

# **The “Homeless Etiquette”**

Social Interaction and Behavior Among the Homeless in Taito Ward, Tokyo

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<p>Tiivistelmä Referat – Abstract</p> <p>The thesis focuses on the social interaction and behavior of the homeless living in Tokyo's Taito Ward. The study is based on the author's own ethnographic field research carried out in the autumn 2003. The chosen methodologies were based on the methodology called "participant observation", and they were used depending on the context. The ethnographic field research was carried out from the mid-August to the beginning of the October in 2003. The most important targets of the research were three separate loosely knit groups placed in certain parts of Taito Ward. One of these groups was based in proximity to the Ueno train station, one group gathered every morning around a homeless support organization called San'yūkai, and one was based in Tamahime Park located in the old San'ya area of Tokyo.</p> <p>The analysis is based on the aspects of Takie Sugiyama Lebra's theory of "social relativism". Lebra's theory consists of the following, arguably universal aspects: belongingness, empathy, dependence, place in the society, and reciprocity. In addition, all the interaction and behavior is tied to the context and the situation. According to Lebra, ritual and intimate situations produce similar action, which is socially relative. Of these, the norms of the ritual behavior are more regulated, while the intimate behavior is less spontaneous. On the contrary, an anomic situation produces anomic behavior, which is not socially relative. Lebra's theory is critically reviewed by the author of the thesis, and the author has attempted to modify the theory to make it more adaptable to the present-day society and to the analysis. Erving Goffman's views of the social interaction and Anthony Giddens' theories about the social structures have been used as complementary theoretical basis.</p> <p>The aim of the thesis is to clarify, how and why the interaction and the behavior of some homeless individuals in some situations follow the aspects of Lebra's "social relativism", and on the other hand, why in some situations they do not. In the latter cases the answers can be sought from regional and individual differences, or from the inaptness of the theory to analyze the presented situation. Here, a significant factor is the major finding of the field study: the so called "homeless etiquette", which is an abstract set of norms and values that influences the social interaction and behavior of the homeless, and with which many homeless individuals presented in the study complied. The fundamental goal of the thesis is to reach profound understanding about the daily life of the homeless, whose lives were studied. The author argues that this kind of profound understanding is necessary in looking for sustainable solutions in the areas of social and housing policy to improve the position of the homeless and the qualitative functioning of the society.</p>			
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## 1. Introduction

Homelessness has been acknowledged as a major social problem in the present-day Japan. The latest official nation-wide statistics are from the year 2003<sup>1</sup>, when the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) organized a national survey to count the number of homeless people in Japan, and to study the situation of the homeless. In the survey of 2003 the official number of the homeless in Japan was 25,296. As the number started to rise rapidly in the 1990s, the presence of the homeless became more and more visible, especially in big cities. Moreover, homeless people began to spread to the parts of cities, which had not been populated by the homeless since the end of the Second World War. In a country, which had become one of the richest in the world, wide-spread homelessness was a new phenomenon.

I first became interested in the issue of Japanese homelessness in the autumn of 2001, when I was doing volunteer work in Tokyo from August 2001 to January 2002. I did volunteer work every Wednesday and Thursday from the September of 2001 in an organization called San'yūkai, which is a homeless support organization located in the old San'ya area in Taito. This gave me an opportunity to take a closer look at homelessness, which was still rapidly increasing in Japan at the time. After my return to Finland I started to study homelessness academically.

In the autumn of 2003 I was able to return to Tokyo to carry out a field study on the daily life of the homeless. The majority of the texts I had studied in English about Japanese homelessness, concentrated on the structural reasons for homelessness. On the more concrete level homelessness was discussed only briefly in connection with the daily life of the Japanese day-laborers. Any of these scientifically qualified articles did not specifically focus on a profound understanding of the daily life of the homeless. In my opinion, it is important to try to understand homelessness from the homeless people's own perspective, as well. This would contribute to the development of sustainable solutions<sup>2</sup>, which in turn

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<sup>1</sup> Kōseirōdōshō, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> In the area of supported housing, health care and so forth.

could help the authorities in dealing with the problems caused by homelessness, and, even more importantly, help the homeless themselves in their situation.

In my master's thesis I will concentrate on the forms of social interaction and social behavior among those Japanese homeless, whose life I observed in different parts of Taito Ward in Tokyo for one and a half months. In some cases I also observed interaction between these homeless and some other people. In my analysis I mostly refer to Takie Sugiyama Lebra's theory of "social relativism"<sup>3</sup>. According to Lebra, "social relativism" is a combination of "social preoccupation" and "interactional relativism" These two concepts "both imply each other and are conducive of each other". This characterizes what Lebra calls the "Japanese ethos", which is a guiding principle for Japanese social behavior. (Lebra, 1976 p.9.)

In my master's thesis I am not arguing that "social relativism" is something that guides all social behavior of the Japanese.<sup>4</sup> However, "social relativism" is still today an undeniable factor in the Japanese society. Lebra offers several examples of situations, in which "social relativism" influences the behavior of the Japanese. My hypothesis is that the Japanese homeless often interact and behave in ways that Lebra would classify "socially relative". I am going to use the aspects of social relativism to analyze the interaction and the behavior of the homeless. At the same time I am going to use my own data to examine the theory. I also hypothesize that there are other patterns of interaction and behavior, such as the "homeless etiquette", which are not guided by "social relativism", and which need reconsideration. Obviously, Lebra's theory, which dates from the 1970s, needs to be reviewed. For this purpose, I am going to refer to other sociological and anthropological theories as well as some recent theories of Japanology. My primary research problem is to find out how and why the homeless interact and behave socially the way they do. For this purpose I am going to use a modified version of Lebra's concept of "social relativism" as a theoretical framework for my study.

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<sup>3</sup> Lebra's concept has nothing to do with the concept of "cultural relativism"—which may also sometimes be called "social relativism"—in anthropology. Lebra's concept is not a methodology or a methodological approach, but a hypothetical structure in Japanese society or a basis for "Japanese patterns of behavior."

<sup>4</sup> Neither does Lebra. Though she tends to see "social relativism" as more Japanese and another concept called "unilateral determinism" as more "Western" principle for social behavior, she emphasizes that there would be ambiguities and overlapping in every society.

My firsthand ethnographic data is limited to approximately 30 homeless individuals<sup>5</sup>, who resided and spent most of their time in roughly four different parts of Taito Ward between August 21<sup>st</sup> and September 31<sup>st</sup> of 2003. I did a kind of “participant observation”<sup>6</sup> of the daily life of these homeless in three different areas by making notes and occasional unstructured interviews. In addition, I made tape-recorded interviews in the fourth remaining area, where I did not make observations systematically. The tape-recorded interviews were largely made for other purposes, but I have quoted some of the comments in the thesis. I had visited this area earlier in the autumn and early winter of 2001<sup>7</sup> countless times. Apart from this firsthand data on the homeless themselves I interviewed some people, who encounter homeless persons through their work daily. Some of these people might also meet with them in their spare time, mostly in the aforementioned areas around Taito Ward. Because of the scope of my data, the conclusions can be generalized more or less reliably only to some homeless in these areas, but they can, nevertheless, be suggestive of the social interaction and behavior of the other homeless as well. One of the major findings of the field work was a loosely defined set of norms and values called the “homeless etiquette”. All my informants in different areas more or less adhered to it, but they emphasized different aspects of it. Though this unwritten set of norms was not widely called “homeless etiquette”, it clearly affected the daily social life of the homeless in varying degrees.

