

Filosofija ir religija

RECONSIDERING AUTHENTICITY IN RELIGIOUS REVIVAL AND RENEWAL IN JAPAN: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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This article is a discussion of the current dominant theoretical paradigms being used by scholars to delineate the processes of revival in Japanese "folk performing arts". Law identifies a theoretical debate, often cast as an either/or proposition, between a critical assessment of the nativist claims being made by scholars in the folklore movement in Japan, and the naïve historicism of the folklorists, who have, nevertheless, accurately identified the fragile nature of many of Japan's performing arts traditions. Law argues that people involved in "reclaiming" performing arts traditions are far from the mindlessly loyal national patriots of a larger nativist discourse we read about in the minzokugaku (folklore) scholars. Nor are they the nostalgic subject, finding their sense of identity through a desperate appeal to a vanished, fragmented past remembered through a tumultuous and shifting present, suggested by the critical theorists. They have a considerably greater degree of agency than current available theoretical paradigms give them credit for. There is a ludic quality to their performing the past in the present, crafting what is meaningful, and what is now local. It is attention to this quality of agency in how people understand dislocations of the local, its reconstitution in their new communities, and the inclusion of reflections on the past and the meaning of their lives in the continuum of time – beyond our own significations of these processes as folklorists (popular religion scholars) or critical scholars of religion – that informs this article. The article presents the assumptions of each of these basic paradigms, and then moves to a discussion of four interlocking themes upon which each of these paradigms is dependent: 1) the idea of the local; 2) the category of the authentic; 3) nationalism and 4) nostalgia. Law suggests that while both theoretical tendencies, the critical and the historicist/preservationist are out of touch with what is happening in communities in Japan where "local" performing arts are being revived and reenacted. The article suggests that we need to shift our theoretical attentions from discussions of authenticity, nostalgia, localism and nationalism and begin to explore how people are actively adapting to a more global reality in rural Japan.

The late Paul Wheatley of the University of Chicago often said, "There is no ascent to truth without a descent to cases." I begin with a mini case that could be any number of cases around Japan.

On January 2, 2001, in the Mihara District of Awaji, Hyogo prefecture, on this second day of the New Year, the ritual puppetry performance of Sanbansô was presented before the worship hall of the local Hachiman shrine, also the ceremonial center of Awaji puppetry

during the Edo period. Until the start of World War II, this ritual of felicity and purification had been presented every year on the second day of the New Year as a solemn religious rite to remove pollution and bless those assembled for a good year. The practice, along with most ritual puppetry in Japan, had died out by the early post war period. This performance in 2001, while not the first in that location since the war, was the first time the ritual had been used as part of routine, scheduled New Year's festivities.¹ Local people from the area around the shrine gathered with their families to watch the rite. The rite was repeated again in 2002, and in 2003, and is slated to be performed again in 2004. The event is wildly successful and popular, and surprisingly local in its flavor, with an astonishing absence of folklorists and film crews there to study its resurrection.² Locals I spoke with the August of 2003 told me it is once again a standard part of the New Year celebrations in the district.

Immediately, it is tempting to call to service our theories of tradition retrieval and reinvention, and look for the ways in which nostalgia is an operative mood of this moment. Were people pleased because the good old days are back? Do they feel they are "looking through a glass darkly, but perhaps someday face to face,"³ and seeing their Tokugawa ancestors? Were some remembering or reclaiming a past they never really had?

Although technically referred to as a "revival," no one I spoke with (and my conversations included members of the theater, people from the neighborhood surrounding the shrine, and people in the town office) had any illusions that this performance represented any reclaiming of the past as it was in the good old days. The differences between the past and the present are simply too stark: In the "past," itinerant puppeteers, considered outcasts in Japanese society and trained as specialists in removing ritual pollution presented the rite. Now, it is performed by professional actors who get their salaries from the government and are acclaimed as artists, with one Living National Treasure in their troupe. In the past, the itinerant puppeteers were part-time residents of this small district called Sanjo, a demarcated polluted zone surrounding the Hachiman and Ebisu shrine complexes. Now, the actors come from all over Awaji, and many live in new developments alongside well-off neighbors from Europe and other parts of Asia. In the past, the puppeteers walked to the shrine before heading out on foot for a walking tour of the inland sea area, a tour that would last for months, their puppets in a box on their backs. Today, the actors arrive in a mini-van and unload their puppets with the help of a stage crew. At the end of the day, they go home and have a nap like everyone else in Japan. And the list of differences goes on and on. The people on Awaji in Sanjo did not need a scholar with a Ph.D. to point that out to them. They figured it out all by themselves.

