, even more than these apparent violations, the most interesting thing about this poem is its initial date of publication: 1958.[31] This would, of course, place the poem after the appearance of the Tanizaki article and before Henderson and

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[29] Cited from Noriko Ibaragi, *Onna no kotoba* [Women's Words] (Tokyo: Dōwaya, 1994), pp. 28-30.

[30] Tanizaki, "In Praise of Shadows," p. 63.

[31] It first appeared in a poetry collection entitled *Mienai haitatsufu* [The Invisible Delivery Husband] (Tokyo: Iizuka shoten, 1958).

Miner, [32] again seemingly belying their claims to describing a current, uniform Japanese aesthetic.

Ibaragi's word and structural choices are also similarly nontraditional, even "Western," making her (among other things) an enjoyable, and comparatively easy, subject for English translation. This poem, as is usual with Ibaragi, is neither a tanka nor a haiku, not to mention eschews a regular 5-7 syllabic pattern. As is also typical, the playful use of colloquial language – e.g., "I really like making them whine" 男の子をキイキイいわせるのは大好き, "put a dent in my lunch box" べんとう箱がへっこんだ and "Tonight, I'll look for it" 今夜探検してみよう – belies the subversiveness of her overall theme: not just the existence of female strength, not just that it should be admired if found, but that those difficult times demanded strong women. Early post-war Japan, with its continuing social conservativeness, abject poverty, high unemployment, and widespread civil unrest, makes an interesting historical backdrop for this defiant assertion of equality.

As demonstrated by the Yosano poems as well, women writers have traditionally been some of the harshest, most confrontational opponents of Japanese domestic and foreign policy. In the following poem, Ibaragi's self-effacing humor and simplicity of both style and language again serve to underscore a complex, confrontational message.

WHEN I WAS MY MOST BEAUTIFUL

When I was my most beautiful
City after city came tumbling down
I could see blue sky
From the most surprising places

When I was my most beautiful
so many I knew died
in factories, on the seas, on nameless islands
there was nobody left to talk to

When I was my most beautiful

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[32] Harold Henderson, *Haiku in English* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1967); Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

I received no gentle gifts
the boys knew only how to salute
their lovely eyes remaining with me after they all left

When I was my most beautiful
my head was empty
my heart filled with stubbornness
but my arms and legs glistened like chestnuts

When I was my most beautiful
my country lost the war
can you believe the stupidity?
My blouse sleeves rolled up, I walked around the abject city

When I was my most beautiful
the streets flooded with the sound of jazz
I became dizzy with it, like the taste of my first cigarette,
this sweet music from a strange country

When I was my most beautiful
I was so unhappy
I was so confused
I was so very lonely

So I've decided to live a very long time
After all, the Frenchman Rouault
painted his most beautiful works in his old age
right?[33]

Here, Ibaragi's use of form and a simple colloquial vocabulary contribute to the poem's twin evocations of extreme personal isolation and cultural dislocation. Structurally, the poem is divided into eight stanzas of four lines; the lines are unpunctuated and of widely varying length (including the monosyllabic last line), with no set pattern of repeating syllable pairings. Lacking seasonal references and other examples of poetic language, this poem is also devoid of the traditional, ostensibly "Japanese" markers for delineating setting, time, narrative progression and structural cohesion. Instead, the poem is held together by its use of repetition, including the

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[33] Ibaragi, *Onna no kotoba*, pp. 48-51.

haunting refrain "when I was my most beautiful" わたしが一番きれいだっ たとき, though seen syntactically within several stanzas (especially the penultimate) as well. Moreover, each stanza serves as a distinct semantic unit, each articulating a separate "point" in a similar rhetorical pattern (when I was young – this happened – with this result), which anticipates the turn (i.e., the ending declaration) in the final stanza as well. Indeed, it could be argued that the ostensibly "Western" conventions of line/syntax repetition and semantic completion used throughout this poem are intrinsic to the delineation of its overall message, mirroring in a sense the war's cultural, artistic, and social disruptions – the resulting voids only partially ameliorated by surrender to the tempting seductions of the "conquering" culture. For instance, like the devastated yet now jazz-filled streets it describes, the poem's free form and colloquial wording are a veneer of Western influence both "sweet" and "dizzying," with the "right" ね of that final line hopeful, but not certain, of the redemption it seems to offer.

While preparing this paper, I came across *Other Side River*, an excellent 1995 anthology of poetry by Japanese women.[34] Overall, I have nothing but praise for its translations; however, our one poem of overlap is "When I Was My Most Beautiful," and interestingly enough, here I do have a minor, though important, quibble with one line in the fifth stanza. Their translation of that stanza's third line – "how could all that have happened?" – is much tamer than my "can you believe the stupidity." I feel, though, that the Japanese そんな馬鹿なことってあるものか better supports my rendition, with the very informal grammar, and particularly the term 馬鹿 (stupid, fool, idiot), underlining the shock – and anger – the populace felt upon discovering their many wartime sacrifices had been in vain. In other words, Ibaragi is not just reminiscing but commenting, and her commentary conveys in direct language, both here and elsewhere, sorrow, shock and anger at all that had been lost.

Best selling poet "Tawara Machi" (her pen name) also habitually violates the Japanese aesthetic. In her influential 1989 book *Sarada Kinnenbi* [The Anniversary of Salad], for instance, she uses the tanka form to narrate the course of a failed romantic relationship, with each tanka depicting a particular stage (e.g., her realization of love, doubt, and finally loss) in that relationship. Here is a small sampling:

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[34] Leza Lowitz and Miyuki Aoyama, eds., *Other Side River: Free Verse* (New York: Stonebridge Press, 1995).

Suddenly, I'm aware that all
the clothes I'm trying on have
your favorite flower pattern.

The falling rain
and just like that I want
your lips.

Believing no promises, you play
in sand where waves cannot reach,
building nothing.

I try James Dean poses
outside in a jacket
musky with you.

I realized I'd given up on you
while wearing a hemp skirt, drinking
the first 'ice coffee' of summer.

It was there we said
goodbye. Like an exit interview,
that evening.[35]

      While devoid of the biting political/social commentary that characterizes the work of Ibaragi and Yosano, Tawara Machi's poems share with these authors a similar stylistic virtuosity. These are not the tanka of Fujiwara, Emperor Go-Toba, or even Ryōkan; seasonal references are blurred or omitted, and Nature itself is a mere backdrop for an intensely personal, human drama. Indeed, the colloquial language, the directness of the images, not to mention the coherent narrative of a failed relationship depicted in the collection, mark departures both from the tanka form itself and from the Japanese aesthetic discussed above. From the bold declaration of "and just like that I want/your lips" 落ちてきた雨を見上げてそのままの形でふいに、唇が欲し to the audacity of her referring to a final discussion with her lover as an "exit interview" もうそこにサヨナラという語があって一

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[35] Tawara Machi, *Sarada kinnenbi* [The Anniversary of Salad] (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1989), pp. 15, 18, 33, 83, 122, 180.

問一答式の夕暮れ, Tawara Machi is forthright, unabashedly assertive, and even confrontational; the success of the book (over two million copies sold, by far the most successful poetry collection in modern Japanese history) again demonstrates the extensive market in Japan for work with such qualities.

     *Other Side River* contains examples of poems by Japanese women that appear similarly to violate the conventions of the Japanese aesthetic. Here, for instance, are the ending stanzas (the full poem is quite long) from "Harakiri," Hiromi Ito's devastating indictment of "bushidō," the so-called Japanese "way of the warrior," mentality that had played (and continues to play in some political circles) such a tragic role in modern Japanese history.

> "I know it's kind of sick," he said.
> He thinks *bushido* should have cherry blossoms
> He thinks samurai are always
> looking for a place to die.
> I failed to hear
> If his ancestors were samurai.
> He thinks pain will become pleasure
> If he trains himself
> "That's why I'm training myself now," he says,
>     (masturbating)
> I'm sure it's extremely exciting
> To commit harakiri facing a woman
> Mr. O says,
> (masturbating)
> samurai
>     (masturbating)
> ha ha
> (masturbating)
> cherry blossoms
> (masturbating)
> falling
> (masturbating)
> It's really kind of kinky.[36]

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[36] Hiromi Ito, "Harakiri," in *Other Side River: Free Verse*, pp. 88-89. Note that this is Lowitz and Aoyama's translation.

As with the poems described earlier, the contraventions here of the Japanese aesthetic are readily apparent. There are no "silences" in this poem – even masturbation is conducted through a stream of dialogue. From the mocking "I failed to hear/If his ancestors were samurai" to the conceit of having the would-be "samurai" masturbate in his excitement, Ito's sarcasm is neither subtle nor opaque. On the contrary, her poem seems to represent a direct and extremely lucid criticism of those who would continue to espouse the virtues of an anachronistic "warrior mentality" in a modern industrial society. Furthermore, the ending line appears to violate the aesthetic as well in both the overtness and completeness of its revelation; indeed, "It's really kind of kinky" deftly skewers her target, suggesting as it does that "bushidō" is ultimately just another deviant sexual obsession.

Still, there are a number of poems written by Japanese women which seem "Japanese" – in the sense that they are indirect, understated, non-narrative driven and open to various interpretations. However, this brings up an important salient point – is this not equally true of some Western poetry in English as well? Ashbery – who once said that in his poems he "attempts to use words abstractly, as an abstract painter uses paint"[37] – comes to mind immediately. Also St. John's "Acadian Lane," Plath's "Watercolor of Grantchester Meadows," Scheele's "The Gap in the Cedar" – there appear to be a large number of poems in the English language as well where image enjoys precedent over meaning, where the ending revelation is either muted or left seemingly incomplete, stimulating the imagination and inviting a variety of interpretations. Do not these poems also partake of a similar, so-called "Japanese" aesthetic?

Which leads me to this final question: with so many exceptions existing in the Japanese language, not to mention so many Western poems seeming to conform to the aesthetic ideal delineated above, why has an argument been made for there being a uniquely "Japanese" aesthetic? One explanation that has been offered is racism, i.e., the West's "imperialist tradition" has resulted in an obsession with "essentializing" or "othering" the Orient. Ma, Said, and Susser, among others, have argued that Western researchers frequently minimalize (or omit entirely) the historical and cultural complexities of their Oriental subject matter, emphasizing instead

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[37] Cited in *Strong Measures: Contemporary American Poetry in Traditional Forms*, eds. Philip Dacey and David Jauss (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 18.

areas of perceived differences vis-à-vis Western societies. Worse, this assumption of, and fascination with, "difference" ostensibly leads many Western researchers to "create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe,"[38] exaggerating (or even inventing) the exotic in an attempt to "polarize the distinction or that the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner becomes more Western." According to these critics, the end result is too often a false dichotomy where the Orient is reduced to an artificial construct, an "Other" which has less to do with the actual reality than with the "identity of the subject who is gazing at the 'Other.'"[39]

This line of reasoning belies the fact that, in the case of Japan, many of the offenders in this myth-building process are Japanese. For instance, in asserting the importance of incompleteness and indirectness in Japanese art, Okakura supports his argument with references to both the semantic origin and modern usage of the Japanese word for "tea ceremony house" ("sukiya" 数寄屋).[40] These oft-cited assertions: the Chinese characters, taken together, originally translated to mean "abode of fancy;" the Chinese characters used to express this term have changed repeatedly over the years; currently, depending on the characters used, the term "sukiya" can be translated to mean "abode of vacancy" or "abode of the unsymmetrical."

However, as even Okakura himself must have been aware when he wrote *The Book of Tea*, all three assertions are open to criticism. Here are the original characters and their former [and present] meanings:

> 數   chant while holding sticks ("shamaness" in Chinese) [Now: "count" or "number"]
> 寄   seeking protection in a stranger's house [Now: "draw near," "visit" or "send"]
> 屋   a room where, having arrived, one can relax [Now: "house," "shop" or "shopkeeper"][41]

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[38] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 3.

[39] Bernard Susser, "EFL's Othering of Japan," *JALT Journal* 20/1 (1998): 52.

[40] Okakura, "The Tea Room," p. 56.

[41] Izuru Shinmura, ed., *Kōjien* [Unabridged Japanese Dictionary] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1955); and Kenneth Henshall, *A Guide to Remembering Japanese Characters* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1988).

As can be seen, except for a slight difference in the shape of the first Chinese character, the standard characters used to represent "sukiya" 数寄屋 appear to have remained almost unchanged for over four hundred years. Also, it is difficult to imagine how this term, whether the characters are taken separately or together, could be construed to mean "abode of fancy," "abode of vacancy" or "abode of the unsymmetrical." Indeed, I would argue that the best literal translation of the modern Japanese would be simply "a house where people can gather together." Now, it should also be noted that "sukiya" has in the past sometimes been shortened to "suki" 数寄, a term which had an additional connotation of "like." Hence, the term "sukiya" can also be translated as "a gathering place for people who like tea," a concept certainly intelligible to most Western readers as well.

Okakura may have been motivated by complex, and at times contradictory, desires in articulating his views of a unified, Japan-specific, aesthetic. While symbolism, not to mention an artistic consciousness (see, for instance, Kyorai's "Conversations with Basho"[42]), certainly did exist in Japanese literature prior to encountering the West, no systemic Japanese attempt had been made to codify these often contradictory arguments into a single, coherent aesthetic theory.[43] Accordingly, some scholars have argued that many of the seminal articles written on the Japanese aesthetic in the latter half of the Meiji period (1890-1912) were motivated at least partly by a perceived need to define a "national essence,"[44] to demonstrate artistic and cultural independence (later, superiority) from the West. In an exhaustive study of Okakura's life and work, for instance, Notehelfer[45] demonstrates convincingly how his aesthetic arguments were but a part of a much larger agenda, both to promote popular acceptance of an idealized past and to justify the military expansion that had already begun to dominate Japan's present. According to Okakura, Japan's artistic sensibilities were the result of

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[42] Donald Keene, trans., "Conversations with Bashō," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, eds. Ryusaku Tsunoda and William Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 450-458.

[43] Earl Jackson, "The Heresy of Meaning: Japanese Symbolist Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51/2 (1991): 561-598.

[44] Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 436.

[45] F. G. Notehelfer, "On Idealism and Realism in the Thought of Okakura Tenshin," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 16/2 (1990): 309-355.

a "remarkable synthesis" of the best of Asian thought, made possible only by the "particular genius of the Japanese race."[46] Okakura argued further that these superior sensibilities (i.e., the unique aesthetic he had described) justified Japan's "mission" to "revive the dormant life of the old Asiatic unity,"[47] observing as well that "The Chinese War, which revealed our supremacy in Eastern waters, and which has yet drawn us closer than ever in mutual friendship [with China], was a natural outgrowth" of this mission.[48] As Notehelfer himself concludes:

> Here the ambiguity of his upbringing and education, his peculiar need to defend Japan among foreigners, and his romantic adherence to "what should be" instead of "what was" all worked to inhibit a clear expression of the reality in which late Meiji Japan found itself.[49]

In other words, there is ample reason to question the motivations behind, not to mention some of the substance of, Okakura's foundational work in Japanese aesthetics.