The nature of a study based on ethnographic fieldwork requires some consideration of the ethical issues. Here I have followed the code of ethics as presented by the American Anthropological Association (1998). First of all, I have protected the anonymity of my informants by using pseudonyms. I have also left out a small amount of information following one informant’s wish. Otherwise I did not experience serious ethical issues during the study. Getting information presupposed “bribery” in the form of small liquor bottle on two occasions, but I do not consider this a serious issue, as I and the informant got along very well otherwise too. It was quite easy to get along with all the informants,

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<sup>5</sup> There were some “key informants”, who were more informative and accessible than some others.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Spradley, 1980.

<sup>7</sup> I give more exact information about this in the “ethnography” part on pp.30-49.

and this also contributed to the fact that I did not have to make many difficult ethical choices. The study was also carried out without any outside interests or financing.

I will proceed by first giving general information about Japanese homelessness and shortly commenting it. Next, I will review Lebra's theory more thoroughly and present my own theoretical framework for this paper, which includes some other sociological and anthropological theories. This is followed by the presentation of my ethnographic field work and the data. In the analysis part I test the aspects of Lebra's theory of social relativism with my own data on the homeless, and sometimes using other theoretical approach. In the final part I present the conclusions.

All the Japanese names in the text are written in the Japanese order i.e. family name first. Japanese terms are written in italics, and their English translations are given in various ways depending on the situation. A list of Japanese terms used in the text can be found in the appendix. I have also written some English terms in italics in case I have wanted to emphasize them. The place names, which are not written in italics, are sometimes translated from Japanese to English, if I have seen it as important. Of the place names I have translated classification terms from Japanese to English, e.g. *kôen* -> "park". I have used the following pattern in the translation of the place names: e.g. Ueno eki -> Ueno Station; Tamahime *kôen* -> Tamahime Park and so forth. As an exception, I have not translated bridges at all but left them in the form e.g. Sakura-bashi, where *bashi* means "bridge". This pattern is chosen, because one of the most often mentioned places in the text is called Jewelry Bridge, and it does not have a Japanese translation.

## 2. About the Homelessness in Japan

### 2.1 Background: Facts and Figures

The number of the homeless people in Japan took a sharp rise after the Asian currency crisis in 1997. In 2000 there were officially 20,000 homeless in Japan. However, a rapid increase started already in the beginning of the 1990s, when the so-called “bubble economy” burst. Before the 1990s homelessness was not uncommon in Japan, but it was different in nature. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s it was more temporary, short-term, and small-scale in the sense that it concerned mainly Japan’s day-laborer (*hiyatoi rôdôsha* in Japanese) and other underclass population.<sup>8</sup> In the national survey of 2003<sup>9</sup> the official number of the homeless in Japan was 25,296.

Currently, in 2006, there is no reliable or official information available about the current number of the homeless nationwide in Japan. Some unofficial sources claim that the overall number has continued to rise, but there are not any public statistics available. According to other sources, also the earlier official figures have been misleading.<sup>10</sup> This may be true, but at least the published numbers are suggestive. The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare had planned a new survey for March 2006<sup>11</sup>, but if the survey was indeed carried out, the results remain unpublished.

A concrete proof of the fact that the authorities have considered the problem was the new legislation concerning the homeless that was put into effect in August 2002. This may have been partly due to the Japanese non-governmental organizations’ action, which lead to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to make suggestions

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<sup>8</sup> For more information about the “Japanese Skid Rows” in the late 1960s see e.g. Caldarola, 1968; about the homelessness among the day-laborer population in the 1970s, see e.g. de Bary, 1974; and about the homelessness as one dimension of the day-laborer lifestyle especially in Tokyo’s San’ya area in the late 1980s, see e.g. Fowler, 1996; and Hester, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Kôseirôdôshô, 2003. The national survey included the census of the homeless as well structured questions concerning their background among other things.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Japan’s NGO Report on the United Nations’ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 2001, [1] 3.

<sup>11</sup> Kôseirôdôshô, 2006.



and recommendations for the State of Japan.<sup>12</sup> The new law was called the Act to Provide Special Measures for the Support of the Self Reliance of the Homeless (*Hômuresu no jiritsu shien tô ni kan suru tokubetsu sochi hô*)<sup>13</sup>. The law was created to support the self reliance of the homeless by the way of taking different measures, and it obliged the national government, MHLW and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, and—furthermore—the prefectural and municipal governments to take required action.<sup>14</sup> In practise this requires co-operation with many non-profit organizations (NPO) and Christian churches in Japan, many of which have at least some kind of practical knowledge about working with the homeless. The implementation of the new homeless law is taking place gradually so that after five years from its enactment there will be some kind of investigation into its enforcement.<sup>15</sup> It is notable that the law mentions the prevention of those on the verge of homelessness from becoming homeless by offering livelihood assistance, though the emphasis is on areas, where there are large numbers of people in danger of becoming homeless.<sup>16</sup>

There were 6,231 homeless in Tokyo in 2003, according to the aforementioned national survey. The presence of the homeless can be felt almost everywhere in central Tokyo. This is commonly considered an “eyesore”, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) has a history of taking strict measures against the growing problem. These measures, however, have not succeeded in relieving the situation.

The New Homeless Law has given birth to new kind of action. Tokyo has set up “self-dependence centers” as a short-term approach. Last year Tokyo also launched a program to promote an “entry to local community”<sup>17</sup> (Matsubara, 2004). The latter program also includes work and subsidized housing for those who are accepted as applicants (ibid.).

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<sup>12</sup> See above (n.3) and the Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights : Japan. 31/08/2001. E/C. 12/1/Add. 67. (Concluding Observations/Comments), which can also be found from the Shelter-less homepage: [http://homepage3.nifty.com/shelter-less/english/eng\\_idx.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/shelter-less/english/eng_idx.html). There is also a link to the whole document.

<sup>13</sup> From now on I will call this “the New Homeless Law”.

<sup>14</sup> This information comes from Sasaki (2004 pp.145–146). The law can be found in English from the Shelter-less magazine’s homepage: [http://homepage3.nifty.com/shelter-less/english/eng\\_idx.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/shelter-less/english/eng_idx.html). The Japanese version can be found from the same homepage: [http://homepage3.nifty.com/shelter-less/doc/doc\\_idx.html](http://homepage3.nifty.com/shelter-less/doc/doc_idx.html)

<sup>15</sup> According to ibid. p.146.

<sup>16</sup> The New Homeless Law: Part I, Art. 3, Para 1, 2; Part II, Art. 8, Para 2, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Chi’i seikatsu ikô shien jigyô* in Japanese.