¹ I discuss the history, context and transformations of this rite up through the late 1980's in my book *Puppets of Nostalgia: The Life, Death and Rebirth of the Awaji Ningyō Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

² Perhaps that alone should get it slapped with a Good Housekeeping Seal of Authenticity.

³ My apologies to the Apostle Paul.

Nevertheless, local people and actors alike feel very strongly about what they are doing and why they are doing it. And they are far from the mindlessly loyal national patriots of a larger nativist discourse we read about in the *minzokugaku* (folklore) scholars. Nor are they the nostalgic subject, finding their sense of identity through a desperate appeal to a vanished, fragmented past remembered through a tumultuous and shifting present. They have a considerably greater degree of agency than we give them credit for. There is a ludic quality to their performing the past in the present, crafting what is meaningful, and what is now local. It is attention to this quality of agency in how people understand dislocations of the local, its reconstitution in their new communities, and the inclusion of reflections on the past and the meaning of their lives in the continuum of time – beyond our own significations of these processes as folklorists (popular religion scholars) or critical scholars of religion – that informs this paper.⁴

My reflections here grow out of an uneasy feeling I have had over the past decade as I have read the work of the *minzokugakusha*⁵ on the one hand and critical scholars on the other, on nostalgia, authenticity discourses, revival movements, tradition invention, tourism, modernity and commodification; the former, trying hard to locate in the people who claim local ownership of the ritual performing arts an identity project predicated on allegiance to reclaiming the past as the location of value, and the latter, relentlessly revealing all the cracks in what these blinded nativists are up to, and how they are mercilessly manipulated by the forces of late capitalism through a mystifying nostalgic process. I read this stuff, not as a form of academic ascetic self-torture, but because I genuinely believe that good theory should teach us to see things in actual cases ways we otherwise wouldn't. The uneasy feeling is this: Somehow, our theorizing about what is happening in Japanese religions as it relates to these revival movements in the late 20th century (and into the current year, and in particular those

⁴ During the period of time I did fieldwork on Awaji (from the early 1980's up through the present), I have seen many aspects of Awaji puppetry go through the strange process of what is called in Japanese simply *fukkatsu*, revival. This August as I took a bus from Kobe across the Akashi bridge, recalling that 25 years ago I made the trip from Kobe to Awaji on an outboard motor boat, I reflected on the dramatic changes of 25 years on the island. I know very well the strange contortions people have gone through to try and find a place for the iconic past of this island, puppetry, in the weird old world of the 21st century. Like many people who do fieldwork in Japan, I know the players of the revival movement intimately. We have been closely observing the same process, from two different vantage points, for 25 years together. They are my friends. They will speak with me openly about what they are doing and why they are doing it. Like the rest of us, their lives have changed dramatically in the past fifteen years as globalization has become a fact on the ground. One can get a good bagel in Fukura. I eat *natto* in Ithaca for breakfast. As their lives have changed, so, too have their understandings of what they are doing when they explore what we call a "traditional performing art".

⁵ In this paper, I am using the general term "folklorist" in Japanese (*minzokugakusha*) to include also those scholars in Japan and Europe whose primary research focus is what has been delineated as *minzoku geinō* ("folk performing arts"). To a large extent, due to the public popularity of folklorists' enterprises in Japan, the term as a label for scholars has not undergone the critical scrutiny in Japan that it has elsewhere, and scholars still often use the term to refer to themselves, even when their work takes them more in the directions of what we would now consider performance studies or ritual studies in this country.

cases which are centered around ritual performance,) is not adequately accounting for what is actually being confronted and reshaped in the communities where these little dramas are being carried out. People on both sides of this debate about the folk performing arts boom of the 1980's and 1990's, and the tourism campaigns and popular films to promote them – the folklorists and their groups and those interested in discourse analysis in as a form of cultural critique in Japan can study the same case and both draw out entire careers from it. But what do the people involved in these cases make of what they are doing?