Is there a uniquely Japanese aesthetic? I would argue no – at least, no clear articulation of one has been offered that can encompass the myriad of voices and forms existent in Japanese literature today, let alone one which can delineate a clear and consistent contrast with Western ideals of the aesthetic. Moreover, considering the pace and extent of the changes occurring just in the area of women's letters, the task of describing such an aesthetic would appear formidable and increasingly so. The translated poems referenced in this paper document the existence of a vibrant, assertive, and even confrontational tradition of poetry by Japanese women, one well received by the public. As alluded to above, the critical and artistic impact, although often unacknowledged (when not completely ignored), has perhaps

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[46] Notehelfer, "On Idealism and Realism in the Thought of Okakura Tenshin": 331.

[47] Notehelfer, "On Idealism and Realism in the Thought of Okakura Tenshin": 335.

[48] Notehelfer, "On Idealism and Realism in the Thought of Okakura Tenshin": 341-342. To this, Notehelfer drily responds: "One wonders how any Chinese or Korean, even of the deepest idealistic convictions, could have agreed with Okakura's evaluation of Japanese foreign policy."

[49] Notehelfer, "On Idealism and Realism in the Thought of Okakura Tenshin": 354.

been even more important. Ooka and others have argued that modern Japanese free verse began with Kawaji, when in fact many of the very innovations he advocates appeared much earlier in Yosano's popular, provocative work. Ninety years later, Tawara Machi similarly revitalizes the Tanka form, making it suddenly modern, "hip," and relevant – indeed, while I have focused on Japanese poetry over the last one hundred years, an argument can be made that this tradition of female literary virtuosity extends back to at least the Heian Period (794 to 1185) and Murasaki Shikibu's groundbreaking *The Tale of Genji*.[50] Accordingly, it would seem that modern scholarship would be better served by learning to recognize, and to celebrate, the variety of styles and themes in the Japanese literary arts. At the very least, this idea of "shaking" women poets "in flux and reaching for a landing point" would appear, at best, to refer to a very small subset of women writers. In Japanese letters, it is often the women who lead the way, and their work is a far cry from impermanent.

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[50] Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (London: Penguin Books, 1964) argues this at length.

# BOB DYLAN'S ZEN GARDEN:
## CROSS-CULTURAL CURRENTS IN HIS
## APPROACH TO RELIGIOSITY[1]

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### Dylan's Spiritual Influences, Eastern and Western

It has been said, "Religion looms large in Dylan's worldview."[2] During every phase of his career, Bob Dylan has portrayed himself as an outcast or misfit, a drifter or wanderer, or a stranger in a strange land toiling in perpetual exile yet struggling to gain redemption by breaking through the ever-challenging gates to heaven. From the mournful pleas of the "Man of Constant Sorrow" on his first album *Bob Dylan* (1962) to awaiting mixed blessings "When the Deal Goes Down" on the recent *Modern Times* (2006), Dylan's ongoing quest for elusive paradise has continued unabated.

As a critic of Dylan points out, "Folklore, ethnomusicology, linguistics, anthropology, literary criticism, and philology: none of these can be left aside in a thorough attempt to gain insight into the rich dynamics and designs of Bob Dylan's performance artistry."[3] The same must also be said for the field of religious studies, and while the main focus has been on various aspects of Western traditions, this makes the case for injecting Eastern mysticism into the multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural mix because of Dylan's wide-ranging affinities with Zen Buddhism, which are in part historical/biographical and also spiritual/intellectual. Examining Dylan's relation with Zen underscores that the more remote and exotic the cultural

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[1] This paper was originally presented at a symposium on Bob Dylan held at the University of Minnesota in March 2007, and some of this material appears in *Bargainin' for Salvation: Bob Dylan, A Zen Master?* (New York: Continuum, 2009). All quotes of Bob Dylan's lyrics are taken from the official website, http://bobdylan.com, by permission of Dylan's manager, Jeff Rosen.

[2] M. Cooper Harriss, "Religion in *Modern Times*," *Sightings* (August 10, 2006); http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/sightings/archive_2006/0810.shtml.

[3] Catherine Mason and Richard Thomas, "Introduction [to special issue on Bob Dylan]," *Oral Tradition* 22/1 (2007): 3.

context he pursues, the more intimate and familiar the sense of truth it reveals.

Dylan's songwriting was greatly influenced by American folk/blues music as well Beat poetry and a variety of other literary sources. In considering the role of religious imagery, the most prominent source of inspiration seems to be an extensive use of biblical references. Whether interpreted from either a Judaic/Old Testament perspective or a Christian/New Testament one, citations from the Bible appear in just about every album. This includes, but is not limited to, his gospel stage that began in the late 1970s and endured until the early '80s.[4] But is the Bible the sole factor needed to assess the spiritual dimensions of Dylan's life work?

It is clear that Japanese culture, Zen Buddhism in particular, was making an imprint on Dylan's approach to music-making during the mid-1970s. This phase, marked by several direct references and indirect allusions in Dylan's writings, lasted for several years through the time of his first Far East tour in 1978. It culminated with an explicit mention of Zen gardens visited in Kyoto in album liner notes that appeared just months before his conversion to Christianity less than a year later. The rise and fall of an interest in Zen in relation to the awakening of a Christian consciousness is a very important biographical juxtaposition that is generally overlooked in the field of Dylanology. This is primarily because most critics are not sensitive to the issue of Eastern affinities and possible influences.

Dylan's initial exposure to Zen undoubtedly came through the auspices of poet and avowed meditator Allen Ginsberg, along with other Beat movement writers who were involved extensively with pursuing the Buddhist dharma either in their narrative writings, such as Jack Kerouac, or in their religious practice and poetry, such as Gary Snyder. Dylan befriended Ginsberg and read the works of other Beats when he first arrived and became ensconced in the bohemian scene that was flourishing in New York's Greenwich Village in the 1960s. For the members of the Beat movement, the appropriation of a Zen way of living freely in the eternal moment was considered a crucial component of their literary endeavors,

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[4] See Michael J. Gilmour, *Tangled Up In the Bible: Bob Dylan and Scripture* (New York: Continuum, 2004); and Stephen H. Webb, *Dylan Redeemed: from Highway 61 to Saved.* (New York: Continuum, 2006); and Seth Rogonoy, *Prophet, Mystic, Poet* (New York: Scribner, 2009).

which expressed an obsessive search for individual freedom and spiritual truth beyond the conventions of modern, mechanical society.

As early as the mid-'60s, or over a decade before his travels to Japan, there were lyrics in a number of Dylan songs indicating the inception of a Zen-like outlook. These deal with the quest to find a haven of solitude and detachment in a world where the boundary between reality and illusion is continually breaking down with each act of social or personal injustice, hypocrisy, and inauthenticity. This spiritual longing is conveyed in songs such as "Chimes of Freedom," with its compassion for the misunderstood and downtrodden, "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," which expresses a strict adherence to intellectual and cultural integrity and disdain for self-deception, and "Desolation Row," in which the aloofness of resignation and detachment seems to be the only answer for profound social ills.
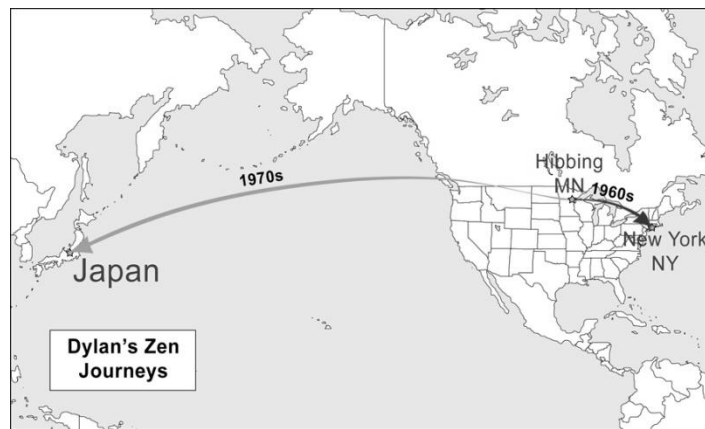


**Two Journeys Leading to Zen**

In songs in which the Beat literary influence is particularly strong, Dylan seems to reflect the Zen attitude of "seeing things as they really are," by overcoming delusion and remaining free of blinders, distortions, or bad faith. Affinities with Zen also seem evident in lyrics that express a view of moral causality which resembles the Buddhist notion of karma. Several songs from *Blonde on Blonde* in 1966, including "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again," "Visions of Johanna," and "4th Time Around," refer to the notion that "'Everybody must give something back/For something they get.'" Another example of Zen inklings is the

cycle of songs on *The Basement Tapes* recorded in 1967 (released in 1975) that explore the implications of an experience of nothingness, or the spiritual void, in "Too Much of Nothing," "Nothing Was Delivered," and "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere."

**The Village in Early '60s and Japan in Late '70s**

Dylan's possible interest in a Zen outlook was no doubt greatly enhanced by his travels in Japan a decade later. Dylan's music gained popularity and a cult following in Japan beginning in the '60s when songs like "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Like a Rolling Stone" were hit singles, and he became a role model for Japan's student protest movement during the Vietnam War era.



**Dylan '60s Record Jacket in Japan**

Dylan's arrival for the 1978 tour was eagerly anticipated and documented by scores of journalists. When he was asked at a press conference held at Haneda Airport why he had come to their country, Dylan told Japanese reporters rather playfully that it was because "we are living in a Zen age."[5] Although Dylan sang unconventional arrangements of his

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[5] Greeted with the newspaper headline "Bob Dylan has arrived!"("Bobu Diran ga yatte-kita"), Dylan was also asked if he should be considered a "god of folk songs," to which he responded, "no," and when queried how he should be thought of, he replied, "I'm just a person." Skeptics have seen the motive for the tour tied to a need for money to pay alimony after a

classic songs, accompanied for the first time in his career by a back-up band with sax, bongo drums, and distaff singers, the reception was very positive. A headline in an entertainment rag back in the states ran, "Dylan Zaps Japs."

Upon leaving Japan at the conclusion of the tour, Dylan spoke fondly of the Zen temples he visited there, including Kinkakuji Temple (The Temple of the Golden Pavilion) and the most famous Zen rock garden located at Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto. Remarks on the cover of *Live at Budokan*, which was originally planned along with the greatest hits collection *Masterpieces* for a Japan-only release, mention his fascination with the teachings of Zen:

> The Japanese people can hear my heart still beating in Kyoto at the Zen Rock Garden – Someday I will be back to reclaim it.



**From '78 Far East/Budokan Tour Program**

**Sitting Buddha versus Precious Angel**

Dylan's "Zen garden," a stage that included explicit references to Zen or Asian mysticism, was probably initially cultivated in 1974 on *Planet Waves*, which includes liner notes that evoke the image of Native American poets seeking a sense of the Buddha as part of their spiritual journey. The

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difficult, contested divorce. See Naoki Urasawa and Koji Wakui, *Diran wo katarou: Talking About Bob Dylan* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2007); and also see Mihashi Kazuo, *60 nendai no Bobu Diran* (Tokyo: Shinko Music Pub. Co., 1991).

album also contains the song "Dirge," which says cryptically much like "Desolation Row": "I paid the price of solitude, but at least I'm out of debt." This implies that a Zen-like transcendence of ordinary attachments is worth the sacrifice of superficial companionship or seeking the approval of peers.

In an outtake version of "Idiot Wind" recorded for *Blood on the Tracks* a year later, Dylan explicitly evokes an ancient Asian religious text, the *I-Ching* (or *Book of Changes*), originally composed nearly three thousand years ago and translated many times into English. This scripture, which introduces the doctrine of the balance of opposing but complementary forces of Yin (yielding) and Yang (assertive), is known for its distinctive view of reconciling the conundrum of human choice versus fate determined by external powers through the doctrine of synchronicity, or the confluence of mutually determining factors that defy logical explanation. From this standpoint, there is no such thing as coincidence in the conventional sense of random, arbitrary occurrences because free will and destiny are interwoven possibilities in each and every action.

According to this version of "Idiot Wind," "I threw the *I-Ching* yesterday, it said there might be some thunder at the well/I haven't tasted peace an' quiet for so long, it seems like livin' hell."[6] The reference to "thunder in the well" indicates the occasion of dramatic change or upheaval, and suggests that the consolation of solitude and quietude is not easily attained until the emotions of resentment and doubt are overcome. In addition, the final verse of an unofficial version of "Simple Twist of Fate" also recorded for *Blood on the Tracks*, concludes the anguished love song about missed opportunities amid the misfortunes of fateful circumstances by saying that the complex situation is "leaving me to meditate/One more time on a simple twist of fate."[7] Here, fate implies the inescapability of inevitable circumstances that may cause turmoil or upheaval yet must be accepted with calm resignation.

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[6] "The officially released version is, "I ran into the fortune-teller, who said beware of lightning that might strike/I haven't known peace and quiet for so long I can't remember what it's like." One wonders why he removed the Asian reference.

[7] The officially released version is, "She was born in spring, but I was born too late/Blame it on a simple twist of fate."

In "Up to Me," another song recorded for *Blood on the Tracks* but not included on the official release, Dylan cryptically downplays the typical Christian explanation of moral consequences based on the beatitudes, including the ideals of turning the other cheek and the meek inheriting the earth: "We heard the Sermon on the Mount and I knew it was too complex/It didn't amount to anything more than what the broken glass reflects." The broken glass image suggests the Zen view of embracing multiple, fractured perspectives as the best way of taking part in, yet remaining detached from, a fragmented and relativistic universe. The song indicates that the Asian outlook is more attuned to natural circumstances and, therefore, of equal weight or perhaps superior to the biblical account of morality.

Furthermore, a few months later in April 1975, Dylan did a radio interview with Mary Travers (of the renowned folk trio Peter, Paul, and Mary) in which he chided listeners like Travers who would say they "enjoyed" listening to *Blood on the Tracks*, because it reveals so much inner pain (she conceded that she meant to say "appreciated"). He also discussed with Travers that day how the Zen notion of time as an eternal present moment helped to inspire the revival of his artistry after a lull in his songwriting during the early '70s. This period of composing was also influenced by Dylan's painting teacher Norman Raeban.[8] Although Raeban, a descendant of famed Yiddish writer Shalom Aleichem, did not introduce Zen, he taught Dylan "a new way of seeing" based on a comprehensive scope that has affinities with Eastern mysticism. According to Dylan, this helped to spark his innovative approach to constructing narrative structures by integrating past and future vantage points with current perspectives.

In his next album, *Desire* released in 1976, explicit references to Buddhism come to the fore in the hit song "Hurricane." Dylan ironically evokes the image of a Buddhist meditation hut, which is traditionally "ten-foot square" in honor of the abode of the humble lay saint Vimalakirti, who was said to have defeated Buddhist deities in a heavenly debate. This image conveys a sense of empathy for the listener with the plight of the unfairly imprisoned black boxer, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter: "Now all the criminals in their coats and their ties/Are free to drink martinis and watch the sun

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[8] See Clinton Heylin, *Bob Dylan: Behind the Shades Revisited* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2000), pp. 368-369.

rise/While Rubin sits like Buddha in a ten-foot cell/An innocent man in a living hell."

Carter was a rising prizefighter who "one time… could-a been/The [middleweight] champion of the world," but who in the racially divided environment of Patterson, New Jersey in the 1960s was framed for a bloody murder he did not commit. Hurricane continued to contest and appeal his case through the legal system while he remained in prison for ten years after Dylan's involvement in the cause, and he was eventually freed from jail in 1985 after serving nearly two decades. Some time later, he was awarded two honorary doctorate of law degrees from universities in Canada and Australia, and was celebrated in a film starring Denzel Washington.