These measures are mainly directed toward those homeless, who are willing and whom the city authorities find potentially able to enter community life. It is, however, questionable whether many of the homeless have a chance to become such an applicant. It has also been noted that the program attracts homeless from many other places to the places where the applicants are interviewed and chosen (ibid.). The program may also create strict competition among the homeless, because at its best the program can offer housing for only less than 40 % of the Tokyo homeless, given that the numbers of the actual homeless and those whom the program could help are trustworthy.

In addition to these measures the Tokyo city authorities were about to take a harder line on the homeless living in public places. This includes the evacuation of the homeless from several public places, and denying the entry to these places from the homeless altogether. (Ibid.) If this kind of policy is strictly carried out, it may cause serious deterioration of the security and survival of many homeless living in Tokyo. After the aforementioned measures were exposed in the media, many petitions and protests emerged.

However, the official statistics of the TMG, would seem to show that the plan is working. According to the TMG's summer 2006 homeless survey<sup>18</sup>, which covered all the 23 wards of Tokyo, the number of homeless people in Tokyo has dropped to 3,670. This was about 600 less than in the previous year, and almost 2,000 less than in 2003. Actually, the official number got below 4,000 the first time in 9 years. TMG sees this as an outcome of the new policies, especially of the Self-Reliance and Support System and its Entry to Local Community Program.

The Entry to Local Community Program enables the homeless to move into rental apartments, which have a fixed (and probably subsidised) rent of 3,000 yen per month. The homeless can live in the subsidised apartment for two years, after which period they are supposed to continue living on their own. In practice this means that one must get a job, or become eligible for social security. Many people, including many homeless, have suspicions about the working of the plan. They feel most suspicious about the fact, that the homeless who move into the 3,000 yen rental apartments would be able to pay higher rents

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<sup>18</sup> Tōkyō-to fukushi hoken kyoku, 2006a.

after the two year period. Besides this, many homeless have mixed feelings about the self-dependence centers, which they see, more or less, in the same light as the normal shelters.<sup>19</sup>

Without doubt the decrease in the official number of Tokyo homeless has been affected by the Self-Reliance and Support System. However, the methodology of the survey poses the biggest question mark: did the counts really take place only in the daytime, as it was stated in the press-release of the survey? If this is the case, the survey is highly unreliable. It is also somewhat unspecified, because the observation places were not mentioned. It would be interesting to know how many homeless there were in Ueno Park, for example.<sup>20</sup> If we take Taito Ward as an example, the survey reports the total number of 649 homeless people in the whole Taito area. On one rainy night I counted 85 homeless people sleeping in the immediate vicinity of the Ueno Station only. On another night I counted almost 100 homeless sleeping under the roof of Iroha Arcade shopping mall in San'ya. None of these homeless possessed a shack or a tent, and presumably many of them changed their sleeping place on a nightly basis, at least in Ueno.<sup>21</sup>

Why would the daytime-only observations be unreliable? Only some of the homeless spend their daytime around their normal sleeping place. Some of them actually sleep during the day and are active at night. I'm not suggesting that a great number of homeless were excluded from the counts for this reason, but it may have had some effect on the survey. However, it is even more important to note that many homeless change place all the time. A great number of homeless also go to *takidashi* (food handouts), and other gatherings in the daytime. They may visit institutions or go to work. If the survey was made in each place in the daytime for one day only, and the estimate only by eye, there is a huge potential for error. If this was the case I would, nevertheless, question the outcome.

There is no classification according to the exact places where the survey was carried out, but there is a classification by the 23 wards of Tokyo.<sup>22</sup> The numbers are interesting: the

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<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Midnight Homeless Blue blog (b); This, however, may not represent every homeless individual's opinion. I have personally heard only few people's opinion.

<sup>20</sup> This information may well be available somewhere.

<sup>21</sup> Naturally on a rainy day the homeless sought their way to the covered areas if possible.

<sup>22</sup> Tōkyō-to fukushi hoken kyoku, 2006b.

greatest drop was in Shibuya Ward, from 615 homeless in 2005 to 343 in 2006. In Shinjuku Ward the drop was from 463 to 372. In proportion the biggest drop besides Shibuya was in Toshima Ward, from 211 to 133. There was also a notable decrease in the number of the homeless in Chûo Ward, Minato Ward, and in Ôta Ward. In Taito Ward, where the amount of the homeless was biggest in Tokyo in 2005, the drop was only about 40 people, from 686 to 649. In other wards the drop was not significant. In some wards the number actually rose. The sharpest increases were in Chiyoda Ward from 116 to 130, and in Sumida Ward from 605 to 638.

If the self-support system caused the decrease in some areas, what caused the increase in some other areas? Are the new homeless in those areas literally new homeless, or maybe migrating homeless from other areas? In any case, if the self-support system is succeeding in some areas, why could it not also work in other areas? Time will tell how the plan will work on a long-term basis.

## 2.2 Structural Reasons for Homelessness in Japan

Numerous writings, both in English and Japanese, have dealt with the structural reasons for the rise of homelessness in Japan since the beginning of the 1990s. Also some English sources have described the homelessness in Japan before the sharp increase in the 1990s. I have gone through only English sources, because Japanese sources are too numerous, and it is difficult to know where to start from without any guidance. Besides, the purpose of this master's thesis is not to examine closely either the history of homelessness in Japan or the structural reasons behind the phenomenon.

The best English account of the post-war history of the Japanese homelessness I have found is by Hasegawa Miki (2006). Among other things, Hasegawa briefly examines the whole time-span from the end of the Second World War, when the homelessness in Japan reached peak numbers due to the events of war, to recent times. Hasegawa has used many

Japanese sources<sup>23</sup>, and he takes into account social and economical factors, the effects of globalization, government policies, as well as the effect of construction industry and *yoseba*<sup>24</sup>. (Hasegawa, 2006 pp.23-52.) Understanding the effect of construction industry and *yoseba* as well as the existence of so-called *doya-gai*<sup>25</sup> is essential in understanding the nature and the history of Japanese homelessness.

Homelessness in the immediate post-war era differed fundamentally from the later periods. It was mainly caused by the wide destruction of the housing stock due to the bombings during the war, not to mention the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In big cities the loss of housing stock varied from 50 to 80 percent [Matsuo, 1975; in Hasegawa, 2006 p.23]. Hasegawa shows from the old statistics [Ueno, 1958; in Hasegawa, 2006 p.24] that immediately after the war more than 400,000 households were staying in air-raid shelters and self-made shacks. Allegedly many others were literally living on the streets (Hasegawa, 2006 p.24).

The Japanese Government responded to the problem by creating so-called “relief housing units”, welfare measures (preparation of emergency relief, enactment of the Livelihood Protection Law in 1946, and placement of homeless people in welfare facilities), and promoting employment. Hasegawa claims that the literature which refers to these measures indicates that they were largely inadequate. The government was naturally in a difficult economic situation at the time, but it also employed policies, which among other things delayed economic recovery, and thus also relief of the situation of the homeless. Many

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<sup>23</sup> Hasegawa quotes e.g. Iwata Masami’s book *Sengo shakai fukushi no tenkai to dai-toshi saiteihen* (Social Welfare and the Urban Underclass in Postwar Japan) from 1995, and Umezawa Ka’ichirô’s book *Hômuresu no genjô to sono jûtaku seisaku no kadai: Sandai kan’i shukusho misshû chi’iki wo chûshin ni shite* (The Current Condition of the Homeless and Housing Policy Issues: A Case of the Three Largest Flophouse Quarters) also from 1995.