How can our advanced, and very legitimate suspicions of authenticity discourses, nativism, nostalgia and the processes of commodification bring us into closer appreciation of what is happening, and not simply operate as a meta-analysis, creating theories by reading other theories and not checking in with our cases? Can one religion scholar serve as the informant for another religion scholar when we are discussing local knowledge? To ask these question is not simply to try and conflate the lines between what it means to be a scholar of religion and what it means to be a practitioner of religion.⁶

I will proceed with a simple, two-part schema: First, I will summarize in broad-brush strokes the very recent debates in Japanese cultural studies about reclamations of the past. Second, I will present a series of observations, a veritable laundry list, if you will, of features in recent cases pointing to a larger pattern in the shape of modernity in religion.

The Debate: A Brief Overview

I am assuming here a certain level of familiarity with the debate within Japanese religious studies and performance studies between the *minzokugakusha* and critical scholars who have explored the discourses of authenticity. It is possible to argue that much of the work on Japanese religion dealing with *minzoku geinō* in the past fifteen years has fallen into one of these two camps.⁷ I will briefly summarize two major approaches to Japanese ritual performance studies and folklore studies for the benefit of those not working in Japanese religions.

⁶ While the requisite luxury of being a scholar of religion is being able to see things from a different vantage point than those within the religious community, is it necessary to always assume that our vista is necessarily more, dare I say it, authentic? Put another way, I am asking, as an open ended question, if there is still a place in our scholarship for listening to what the people we are studying say about what they are doing and why they are doing it. This need not be, as Russell McCutcheon has recently suggested, simply an act of being a “caretaker” of religion. See his *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000). Things are changing rapidly, and by the time we have a body of theory, the cases may be shifting again. Sometimes, people have remarkably insightful things to say about what they are doing, and it is not all truth claims.

⁷ It is possible to see a similar trend in Zen studies, in which scholars are either deconstructing the authenticity claims made by the tradition, or arguing for viewing Zen as part of the essence of an authentic Japan.

Minzokugaku and minzoku geinô scholars

On the one hand, there is a tradition of scholarship and a nuanced discourse of Japaneseness inherited from the Tokugawa nativist scholars and the projects of (Kamo no Mabuchi,) Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane, and re-imagined in twentieth century folklorists such as Yanagita Kunio, Hôri Ichirô and Honda Yasuji which can be seen as having a primary allegiance to delineating a native identity, locating the real native in the rural and an imagined category of people known as *aohitogusa*, later to become Yanagita's *jômin*, the folk. The folk were imagined in such a way as to appear somehow more in touch with the authentic religiosity of a Japan untainted by foreign influences. This tradition of folklore studies took considerable influence in the early part of the twentieth century from German and European scholarship, also dealing with issues of forming national identities in a newly global landscape and also forming the parameters of the discipline of folklore studies by essentializing the category of the folk itself as a distinct classification of humanity, shared across national borders. Not only were these folk closer to a national essence of character, their rituals and performances were the expressions of this essence. As Regina Bendix points out, "The Romantic assumption was that authenticity resided in expressive culture."⁸ Translated into the Japanese landscape, it looked like this: If the folk are the real Japanese, their religiosity the real Japanese religion, their worship the act of agricultural work, and their location the rural and untainted countryside, their most concise expression of their way of life will be found in their most overt local expressions of culture: *matsuri* and ritual performances, many tied to rituals of agriculture (or fishing) which formed the backbone of rural labor. Hence, the object of study of early scholars of the folk in Japan led to a privileging of *matsuri* and ritual performance over other forms of self-presentation.

In Japan, the economic bubble of the late 1970's and up through the end of the 1980's released a great deal of money for the revival of native arts, and the folklore boom of more than a decade was the result. But added into the equation at this point was the strong sense of urgency created by the very real assessment that the local performing arts and ritual practices, regarded in this academic tradition as the location of all that was real and Japanese, were dying out. The *minzoku geinô* movement's primary push factor was the sense that if rituals and *matsuri* were not revived and revitalized, they would be lost forever. This was a fact. Many performance traditions disappeared, and the contexts in which they had been presented with them.⁹

⁸ Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, p. 97.

⁹ The cultural manipulation of these discourses of vanishing culture by minzokugakusha and the tourism industry has been critically discussed by Marilyn Ivy in her *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. My critique of her otherwise well researched and thought-provoking book concerns the absence of voices from the rural areas which are the destinations of the tourism campaigns she critiques.