In the song, Dylan's first overt protest lyric in half a decade (since "George Jackson" recorded in 1970 about another apparently falsely accused black prisoner who died in jail), Hurricane becomes a kind of modern-day Zen hero. By turning incarceration into an opportunity for contemplation and purification in rising above all detractors and obstacles, Carter demonstrates the qualities of patience, fortitude, and equanimity coupled with self-assurance and self-assertiveness. Hurricane is said to summon his considerable inner strengths to become spiritually liberated from prolonged physical suffering due to blatant racism and social injustice. It is very interesting that Dylan chose to cast this issue in terms of Eastern imagery of meditative self-determination rather than the Western ideal of sacrificial martyrdom.

There are several lyrics in *Street Legal*, Dylan's next album of original material released in 1978, the same year the live album was recorded in Japan, that contain references or allusions to Zen. In particular, a line in "We Better Talk This Over" cites one of the most famous of the enigmatic Zen koans, or succinct, unanswerable yet edifying spiritual riddles, regarding the difficulty of communicating intuitive awareness: "But I don't think it's liable to happen," Dylan says, perhaps mockingly, about the possibility of reconciliation, "Like the sound of one hand clappin'."

This album also contains songs influenced by the Mississippi Delta Blues tradition, which has greatly affected Dylan's music-making throughout his career, including "New Pony," a rewrite of a classic Charley Patton tune ("Pony Blues," one of Patton's biggest commercial hits in the late 1920s). *Street Legal* makes a couple of allusions to another great bluesman, Robert Johnson, in lines in "Where Are You Tonight?" about "the juice running down my leg" and about anxiety "killing me by degrees." This highlights those songs of the itinerant, long-suffering early twentieth-

century American Blues singers in pursuit of redemption, which was crucial to the development of many subsequent forms of modern popular music, and bears striking affinities with the attitudes and spiritual poetry created by unconventional Zen pilgrims seeking their path in medieval East Asia.

Another lyric in that song, "There's a white diamond gloom on the dark side of this room and a pathway that leads up to the stars/If you don't believe there's a price for this sweet paradise/Remind me to show you the scars," evokes the classical mystical experience of enduring the "dark night of the soul" in order to find higher truth. This corresponds to the Zen notion of suffering, that is inextricably linked with the attainment of enlightenment.[9] In addition, this song's classic blues putdown of a foe, "It felt outa place, my foot in his face," sounds like a comparable Zen saying about dismissing a rival, "Why is his nose in my hands?"

However, a major transition in Dylan's religious orientation was about to happen with his new, or possibly revived, interest in Christianity. It turned out by the time of the release of *Street Legal* in the summer of 1978 that there was yet another twist of faith taking place, and that Dylan's Zen garden stage would be heading for a collision course with his rather abrupt conversion to fundamental Christian doctrine. The encounter and conflict between the two religious views came to a head in 1979 with the album *Slow Train Coming*, in which Dylan explicitly repudiates Buddhism as part of embracing a new belief, though some would argue he had long been involved with the gospel but was not aware of it. After finding a "Precious Angel" (reported to be one of his backup singers) who facilitated his born-again experience, Dylan chides the ecumenical interests apparently of his recently divorced wife Sara, who had perhaps helped to indoctrinate him to Eastern religiosity: "You were telling him about Buddha, you were telling him about Mohammed in the same breath/You never mentioned one time the Man who came and died a criminal's death."

With a Zen light shining on the sitting Buddha seemingly eclipsed and cast aside by the Christian angel's glow, one wonders whether Dylan's affinity with the East would tend to diminish and perhaps disappear altogether. However, the relation between the impact of Christianity, which Dylan seemed to have abandoned by the early '80s, and other spiritual

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[9] In *Chronicles: Volume One* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2004), p. 288, Dylan associates this theme with Robert Johnson, and it is also connected with Arthur Rimbaud's "*Je est un autre*" or "I is someone else."

cultural worldviews remains complex and contested. One way to answer this question of whether or not Dylan may have lost an interest in Zen and Asian mysticism is that there are important indicators of his continued involvement with Japanese culture that have emerged over the three decades of the post-gospel period.

For example, in the early 1980s, the video of "Tight Connection to My Heart (Has Anybody Seen My Love)" was shot in Tokyo. Originally recorded for *Infidels* but released on *Empire Burlesque*, the song deals with the ambiguous image of an idealized, spiritual "Madame Butterfly." As with so many of Dylan's innovations, this proved to be years ahead of its time. The video's extensive use of imagery from contemporary Japanese society presages other American pop cultural interests in the Orient, such as Gwen Stefani's chorus known as the "Harajuku Girls" that rose to prominence over twenty years later, as well as Swedish pop icon Robyn's "Konnichi wa." Furthermore, during a tour of Japan in the early 1990s, outstanding performances of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and "Ring Them Bells" were delivered in an orchestral setting, unusual for Dylan, as part of the "Great Music Experiment" that was recorded in the ancient capital city of Nara.

A few years after this, at the turn of the millennium, the bestselling Japanese book *Confessions of a Yakuza* infused some of the lyrics of *"Love and Theft"*, especially "Lonesome Day Blues," which also includes extensive references to the works of classical poet Ovid.[10] In addition, one of the verses from "Sugar Baby" sounds like a description of the notion of suffering (*dukkha*) that comes straight out of a traditional Buddhist text with its emphasis on overcoming self-deception coupled with disappointment and anxiety in relation to the flux of impermanence:

> Every moment of existence seems like some dirty trick
> Happiness can come suddenly and leave just as quick
> Any minute of the day the bubble could burst
> Try to make things better for someone, sometimes,
> you just end up making it a thousand times worse.

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[10] See Richard F. Thomas, "The Streets of Rome: The Classical Dylan," *Oral Tradition* 22/1 (2007): 30-56.

**Dylan's Career Trajectory as Swinging Pendulum**

The full extent of Dylan's involvement, direct or indirect, with Zen and other branches of Asian mystical thought is not clear, but must be acknowledged as rather limited in scope. How important, then, are affinities with Zen for understanding Dylan's work? Does it play a key role, or is it a veritable blip on the screen compared to other aspects that seem to have had a more dramatic affect on his religiosity? The factors of Western spirituality include Dylan's Jewish upbringing, conversion to Christianity that lasted for at least a few years, and fascination with diverse spiritual sources ranging from Blues music and Beat poetry, to the classics and the philosophy of Nietzsche; It also includes a wide variety of literary and cultural elements, especially from American folk music and the society it reflects yet seeks to transform.

The juxtaposition and sharp contrast between Dylan's appreciation of the Zen rock garden in Kyoto in 1978 and his reverence for Christ that was awakened less than a year later highlights the fact that there have always been two main worldviews, at times competing and at times complementary, in Dylan's mind. Stepping back from that particular time frame to survey his overall production of nearly half a century, it seems clear that many of the singer-songwriter's lyrics echo the Zen philosophy of seeking enlightenment through experiencing life's hardships, continually questioning assumptions and stereotypes, and searching within for reprieve and transcendence.

Various kinds of lyrical or intellectual affinities and indirect connections between Dylan and Zen have taken place throughout different periods of his career, and are by no means limited to the one rather compressed time-frame of the mid- to late-'70s (*Blood on the Tracks* through *Street Legal*). A Zen perspective seems to play a crucial, if frequently indirect, role at times of the disillusionment Dylan expressed in stages during the 1960s and the 1980s in addition to the 1970s. During these phases of his songwriting, Dylan rejected any and all symbols of authority that might obstruct his dedicated pursuit of authenticity and autonomy, which is realized during key moments of Zen-like detachment and compassion.

At the same time, there are songs in various career stages that reverberate with Judeo-Christian precepts of believing in a higher power, obeying moral codes, and submitting to judgment. Dylan's Judeo-Christian-oriented lyrics evoke a dualistic worldview in the sense that Duality refers to two competing forces, such as good and evil, or heaven and hell. The

Duality side is where Dylan is looking for a single higher power to offer solutions to personal and social dilemmas. The higher power provides justice or a sense of retribution for social ills for people that are not following the highest moral standards. In "When the Ships Come In," for example, he writes, "Then the sands will roll/Out a carpet of gold/For your weary toes to be a-touchin'/And the ship's wise men/Will remind you once again/That the whole wide world is watchin'." This is a judgmental view dating back to the Old Testament prophets that Dylan has embraced in some periods of his career.

But in other songs, Dylan leans more toward the non-dualistic worldview of Zen Buddhism. The Non-Duality side is where Dylan sees that instead of one single truth that is making a judgment and offering retribution, there are multiple relativistic truths. In the world of the interaction of Yin and Yang forces, all contrasts, including the relation between reality and illusion, break down. A line from the final verse of "Tangled Up in Blue" in 1975, "All the people I used to know are an illusion to me now," is an example of Dylan expressing resignation toward the relative, illusory world.

To sum up, the Duality worldview is based on a vertical, top-down sense of the universe in which a monolithic truth creates moral judgment and retribution. The Non-Duality worldview is based on a horizontal, side-by-side sense in which there is a plurality of truths that co-inhabit the universe in Yin/Yang fashion and are best dealt with through stoic acceptance and resignation. Both views make extensive use of paradoxical imagery. For example, a line in "The Times They are A-Changin'" from the early '60s, "Rapidly fadin'/And the first one now/Will later be last," is an example of vertical paradox in which opposites are conjoined but with a clear sense of priority (echoing Mark 10:31, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first"). On the other hand, a lyric in "Silvio" from the mid-'80s, "I can stroke your body and relieve your pain/Since every pleasure's got an edge of pain," expresses horizontal paradox in which opposites are forever intertwined and are of equal value and weight.

Dylan's emphasis has swung like a pendulum alternating between the two worldviews through his half a century as a recording artist (see the Appendix for a pendulum-like diagram illustrating the full flow of Dylan's trajectory). During Dylan's folk-protest era, 1963 to 1964, his lyrics often invoked themes of morality and justice. But during his folk-rock period, 1965 to 1967, Dylan's work was more quixotic and searching. For example, in "Tombstone Blues" Dylan insists that excessive verbiage reflecting false

knowledge must be discarded: "Now I wish I could write you a melody so plain/That could hold you dear lady from going insane/That could ease you and cool you and cease the pain/Of your useless and pointless knowledge."

This is reminiscent of a Zen master, influenced by the Daoist view that it is necessary to unlearn and eventually forget conventional understanding, who comments: "The Dao is not subject to knowing or not knowing. Knowing is delusion; not knowing is blankness. If you truly reach the genuine Dao, you will find it as vast and boundless as outer space. How can this be discussed at the level of affirmation and negation?" Both Zen masters and Dylan use language in a special, deliberately perplexing way to go beyond ordinary knowing and speaking in order to reach what a medieval mystical text called the "cloud of unknowing." This state-of-mind reflects a kind of intuitive knowledge that surpasses conventional logic and understanding.

Following the dramatic shift that took place in the 1960s, Dylan's lyrics have continued to move back and forth between the Judeo-Christian and the Zen worldviews, the pendulum swings between idyllic family life (Duality) and the disappointment of separation (Non-Duality) in the 1970s, and an affirmation of the gospel (Duality) and frustration with this belief system (Non-Duality) in the 1980s. Dylan's process of exploring different spiritual paths corresponds to the manner in which Zen masters relentlessly seek a constructive compromise between two approaches: a dedicated commitment to self-discipline or self-reliance as the key to realization known as the path of Self Power; and a calm acceptance of fateful circumstances and divine forces operating beyond anyone's control known as the path of Other Power. Like Zen's approach to multiperspectivism based on "turning things upside down and topsy turvy," Dylan demonstrates an ability to hold in the mind disparate realities with a creative tension that brings out the best and does not interfere with both possibilities.

Therefore, in accord with Zen metaphysics that encompasses the productive interaction of contradictions along the way toward realizing a synthesis, an analysis can be applied to three main periods of Dylan's career. Extending from the early '60s through the '70s to the late '80s, each of the three main periods encompasses two seemingly opposite, pro-and-con stages either supporting or refuting an ideological standpoint of Duality or Non-Duality. That is, each period contains a Yang or assertive phase that puts forward a viewpoint favoring Duality which is followed by a Yin or withdrawn phase that tends to unravel and negate the single higher truth of

dualism from the opposing standpoint of the relative, complementary truths of Non-Duality. The three periods include:

> (1) Period I: From 'Protesting' to 'Detesting' (1962-1967) – the first very intense outburst of Dylan's creativity is at first dominated by topical protest songs in an acoustic folk style (Duality), and ends with songs of disdainful disillusionment about the capacity of music to change a world filled with hypocrisy and corruption played in the electric, folk-rock style (Non-Duality).

> (2) Period II: From 'I'll Be Your Baby' to 'You're an Idiot, Babe' (1967-1979) – following Dylan's motorcycle accident and marriage in the mid-'60s, the stage of country music affirms a wholehearted commitment to family values over social concerns (Duality), but culminates in a despairing account of being disillusioned and discouraged with all manner of human relationships in the aftermath of the Vietnam and Watergate (Non-Duality).

> (3) Period III: From 'Serving Somebody' to 'Letting the Echo Decide' (1979-1988) – following Dylan's divorce and the relative lack of success of several creative ventures, this period begins with gospel music expressing Dylan's conversion to fundamental Christianity (Duality), and concludes with an apparent disillusionment with all theological answers and an awareness and openness to accepting relative truths (Non-Duality).

The zigzag quality lasted, I suggest, until the late 1980s when Dylan began to find a middle path, or a constructive compromise between the extremes. The career trajectory leads finally to the current "Modern Era," which is how I refer to the creative resurgence marking the music from the '90s to the present and reaching a middle way which integrates the oppositions that dominated the previous three periods. This was first suggested by the song "Man in the Long Black Coat," which juxtaposes two verses, one commenting dualistically that "every man's conscience is vile and depraved" with the following verse remarking non-dualistically that "people don't live or die, people just float."

In subsequent albums, especially *Time Out of Mind*, *"Love and Theft"*, and *Modern Times*, he has continued to place side-by-side the

respective standpoints and seems comfortable with their compatibility. Thus, during the most recent phase of his work that has lasted for two decades, Dylan has developed an approach demonstrating that East versus West as well as Duality versus Non-Duality are not always polarized as alternating opposites or engaged in a standoff, but can be linked together as mutually enhancing cross-cultural possibilities of the ongoing spiritual quest. According to a verse in "Nettie Moore," a song about a vengeful yet regretful lover, "The Judge is coming in, everybody rise/Lift up your eyes/You can do what you please, you don't need my advice/Before you call me any dirty names you better think twice." The first two lines evoke dualism, but the final part of the passage suggests the chaos of fragmented approaches to truth.