<sup>24</sup> *Yoseba* (literally “a place for gathering”; in this case I will use the Japanese term throughout the text), in its most common definition, is a place in a city where day-laborers (*hiyatoi rôdôsha*) gather to seek work opportunities. The biggest and most famous *yoseba* are Kamagasaki in Osaka, San’ya in Tokyo, and Kotobuki in Yokohama. In connection with each of these three big *yoseba* is *doya-gai* (flophouse district), where the day-laborers have been able to find accommodation (Gill, 2001a p.120; Hester, 1991 p.5). Other sources give divergent information about the connection of *yoseba* and *doya-gai* (de Bary, 1974 p.83; Fowler, 1996 pp.11, 240). Generally the work offered in *yoseba* has been either construction work or stowing work at the docks. *Yoseba* can also be understood as a life-style of the day-laborers (Hester, 1991 pp.4-6).

<sup>25</sup> See the previous note.

homeless were left to survive on their own doing different kinds of “petty work”<sup>26</sup>, including street vending and rag picking. (Hasegawa, 2006 pp.24-27.)

However, the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950 helped to start the economic recovery. Later in the mid-1950s Japan entered into the period of high economic growth, which continued until the first oil crisis in 1973. At this time the employment rose rapidly and helped to alleviate the homelessness problem, but one of the alleviating factors was also the government’s policy to create housing on a large scale. There was also a separate public housing program for low-income households started in 1951. These policies helped both the high and low-income households in housing matters. The social welfare programs for the badly-off were developed further. (Hasegawa, 2006 pp.27-29.)

The homelessness declined substantially, but it remained sizeable until the mid-1960s. The reason for this was that the rising employment concerned mainly people working in small firms and casual workers in large firms, whose wages and employment security was lower than those of regular workers in large firms. At the same time when the homelessness was declining, the potential or risk for homelessness kept rising. Also the aforementioned public housing program was kept small-scale as most of the governmental housing policies were more generally directed to the industrial growth. Homelessness persisted also because the social welfare was inadequate to eliminate it. (Ibid. pp.29-33.)

However, in the latter part of the 1960s homelessness started to become “invisible”. Hasegawa suggests three reasons for this based on the available literature, although he notes that the process has not been followed closely. First, those who had been living on the streets moved to shacks [Iwata, 1995; in *ibid.* p.33]. Second, large and visible shantytowns were dismantled by local governments and low-priced new housing for low-income people was constructed to replace them. Third, people who refused to move to the new houses were scattered all over the city. (Ibid. p.33.)

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<sup>26</sup> Snow & Anderson (1993 p.146) have used the term “shadow work”, which they define as “[b]esides being unofficial, unenumerated work existing outside the wage labor economy, shadow work is characterized further by its highly opportunistic and innovative nature.”

During the latter part of the economic growth from the mid-1960s onwards, the day-laborers, who constituted a seminal part of all the casual workers in Japan, started to become the most vulnerable group for experiencing homelessness. The use of the homeless as workforce was institutionalized by the creation of the *yoseba* system. de Bary (1974 p.83) has stated that the first mention of “*yoseba*” as a word and an institution dates back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Japan, but he does not give further clues about its origins. Gill (2001a pp.20-22) suggests the year 1790 as the origin of the word “*yoseba*”. During the Second World War *yoseba* came to mean the forced labour camps for people brought from Korea. The camps were supervised by factions of Japanese organized crime (*yakuza*).<sup>27</sup> (Ibid. p.84.)

It was during the economic growth that *yoseba* became institutionalized as a place where the day-laborers gather in the morning to become hired for work. During the growth era many day-laborers could find jobs in steel and shipbuilding industry, coal mining, on the docks, or in the construction industry. Some of these jobs may have been more regular than others, but nevertheless they were precarious and dependent on the economical fluctuations. Later it became most common for day-laborers to get jobs on the docks, and especially in construction industry, which grew fast during the high growth period. At the same time the sub-contracting system in construction industry was developed further, and in this system the day-laborers were at the bottom.<sup>28</sup> In short, the institutionalization of the *yoseba* system meant that the day-laborers were at the bottom of the recruiting hierarchy, they were used as a bumper workforce, which meant precariousness in employment, their wages were low and their housing conditions precarious, and they were also often excluded from the social security benefits.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the 1970s homelessness remained mostly a temporal phenomenon among the day-laborer population, concentrating on the *yoseba* and *doya-gai* areas or in their close proximity. It was simply a matter of how much the day-laborers were able to get work and how much they had wealth to spend on accommodation at any given time. As it is common in construction industry, during the economic downturns there are less jobs available, and

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<sup>27</sup> As we shall see later, *yakuza* has always been connected to *yoseba* one way or another.

<sup>28</sup> For more information about the sub-contracting system, see e.g. Lambert, Funato & Poor, 1996; de Bary, 1974 pp.85-86; and Hasegawa, 2006 pp.45-46.

<sup>29</sup> These features have been discussed by e.g. Fowler, 1996; Gill, 2001a; Hasegawa 2006; Hester, 1991.

during the upturns there are more job opportunities. The fluctuations also depend on the government's schedule of public works, meaning that the worst periods for the day-laborers are between April and July, and the winter holidays in the beginning of January. In the 1970s the average age of the day-laborer population was still relatively low, which meant that they were physically more likely to survive temporary homelessness. (Hasegawa, 2006 pp.33-34.)

In the 1980s the long-term homelessness began to increase among the older day-laborers. This was due to the following structural reasons: the reorganization of sub-contracting systems in construction industry, gentrification of *yoseba* districts, and welfare restructuring. These were connected to the broader changes in the Japanese economy and society, which were affected by the beginning of the era of globalization. The construction industry boomed in the late 1980s after a relative slump in the 1970s, but the availability of work in *yoseba* decreased gradually. This was caused by the restructuring of the sub-contracting system. The system favored the now growing younger workforce and foreign workforce which could be hired elsewhere, and who were considered more cost-effective. Especially the older unskilled day-laborers, who may also have possessed other weaknesses, suffered from these changes. Globalization also helped the transition from a manufacturing to a service society. As the newcomers to *yoseba* were no longer young but elderly people from other industries wanting to try their luck in *yoseba*, the attraction of *yoseba* for the recruiters of the workforce declined further. (Ibid. pp.34, 36-51.)

The gentrification of *yoseba* districts meant tearing down or improvement of the *doya-gai* and other low-income housing. Sometimes these were not replaced by other forms of housing but by office-space for the growing needs of domestic and foreign firms. The improvements of flophouses had already started in the 1970s, but this trend intensified in the 1980s.<sup>30</sup> Many of the flophouses were improved to such a level that the rent became too high for many day-laborers. The gentrification of other kind of low-income housing in the 1980s was crucial to the rise of homelessness later in the 1990s. (Ibid. pp.36, 40, 42.)

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<sup>30</sup> This was also noted by Fowler (1996 pp.46-47); see also Hester, 1991 p.18.