It was the arguments they made for their preservation, and the manner in which they were often rehabilitated, like some Frankenstein made of assembled, ambulatory dead body parts, that attracted the attention of critical scholars who recognized in these arguments and reinventions a recasting of *kokugaku* ideologies and a suspicious valuation of the past as authentic. A significant component of the *minzoku geinô* scholars' work was to find the most "authentic" form of a given ritual, flash freeze it for all times, and reintroduce it into the present as an example of the real Japan. The movement went so far as to suggest the creation of a national center for the "folk performing arts," dislocating the local to the national in a move that was controversial for many reasons.¹⁰

Any scholar who has ever worked at a ritual performance in the past twenty years can not help but notice that often the *minzokugakusha* outnumber others three to one in the audiences, like archaeologists who have unearthed a treasure of the golden age. A significant number of these scholars are Japanese people from urban backgrounds, caught up in a movement to try and locate themselves in a unique native identity. Many American and European scholars of religion and folklore studies working on these ritual performance forms left these latent authenticity claims unexamined. And not a few of these foreign scholars have bought them hook, line and sinker, feeling perhaps that in these lively rural performing arts we could somehow reclaim a Japan closer to our idealized, exotic Other.

Critique of ideology

On the other hand, there is a growing body of scholarship rightly dedicated to analyzing and "outing" the hidden and sometimes not so hidden claims of authenticity and nativism/nationalism inherent in the claims of these folklorists as they use ritual performance and the rural as a way of constituting Japanese religious life. The brilliant and groundbreaking work of H. D. Harootunian in 1988, *Things Seen and Unseen* accurately identified the rhetorical strategies of scholars in the Kokugaku School to create a subject for native project, and to cast this vision of a laboring, authentic peasantry into a powerful ideology of domination. Most relevant to our study is his analysis of Hirata Atsutane's religionization of nativism, and his location of the authentic Ancient Way in the rural, the ordinary and the agrarian, equating labor with worship.

Scholars working in critical theory in Japanese studies have rightly identified the continuity between the assumptions made by *minzokugakusha* of the twentieth century and the complex metonymic strategy set in place by Tokugawa nativists, in which the part, the village, the rural, the imagined peasant, comes to stand for the whole, the national essence, the authentic. This critical project has been picked up by a number of scholars – anthropologists,

¹⁰ See Barbara E. Thornbury's *The Folk Performing Arts: Traditional Culture in Contemporary Japan*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, pp. 115–132 for a discussion of the debates about creating a national theater for *minzoku geinô*.

scholars of the new multi-disciplinary field we call for lack of a better name “cultural studies,” – exploring how Japanese agencies such as the tourism industry or the film industry chooses to re-imagine a past for an entire nation, and then figure out how to get everyone there by train or bus or plane, or perhaps a ticket to the theaters.¹¹ These studies have given birth to a whole new genre of meta-ethnographies – studies of “Japan the nation-obsessed, Japan the retro.”

The problem with these studies is not that they have miscalculated the power of the tourism industry or the film industry to cast an imagination (i.e., “generate a hegemonic discourse” about identity), but they have conflated the ideologies generated by these industries with real Japanese people living in areas that retain some form of the rural or agrarian. Much like a person who watches a movie and assumes it is an accurate reflection of what goes on, many scholars who then go to study nostalgia and commodification of the local in any given area assume – perhaps at an unconscious level, that they are meeting up with the characters from the movies and tourism campaigns, characters they have shown in their own analyses to be indeed very one-dimensional, nostalgic characters, resisting the realities of modernity at all costs. If the characters in these films have a naïve allegiance to the past (which may have never existed), then does it not follow that we will find people much like them in these rural areas portrayed in these films?

Japanese people living in rural areas are not more mindless consumers of the film industry than we are of ours. The extent to which real people living in Japan, in places like Awaji and Aichi and Yoshino and Gifu find those images in film and tourism to actually shape their real experience is NOT a point these studies interrogate. They have a disembodied subject – tourism industry, film industry. These vague subjects have no agency (although agency is attributed to them), and this absent agency is easily slid over onto real people, who become invisible in these studies. These tourism and film campaigns would love to be so successful. In reality, they are not. Analysis of media is an analysis of certain industry’s *attempt* to cast a spell of discourse, and while no doubt there is a symbiotic relationship between a given cultural sphere and the films produced in and about it, analysis of film or the tourism industry can not be conflated with the analysis of real people in real places, however fragmented they may be.