**Are Birds Free?**

Dylan's work has demonstrated a remarkable variability that is reflected in his ability to make the most of a rich variety of genres from blues to rock, country, and gospel that reveal fundamental inconsistencies from the early to the late periods of his career. The genres include personal romantic narratives with profound social significance, such as "Visions of Johanna" or "Tangled Up in Blue"; topical, state-of-the-union message statements, such as "Desolation Row," "Slow Train," or "Political World"; apocalyptic pronouncements, as in "Shooting Star" or asking whether this is "Lincoln County Road or Armageddon?" in "Senor"; barbed-wire fence-straddling howls of desperation, such as "Can You Please Crawl Out My Window" and "Cold Irons Bound"; and confessional, repentant anthems, such as "Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest," "I Believe in You," and "Not Dark Yet." Underlying these thematic approaches is the ever mysterious presence of Dylan taking on the guise of the Drifter, Alias, Jack of Hearts, Jokerman, Man in the Long Black Coat, or Jack Fate. Accepting chaos while wondering if chaos will ever accept him and remaining busy being born rather than busy dyin', Dylan finds shelters from the storm… most of the time.

While it is important to acknowledge and appreciate diverse Western influences, sacred as well as secular, the main theme of this article is to swing the pendulum, so to speak, by highlighting the spiritual significance of enigmatic Dylan seen in relation to the equally elusive and ambiguous utterances and mannerisms of traditional Zen Buddhism. This is done not to assert the superior impact of Zen, but to help to locate and interpret the fulcrum or leverage point that is crucial for understanding the

crisscross paths of dualist and non-dualist worldviews in Dylan's career. The point is that Dylan's affinity with Zen is not limited to certain periods but cuts across all phases in reflecting the ongoing quest to uphold authenticity and autonomy in a world characterized by the absurdity of disruptive turmoil and petty conflict.

Traditional Zen thought was generally expressed in the "sparse words" of minimalist yet evocative verse, often accompanied by eccentric gestures or body language as well as other forms of creative expression. Zen masters sought to attain liberation from bondage to inhibiting psychological and social structures in pursuit of spiritual freedom, regardless of ideology. Their teachings, preserved in the voluminous records of medieval Chinese and Japanese literary culture, remain alive today in part by contributing to modern interfaith and cross-cultural exchanges regarding diverse paths to spiritual realization. The inventive philosophical queries and commentaries of Zen discourse in particular had a strong impact on the New York bohemian environment of the 1960s, as evident in the extensive role they played in the life and works of Beat writers, and also bear a striking similarity to Dylan's corpus.

Dylan's work seems Zen-like in puzzling passages about impenetrable states of consciousness like, "She knows there's no success like failure, and that failure's no success at all," "I need a dump truck mama to unload my head," and "You know it blows right through me like a ball and chain." In addition, there are quixotic queries influenced by Pete Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?", such as "How many times must a man look up/Before he can see the sky?", "Where have you been, my blue-eyed son?" (following the traditional "Lord Randall"), and "[Did] I ever become what you wanted me to be/Did I miss the mark or/Over-step the line/That only you could see?" These recall the classic examples of seemingly unanswerable Zen questions known as koans, "Does a dog have Buddha-nature?" and "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

Both Dylan and Zen demonstrate an ability to use language creatively while remaining cognizant of the limitations of verbal discourse in order to convey the heights and horizons, as well as the depths and defeats, of an inner dimension of spirituality characterized by self-reflection and self-correction. Zen frequently depicts a damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't situation with seemingly absurd examples like holding up a container and demanding of a disciple, "Tell me what this is without calling it a water pitcher and without not calling it a water pitcher. Tell me!"

Zen's "wild and extraordinary" discourse resonates with Dylan's marvelous and haunting inquiry – a true modern-day Zen koan – into the realm and limit of freedom in the concluding (yet inconclusive) verse of "Ballad in Plain D." After bemoaning the loss of someone he genuinely loved through tragic circumstances of betrayal and arrogance, the song's narrator responds to his "friends in the prison", metaphorically speaking, who ask "how good does it feel to be free", by questioning them "so mysteriously": "Are birds free from the chains of the skyway?"

When the capacity of language to express truth is exhausted, Zen masters evoke the importance of maintaining a noble silence, and when asked about its meaning they often remain "silent about silence," lest speech corrupts the contemplative moment. Dylan similarly recognizes the value of no-words when he comments in the *Bringing It All Back Home* liner notes that "experience teaches that silence terrifies people the most." He sees that silence is a useful and sometimes necessary tool to put an end to the blowing of the "Idiot Wind," and to rouse listeners from their spiritual or ideological slumber.

Yet, Dylan and Zen masters are well aware of the limitations of reticence that make it necessary to abandon a reliance on silence if it is used in a stubborn, withdrawn way and to speak up out of moral outrage or to express social criticism. Dylan has said, "I used to care/But things have changed," implying a reluctance to get involved and ensnared in the strife and struggles of the world. Underlying or complementing this detachment is a genuine compassionate concern and commitment for the well-being of self and others. Knowing when to be reticent and when to be proactive in articulating a vision or demanding moral rectitude is an important skill and domain of responsibility taken on by the spiritual master. For Dylan, the Delta Blues musical genre of Patton and Johnson has long been the primary venue that enables forceful yet frequently ambiguous, quixotic expressions of concern in a way that resembles the elusive, probing quality Zen Buddhist koans and verse.

**Every Blade of Grass is Numbered**

There are additional significant similarities between Zen masters and Dylan in their respective dual roles as mystical seekers and recluses, as well as prophets and social critics. Zen became prominent as a medieval Buddhist monastic tradition in which the leading patriarchs attained the heights of spiritual liberation but remained keenly aware of the ambiguities, struggles, and tensions that continue to plague the religious path. Thirteenth

century Japanese Zen master Dogen referred to attaining truth as a matter of "disentangling entangled vines," which can never be fully straightened out. In a parallel way, Bob Dylan is a poetic singer "still searching for another joint" as "revolution is in the air," who glimpses freedom now and again while "knockin' on heaven's door," but keeps wondering "If I could only turn back the clock to when God and her were born." Zen and Dylan take paradox and irony to the level of an art form in seeking to find truth amid the entanglements and distractions of illusory existence.

A fascinating comparison between the two approaches is seen by examining Dogen's majestic philosophical/poetic essay titled *Shōbōgenzō* "Genjokoan," which can be translated as "Realizing Enlightenment in Everyday Life."[11] The opening passage describes the need to reconcile the duality of form or phenomena, that is, daily existence, with emptiness or the manifestation of enlightenment. After delineating the overcoming of polarities such as delusion and realization, life and death, or sentient beings and buddhas, Dogen remarks, "Weeds still spring up to our dismay and flowers still fall to our chagrin." He thereby acknowledges the continuing presence of *samsara* or the frailty of impermanence, and the causal effects of desire and aversion that exist within the efforts to realize the transcendence of nirvana. To put it in Western terms, heaven and hell are never so far apart.

In his hymn "Every Grain of Sand" about the "time of my confession, in the hour of my deepest need," Dylan uses the symbolism of flowers and weeds to comment inspirationally on the inner struggle to come to terms with the impact of karma on spiritual life: "The flowers of indulgence and the weeds of yesteryear/Like criminals they have choked the breath of conscience and good cheer." For Dogen in "Genjokoan," these flowers fade while weeds proliferate even as the Buddha Way "leaps clear of abundance and scarcity" and of all polarity. Dylan, who perhaps had Mark 4:13 in mind, suggests that the indulgent flowers and karmic weeds are obstacles, even as he hears "ancient footsteps like the motion of the sea" and is "hanging in the balance of the reality of man."[12]

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[11] For more on the comparison of Dylan and Dogen, see Steven Heine and Taigen Dan Leighton, "Dylan and Dogen: Masters of Spirit and Words," *Kyoto Journal* 39 (1999): 4-11.

[12] An alternative version to the last phrase in some Dylan performances is, "perfect finished plan."

Dylan proclaims that "every hair is numbered, like every grain of sand." This emphasis on each and every particular element is no doubt influenced by biblical teaching such as Psalm 139:17-18, as well as Matthew 10:28-31 and Luke 12:6-7, but also recalls the William Blake stanza at the beginning of *Songs of Innocence* published in the early 1800s: "To see a World in a Grain of Sand/And a Heaven in a Wild Flower/Hold Infinity I the palm of your hand/And Eternity in an hour." Despite the biblical background they evoke, the writings of both Blake and Dylan are similar to Dogen's poem composed on the occasion of his return from the remote mountains of Eiheiji temple in the provinces to the capital city of Kyoto to seek medical care shortly before his death. According to the last verse Dogen composed in 1253, which in turn reminds us of the opening lines of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*, "Like a blade of grass/My frail body/Treading the path to Kyoto/Seeming to wander/Amid the cloudy mist on Kinobe Pass."[13]

Here and elsewhere, while influenced by Western religious and literary sources, Dylan's work seems to approach the Zen worldview, which finds liberation through recognizing and resigning to, rather than denying, the transient world characterized by illusion and self-doubt. Dylan emphasizes transforming bad-faith perspectives into wisdom that accepts disillusionment through detachment.  Some prominent examples include:

- "I try my best/To be just like I am/But everybody wants you/To be just like them/They sing while you slave and I just get bored" ("Maggie's Farm", 1965).
- "Everybody said they'd stand behind me/When the game got rough/But the joke was on me/There was nobody even there to call my bluff/I'm going back to New York City/I do believe I've had enough" ("Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues," 1965).
- "Life is sad/Life is a bust/All ya can do is do what you must./ You do what you must do and ya do it well" ("Buckets of Rain," 1975).

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[13] Steven Heine, trans., *The Zen Poetry of Dogen: Verses from the Mountain of Eternal Peace* (Mt. Tremper, NY: Dharma Communications, 2005), p. 106.

- "So many roads, so much at stake/So many dead ends, I'm at the edge of the lake/Sometimes I wonder what it's gonna take/To find dignity" ("Dignity," 1989).
- "Standing on the gallows with my head in a noose/Any minute now I'm expecting all hell to break loose/People are crazy and times are strange/I'm locked in tight, I'm out of range/I used to care, but things have changed" ("Things Have Changed," 1999).

In a comparable expression of a creative seeker who longs for the authenticity of the inexpressible haven of solitude amid a world of rank uncertainty and ambiguity, fifth century Chinese Daoist poet Tao Qian, an important precursor of Zen verse, wrote "Drinking Wine," which has a contemporary resonance:

> I made my home amidst this human bustle,
> Yet I hear no clamor from the carts and horses.
> My friend, you ask me how this can be so?
> A distant heart will tend towards like places.
> From the eastern hedge, I pluck chrysanthemum flowers,
> And idly look towards the southern hills.
> The mountain air is beautiful day and night,
> The birds fly back to roost with one another.
> I know that this must have some deeper meaning,
> I try to explain, but cannot find the words.

Dylan further resembles Zen when he embraces a relativist worldview that is resigned to the delusory status of everyday concerns, as expressed in a lyric from "Not Dark Yet," "I've been down on the bottom of a world full of lies/I ain't looking for nothing in anyone's eyes." Similarly, in "Genjokoan" Dogen invokes the sense of ultimate awareness as dynamic and evolving yet always somehow incomplete and in need of renewal: "When dharma [Buddhist truth] does not fill your whole body and mind, you think it is already sufficient. When dharma does fill your body and mind, you understand that something is missing." This paradoxical irony further resembles Dylan's song, "Trying to Get to Heaven," which includes a line about emotional loss that also plays with the tension in the ultimate casting off of illusion that comes with spiritual insight. Dylan says, "Just when you think you've lost everything, you find out you can always

lo-o-o-o-ose a little more," crooning "lose," sung low over a few extra measures for added emphasis.

One of the most important aspects of the worldview of Zen, known for its exquisite rock gardens, calligraphy, tea ceremony, and other forms of art and ritual, is that it seeks to go beyond pessimism by affirming the frail beauty of concrete reality while recognizing and accepting transience and relativism. According to a Zen verse, "To what shall I liken the world/Moonlight, reflected in dewdrops/Shaken from a crane's bill." Beauty, generally associated with the forms of nature in Zen, is appreciated all the more for being ephemeral and frail.

Furthermore, as an expression of their mystical vision, Dylan and Zen both speak poetically with paradoxical phrasing about the true wisdom embedded in the harmonious world of nature. In an early masterpiece, "Lay Down Your Weary Tune," Dylan sings, "The ocean wild like an organ played/The seaweed wove its strands/The crashing waves like cymbals clashed/Against the rocks and sands." As Dylan personifies the music-making of waters, Dogen speaks of the omnipresence of flowing water and also of the phantasmagoria of the walking of mountains in his evocative essay, *Shōbōgenzō* "Sansuikyo" ("The Sutras of Mountains and Waters"). He concludes, "There are mountains hidden in the sky. There are mountains hidden in mountains. There are mountains hidden in hiddenness. This is complete understanding." For Dylan in his song as for Dogen in his philosophical works, the natural elements are not only symbols or mirrors for behavior, but are very much alive as powerful spiritual guides that can enhance or hinder the path.

This further recalls a variety of Dylan songs from periods of disillusionment in which he expresses a profound appreciation for nature while acknowledging the pathos of human relations that defies placing it on a pedestal as an eternal godlike image. In "When the Deal Goes Down," Dylan writes, "In this earthly domain, full of disappointment and pain/You'll never see me frown," and in "Highlands," "Well, my heart's in the Highlands at the break of day/Over the hills and far away/There's a way to get there, and I'll figure it out somehow/But I'm already there in my mind/And that's good enough for now." To see the twin aspects of absurdity and tragedy for what they are and to at once protest and detest human foibles while calmly standing back and distancing oneself is the quality that links Dylan and Zen. Is Dylan a Zen master? The question itself provides the answer to the question.

# Featured Essays

# HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE EAST: A COMPARISON OF THE PORTRAYAL OF THE JAPANESE IN CHINESE AND HONG KONG MARTIAL ARTS CINEMA IN THE 1970S AND 1990S

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## Introduction

A society can be defined not only by what it believes in or what it stands for, but who or what it stands against. An effective and frequently overlooked method of defining a society is to analyze its popular culture, particularly with regard to the villains faced by its heroes, historical and fictional. Whether in Greek and Roman epics, the Arthurian romances, or in superhero comic books, villains reveal as much about their culture of origin as the heroes, especially said culture's fears and concerns, such as domination or assimilation by foreign powers.

Chinese martial arts films are a perfect example of how the villains in a society's popular culture reflect its ideology. The abundance of foreign villains in Chinese martial arts films – namely the Manchus, western opium dealers, and the Japanese – reflects China's strong nationalist ideology, a great deal of which is based on the idea of resistance to foreign invaders and would-be conquerors, the Japanese included (Nathan and Ross 1997, 32-34). This sense of resistance is not limited to military force, but also to cultural influence, a concern which has been expressed in such martial arts films as *Once Upon a Time in China* (1991) and the more recent *Fearless* (2006).

Among these various foreign foes, it is the Japanese who are the most noteworthy nemeses of Chinese martial arts heroes because their portrayal has evolved and changed over time, while the portrayals of other foreign conquerors and invaders have remained the same. Beginning in the early 1970s, arguably the apex of martial arts cinema, one can detect a decade-by-decade evolution in the cinematic representation of the Japanese, from vicious anti-Japanese sentiment to grudging respect, eventually leading to more well-rounded, respectable, and likeable Japanese characters appearing in Chinese and Hong Kong martial arts films. Considering the hostile history between the two nations, it is intriguing to see how the Japanese are portrayed at a certain point in time, and how China and Japan were getting along in the real world concurrently. It will be observed in this

paper that the cinematic portrayal of the Japanese and the Chinese governments' official attitude towards Japan do not always match, and are at times complete opposites.