Globalization-related deregulation and privatization policies also affected public programs for low-income people.<sup>31</sup> Welfare was restructured in a way that it further caused problems for the *yoseba* population. Nakasone administration (1982-1987) restricted provision of public assistance and unemployment insurance benefits for day-laborers, who had registered in public labor exchanges. The unemployment insurance program required the day-laborers to collect a certain amount of stamps in a book called *shiro techô* (white notebook) from the employers in a two-month period, to be entitled to receive the unemployment dole.<sup>32</sup> Collecting enough stamps has posed many day-laborers a problem, and the unregistered are not entitled to any unemployment benefits. The program was further restricted, when the government began to require a residential card from the applicants in 1988. The forms and sums of public assistance have varied in different cities, but, nevertheless, it has also been subject to cuts many times in the 1980s. (Hasegawa, 2006 pp.50-51.)

All these factors have paved the way for the rapid increase in the number of the homeless in the 1990s, when the recession hit Japan. The economic downturn affected the construction industry, and there was even less need for day-laborers, especially for aged and unskilled ones. The supply of workforce kept rising, because the downturn affected other industries as well, and many people who had been working on the other industries came to try their luck in *yoseba*. The gentrification process, which had resulted in the shrinking of low-income housing stock, meant that there was even less accommodation available for the now growing number of low-income people. Finally, the welfare practices were not changed to meet the growing demand in the 1990s, though the economic situation was completely different. There emerged more and more people, who did not meet the requirements for basic welfare<sup>33</sup>, and there were ever less job opportunities for those who had registered to the unemployment insurance program for the day-laborers.

As already mentioned, the number of the homeless began to rise even faster after the recession launched by the Asian currency crisis in 1997. Until the recent developments the

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<sup>31</sup> Presumably public (or social) housing was also affected by this.

<sup>32</sup> Fowler (1996 p.242): “*Shiro techô*. “White Card.” A popular appellation for *hiyatoi rôdô hihokensha techô*, or longbook for insured day laborers. Used by day laborers registered with a municipal government to obtain unemployment compensation.”

<sup>33</sup> The lack of physical address for one reason or another being the main cause.

number kept rising in 2000s as well. The government has taken steps in the form of New Homeless Law and successive measures, which may now have begun to alleviate the problem. Whether these measures are enough to compensate the problems caused by the globalization-related structural changes in Japanese society, and especially the gaps and restrictions in welfare, remains to be seen.

### 2.3 Japanese Terms for Homeless and General Definitions for Homelessness

Defining homelessness, or who is homeless, is always controversial. Behind the definitions there may be many motives. Different definitions may affect the understanding of the phenomenon, and they may have different consequences. As elsewhere, in Japan, too, there are different names given to the homeless in different contexts. Japan's conceptualization of homelessness e.g. in surveys also differs from the systems used in many other countries.

The official Japanese term for the homeless has varied. According to Ezawa (2002 p.81), up until 1993 the term for homeless used in public debates and in media was "*furôsha*", literally "a vagrant person", and roughly equivalent to "vagrant", and also to "hobo"<sup>34</sup>. At the same time a loanword "*hômuresu*" was used of the homeless of other countries. As homelessness became more visible during the 1990s, the term "*nojuku rôdôsha*", literally "worker who sleeps in the open", came into use. (Ibid.) Nowadays a shortened version "*nojukusha*", meaning a person who sleeps in the open, is often used in many different contexts.

According to Guzewicz (1996 p.44) the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) gave its first public report on the Tokyo homeless in the 1990s in 1995. In the report the TMG used the term "*rojô seikatsusha*", literally "person(s) living on the street", and it has continued to use this term of the Tokyo homeless in its reports ever since. At the same time, or at least from the first national survey on the homeless in 1999<sup>35</sup> one can notice that the

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<sup>34</sup> This reflects the fact, that the Japanese homeless are often associated with the day-laborers.

<sup>35</sup> Kôseirôdôshô, 1999.

Japanese government has used the term “*hômuresu*” also about the Japanese homeless already in 1999.

However, all the aforementioned terms have also been translated to mean “homeless”. One term, which is commonly used by the homeless themselves is “*aokan*”, an abbreviation from the words “*aozora*”, meaning “blue sky”, and “*kantan*”, meaning “simple” or “easy”. Another term “*pûtarô*” simply means “homeless”, but has also other meanings<sup>36</sup>. The terms “*kojiki*” and “*monogoi*” on the other hand, both mean “beggar”. Some homeless consider these expressions derogatory, and want to distance themselves from them. Some Japanese who work in homeless support organizations call the homeless “*ojiisan*”<sup>37</sup>, which means “grandfather” and “male senior-citizen”. They use this term when they speak to the homeless, but also more generally when they speak *about* the homeless. There are two more terms I have come across in everyday speech as well as in dictionaries: “*jûsho futei*” means literally “lacking an address” or “no fixed abode”, and “*ie no nai hito(bito)*” means literally “those without a home” or “homeless”. The last two terms would seem to be the most neutral ones of all the mentioned terms.<sup>38</sup>

Some of the terms and the use of the terms has created controversy. It can be argued that some of these terms do not sufficiently express the fact that the homeless have no home or access to a reasonable accommodation. It is also peculiar that the Japanese government has chosen to use the loan word “*hômuresu*” when discussing Japanese homeless, though this kind of practice is not limited to the homeless.<sup>39</sup> The variation of terms is most problematic in connection of the census and surveys of the homeless. Ezawa (2002 pp.281-283) has stated that the calculations of the TMG in the years 1995-1999 did not include those living temporarily in shelters, flophouses, or hostels. As the terminology and the methodology of the calculations of the TMG has seemingly remained more or less the same until now, it

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<sup>36</sup> It can also mean a construction worker. The Japanese Wikipedia gives interesting information in Japanese about its history, definition, and possible origins. See:

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%83%97%E3%83%BC%E3%82%BF%E3%83%AD%E3%83%BC>

<sup>37</sup> This word is used, because many of the homeless are (male) senior citizens. This word is very close to the word “*ojisan*”, which means a middle-aged man, and could be understood differently.

<sup>38</sup> Jim Breen’s internet dictionary (<http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html>) gives some additional terms. See also Gill’s (2001a pp.126-133) discussion on narrow and broad definitions of homelessness and the Japanese homeless.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. “*furiitaa*”, which is an abbreviation of the two loan words “*furi*” and “*arubaito*”, and which means young part-time workers, who have become to present a new social group in Japan. The image of *furiitaa* of course differs from that of homeless.

could be concluded that only those, who are living either on the streets (*rojô seikatsusha*) or otherwise in the open, or in self-built *koya* (shacks) are included in the statistics. Those in temporary accommodation are not counted as homeless. But do they have a home? Next I will take a closer look on the definitions of homelessness in some other countries.