Nostalgia Isn’t What It Used to Be: Some Observations

I would like to pose some observations about ways in which this lively, if now somewhat passé debate, is lacking in describing what is actually going on in many communities with “revived” ritual performing arts. All of these observations suggest that what is being missed

¹¹ See, for example, Millie Creighton, “Consuming Rural Japan: The Marketing of Tradition and Nostalgia in the Japanese Travel Industry,” *Ethnology*, vol. 36, no 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 239–254. Her work follows in the vein of Ivy, *op. cit.*

by our focus on either defending the reclaiming of the past (Thornbury, Averbuch, etc.) or critiquing nostalgic discourses (Sakai, Ivy, Creighton, etc.) is a more on the ground understanding of how contemporary people in Japan are understanding the experience of late modernity.¹² While there are always risks to writing ethnography based on limited informants, I suggest that we have reached the other end of the pendulum's swing as we are now writing uninhabited ethnographies of subjectless campaigns and industries. If cultural studies demand we move the focus of our inquiry from people as informants to organisms in society, we need to reconstitute the sources of agency in those organisms. We need voices. To do otherwise is to participate in the further mystification of the very agencies which generate powerful discourses of identity – the very discourses we seek to expose.

By modernity, I am indebted to the work of many authors, but for the purposes of this paper, would like to orient the discussion around a fundamental dislocation of what can be regarded as the local. Within that, I will examine how theories about nostalgia for a certain kind of locality imagined in the past, and theories about the kind of meaning that kind of locality in the past is supposed to have produced in fact constitutes a “misrecognized task” (to borrow Harootunian's phrase) at this stage of our work in Japan. I will argue that our studies continue to make assumptions about people's understanding of locality, temporality and meaning. Extant studies seem to lock Japanese people at a certain stage in the crisis of modernity, when in reality a large number of Japanese people have actively recognized the dramatic shifts in the ideological mechanisms that locate them in time and place and which make their lives meaningful, and have actively moved on to do the work of culture – carving out a vision of locality that conforms to contemporary concerns, finding meaning in their lives, and sharing a process of cultural memory production which looks both forward and past. In short, nostalgia isn't what it used to be. I will focus on four interlocking concerns: 1) the local; 2) the authentic; 3) nationalism and 4) nostalgia.

The problem of the local

Both minzokugakusha and critical theorists are very concerned with the local as a place. For the minzokugakusha, it is where the authentic exists. For the critical scholar, it is the very idea of the local that is suspect. Yet neither group can have a subject without the local to ground

¹² While Harootunian's inquiry into Japan's early forays into modernity situates the problem in a socio-economic shift, I am interested in understanding the economic dimension of modernity as less monolithic. Harootunian writes, “When I refer to modernity and modernists in this book, I am using the term not as a limited aesthetic marker but as a broad signifier that includes art and literature, to be sure, but also philosophy, religion and social and political thought. I am also using modernism as an ideologization of the process of capitalist modernization and transformation Japanese were experiencing and trying to grasp”. H. D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University press, 2001, preface, p. xx. While his frame includes the worlds of religion and art, his underlying schema is a Marxist materialist one which regards the material and the economic as uniquely productive of cultural change.

their studies.¹³ For both scholarly schools, the threat to the local is the subject of inquiry – one side regarding it as a call to arms to save it, and another asking us to notice that it has not continued unchanged, and is largely an imagined reality. Both start from an assumption that a feature of modernity is a breakdown of the local.

All of this seems rather obvious. As Arjun Appadurai noted, “It is one of the grand clichés of social theory (going back to Toennies, Weber and Durkheim) that locality as a property or diacritic of social life comes under siege in modern societies.”¹⁴ However, my observations suggest that the idea of the local as a stable point is no longer valid in rural Japan and people recognize this. (In fact, it may never have been regarded as stable, but people may well have understood on some level that in fact it is the very focus on the work of ritual to maintain it.) People living in rural communities recognize that it is no longer possible to assume that local means a continuity of generations, and hence claims about people reclaiming their own pasts is often a moot point.¹⁵