This essay will compare and contrast the portrayal of the Japanese in martial arts films in two specific time periods: the 1970s, when the portrayals were racist and derogatory, and the 1990s, when Japanese characters were finally allowed to be well-rounded, fully-developed characters. The changes in the portrayal of a long-time enemy are especially noteworthy in the realm of cultural analysis, and the films that reflect this change are a valuable tool for any cultural historian wishing to explore Sino-Japanese relations.

**The 1970s**

As previously mentioned, in the 1970s, Japanese characters in martial arts films were exclusively villains. If they were not the main villains themselves, they would serve as henchmen, as they did in such films as *King Boxer (*aka *Five Fingers of Death), The Way of the Dragon (*aka *Return of the Dragon)*, and *Death Duel of Kung Fu,* in which Japanese characters were depicted as ruthless cold-blooded murderers, arrogant mercenaries, and seductive femme fatales, respectively. Their motivation often seemed to be doing evil for evil's sake. Even if there was no mention of Japan itself as a nation, it seems as though audiences were meant to automatically assume that when a Japanese character first shows up, he or she is intended to be a villain, either by character performance, background music, or other cinematography methods to enhance the mood of a scene and the sense of menace a character creates. However, the idea of the Japanese being the main villains was an essential plot point for several important films.

Putting these films in historical and cultural context will reveal that this literally hateful attitude seems to clearly stem from anger over the conflicts between China and Japan during the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century— the outbreak of Japanese imperialism. Japan made numerous attempts on its part to conquer China, both through direct armed conflict (Henshall 2001, 92) and strategic chipping away at China's strength (Chai 1972, 13). A popular conspiracy theory claims that in the infamous Mukden Incident of 1931, which sparked hostilities between China and Japan during World War II, the Japanese sabotaged their own railway and blamed the Chinese for it, giving them an excuse to go to war (Ferrell 1955, 66-67).

Furthermore, the Japanese committed numerous war crimes against the Chinese and other nations it conquered, such as the Rape of Nanjing (Brook 2001, 676-677; Yang 1999, 844) and the atrocities performed by Unit 731 (Baader, et. al. 2005, 220-224), none of which have been forgotten by the Chinese. Certainly the wounds the Japanese left behind would not yet have healed. Therefore, when analyzing the evolution of the portrayal of the Japanese, one should not be surprised that the farther back one begins looking at the films, the more hostility and hatred one finds in Chinese martial arts movies.

Among the first films to delve into anti-Japanese sentiment was *The Chinese Boxer* (1970), one of countless stories about a lone Chinese martial arts student out to avenge the death of his master and fellow pupils. The perpetrators are the Japanese masters of a rival karate school, who are also racketeers involved in gambling and protection rackets (Pollard, 2005). While often overlooked, *Chinese Boxer* is a significant entry in the martial arts film genre because it is one of the first straight martial arts films, also known as *kung fu* or "chop socky" films, as opposed to the *wuxia pien* genre, which consists of fantasy swordplay stories supported by elaborate choreography and special effects. It is interesting to note that the so-called "chop socky" genre of martial arts film and the trend of the Japanese as villains began with the same film.

The next, arguably best-known, and most important example of the "Chinese vs. Japanese" theme of this time period was 1972's *Fist of Fury* (US title: *The Chinese Connection*), starring martial arts cinema icon Bruce Lee. While similar in plot to *The Chinese Boxer,* the vilification of the Japanese and the related sense of Chinese nationalism is stronger in *Fist of Fury,* and is therefore worthy of a more in-depth analysis. Furthermore, the plot of *Fist of Fury* is loosely inspired by the true story of the mysterious death of martial arts master Huo Yuan-jia, the founder of the Ching Woo Athletics Association, who was allegedly poisoned by the Japanese (United Kingdom Ching Woo 2004). While Huo's death might not be seen as particularly noteworthy as part of the bigger historical picture, it had a tremendous impact on future Chinese martial arts films and the demonization of the Japanese within these films. In order to understand why, in the absence of solid historical record, we must look to historiography, folk legend, and even mere rumor about Huo Yuan-jia for the answers.

After the humiliation China endured at the hands of foreigners during the Boxer Rebellion, Huo's victories over a Russian wrestler (1901)

and a British boxer (1909) were a source of inspiration to the Chinese, who were proud to see one of their countrymen able to overcome a foreigner in combat (United Kingdom Ching Woo 2004). After his death, rumors began to spread that he had been poisoned by a Japanese doctor who suddenly disappeared from Shanghai soon afterwards. Whether Huo was actually murdered and poisoned by the Japanese remains unknown, but Ching Woo's website continues to perpetuate the claim that the Japanese were responsible for Huo's murder. When it comes to the life of Huo Yuan-jia, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between reality and rumor, but it may be said that when it comes to creating a hero, truth does not always matter. In any event, regardless of what is fact and what is legend, the Japanese would receive the blame for decades in numerous movies based on Huo's life and mysterious death, and *Fist of Fury* was the first of many cinematic examples of this.

The film revolves around Lee's character, a disciple of Huo named Chen Zhen who is devastated to learn of his teacher's sudden death. Towards the beginning of the film, at a memorial service held at Huo's Ching Woo school, members of a Japanese martial arts school force their way inside and challenge the students of Ching Woo to a fight while deriding the Chinese and giving them a banner reading "Sick Men of Asia." Chen Zhen's anger quietly begins to boil, but before it has the chance to erupt, his senior pupils tell him not to accept the challenge to honor the peaceful teachings of Huo Yuan-jia, who discouraged such competitions between schools. This can be seen as a more subtle swipe at the Japanese, portraying them as violent and eager to attack, while the Chinese are peaceful and dignified, refusing to resort to unnecessary violence.

Although forced to back down and endure the humiliation at Huo's memorial service, Chen goes to the Japanese *dōjō* (school) on his own, bringing the "Sick Men of Asia" sign with him, and proceeds to single-handedly thrash all of the students and teachers. When the battle is over, Chen's anger is still not appeased and he takes out his anger on the furnishings of the school, even striking portraits and photographs of the school's founders. While this may seem like a mere act of rage, this is actually an insult of the highest order (Shou, 1995, DVD commentary), akin to striking one's memorial tablet or defiling a headstone.

The Japanese retaliate, coincidentally attacking Ching Woo while Chen is away. They defeat the Chinese students and try to destroy Huo Yuan-jia's memorial tablet, which one student defends with his own body, howling in agony as a Japanese fighter stomps on his back again and again.

It is interesting to note that the actions of the Japanese are not all that different from Chen's, including the desecration of the image of a school's founder. However, Chen's "visit" to the Japanese school is portrayed as a justified reaction to the events at Huo's memorial, while the Japanese assault on Ching Woo is treated as an act of sheer ruthlessness and villainy. While one reason for this slant is that the Japanese provoked Chen's initial reaction, and while the Japanese attack cannot be excused, another possibility is that to the filmmakers any assault on the Japanese by the Chinese is justified, while any attack by the Japanese is an act of villainy.

Chen later makes the discovery that members of the Japanese school, working undercover at Ching Woo, were responsible for poisoning Huo, and vows revenge. One curious aspect of this scene involves Chen stumbling across a Japanese infiltrator who poses as Chinese, and Chen is able to tell that the man is Japanese just because he is not wearing a shirt, implying racial differences between the Chinese and Japanese. One must also wonder why, when interrogating the murderer as to his motives, Chen does not wait for an answer before literally beating the man to death. Throughout the film, no motive for Huo's murder or the Japanese instigation of hostilities is ever given, and perhaps none is considered necessary. The Japanese are either acting out of malice towards the Chinese, or even engaging in evil for its own sake. This may be another way of portraying the Japanese as evil by saying the Japanese do not even need reasons to behave as they do.

The rivalry between Ching Woo and the Japanese school flares up to the point that Suzuki, the Japanese headmaster, orders his students to murder all the Ching Woo students. After Chen successfully returns from his mission of vengeance, he finds that most of his fellow students have been murdered, women and children included. The only other survivors, the ones looking for Chen, angrily declare that Chen was right for fighting back against the Japanese instead of trying to maintain peace. Previously, they had not supported Chen's actions, considering them to be unnecessarily provocative. This is a clear message that foreign abuses must be answered and avenged instead of tolerated.

*Fist of Fury* was a phenomenal box-office success by all accounts, and many fans consider it to be the quintessential Bruce Lee movie, let alone a highlight of the martial arts genre. While it can be assumed that Lee himself and his martial arts abilities were certainly enough to draw audiences, the nationalist theme and the anti-Japanese sentiment within the film might have also contributed to its popularity. *Fist of Fury* emphasizes

nationalism beyond mere anti-Japanese racism. Before Chen discovers his master was murdered, his anger towards the Japanese stems from their "Sick Men of Asia" comment. Chen's patriotism is flaunted throughout the film, most notably in a scene in a public park, where a posted sign decrees that dogs and Chinese are not allowed to enter. When mocked by the guard at the entrance and by Japanese passersby, Chen lashes out at them, kicks the sign off the wall, and shatters it in mid-air, a scene that often is received with applause from Chinese audiences (Omatsu). Before he surrenders to Shanghai's Japanese authorities, he forces them to promise that they will not persecute the Ching Woo for his crimes. The chief of police, who is Chinese, promises to look after the school, reminding Chen that "I am Chinese too."

Throughout the 1970s, numerous martial arts films would carry on the theme of Chinese vs. Japanese, including *Hapkido* and numerous "sequels" and knock-offs of *Fist of Fury*. Surprisingly, however, the 1970s was a period in time in which relations between China and Japan were improving. Normalization negotiations between the two nations commenced in 1972 after years of semi-official trade agreements. Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei met with Zhou Enlai in China, where the two announced the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations on the condition that Japan sever its ties with Taiwan. This allowed trade between China and Japan to expand without limitation or restriction, and China became Japan's third-largest export market in 1975 (Nathan and Ross 1997).

If relations between Japan and China were indeed improving around this time, why then is the cinematic portrayal of the Japanese exclusively negative? There are presently no records or director's notes by the filmmakers that can be looked to as an answer, and so one can only speculate. Perhaps the films were a reaction to the improving relations between China and Japan, or an unwillingness on the part of the people to forgive Japan in order to benefit China. The frequent presence of Chinese collaborators with the Japanese, as seen in *Chinese Boxer, Fist of Fury,* and *Hapkido,* may be a response to this, condemning Chinese politicians and "collaborators" for getting friendly with their former enemies for their own personal gain. Alternatively, it may be as simple as the people not willing to forgive their former foe, even though the government is. Because Hong Kong was a British territory and free of the restrictiveness and authority of the Chinese Communist Party's ideology during this time, it is unlikely that the anti-foreign nationalism that is so much a part of CCP doctrine is the

same sentiment expressed in films from Hong Kong.

Of course, there is an exception to every rule, and such an exception to the "Japanese are always evil" rule exists in this time period – namely, Lau Kar-leung's *Heroes of the East,* also known as *Shaolin vs. Ninja* (1978). The plot involves an arranged marriage between Chinese martial artist Ho To and Kung Zi, who is Japanese, despite her Chinese name. Kung Zi is also a martial artist, but one who only practices Japanese styles and spurns Ho To's offer to learn Chinese styles. Kung Zi's refusal to adapt to Ho To's traditional Chinese lifestyle results in conflict between them, followed by Kung Zi's return to Japan. However, Ho To does not let her go that easily, and tricks her into coming back by deriding Japanese martial arts in a letter, hoping she will return for a rematch. While that part of his plan does succeed, she also brings seven Japanese martial arts masters with her. Ho To prevails against them all, although he does not kill them, and he and his wife reconcile.

Despite the film being a variation of the "Chinese vs. Japanese" theme, the treatment of the Japanese and their martial arts is quite respectful. Additionally, this movie finally provides Japanese actors and characters with roles beyond mere one-dimensional villains. There is a mutual respect between the Chinese and Japanese martial artists of the film, and they recognize their similarities as well as their differences.

**The 1990s**

China came into the 1990s smarting from international backlash to the Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989. China was globally isolated, by and large, and in need of loans from Japan. Japan ended up becoming one of the Group of Seven, a collective of nations that would agree not to condemn China's actions in Tiananmen Square as well as other human rights abuses. For their part, China let up on its hostility towards Japan, allowing for more cordial, if not friendly relations (Nathan and Ross 1997, 89).

In a likely reflection of this new era of cooperation, Hong Kong martial arts films would progressively portray the Japanese in a more sympathetic light, including Japanese characters that are not villains or antagonists in any way, shape or form. It may have been realized that China would be thought of as hypocritical for demonizing Japan's war crimes while the international community considered China to be no better. Another possibility was that some Chinese might have been grateful to the Japanese for loaning their country money when nobody else would. But

however it came about, a new era in martial arts films had clearly begun. Two such examples that will be examined are *Martial Arts Master Wong Fei-hung* (1992) and *Fist of Legend* (1994).

*Martial Arts Master Wong Fei-hung,* known in the United States as *Great Hero From China,* is one of literally over a hundred films about Chinese folk hero Wong Fei-hung, nearly all of which focus on themes of nationalism and Chinese cultural pride. Nevertheless, *Martial Arts Master Wong Fei-hung* makes the most surprising break from the cinematic anti-Japanese tradition by providing Wong with a Japanese love interest. This is especially noteworthy considering the anti-foreign sentiments demonstrated by Wong-Fei-hung in numerous other films, including *Once Upon a Time in China,* produced only two years prior.

Nevertheless, *Martial Arts Master Wong Fei-Hung* finds Wong Fei-hung smitten with a Japanese girl who has come to China with her brother, a samurai named Sakura. Sakura seeks to kill renowned martial artists to prove his superiority to all other warriors; naturally, Wong Fei-hung is on his list. Sakura is portrayed as arrogant and stubborn, not allowing his sister's love for Wong Fei-hung to dissuade him from trying to kill his rival. Furthermore, Sakura is ruthless and merciless when it comes to dispatching opponents in combat to the death. In this context, the resolution of the film is especially surprising. After Sakura is defeated by Wong, Wong spares his life and even prevents him from committing *seppuku.* Sakura accepts defeat and retires to a Buddhist monastery, abandoning killing and violence.

The main villains of the movie, as opposed to Sakura, are British opium dealers conspiring with Qing officials to open an opium den in Wong's home village of Fushan. In fact, Sakura even rescues Wong from an ambush perpetrated by British soldiers. Granted that this is because Sakura wants to kill Wong himself, the results are the same nevertheless. *Wong Fei-hung* was one of numerous movies to feature Wong, as well as other heroes, battling British opium dealers and American slave traders. Perhaps Westerners' roles as villains increased as Japanese vilification decreased.