One of the most well-known definitions of homelessness comes from Rossi. Rossi, who studied the American homeless in the 1980s, defines as *literal homeless* those, who do not have a regular or customary access to a normal owned or rental apartment, or who do not belong to any household. In this group Rossi includes also those, who live in trailers or in rental rooms in e.g. hostels or flophouses. Rossi uses the term *uncommon accommodation* by which he means places, which are not meant for accommodation. Those living in such conditions are considered literal homeless. Those staying in shelters also belong to the group of literal homeless. In addition, Rossi gives another definition for those, who are *insecurely housed*. This group includes all those who live in inadequate conditions, and who risk losing this accommodation. Rossi emphasizes that these conditions are causes of extreme poverty. (Rossi, 1987 pp.8-13, 47-48.)

Rossi's definition is widely used, but it leaves some room for speculation. In The United States the "general definition of a homeless individual", still in force in 1999, covers:

- (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is—
  - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  - (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Title 42 – The Public Health and Welfare. Chapter 119 - McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Subchapter I. Section 11302. General Definition of Homeless Individual.

In Europe, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA<sup>41</sup>) has developed the so-called ETHOS (European Typology for Data Collection on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion). According to the latest edition:

Having a home can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (*physical domain*); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (*social domain*) and having a legal title to occupation (*legal domain*). This leads to the 4 main concepts of Rooflessness, Houselessness, Insecure Housing and Inadequate Housing all of which can be taken to indicate *the absence of a home*. ETHOS therefore classifies people who are homeless according to their living or “home” situation. These conceptual categories are divided into 13 operational categories that can be used for different policy purposes such as mapping of the problem of homelessness, developing, monitoring and evaluating policies.<sup>42</sup>

This is also presented in the table 1.

Based on the information that has been given about the definitions for the Japanese homeless in the official governmental and municipal surveys and censuses, the official definition of homeless used in Japan includes only one operational category, or possibly three in maximum, out of 13 operational categories as presented in the ETHOS. These categories are (1) people living rough; (2) people staying in night shelters; and (3) people in accommodation for the homeless. The first two operational categories are considered to belong to the conceptual category of “rooflessness”, while the third is in the category of “houselessness”. It can be concluded that the official Japanese definition of homelessness, as presented in surveys and censuses, is extremely narrow compared to definitions used in many other developed countries.

Hasegawa gives information, that there have been few exceptions to this formal definition in Japan. A group of housing advocates, called Nihon Jûtaku Kaigi, used United Nations

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<sup>41</sup> FEANTSA abbreviation comes from the French version of the name (la Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri).

<sup>42</sup> As presented by FEANTSA (2006) in the 2006 edition of ETHOS. The italics appear in the original text.

Table 1:

Conceptual Category		Operational Category		Generic Definition
<b>ROOFLESS</b>	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Rough Sleeping (no access to 24-hour accommodation) / No abode
	2	People staying in a night shelter	2.1	Overnight shelter
<b>HOUSELESS</b>	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Homeless hostel
			3.2	Temporary Accommodation
	4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation
	5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1	Temporary accommodation / reception centres (asylum)
			5.2	Migrant workers accommodation
	6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1	Penal institutions
			6.2	Medical institutions
7	People receiving support (due to homelessness)	7.1	Residential care for homeless people	
		7.2	Supported accommodation	
		7.3	Transitional accommodation with support	
		7.4	Accommodation with support	
<b>INSECURE</b>	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1	Temporarily with family/friends
			8.2	No legal (sub)tenancy
			8.3	Illegal occupation of building
8.4			Illegal occupation of land	
9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1	Legal orders enforced (rented)	
		9.2	Re-possession orders (owned)	
10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents of domestic violence	
<b>INADEQUATE</b>	11	People living in temporary / non-standard structures	11.1	Mobile home / caravan
			11.2	Non-standard building
			11.3	Temporary structure
	12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Unfit for habitation (under national legislation; occupied)
	13	People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding

(FEANTSA 2006.)

guidelines to define the homeless in 1988 as “those who are without stable housing and living in places which cannot be called housing.” Some other researchers have also used broader definitions. According to Hasegawa, the censuses have always been based on simple headcount, which does not involve probability sampling. (Hasegawa, 2006 pp.147-148.) As noted earlier, the New Homeless Law mentions briefly also those, who are at risk of becoming homeless, and also discusses those homeless, who live in temporary shelters. At the same time, the law continues to define homeless as those, “who illegally live and lead daily lives in such facilities as city parks, riversides, roads, railway stations, etc.”<sup>43</sup>

One could question e.g. the ETHOS definition of the homeless on grounds that it may be applicable only to (some) EU countries. It is also questionable, whether living in a mobile

<sup>43</sup> The New Homeless Law: Chapter I, Art 2 & 3, Para 1 [2]; and Chapter II, Art 8, Para 2 [2] and [3].

home or in another kind of “inadequate housing,” is actually considered homelessness by everyone.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, many European countries count all categories in the ETHOS definition as homeless. The difference to the definition used in Japan is remarkable. This may lead to drastic differences in the statistics of the homeless in different countries, and make the statistics practically incomparable. The bottom line is that even if the Japanese government or municipal governments are aware of the precariously housed or other subgroups in need of housing, they do not often discuss the problem in connection with homelessness.

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<sup>44</sup> ETHOS definition does not claim that “inadequate housing” is actual “homelessness”, but it suggests that it can be. The US definition does not cover “inadequate housing” nor many other categories in the ETHOS definition, but it is also significantly broader than the Japanese official definition.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Social relativism is a compound of two concepts, social preoccupation and interactional relativism. Social preoccupation and interactional relativism “imply each other, the one being conducive to the other” (Lebra, 1976 p.9). About social preoccupation Lebra argues that “[a]mong the different kinds of things people can relate to, the Japanese seem most sensitized to “social” objects, namely other human beings, *hito*...” (ibid. p.2). Lebra continues that whenever the Japanese go through emotions, they tend to be preoccupied with their relationships to some *hito* (ibid.). The objects of social preoccupation can be either social, physical, or symbolic (ibid. p.3)<sup>45</sup>.

According to Lebra, especially for the Japanese, social preoccupation is present in every relationship between a human and other objects, and the human relationships are the ones that matter the most. Lebra does not note here that the situations can vary a lot, though she later examines the different domains of situational interaction (and cross-situational interaction), dividing the forms of behavior to intimate, ritual, and anomic (ibid. pp.110-136). But I argue that someone can be angry at himself or treasure a physical object for purely selfish reasons. Someone can also treasure one’s own well-being over a social relationship. In numerous situations social preoccupation could be almost non-existent. An example of this could be the subculture of *otaku*. *Otaku*, in its slang form, means people who are obsessed with their hobbies, and this obsession may override their social relationships in importance. One must realize that this kind of behavior is still often seen as somewhat deviant<sup>46</sup>, and in Lebra’s terms it could be considered as anomic. I only refer here to interaction, which can be also pursued by selfish reasons, not only by social relativism. I do not refer to individual action, as I did not study this on the field.

According to Lebra, interactional relativism means that “an actor acts in a certain way... [as] a result of interaction and mutual influence between himself and his object”. The opposite to “interactional relativism” is “unilateral determinism”, in which action would not be influenced by interaction at all, but by some external force. (Ibid. pp.7-8.) Lebra

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<sup>45</sup> Lebra says that this follows Talcott Parsons’ functionalism.