In contemporary Japan, people involved in local revival movements are often people who have moved to an area very recently, and are looking to get involved in local activities. For example, as Awaji has become Japan’s Mediterranean in the past fifteen years, complete with world class luxury hotels with breathtaking views of the Naruto Bridge (such as the Anaga Hotel) and ports for ocean worthy sailboats brought in by the globally rich and famous, many people from all over Japan, and even the world live and work there. An even greater number of people live on Awaji and work in Kobe and even Osaka, with transportation made easier by the bridge connecting Awaji to the mainland. Such transformations in transportation in the past decade have been considerable and staggering, and while fifteen years ago there was a considerable lament among families who had lived for generations on the island (and I certainly heard a lot about this while I was doing my field research on Awaji in the 1980’s), this attempt to hold on to a homogenous past is not only no longer the dominant narrative, people are actively carving themselves into a more inclusive vision of community. So while the tourism industry may still be marketing the rural and the exotic, the people producing the rural heritage may very well be from Tokyo, Osaka, Paris or Florida. And they are not

¹³ Harootunian delineated the construction of the *habitus*, particular place as imagined whole – crafted by nativist scholars such as Miyahiro, Mutoke and Miyauchi, a part of his exposure of the nativist metonymic paradigm in which the local was infused with a meaning beyond its mere geography. He writes, “In time, they were combined into a comprehensive and coherent view, establishing the identity of a particular place and a broader political space, village and habitus, part and whole.” H. D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 307–8.

¹⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 196.

¹⁵ While we have the excellent work of Jennifer Robertson pointing out the dramatic shifts in constitution of locality in the urban setting, assumptions are still made that people in rural areas of Japan are at another, more delayed stage of coping with the population shifts that have occurred in the past half a century. See Jennifer Robertson, *Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

necessarily even trying to serve up what the tourism industry is touting as the rural authentic. They are much more in charge of their own commodification processes, than manipulated by campaigns and bureaucrats.

The problem of the “Authentic”

Locating the authentic version of a folk performing art or ritual practice is an activity that occupies a great deal of the work of scholars in *minzoku geinô* studies, and indicating ways in which authenticity discourses get invented and recast into other industries is the work of critical scholars. But what do people around whom these claims spin have to say about all this? A number of observations can be made.

First, local people (and I use the term somewhat tongue in cheek as a general category to include those who are somehow not the scholars) are often very conscious of what they are making up and are happy to admit to outright fabrications for the purposes of expediency, coherence of a performance, etc. I have numerous examples from my own fieldwork into Japanese puppetry to support this observation which I leave aside out of respect for the privacy of those who told me of them.

Second, the problem of authenticity – both its construction and inventedness – is a problem created by folklorists and its absence now gloated about by critical scholars. It tends not to be a major concern in this generation of ritual practitioners. People tend to be interested in what works. When people speak of authenticity, if at all, it is usually as regards the ability of the performance or ritual to provide a vehicle for a deep and transformative experience, however new, and in some cases modernly private that experience may be. The idea of authenticity as somehow being an allegiance to the past is not at all a shared and assumed value.

Third, a broader, international frame plays a significant role in the production of fakelore and tales of authenticity. Touring troupes are keenly aware of their location as performers of “the authentic, exotic Japan” and produce a performance of precisely that when they travel abroad. Since many *minzoku geinô* troupes do the bulk of their performances for foreign audiences (and to a lesser degree the audiences of scholars seeking out the true and the native), it is imperative that we interrogate the role of this new performance context in creating what appears on the surface to be discourses of authenticity generated by performers and “local people.” While they may not be innocent, they are not often believed by their performers.

Fourth, the issue of mixing and borrowing, across performance and ritual traditions within Japan, and indeed, now with global referents as a base, is often highlighted as an example of “inauthenticity” (by folklorists) or proof of the dislocation of meaning. Pastiche, that is to say shameless borrowing from other ritual traditions inside and outside Japan is not simply the work of people who have been ripped from a sense of coherence in the world and are left with nothing but fragments in the face of modernity, as Jameson would argue. Patching things together is often done because people are acknowledging a larger pool of shared referents for ritual symbolism and are creating performances with that larger context in mind.

The problem of a coherent identity based on nativist claims for a national identity

Folklorists often argue that *minzoku geinô* are indeed performances of an authentic, “traditional” Japan.¹⁶ Critical scholars, seeking to expose the danger of this kind of nativism, argue that these discourses are invented, and yet assume the people involved in the production of rituals and performances are in agreement with the signifying voices of the folklore scholars. In fact, people who work in the cases we have examined have multiple frames of reference for locating their own identity projects. Because someone participates actively and enthusiastically in a revival movement does not mean that the person’s primary location of identity and meaning is in a reclaimed past. In short, people have identities and calendars as full and complex as our own. We participate in their signification when we paint them as one-dimensional.