The other significant film from this time period that must be highlighted, *Fist of Legend*, was released a year after *Martial Arts Master,* and goes even further in terms of showing sympathy to the Japanese in general. *Legend*, one of many remakes of Bruce Lee's *Fist of Fury,* paints Japanese militarism as the "villain" of the film, as opposed to all Japanese in general. Even other Japanese characters, such as the Japanese

ambassador and the students of the rival Japanese school, reflect an understanding of the bigger picture involving the geopolitical climate of the day, and these Japanese characters demonstrate respect for the Chinese. The change in the portrayal of the Japanese was deliberate on the part of the filmmakers. Li, who produced the film as well as starred in it, was responsible for the shift in attitude from the original *Fist of Fury,* wanting to present a more balanced view of the story, and he deliberately avoided portraying the Japanese as one-dimensional villains (Parish 2002, 113).

In *Fist of Legend,* as in *Martial Arts Master Wong Fei-hung,* Chinese hero Chen Zhen also has a Japanese love interest, Funakoshi Mitsuko, the niece of a renowned Japanese martial artist who Chen respects (and who likewise respects Chen). Considering the history of the Chen Zhen character, who is previously portrayed in *Fist of Fury* and its many clones as a passionately ethnocentric nationalist, this is no less surprising than Wong Fei-hung having a Japanese girlfriend, if not more so. He is even willing to leave Ching Woo for her and fight the school's headmaster for the right to stay with her.

The beginning of *Fist of Legend* basically follows the same structure as the original, featuring heroic Chen Zhen avenging the death of Huo Yuan-jia, his teacher. However, there are noticeable differences. The film starts with Chen studying engineering in Japan, and learning of Huo's death after a fight with a Japanese martial artist, Akutagawa Ryuichi. Chen leaves Mitsuko behind, vowing to comeback when the Japanese leave China, and returns to Shanghai and to Ching Woo to pay respects to Huo. Soon after, he challenges Akutagawa to a match to avenge Huo's death, thrashing Akutagawa's students first when they stand in his way. Akutagawa agrees to the duel, and despite the circumstances, there is a surprising degree of cordiality between Akutagawa and Chen, with Akutagawa demanding that no vengeance be taken however the fight turns out. After Chen easily wins the fight, he is suspicious about Huo's death. He doubts that Akutagawa is powerful or skilled enough to kill Huo, and suspects foul play. An autopsy of Huo's body reveals signs of poisoning, and everyone is left to speculate who was responsible and how the poisoning was achieved.

The vengeance plot is sidelined, however, when Akutagawa is murdered by General Fujita Guo, who frames Chen for the crime. Chen is arrested and placed on trial, and it becomes clear that the trial has been rigged by Fujita to ensure Chen's conviction. The Japanese prosecutor refuses to allow any Chinese witnesses to testify on Chen's behalf because

he feels they cannot be trusted not to lie. However, Mitsuko appears as a surprise witness. She lies to the prosecutor, telling him Chen was with her the night of the murder, and therefore shames herself publicly to protect him. This scene alone is enough evidence to how much the portrayal of the Japanese changed over the years, in that a film would show a Japanese woman willing to sacrifice her reputation for a Chinese man.

Chen returns the favor when the residents of Ching Woo refuse to accept Mitsuko just because she is Japanese. Huo's son, Ting-en, the new headmaster, demands that Chen give her up. While this may be fueled by Ting-en being jealous of Chen's popularity, there are also traces of racism from both Ting-en and the other students of Ching Woo. Chen defeats Ting-en but leaves Ching Woo, taking Mitsuko with him. As she sacrificed herself for his protection, he has now done the same for her.

The hero himself, Chen Zhen, has also evolved from an angry nationalist to a calmer, more moderate, well-rounded character. Chen treats his Japanese opponents with a degree of courtesy, if not open friendship, and he receives the same treatment in kind. Nevertheless, he is proud of his Chinese heritage and his affiliation with Ching Woo, and he takes down a group of *kokuryū* members who burst into the university where he studies and try to kick him out towards the beginning of the film. In the recreation of the classic *dōjō* fight, when Chen storms the Japanese martial arts school to fight the man that "killed" Huo, the students demand that he leave because he is Chinese. Chen responds, "Here is China," [sic] and that any Chinese has the right to go where he pleases in his own country. At the end of the film (in which Chen's death is faked, unlike the original), Chen asks where a military conflict with the Japanese would be most likely to take place, and asks to be taken there.

These inconsistencies indicate confusion or a lack of certainty as to his personal feelings towards the Japanese. When Mitsuko asks him at the beginning of the film if he hates the Japanese, Chen replies, "I don't know...in these uncertain times, we [Chinese] may have no choice." Perhaps this is a recognition that hostile attitudes towards others are created by circumstances.

Likewise, Chen's Japanese opponents, except for General Fujita, are no longer the one-dimensional racist stereotypes from earlier films, but men of honor who fight for the sake of testing their skills rather than for the sake of any animosity towards the Chinese. Akutagawa Ryuichi, the Japanese fighter who apparently killed Huo Yuan-jia in a competitive match, is horrified to learn that the match was rigged and that Huo had been

poisoned before the fight on orders of General Fujita. Akutagawa had wanted a fair fight with Huo, and displays genuine anger when he learns the truth about Huo's death. When Akutagawa confronts Fujita, calling him a disgrace to the *samurai* spirit, Fujita kills him, reiterating that the true *samurai* spirit demands victory, even if it means becoming a criminal of history. As mentioned previously, this humanizes Fujita himself, in a way, by giving him an ideology to believe in, rather than making him a killer for the sake of killing. Fujita is the film's only true villain, representing Japanese militarism. He realized that the actions of the military may be considered wrong by future generations, but considers it a reasonable price to pay for Japanese prosperity.  In this way, Fujita is also humanized and given depth in a way previous Japanese villains were not.

Throughout the film, Chinese demonstrations of prejudice towards the Japanese are portrayed as unsavory, a trend that began with films such as *Duel to the Death* in the 1980s, but is taken even further in *Fist of Legend*. When Chen's Japanese girlfriend comes to China to be with him, the students of Ching Woo refuse to allow her to stay with them because she is Japanese, and Chen himself is derided by his students as a traitor to the Chinese because of his feelings for her. Chen leaves the school to be with her, but they are unable to find any housing on account of Chinese landlords who refuse to rent to a Japanese. The two are forced to take up residence in an abandoned shack in the countryside, scratching out a living. This provides an interesting twist on the more negative aspects of nationalism and the way it can lead to prejudice and bigotry.

Although *Fist of Legend* is highly regarded by martial arts cinema enthusiasts and is considered to be one of the gems of the genre, it was only a moderate success at the box office (Parrish 2002, 113), and there is no definitive explanation as to why this is so. Li himself stated that he was disappointed by this, saying that because the film had failed to find a broad audience, its message could not be disseminated, although he did not offer an explanation for why he felt the film did not do as well at the box office as he hoped. There are several possible reasons why *Fist of Legend* was not a success, and one of them might be that the positive portrayal of the Japanese may have turned Hong Kong audiences away, though there is no direct evidence for this. *Martial Arts Master Wong Fei-hung* was also not a box office success, and this can be attributed to it being seen as a low-budget attempt to cash in on the *Once Upon A Time in China* series and the *wire-fu* style it popularized. However, as with *Fist of Legend,* the idea of a notable Chinese hero famous for defiance of all things and people foreign

may have kept Chinese audiences away.

The cordiality between China and Japan would not last, as tensions erupted over Taiwan midway through the decade. Beginning in 1995, there were numerous overtures on Japan's part aimed at establishing diplomatic relations with Taiwan, a move that incensed the Chinese. Japan, for its part, threatened to freeze any and all loans to China after the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, presumably alarmed by China conducting missile tests in response to Taiwan's resistance to China's "One China" policy.

As for how this impacted filmmakers in Hong Kong, they may have felt caught in the middle by this tension. With Hong Kong set to return to Chinese control in 1997, it is likely that Hong Kong and its filmmakers would have wanted to back China's play and not show too much friendliness or sympathy towards the Japanese, fearing repercussions following China's reassertion of control. However, instead of returning to demonizing the Japanese, filmmakers for the most part simply ignored themes of space Sino-Japanese conflict.

**Conclusion**

The evolution of the Chinese attitude towards the Japanese that is presented in Chinese martial arts films demonstrates how perceptions do not remain static over time, and what the catalysts might be that can trigger an evolution in that perception. Furthermore, one can also observe that whatever the political will of a society may be, the will of the people within that culture does not always reflect their leaders' ideals. As has been demonstrated, the cinematic attitude towards the Japanese on the part of Chinese filmmakers has not always paralleled the state of political affairs between China and Japan. This is a valuable lesson that certain world leaders would do well to remember when considering their role in foreign affairs. It is insufficient to simply scrutinize the deeds or listen to the speeches of politicians in order to understand what a country believes in and values. One has to go directly to the people and focus on their popular culture, regardless of any misgivings about the quality or the substance of that means of expression. There is value in everything, and every aspect of popular culture that is overlooked is a piece that remains missing from a puzzle.

With this context now available, it can be understood why the Japanese are exclusively villains in the martial arts films of the 1970s, and why numerous films made during this period involve Chinese nationalists defending their homeland against Japanese invaders. We even see a popular

folk hero, who was allegedly murdered by the Japanese, being transformed into an icon and a symbol of Japanese villainy and the need to fight back against the Japanese and any other foreign aggressors. It does not even seem to matter that the matter of Huo's death has never been conclusively solved, including whether he was even murdered or not. The allegation and the rumor is enough, which is the ultimate sign of bias.

From there, one can observe the beginnings of change in the 1980s, with small steps being taken towards a more humanized, well-rounded portrayal of the Japanese that would continue into the 1990s. There can be no greater example of this than providing Japanese love interests to Chinese heroes renowned for their national and cultural pride, yet willing to accept and care for someone from a different culture – one that has been portrayed as an enemy. Even the villains became devoid of their more over-the-top "evil" characteristics, and were allowed to be given a certain degree of humanity. Perhaps the Tiananmen Square Incident proved to be the catalyst of change, forcing the Chinese to take a good look at themselves and their former adversaries, and forcing cultural analysts to examine the cinematic evolution of the Japanese. Did Chinese come to realize that their cinematic treatment of the Japanese could be considered hypocrisy in light of the Chinese government's own actions? Was it gratitude for Japanese financial support when all others were turning their backs on China? All of these factors must be taken into account when crafting an opinion on this topic.

The films, however, seemingly do not reflect the anger of the Chinese government, who at this time was willing to commence diplomatic relations with Japan. During the 1970s, when the films were at their most hostile, China was looking to make strides with Japan on the diplomatic front, and this may have displeased the local populace. Likewise, the cinematic reconciliation with the Japanese comes during a time of renewed tensions. This further proves that we cannot look solely to governments to express the sentiment of a culture. The voice of the artisans and the way the average resident of that society respond to their works must also be taken into account. With film, it is easy to do so by examining the financial success and enduring popularity of a certain film.

The observations and analysis within this essay therefore reflect not only the changes in perception of a former enemy over time, but also the benefit, relevance, and importance of studying all aspects of a society's popular culture, even a genre that may seem "low-brow" or insignificant to those engaged in cultural studies. Like literature and music, film is a

method of presenting a society as one wishes it to be seen, and a society's cultural self-perception and perception of others is something that must always be investigated in order to understand how a society functions, regardless of how it manifests itself in more high-brow or political avenues.

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# WHAT SKILLS SHOULD THE STUDENT POSSESS
# AFTER COURSES IN BUSINESS JAPANESE?

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*University of Memphis*

We know that learning language and learning about language are basically different. Both are important in studying foreign languages, but to be truly functional in the environment where the target language is spoken, knowing about the language alone is not enough; we have to be able to use the language as a communication tool. The same is true for culture. It is very important to study the target culture. However, knowing about culture alone is not enough for our students to function well in the target culture. They need to develop critical thinking and perspectives toward the target culture and learn to be able to practice them. Most business Japanese programs require or encourage the students to experience internships in Japan. Many students also seek a job in a Japanese company. Thus, our role as business Japanese instructors is to facilitate the link between classroom teaching and the real world to produce competent students. Specifically, we need to educate the students to develop language skills and cultural perspectives at the same time.

In this paper, I will introduce the results of two surveys and by doing so I will discuss what skills the student should possess after courses in business Japanese. One of the surveys was conducted by JETRO, and the other is the one I conducted with three former students in the IMBA program (Japanese Track) at the University of Memphis who currently work for Japanese companies. All of them had passed what was at the time Level 2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

The results of these two surveys confirm the thesis that those students who have good cultural perspectives and the ability to adjust to the ways the target culture operates are most successful in finding and keeping jobs in Japanese companies. At first glance, Japanese business executives might appear to focus on personality issues. Through closer analysis of survey 2, we find that Japanese executives need workers who can communicate in Japanese under the Japanese cultural value system.

Appendix A is a survey conducted by JETRO Atlanta in 2006.[1]

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[1] I thank the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Atlanta for allowing me to use the result of their surveys for my research.

This survey was given to 18 companies who took part in the International Internship Program covered by JETRO Atlanta. We notice from this survey that the companies prefer students who have a good personality and communication skills at the same time. For example, Company 18 comments that "the success of the program depends on the personality and communication skills of the students." By looking through the responses from all companies, we notice that company executives consider the attitude and personality of interns to be very important.

Appendix B reflects the view of American workers in a Japanese company. I asked my former students to give me their candid opinions/comments toward the following three questions:

> (1) State some unique characteristics of Japan-related companies that you are aware of (for example the length of meetings; the procedure of allocating tasks; communication mode; group mentality; working hours, etc.)
> (2) What aspects of Japanese culture do you think would be most useful to know to work well with Japanese?
> (3) Which language skills (and what level) would be required to perform your current job well? Did you have enough skills?

All three respondents note that Japanese companies emphasize group harmony. For example, they note that Japanese companies have long meeting hours and require them to be loyal to the company even if they have to work overtime. It is also evident that their job requires language skills that are roughly equivalent to the Level 2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. It looks like they need both cultural and language skills to get the current job.

Thus, it seems that the students of business Japanese need to develop a rather high level of language skills to perform their daily work and to communicate with their Japanese-speaking colleagues.

The general results of existing standard tests confirm our analysis. The Japanese Language Proficiency Test is a very popular exam among learners of Japanese. It measures the knowledge toward vocabularies, grammar, and kanji. However, it does not measure one's communication skills in real-life situations.[2]

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[2] It should be noted that the Japanese Language Proficiency Test will be revised from 2010. The revised exam is to measure communicative

In contrast, JETRO's Business Japanese Proficiency Test (BJT) measures the students' practical business skills.[3] The BJT is run in cooperation with the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (which also run the Japanese Language Proficiency Test) and the National Institute for Japanese Language, and is supported by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Japanese business community. The objective of this exam is to measure and evaluate "communication skills in Japanese in various scenes and situations of business, not how much they know about Japanese and business." The specific purposes of the BJT are explained as follows:

1. To measure the communication skills in Japanese in ordinary business scenes;
2. To measure the expression skills in Japanese to show their own business knowledge or business strategies;
3. To measure the intercultural adjustment skills in Japanese to act properly in Japanese business and commercial customs;
4. To contribute to mutual understanding among business-related people, Japanese or foreign, by clearing up misunderstandings and removing barriers in business communication

The test has two parts. One is a listening and reading test to measure one's ability to understand and communicate in Japanese in various business situations. The second test is an oral communication test which will be given to only those who scored 530 or higher out of 800 on the listening/ reading test.