<sup>46</sup> Though not necessarily in a negative way, especially among the younger people.



emphasizes that these are ideal types, but concludes that interactional relativism is more Japanese in style, whereas unilateral determinism is closer to the “traditional western culture”. She adds, that also in Japan the interactional relativism is closer to the *traditional* Japanese culture. (Ibid. p.8.)

It is problematic to state that interactional relativism would be more common in Japan than in other countries.<sup>47</sup> It is safer to hypothesize that interactional relativism is a common principle behind many Japanese conventions. One should not, however, fail to take into consideration, that in some situations unilateral determinism can be a more determining principle. There is variation from one context to another as well as from one individual to another.

Ultimately Lebra’s concept of social relativism overlaps some aspects of sociological concepts of “social action” and “social interaction”, which form the basis of social relations, which in turn form the basis for greater social complexes. However, Lebra’s definition of social relativism implies that it is considerate towards other people’s feelings, whereas in social actions or in social interaction there is no such a requirement. Weber differentiated social actions in four groups: rational actions, instrumental actions, affectional actions, and traditional actions<sup>48</sup>. Of these, only affectional actions can resemble social relativism, but the actions can also be limited to be based on actor’s own feelings. In the field of sociology socially relative behavior represents only one form of social interaction and social relations.

A question arises, what kind of meaning the Japanese attach to their social actions in the context of Lebra’s theory. In the view of symbolic interactionism, as stated by Blumer (1969), people act toward things that are meaningful to them, they derive the meaning from social interaction with other people, and the meanings are handled and modified in the process. Lebra’s abstractions of social relativism does not imply this kind of reconstruction. It would seem that the Japanese simply react to social actions in a predetermined way, and

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<sup>47</sup> Lebra often compares Japan to the “Western” countries. Obviously the other “Western countries” do not constitute an uniform or homogenous group, which could easily be compared to Japan.

<sup>48</sup> This information comes from Wikipedia, which quotes Ferrante, J. 2005. *Sociology: A Global Perspective* Thomson Wadsworth: p.21. One could of course argue that it may be rational or instrumental to consider other people’s feelings when acting, but what would then be the determining factor?

that the meanings would be and stay the same to everyone. However, Lebra does not deny this possibility, as she also discusses the possibility of differences between the individuals and the possibility of social change (Lebra, 1976 pp.248-258).

How does social relativism reproduce itself in Japanese society? Lebra suggests the process of (early) socialization for an answer. She does not really consider reasons, how and why throughout the history has social relativism been developed inside the Japanese society. Nevertheless, social relativism can be at work in the society. Though we do not know all the reasons for its development and reproduction, we can suppose that it has developed and it continues to be reproduced by the human agencies<sup>49</sup> in the society. My purpose is to test how much social relativism is at work among the homeless whose life I studied and at the same time I use the concept to thematize and analyze the daily life of the homeless, as well. Obviously, social relativism and its antithesis “anomic behavior” are not adequate concepts to explain the behavior of the homeless in its entirety. Lebra has been criticized about seeing the subjects as “actors of roles” instead of “agents”, who may have diverse motives behind their actions.<sup>50</sup> These ways of behavior require further thinking.

Lebra claims that the Japanese cosmology, morality, authority, emotions, and esthetic sensibility are all socially relative (ibid. p.9). Of these only cosmological, moral, and emotional issues are the ones that I can test however superficially with my data. I will go through these shortly.

According to Lebra, in cosmological issues the Japanese do not normally make clear difference between this world and the other world. Neither do they keep human superior to other animals. There is affinity between human and lower forms of life. (Ibid. p.10.) I would suggest some contradictions or ambiguities here: At least some Japanese speak of *kono yo* (this world) and *ano yo* (other world), which implies a differentiation between this and the other world.<sup>51</sup> If one is a devout practitioner of e.g. Jôdô Shû Buddhism (“Pure Land School Buddhism”), in which the goal is to be born in the “Pure Land” by a repetitive

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<sup>49</sup> This comes close to the principles presented in Giddens’ theory of structuration.

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Borovoy, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> I interviewed one homeless, who talked about *ano yo*. Old people talk about *kono yo* and *ano yo* in Japanese institutions for elderly. See e.g. Bethel D.L. 1992: p.129.

recitation of Amida Buddha's name, one is bound to make some kind of differentiation.<sup>52</sup> Religious feelings and age may have an influence on the differentiation. Of course, *how* clear is this difference could be a matter of controversy. Affinity between human beings and lower forms of life is one of the central principles in Buddhism and animism, common religious movements in Japan, but other kinds of affinity also exist. However, expressions/feelings of affinity between humans and other forms of life are felt and expressed all over the world. They are not necessarily based on clear religious influence. One example of this are the worldwide organizations supporting animal rights. Nonetheless, this is often related to cosmological issues. This may be the case in modern Japan, as well. On the other hand, modern Japan has often acted in a very *laissez-faire* way toward environmental issues, which shows that the affinity is both relative and contextual, and the whole principle of "affinity" may be in transition.

Many homeless are religious. The religions vary: some of them are Buddhist<sup>53</sup>, some are Christian, some of them more devout than others. But, how much do their religious attitudes reflect socially relative aspects? One could argue that the level of social relativism in a religion depends on the nature of the religion as well as on the nature of practitioner.

In morality social relativism means also changeability, but this does not necessarily mean "inscrutability or unreliability"—actually the very opposite may be the case. Lebra argues that—like George DeVos [1960]—that for the Japanese "guilt seems to stem at least in part from one's empathetic feelings for the pain and sacrifice suffered by another person." Lebra adds to this that the guilt seems to intensify "when another persons suffering is understood as due to one's action or as intended to benefit one." (Lebra 1976, pp.12-14.) Here Lebra's view is different from that of Ruth Benedict, who saw Japanese guilt as "shame".

It may be that that Benedict could not see the above mentioned reasons for Japanese guilt. However, it would not be correct to assume that some kind of general Western ethics exist based on only one religion or ideology. The Western people may also feel guilt based on

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<sup>52</sup> Though one could claim that in Buddhism the enlightenment presupposes understanding that there is no differentiation between this world and other world!

<sup>53</sup> There are numerous Buddhist sects, which may differ a lot from each other.

the same reasons as above. These reasons are based on “empathy”, which Lebra also examines carefully in her book. Conscience is not mentioned by Lebra. In many Western countries conscience can be attached to many cosmologies, but it is also generally thought of as a basic human quality. Ideologies and religions vary, but even the most socially darwinist individuals surely may feel empathy. Individuals suffering from mental illness may make an exception to this, of course.

The guilt based on *on*<sup>54</sup> may indeed be more unique to the Japanese only, and it could be more relevant in the case of the homeless. The homeless may feel empathy towards the other homeless, who may do worse than them. Some of the homeless, though most probably a minority, may even pity the domiciled, who may have to work hard every day. More often it is probably *vice versa*, the domiciled pitying the homeless. *If* they do pity the homeless in the first place. The guilt based on *on* among the homeless would be an interesting hypothesis, although I did not include this aspect in my studies.