The problem of nostalgia

Nostalgia as a cultural force can be expressed and produced in film, various tourism campaigns, and even large segments of visual culture. But at a personal level, feelings of nostalgia are usually short lived, even fleeting. Anyone who has ever experienced real nostalgia, perhaps upon returning to one’s childhood home or alma mater, for instance, knows how intensely painful the experience can be, and few people are so pathological as to locate their identity in such a painful, liminal temporality as a nostalgic past.

While studies of nostalgic discourse have produced some healthy suspicions of larger movements in Japan, these studies require that we regard our subjects as either complicit nativists/nationalists or unknowing victims of the strong discourses swirling around them and subsuming them. I argue that in the place of an analysis of nostalgia, it is now time to shift our attention to more detailed studies of the production of cultural memory. Remembering the past (i.e., cultural memory, however “creatively” one may do it) is a different cultural act from simply longing for the past (i.e., being nostalgic). In the former, remembrance is a way of living in the present. In the latter, it is a way of avoiding it because it is simply too unbearable. Unlike nostalgic discourse studies, inquiry into cultural memory demands that we see people as active agents in the production of their own meaning, as regards the present situated within the past and *visa versa*. While a working definition of cultural memory of course includes the idea of selective forgetting, I see this project as a more fruitful avenue of inquiry, as people are actively deciding how they will choose to remember events. We may raise our legitimate suspicions about what is being remembered and what is being forgotten,

¹⁶ The Japanese anthropologist of gender studies, Mariko Okada in her work on the geisha as cultural performer has termed these authenticity claims “Good Old Japan.” See her forthcoming essay “The Geisha as Cultural Performer”, Christoph Brumann and Rupert Cox, ed., *Making Heritage in Japan*, Berlin: Berg Press, forthcoming.

but in the end, we have to afford agency to the people who do this work, however sinister in some cases it could be. However, not all locations of the past in the present are so sinister. Here is an example.

One woman, a farm wife aged 55, I spoke with in Fukura on Awaji this summer had this to say about the assumption that local people are being nostalgic when they seek to restore a traditional storehouse (*kura*) and save it from destruction: “Am I being nostalgic because I prefer the lovely architectural lines of this *kura* to the concrete box my neighbor built for one tenth the cost in her field? I’m sorry to be snobbish, but the fact is, the lines of these *kura* are just nicer. I have to live here and look at this every day. If that makes me nostalgic, then please say I am. But this is not about nostalgia.”

A Little Case with Some Little Lessons

Let me return briefly to the case which opened my discussion. Recall that I noted that locals in this area were very pleased about this new, “restored” aspect of their new year’s festivities at their local shrine. How can this case teach us anything about meanings of the local, the temporal and the location of meaning?

First of all, it is worth investigating who these anonymous locals are. Out of about thirty-five people who attended the rite at this small shrine the past three years, only three were old enough to remember it as a rite from the pre-war era. No doubt, they felt very strongly about it because it for them created a powerful connection between the past of their childhoods and the present. They told me as much. They enjoyed narrating all the differences, and querying whether the rite had any place in the brave new world to anyone who would listen. For the bulk of the people, it was something with which they had no connection, so severed had it been from their sense of a local identity. Of the others, a small number of people were new residents to the area, who have lived in the district less than ten years, and who hope to make the pretty area of the central plain of Awaji with its quiet roads and good schools a permanent home. Others were foreigners, one, a man from New York City who has taken up residence on Awaji and works as a free-lance writer. Another foreigner lives part time on Awaji and part time in Tokyo, working for a computer company based in Kobe. Quite a few who came every year were the kids from the local junior high puppetry club, interested in watching the performance, and required to attend by their teacher.

Second, we can ask something of how these people understood the issue of the past and revival. Were they concerned that this rite somehow was true to some past version of itself? In my conversations, I heard nothing to even hint at a concern that the rite was “as it was.” On the contrary, people were very concerned that the rite “worked.” What did they want it to accomplish?

Since I had been the scholar who wrote the book on this rite, people deferred to me for its historical meanings. As these were explained, one young mother said, “We don’t believe in all old that old fashioned stuff. What we want is for people in the neighborhood to get together on the new year and feel like a community. We all lead such busy lives and come from all

over Japan. If we come and see these puppets, it gives us a chance to think about what, if anything, it means to live here.”