The rubrics of lower passing levels (J1 530-600 points) of the reading/listening test state that:

People at this level have very good communication skills in

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competence in accomplishing tasks. Please refer to the report published in June 2008 by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services http://www.jees.or.jp/jlpt/pdf/20080525_jlpt_kaitei_report_en_pre 01_0718.pdf.

[3] As of April 2009, the administrator of the Business Japanese Language Proficiency Test has changed from JETRO to the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation.

Japanese which are sufficient for general business-related situations. These skills include; having good knowledge and proficiency of the Japanese language, accurately understanding various business conversations, picking-up and effectively understanding dialogues spoken at normal speeds in negotiations, intra/inter-office meetings, telephoning, etc. demonstrating the facility to communicate at a wide level of politeness and formality, reading ordinary business documents and articles with accurate comprehension, effectively understanding Japanese business customs and practices. (JETRO BJT)

It is evident that to score high in this test the students need to be able to obtain high levels of communication and cultural skills.

One surprising drawback of this exam is that this test seems to be very difficult for those students studying in the U.S. According to the summary of the test results published by JETRO, most examinees that score high are already in Japan.[4] For example, in 2007 (November 18), there were about 2000 people took the test in Japan but only 28 in the United States. The average score of the test was 506.8 in Japan but 399.4 in Atlanta and 419.6 in New York. In other words, the average score in the U.S. group was lower than J2 level (529-420) of the test. The highest score in the U.S. was 472 in that test, which was also J2 level. Therefore, nobody in the U.S. was able to take the second oral test.

The test results also show a comparison with the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The average score of those who passed Level 1 of the JPT was 511 and that of those who passed Level 2 was 431. This data tells us that linguistic knowledge alone cannot be linked to the success of the exam that tests the task-oriented abilities. This result clearly points out that U.S. students are lacking in some useful exposure to the target business culture. More detailed analysis toward the data is required, but we can say that conventional language skills (vocabulary and grammar) alone are not enough to function well in Japanese business situations. The survey from my students also indicates that familiarity toward cultural values significantly helps them function well in Japanese business environments, even if they have minimal language skills scaled by the traditional proficiency exam (Level 2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test).

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[4] See JETRO Data and materials http://www.kanken.or.jp/bjt/english/past data/index.html.

Given this reality, we have to rethink how to teach culture in language courses in this country. This is, indeed, directly addressed in the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. In 1996, Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century was established for grades K-12, but subsequently, in 1999, the Japanese task force group had established the Japanese National Standards that target the whole K-16. This was a joint project of National Council of Secondary Teachers of Japanese (NCSTJ) and Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ). Standards for Foreign Language Learning articulated the 5C's of foreign language education in the United States. The 5Cs are: Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

These standards emphasize "knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom." Formerly, most language classrooms concentrated on the *how* (grammar) to say *what* (vocabulary). While these components of language are indeed crucial, we have found that what is important for our business Japanese students is *communication*, which also highlights the *why*, the *whom*, and the *when*. It is the acquisition of the ability to use them and to communicate in meaningful and appropriate ways with Japanese speaking business people. Here is a quote from the National Standard:

> Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. (National Standards 1996)

In this spirit, we should change our business Japanese or any Japanese classroom in order to develop the students' practical language skills and perspectives toward the target culture. According to the National Standards, cultures are divided into three integrated components: Practice, Product, and Perspective (3P). There are two standards under Cultures in the National Standards. They are:

> Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.
> Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studies.

Let me give an example of "product, practices and perspectives." Japanese people exchange gifts or Oseibo (product) at the end of the year (practice) to maintain a good relationship with people whom they associated with. They also return the favors they received from them within the year to welcome a new year without owing anything to anyone. There are many protocols involving this practice of gift-giving, such as how to present and receive gifts (practice). Just as the practice of exchanging business cards (product), this gift-giving practice is rooted in the Japanese people's emphasis on *kata* or basic forms (perspective). As those who have studied any form of Japanese traditional arts (tea ceremony, flower arrangement, etc.), martial arts, or craftsmanship know, the Japanese people give importance to basic forms which must be mastered before going on to learn anything else.

Another example would be the Ringi system, or a traditional Japanese decision-making process. All of my students pointed out that ringi are very important aspects of decision making in Japanese companies. Ringisho (product) is passed around a number of people to obtain everyone's approval (practice). Before formally signing off a Ringisho (product), Japanese people approach affected members to informally discuss the issue as well (practice). This practice is known as Nemawashi, or root-binding. All these business practices are based on the cultural value of group orientation (perspective).

In incorporating these cultural perspectives into the curriculum of business Japanese language courses, we need to decide wisely what and how to teach. Our students should be able to learn various cultural and sociological issues affecting how Japanese people conduct business. At the same time, we need to let our students develop their own perspectives toward culture by actively participating in the target culture (Tohsaku 2005). In this regard, the language faculty needs to cooperate with area studies faculty. They can work together to develop curriculum and meaningful programs so that the students can learn culture through language. One example of meaningful collaboration is outreach activities. Business students can learn Zen philosophy and then participate in tea ceremony lessons. In this way, they can learn an emphasis on forms and hospitality in Japanese business. At the same time, the language classes should incorporate these cultural values into teaching materials and classroom activities. In this way, the language classes can be a productive realm for the students to develop both language skills and cultural perspectives. It is a good sign that the field started to see the importance of such integration by

devising the National Standards and proficiency based evaluation methods.

**Conclusion**

Our students should possess the following skills after courses in business Japanese: understanding Japanese cultural values, and having the ability to practice them in Japanese. To make this happen, the language faculty needs to collaborate with the faculty who teaches area studies such as business, culture, history, and literature to make sure the students can develop cultural perspectives through language usages.

<div align="center">

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**Appendix A**
**JETRO Atlanta survey to Japanese companies who received interns**

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| Company | About interns | comments |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | スキル不足 | |
| 6 | 専攻と目的が若干ずれていた。 | |
| 8 | 大変優秀な学生 | |
| 9 | その分野の専門ではなかったが、積極的に取り組んでくれた。 | |
| 12 | 学生の希望に近い形でマッチングできた。結果的には満足 | |
| 13 | 研究開発より日本語学習に関心があり、研究 | 遅刻が非常に多く（1〜5 分くらいは普通で、ひどい時 |

| | 開発（仕事）に対する やる気が低かった。 | は1時間くらい）、また今年 のインターン生は特に社会 経験がないために社会人と しての一般常識がなかっ た。何時も問題となるのは、 生活スタイル・風習の違い　　積極的で明るい性格だっ たので、会社にもすぐ馴染 み、社員とも仲良くなり、 プライベートでも比較的充 実して過ごせたようで、よ かった。 |
|---|---|---|
| 16 | 性格が内向的でアクテ ィブなプログラムが組 めませんでした。 | 地方の地場産業でも、海外 文系の Internship 受け入れが 有益であることが実証でき た。 |
| 18 | | International Internship Program の成否はずばり「人 柄とコミュニケーション能 力」と思います。 |

**Appendix B**
**Interview of University of Memphis IMBA aluminae who work for**
**Japanese companies in U.S.**

**Case 1:**
**Title:** Marketing Manager
**Main Duties:** Marketing of coronary/endovascular products to North and South America market

**Important skills/ awareness required for working with Japanese:**
- Many more forms and procedures to deal with
- Tasks are allocated based on job description; most employees do not deviate from the job description.
- Some key information is not relayed to me until the last minute

- Working hours are long (I always work overtime and usually have business travel into the weekends)
- We always have weekly meetings and must write weekly reports about our daily tasks and job activities

**What aspect of Japanese culture would be most useful to know to work well with Japanese?**
- Decision-making process (group decisions) – there is some resistance to change and it takes time
- Risk averse culture – very conservative in business

**What language skills (and what level) would be required to perform your job well? Did you have enough skills?**
I mainly deal with Japanese doctors and their English is pretty good, so knowing the culture is more important than the language aspect.

When dealing with XXX home office in Japan, I would like to speak/read/type at a higher level of Japanese. I think the Level 2 Japanese Language Proficiency Test would be enough.

Sometimes I have a little trouble but overall my language and cultural knowledge have been enough to do my job successfully.

**Case 2:**
**Title:** Delivery Specialist
**Main Duties:** Maintain inventory in Warehouse to cover orders from Honda. Handle any problems that occur before, during, and after delivery of goods.

**Important skills/ awareness required for working with Japanese:**
- Working overtime is expected.
- Proximity of desks (My manager sits RIGHT in front of me. ) Meetings can be fairly lengthy (2 hours avg. if in Japanese).
- Seniority must be paid close attention to. Emails should include superiors, even if they aren't directly related to the situation.
- Meetings are your best friend.  Decisions are usually discussed within a group.
- Women are treated differently.  And certain positions (such as secretary or receptionist) are considered to be naturally a female's position.

**What aspect of Japanese culture would be most useful to know to work well with Japanese?**

- Japanese etiquette. Communication process (group approval). Knowledge of Japanese sense of humor.

**What language skills (and what level) would be required to perform your job well? Did you have enough skills?**

- My manager's English level isn't so high, so my being able to speak Japanese definitely helps. My knowledge of Japanese culture also helps a lot.

**Case 3:**
**Title:** Translator
**Main Duties:** My company is a Japanese subsidiary where my position is Translator; I translate and interpret English/Japanese, Japanese/English for all departments and track product quality and scrap costs for the Quality Assurance Department.

**Important skills/ awareness required for working with Japanese:**

- Chain of approval – All of the reports that I make for presentation to all associates and/or distribution outside the company are signed and approved of in order, starting with me, then a QA engineer, next QA Manager, next Plant Manager, finally the President, so everyone approves and agrees.
- Use of ringis – all purchases in excess of $2000 that are not budgeted as capital expenditures require a ringi (which everyone refers to as a ringi).
- Morning stretching exercises – before every shift, 5 minute stretching with music and directions over louder speakers
- Uniform – all personnel (including the President) wears the same uniform as the factory workers symbolizing that we are in the same group and can all go help in production if necessary.

**What aspect of Japanese culture would be most useful to know to work well with Japanese?**

- I think that the most important concept to understand is the idea of the company ("uchi") as your group (almost as family), where you would

take care of it without hesitation or complaint and it will take care of you. The same idea applies to the broader picture of companies in your supply chain. Loyalty is expected and returned; consequently customer relations are extremely important.

**What language skills (and what level) would be required to perform your job well? Did you have enough skills?**
- I need a very high level in all areas. I need practice most with interpretation and the finer points of Japanese grammar.

**Takeshi Matsuda,** *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency.* **Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. 372 pp. ISBN: 0-8047-0040-0 (hardcover), $60.00.**

*Reviewed By Daniel A. Métraux*

Takeshi Matsuda in Early Postwar Japan offers an in-depth examination of the cultural aspects of Japanese-American relations from the inception of the American Occupation in 1945 through the late 1950s. The U.S. Occupation is often portrayed as a great success story – Japan became an avowedly democratic and prosperous nation with a strong pacifist bent. Professor Matsuda, however, finds at least some fault with this glowing picture, strongly asserting that the highly paternalistic cultural diplomacy of the Americans created a sense of permanent dependency on the part of the Japanese. He finds that while Japan proudly boasts the elegant trappings of electoral democracy, the country itself remains highly elitist and submissive due in part to American efforts to reinforce the domestic importance of intellectual elite.

Matsuda argues that any comprehensive foreign policy is shaped by three legs – political, economic, and cultural. These three elements were strongly emphasized during the Occupation, but with mixed results. The cultural or exchange programs and enduring friendships represent the positive side of the picture. Matsuda notes the enduring importance of the International House in Tokyo, as the rest of the world structural dependencies on the part of the Japanese represent the downside of these policies.

The United States made a concerted effort to develop a genuine exchange in both directions, but as historian John Dower notes in the Foreword, however, this was easier said than done. The two-lane street amounted to a multilane highway on the U.S. side and single lane in the other. Certainly in American eyes, the United States was – and still remains, more than a half century later – the supreme military commander of defeated Japan. American policymakers and cultural emissaries have never abandoned their early postwar assumption of moral, cultural and intellectual superiority; and the Japanese elites whom the United States has so carefully cultivated, in turn, have rarely failed to acquiesce to such cultural hegemony (xiv+xvi). Matsuda sadly recounts how an abiding psychology of dependence on the U.S. continues to grip Japan, but this is a malady.

The American presence in Japan brought about an explosion of Japanese studies in the United States and American studies in Japan, which has built strong bonds between the two nations. A critical American Occupation goal was to democratize intellectual and university life in Japan by opening a whole slew of new universities, but this project failed to get off the ground. Instead, by working with old school Japanese bureaucratic leaders and by emphasizing the importance of the major universities of prewar Japan, the U.S. strongly encouraged the reemergence of a cultural and intellectual elite in Japan. Matsuda is very critical of Japanese scholars, who live in their proverbial ivory towers while fostering their own work but contribute very little to the welfare of society and, most damningly, fail to openly question or criticize government programs and policies. Japanese intellectuals are said to be simultaneously elitist and submissive. This problem, Matsuda notes, represents one of the key failings of attempts to build constructive democracy in Japan left virtually intact of intellectual weaklings. The Japanese elite who had been nurtured to become pro-American gained ever greater power and influence in the postwar Japanese society. The Japanese bureaucracy, too, actually attained greater authority than it had possessed at the height of mobilization for war. Yet, the postwar Japanese elite were pathetically weak before authority and lamentably deficient in thought and behavioral developments. This has led to a weak elitist form of democracy in Japan that prevails even today.

Matsuda's portrayal of Japanese university life is very much on target. When I taught at Doshisha Women's University, professors were graduates of Doshisha University. Only a small handful of professors had any involvement in non-Doshisha activities of any kind. While a good number of professors at Mary Baldwin College in Virginia, my home institution, hold local political office and are actively involved in community affairs, such is not the case with a vast majority of Doshisha professors. When I tried to submit an article to a Doshisha-based scholarly journal, I was told that only full-time Doshisha professors could submit articles. I very rarely heard any discussions on politics in Japan unless I tried to start one.

Although the Iraq War is not a core topic of this book, Matsuda compares the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the occupations of Japan and Germany after World War II. Matsuda notes that members of the Bush team claimed that American soft and hard power permanently shaped the future of these two nations and that their goal was to apply the same methodology to Iraq to create a peaceful and democratic

society there. Matsuda, however, warns that the occupation of Japan is very different from that of Iraq because the United States approached Japan with a genuine interest in understanding and appreciating Japanese history and culture. While the Americans did indeed approach the Japanese with a deep form of cultural imperialism, the U.S. had for several years prepared itself with a large reservoir of knowledge concerning the interaction of American and Japanese cultures. In contrast to the current situation in Iraq, the U.S occupation of Japan was a democratic experiment supported by American soft power, as well as hard power. Before the actual occupation of Japan, America made the effort to define the general objectives of the occupation and formulate programs needed to meet the specific objectives of the United States.

Matsuda comments on Japanese-American relations in the postwar era, but also discusses the failure of Japan to develop a strong foundation for its democratic state. He offers a harsh but very necessary critique of Japanese intelligence, universities, and the lack of critical thinking in the nation's educational and political systems. American political leaders will find a very comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of American catastrophes, like Iraq. Matsuda's insights are profound, and his analyses are well developed. *Soft Power* is one of the best studies ever done on postwar Japan.