Arjun Appadurai noted that much of ethnology, from Malinowski to present studies of Japanese communities can be read as a study of the constituting of the local. His point is this: While the dislocation of locality may seem like a uniquely modern phenomenon, in fact all successful locations of a community into what he calls an ethnoscape are the result of an ongoing struggle to do just that. This is, in short, a large part of what culture is all about.¹⁷

It could be argued that the choice of a puppet performance to create an event to form a new community in the current day is almost happenstance. Or we could argue that puppetry, for people on Awaji, is what is at hand. It allows new people to become a part of a carefully crafted and very shared cultural memory of life on Awaji. But it is far too simplistic to assume that the choice of this performance is motivated primarily by nostalgia. Fifteen years ago, this might have been the case. But today, I argue, there is a new level of engagement with multiplicity being worked out. And included in that multiplicity is a multiplicity of time and space. People as well as subjects come from all over – spatially and temporally. People are working out the new local. They are succeeding. And it is not all about nostalgia anymore.

PERMAŠTANT JAPONIJOS RELIGINIO ATGAIVINIMO IR ATSINAUJINIMO AUTENTIŠKUMĄ: TEORINIAI SAMPROTAVIMAI

Jane Marie Law

S a n t r a u k a

Šiame straipsnyje aptariamos šiuo metu vyraujančios teorinės paradigmos, kuriomis mokslininkai apibūdina „liaudies atlikimo menų“ atgaivinimo Japonijoje procesus. Straipsnio autorė teorinę diskusiją, dažnai besirutuliojančią prielaidų lygmeniu, išvelgia tarp kritinių natyvistinio pobūdžio vertinimų, kuriuos pateikia Japonijos liaudies meno sąjūdžius tiriantys mokslininkai, ir naiviojo folkloristų istorizmo, pripažindama, jog pastarieji tiksliai nustatė daugelio sunkiai apčiuopiamų Japonijos atlikimo menų tradicijų prigimtį. J. M. Law teigimu, norintys „peržiūrėti“ atlikimo menų tradicijas anaipol nėra siaurų pažiūrų nacionaliniai patriotai, priklausantys platesniam natyvistiniam diskursui, su kuriuo galime susipažinti *minzokugaku* (folkloro) tyrinėtojų darbuose. Juo labiau negalėtume jų laikyti tais, kurie pasiduoda nostalgijai ir, beviltiškai apeliuodami į išnykusią ir fragmentišką praeitį, ieško savo tapatybės kritikų įsivaizduojamoje chaotiškoje ir kintančioje dabartyje. Jie turi nepalyginti didesnę veikimo galimybę, nei ta, kurią suteikią įsigalėjusios teorinės paradigmos. Jų dabartyje reiškiamą praeitį, konstruojama lokalaus pobūdžio, tačiau reikšminga visuma, yra visiškai skaidri ir suprantama. Šio straipsnio tikslas – atkreipti dėmesį į tai, kad atstovavimo pobūdis, kuris išryškėja stebint, kaip žmonės suvokia lokalią visumą išsklaidą, jos atkūrimą naujose jų suburtose bendruomenėse, praeities ir savo pačių gyvenimo prasmės apmąstymą tęstiniame laike, atsiribojant nuo mūsų kaip folkloro (liaudies religijos) tyrinėtojų ar kritinės religijotyros atstovų priskiriamų reikšmių. Straipsnyje aptariamos kiekvienos šių pagrindinių paradigmos prielaidos, vėliau pereinant prie keturių susijusių temų, grindžiančių šias paradigmas, analizės: 1) lokalumo idėjos; 2) autentiškumo; 3) nacionalizmo ir 4) nostalgijos kategorijos. J. M. Law išreiš-

¹⁷ Appadurai, pp. 199–204.

čia minti, kad abi teorinės nuostatos – tiek kritinė, tiek istorinė / išsaugojimo – tiesiogiai nėra susijusios su tuo, kas vyksta Japonijos bendruomenėse, atgaivinančiose ir naujai perkuriančiose vietiniuose atlikimo menus. Šiame straipsnyje keliama idėja pereiti nuo teorinių apmąstymų apie autentiškumą, nostalgiją, lokalumą ir nacionalizmą prie tyrimo, kaip Japonijos kaimo gyventojai prisitaiko prie globalios tikrovės.

Įteikta 2004 m. kovo 15 d.