**Frances McCall Rosenbluth, ed.,** ***The Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility***. **Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007. 240pp. ISBN 978-0-8047-5486 (hardcover), $50.00.**

*Reviewed By John Hickman*

Low fertility is increasingly perceived as a public policy problem by the elites in advanced industrial states. This edited volume by Frances McCall Rosenbluth does not challenge that perception but instead explores related aspects of the phenomenon in Japan, one of several Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries presenting fertility rates below population replacement levels. Integrating the eight articles in the book is the thesis, articulated in the editor's first chapter, that low fertility in Japan reflects the high costs women bear in both participating in the labor market and taking care of children. After addressing arguments based on cultural difference and household bargaining models, Rosenbluth articulates a very strong case that low

fertility in Japan is attributable to gender barriers to entering or reentering the corporate labor market, and that government support for childcare has been insufficient to rectify the disparity in career opportunity. The remaining seven chapters expand on different aspects of the relationship between work and childbirth.

Comparing women's labor force participation and incomes in Japan, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Britain and the U.S., Sawako Shirahase shows that the economic power of wives in households is crucial in explaining fertility levels (pp. 52-53). Excepting Italy, the incomes of married women are inversely associated with lower fertility (p. 45). Shirhase argues that Japanese women are discouraged from having children because it increases their economic dependence on other family members. They are reduced to making minor contributions to family income if they withdraw from their careers because of childbirth. While only 20.3% of Swedish working mothers contribute less than 20% of total household income, this is true of 51.1% of Japanese working mothers (p. 45).

Margarita Estevez-Abe critiques the belief that Scandinavian social-democracies have achieved more gender equality than alternative political economic regimes. Cross-national comparison of female labor force participation, occupational segregation, and gender wage gap for the OECD countries from the late 1990s are used to point out exceptions to that conventional wisdom. Anglo-Saxon countries, which have less generous maternity leave and public childcare benefits than the Scandinavian countries, also present high female labor force participation. Australia and Italy, she points out, also narrowed the gender wage gap. Unfortunately, more recent data indicate that while Australia and New Zealand continue to present a smaller gender income gap than many other OECD countries, the gender income gap in Italy is once again relatively large. According to the UNDP's 2006 Human Development Report, Sweden presents the smallest gender gap (.81), followed by Norway (.75), Denmark (.73), and Iceland (.71). Australia and New Zealand tie for fifth place (.70). Italy (.46) ranks barely above Japan (.44). Most countries within OECD, including the three other Anglo-Saxon countries, are in the middle range between Scandinavia/Oceania on one hand and Italy/Japan on the other.

Mary C. Brinton traces the historical development of clerical work in the United States and Japan from the late 19th century to the early 21st century using birth cohort labor force statistics. Her principal conclusion is that cultural difference in the relative statuses of age and education explains the markedly greater tendency for Japanese women to leave clerical work as

they grow older. Status in the Japanese workplace is more related to age than it is in the United States. "Older women in the workplace constitute an anomaly vis-à-vis younger men. As women, they generally have lower status, but their age gives them higher status. This produces a situation that can be disconcerting for everyone" (p. 105).

In an interesting analysis, Eiko Kenjoh investigates the relationship between female labor force participation and childbirth in Japan and four other OECD countries. Comparison of the Japanese and Dutch cases reveals a strong similarity in women's employment during the 1980s but not during the 1990s. In the 1980s, approximately 90% of Japanese and Dutch women participated in the labor market until their first childbirth, after which the percentage declined to approximately 30%. While that pattern continued in Japan in the 1990s, in the Netherlands women's participation in the labor market increased to approximately 60% at the time of the first childbirth. Kenjoh explains this and similar increases in Britain, Germany, and Sweden reflect changes in social attitudes and public policies more supportive of working parents. In the Dutch case, the change in the 1990s is attributable to "wider social acceptance of mothers who work, but also by the revolution in part-time employment" (p. 115).

If limited access to the labor market discourages fertility, then access to childcare and affordable education are essential in addressing the problem of low fertility. Patricia Boling surveys the development of family policy in Japan, including child allowances, tax allowances for dependents, parental leave, and public childcare. She explains the glacial nature of change in family policy-making as a survival of the closed political system consisting of senior bureaucrats at the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the social policy "tribe" in the Liberal Democratic Party's Policy Research Council. Representatives of important stakeholder groups like parents of children in childcare were not invited to serve on advisory councils because "the process does not seem to welcome unscripted and, perhaps, critical comments" (p. 145).

Problems with public sector daycare provisions are investigated by Junichiro Wada. The first is that national, prefectural, and municipal government subsidies for both public and licensed private sector daycare facilities are accompanied by limits on fees paid that cause consumer demand to exceed supply. The second is that the "inflexibility of public childcare" reflected in the failure to provide extendable care, night care and interim care are caused by the resistance of public employee unions to the employment of part-time daycare workers (p. 159). He also blames working

mothers who gain access to limited childcare services for the limited availability of childcare to others. Those who gain access organize collectively to extract improvements which limit the expansion of childcare to working mothers who are still on waiting lists (p. 164).

The economic impact on families of private schools and *juku* or private sector "cram schools" is examined by Keiko Hirao. She notes that compared with other major OECD countries, public spending on education at all levels is low in Japan. University- and college-bound Japanese youth typically attend *juku* for several hours after regular school hours to prepare for the rigors of highly competitive entrance examinations. In the mid-1990s, some 59.5% of middle school students attended *juku*. Among Hirao's most interesting findings is that single income families with one child spent 4% of their budget on education while two income families with one child spent 5.9% (pp. 181-182). The percentages for families with two children are 8.9% and 9.7%, respectively. Given the limits of the data, however, Hirao is unwilling to conclude that the costs of privatized education cause mothers to enter or reenter the work force.

Rosenbuth's edited volume is a valuable contribution to the literature connecting demography and political economy. Many of the chapters offer not only useful content but also indicate opportunities for future research with important public policy applications.

**Peter Pagnamento and Momoko Williams, *Sword and Blossom: A British Officer's Enduring Love for a Japanese Woman.* New York: The Penguin Press, 2006. xiv+345 pp. ISBN: 1-59420-089-0 (hardcover), $25.95.**

*Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux*

*Sword and Blossom* is a love story between a late Victorian British Army officer and a beautiful Japanese woman he met while serving in Japan, but it is much more. Authors Peter Pagnamento and Momoko Williams provide us with an excellent look at early twentieth century life in Japan and a fascinating analysis of the British-Japanese military alliance which made this relationship possible. The British officer, Brigadier General Arthur Hart-Synnot, takes us on a historical tour of the Boer War in South Africa; reviews life at the front in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War; involves us in tours of duty in Hong Kong, India, Burma and Japan; and gives us a front row seat to the horrors of World War I in France.

Masa Suzuki, who met Hart-Synnot at the Officer's Club in Tokyo in 1904, gives us a clear view of family life and the status of Japanese women in the late Meiji era (1868-1912).

After the ratification of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, the British sent ten promising young officers to Tokyo to learn Japanese so that British and Japanese military officials could begin conversing with each other. Hart-Synnot volunteered for the mission and soon became amazingly fluent, with near native writing and speaking ability. A genuine scholar, he developed a deep appreciation for Japanese history and culture when he met Masa, the daughter of a lower-middle-class tradesman doing clerical work at the Officer's Club. They were immediately smitten and were soon living together in his small private apartment.

Because Hart-Synnot was so proficient in Japanese, they developed a hot and heavy correspondence where they shared their love and made fascinating observations about their lives and times. Hart-Synnot provides brilliant depictions of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and colonial postings in India, Burma and Hong Kong. We even view English gentry life at Hart-Synnot's family estate in Ireland and the destruction of the house by the IRA during the Irish Civil War of 1916. Fortunately, Hart-Synnot was also stationed in Japan for long intervals between other assignments and was thus able to live with Masa. Their romantic relationship was maintained despite the racial prejudice and social snobbery they endured. They became parents of two boys, one who died very young, and Masa even joined Hart-Synnot in Hong Kong for two long intervals. Hart-Synnot begged Masa to marry him, but her family wanted her home caring for her aged mother and feared that she would be racially stigmatized abroad. Her refusal, despite her intense love for him, was a move she would later deeply regret.

Like the story of Madame Butterfly, this relationship was ultimately doomed. Hart-Synnot always came back to his Masa, but his military duty and other assignments meant long painful separations as well. Hart-Synnot was considering retirement from the army in 1914 and a permanent life with Masa and her boys in Japan, but World War I got in their way. He was severely wounded and had both his legs amputated. He needed daily care and could not make the long boat trip to Japan. Luckily for him, he was able to marry his older British nurse who cared for him through his death in 1942. Masa was shocked that her lover married another, but they eventually reconciled and he maintained his financial support for her up through the start of World War II.

Their surviving Anglo-Japanese son, Kiyoshi, evolved into a brilliant athlete and scholar-author. He even met his father in France shortly before World War II when both were living there, but Kiyoshi died a tragic death at the hands of the Russians at the end of the war. Masa died in the 1960s.

Both Masa and Hart-Synnot saved each other's letters, but Masa's letters were lost during World War II. Hart-Synnot's letters to Masa, however, survive and authors Williams and Pagnamento have combed hundreds of these letters to provide a marvelous picture of this relationship, as well as an excellent history of this critical period. The book is clearly and beautifully written. The only drawback is that Masa emerges as a rather hollow person because her letters do not survive – we only see her through Hart-Synnot's eyes. This book would serve as a great supplement for a course on modern Japan or early modern Asia.

**Kelly M. Foreman, *The Gei of Geisha: Music, Identity and Meaning.* Burlington, VT; Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2008. 176 pp. ISBN: 0754650570 (hardcover), $89.95.**

*Reviewed by Jan Bardsley*

An outstanding contribution to the academic study of geisha, *The Gei of Geisha: Music, Identity and Meaning* opens a new window on this famous, but much misunderstood profession. Author Kelly M. Foreman, an ethnomusicologist, spent over ten years researching the topic, including nearly four years (1997-2001) in Kyoto and Tokyo studying *shamisen* alongside geisha, interviewing them, observing their stage performances, and participating in the *ozashiki* (private gatherings of patrons and geisha). Her book breaks ground in its detailed analysis of the arts practices of the contemporary geisha and the network of teachers, geisha associations, and patrons integral to keeping the profession alive. One comes away from this study with an appreciation of the geisha as unique in the classical arts world for her accomplishment in several arts, and for her ability to perform in the intimate setting of the *ozashiki* as well as publicly at festivals, in shrines and temples, and in major stage productions. The astounding cost in time and money required by the geisha's arts practice, her dependence on client patronage, and the ambiguity of her status in both the arts world and Japanese society make her position today, however, precarious indeed.

*The Gei of Geisha* clears the way for discussing contemporary geisha by distancing them from the sexualized fantasies that continue to color their reception abroad and even in Japan. This book takes the geisha as a subject, not an object, and views her as one who strives to master an Edo-inspired chic known as *iki*. Foreman emphasizes that today's geisha, literally translated as "arts person," is defined by her practice of multiple arts (dance, music, tea ceremony, and others) and her accomplishment in many genres within an art. This makes her unusual in the classical arts world in Japan, where most practitioners, especially professional stage musicians, devote themselves entirely to one art and genre. Foreman explains that young women interested in becoming geisha are attracted to the well-rounded, more diverse arts education the profession requires. They also appreciate the financial support provided to novices by the *karyūkai* (geisha network); the convenience of being able to take lessons from different teachers at a single location – the *kaburenjo* or dance hall of one's particular geisha district (*hanamachi*); and the opportunity for immersion in an almost daily series of lessons with no obligation to earn their keep by teaching, as other arts professionals often must. The geisha career involves women in a closely knit, communal world of geisha houses (*okiya*), teahouses (*ochaya)*, art guilds (*ryū*) headed by an *iemoto* headmaster, and an association (*kumiai*) of geisha houses. It is also a hierarchical world in which geisha identities and loyalties are fixed by their location in specific *okiya*, *hanamachi*, and *ryū*.

Foreman conducts her analysis of the geisha profession from a strongly feminist perspective, and this, too, presents a new view of geisha. She argues that discrimination against women in Japan, although ameliorated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1986 and the Basic Law for Gender Equality in 1999, has not ended in the world of the classic arts. The Kabuki stage remains open only to men, and although geisha study the shamisen professionally with the same masters as Kabuki professionals, they are not allowed in Kabuki. A law initiated in 2000 forbidding civil servants from any involvement in the *karyūkai* even in their leisure time meant that politicians, a group long associated with geisha gatherings, could not serve as *ozashiki* patrons or guests— a move that meant such a loss of income for Tokyo geisha that many were forced to retire. The law also casts the geisha as a victim at worst and unsavory at best. Foreman further observes that as practitioners of *multiple* arts, even the most accomplished geisha are not eligible for the honor and financial support of being named a Living National Treasure of Japan as others

skilled in Edo-era arts and crafts are. When Foreman broached the possibility of other kinds of support for geisha, such as arts grants, however, she discovered that most preferred to rely on the current system of client patronage.

Foreman's feminist analysis of the geisha as independent career artists depends a good deal on the light she sheds on contemporary patronage. The patron, or *danna,* represented in modern Japanese literature and film has often been depicted as little more than a rich and lecherous scoundrel. Today, patrons are women and men who come from many walks of life (medical professionals, artists, photographers, administrators), who appreciate classical dance and music and may study or even perform themselves on an amateur basis. Foreman observes they may use the title *suponsaa* (sponsor) rather than *danna*. Patrons must have the financial wherewithal to pay the high fees of the *ozashiki*, which in turn provide income for geisha. Patrons are also expected to support the geisha arts by buying tickets to the annual stage productions and by contributing to *okiya* with, for example, a new instrument or other needed items. Relations between geisha and patrons are not intended to lead to romantic liaisons, although at times these do occur.

Although patrons and geisha alike appreciate the performance space of the *ozashiki*, both know that geisha train most intensely for the annual lavish stage productions such as *Miyako Odori* (Dances of the Capital) performed each spring in Kyoto by members of the Gion Kōbu *hanamachi*. As Foreman discusses in detail, geisha bear all costs for such productions, sometimes even going into debt. Participation in such productions as well as *ryū* recitals is mandatory.

*The Gei of Geisha* updates and builds on Liza Dalby's well-known anthropological study, *Geisha*, based on her fieldwork in Kyoto in the 1970s[1]; a 25th anniversary edition was recently released. Both books make an excellent case for understanding geisha based on their actual motivations, work, and communities. They also pave the way for more research on geisha at different historical junctures and locations in Japan. G.G. Rowley's excellent translation of the autobiography of one-time geisha Masuda Sayo, who died in 2008 at age 83, for example, offers the contrast of an impoverished woman living in a much different era who experienced

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[1] Liza Dalby, *Geisha*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983).

abuse in an *okiya* and by *danna*.[2] Although Dalby's and Masuda's books are available in paperback, Foreman's remains a steeply priced hard back. One hopes that all interested in geisha, patronage, and the arts in Japan today will nevertheless seek out a copy.

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[2] Masuda Sayo. *Autobiography of a Geisha* trans. G.G. Rowley (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

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