Lebra argues that in the West rational thinking and acting has been seen different from emotions and emotional irrationalism, but that in Japan rationality and emotionality are not “mutually exclusive” (ibid. p.19). She continues by explaining that there is a difference also in the concept of “selfhood”, and quotes Kawai Hayao [1972; in ibid.]: “Ego function for the Japanese...is based upon the dynamic interplay between intuition and sensation, whereas that for Westerners is built upon the dynamic interrelation between thought and emotion.” How about the famous concepts *giri* and *ninjô*? Do not they represent rationality and emotionality respectively, and are not they mutually exclusive in some situations? In any case, it may be difficult for me to analyze the homeless’ emotions from my data.

I will next concentrate on the aspects of social relativism. Lebra presents five main aspects, or normative components (as she calls them): *belongingness*, *empathy*, *dependency*, *occupying the proper place*, and *reciprocity*. Each of these are divided into more sophisticated and specific concepts. There are also three, or four, domains of situational interaction: intimate, ritual, anomic, and one unnamed which is unlikely, yet possible. In my analysis of the social interaction of the homeless that will follow, I will use these

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<sup>54</sup> *On* could be translated as “favor”. E.g. one who has received *on* may have feelings of guilt in case one can not return a favor. This is examined more thoroughly in the analysis.

aspects as a basis of the analysis. I argue, that these aspects are not only tied to suggested social relativism in Japanese culture, but rather that they can be universal aspects of social interaction anywhere.

In Lebra's framework, so called "pattern persistence" is affected by "situational fluctuation" (ibid. pp.110-111). Though Lebra has been criticized of using only "semantic and pragmatic definitions of a concept" that "alone cannot predict or fully capture the variety and depth of individual experience" (Shimizu, 2001 p.2), her theory leaves room for other options, as she takes e.g. the situational fluctuation into account. The aforementioned normative components, "normative"<sup>55</sup> patterns, or aspects of social relativism present an "internalized pattern of behavior that *most*<sup>56</sup> Japanese follow" (Lebra, 1976 p.110). One could add, that most Japanese follow this pattern in many situations, but not all situations. According to Lebra, this pattern has persisted over time and across situations, meaning that a normative, culturally patterned value may be repressed in one relationship and manifested in another. Lebra calls this continuum "persistence or consistency of a behavioral pattern" or "cultural entrapment". The argument is based on the fundamental principles of the culture dominated by social relativism, simply put that dispensing one value affects another. According to Lebra, behavioral patterns and cultural entrapment will not disappear as long as "socially anchored security holds primacy over other values." (Ibid. p.110-111.)

However, the Japanese also "show sensitivity to situational change and readiness for situational adjustment...This is consistent with the ethos of social relativism, which fosters sensitivity to social situations." Special situations require corresponding behavior by the participants. Kirkup [1970; in ibid. p.111] has called this "a sense of occasion." Commonly this has also been identified as "situation ethic" or "situationalism". Lebra argues that "[i]t would be dangerous...to infer a lack of moral integrity in the situational adaptability, and that this is only a part of Japanese behavior, often taking place at a surface level or for a reason that does not bear on ethics." (Ibid.)

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<sup>55</sup> Quotes are Lebra's.

<sup>56</sup> Emphasis is mine.

Goffman has examined the social interaction in America in the 1960s, but many of his findings are still universally applicable. Interaction can be considered in two steps: *unfocused interaction* and *focused interaction*. Unfocused interaction has “largely to do with the management of sheer and mere copresence.” In focused interaction the participants typically have a single focus of attention. (Goffman, 1963 p.24.) In the aforementioned sense, social relativism—especially in ritual and intimate situations—can be compared to Goffman’s situational proprieties, social values and norms concerning the involvement, which guide an actor and his or her interaction in a social situation. Goffman, though he gives countless descriptions of imaginable social interaction, does not specify these situational proprieties. This implicitly suggests that these can be slightly different in every situation. (Ibid. 1963 pp.193-197.)<sup>57</sup> An opposite to situational proprieties are situational improprieties (ibid. pp. 216-241), which can be present in anomic situations as well as in ritual and intimate situations where socially aggressive behavior may surface. In the first situation the improprieties may be unintentional, in the latter situations intentional. Another dimension that affects the interaction and the tactics used in it, are the roles people take on “front and regions”, respectively (Goffman 1959). These regions and according behavior can also be compared to Lebra’s situational domains of interaction.

Giddens continues from Goffman’s theory, and he speaks of “tact”—a latent conceptual agreement among participants in interaction contexts—instead of proprieties. Giddens also argues, that “[w]hile the content of what counts as ‘being tactful’ may vary widely, the significance of tact in otherwise very different societies or cultures is impossible to dispute.” (Giddens, 1984 p.75.) Both see this as a result of desire for “ontological security”, though Goffman does not use the exact word. Giddens leaves more room for the subtlety of human actors and the forms of interaction, but the differences between Goffman’s and Giddens’ ideas would require a study on its own.

However, Giddens offers valuable principles which represent his structuration theory. I have summarized some of them here, because I have tried to follow the principles in my own study: The human actors are knowledgeable agents, and their knowledge is also

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<sup>57</sup> Actually Goffman favored microsociological approach and was not concerned of macrosociology, but Giddens suggests that by doing this he failed to see the possibilities of macrosociology, as the “advocates of macrosociology” väheksyivät microsociology. Giddens sees this as unnecessary and unhealthy confrontation. (Giddens, 1984 p.139.)

embedded in practical consciousness, which the actors cannot always describe discursively. One must also take the unconscious, unacknowledged conditions, and unintended consequences into the account. These may also affect the social reproduction; Day-to-day life of the actors is formed from “paths traced through time-space.” These involve routines, which sustain the ontological security; The context include “the time-space boundaries”, the copresence of actors, and the “awareness and use of these phenomena reflexively to influence or control the flow of interaction.”; The study of the constitution of social identities (and roles), the effects of the structural principles of society, and the influence of power are also essential in the structuration theory. (Giddens, 1984 pp.281-284.) One of the most fundamental principles in structuration theory is the principle of “duality of structure”. According to it, a structure is not “external” to individuals, but it is reproduced in the day-to-day lives of human agents, and it should not be equated with “constraint”, but it is always constraining and enabling (ibid. 25-28).

#### 4. Ethnographical Fieldwork

Between August 21<sup>st</sup> and September 31<sup>st</sup> of 2003 I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in roughly two different areas in three separate and loosely knit communities. First, for about two weeks I observed the life of a group of homeless who were staying nearby the Ueno JR station, and who had many activities in the surrounding areas. The group was very mobile, and because of that I also travelled around and did ethnographic study in other places, some of them relatively far from the station. After this I changed my place of study to old San'ya, which is nowadays roughly divided between two wards and three towns: Minami-senju in the north, which is part of Arakawa Ward, Kiyokawa in the east and Nihonzutsumi in the west are part of Taito Ward. In San'ya I first observed the homeless who came from nearby areas to the local homeless support organization. Later I observed another loosely knit community in Tamahime Park in Kiyokawa.<sup>58</sup> I chose these particular places for my study for three obvious reasons. The first reason was that the places were relatively close to each other, and to my place of residence in Okachimachi. This made the travelling between the places fast, convenient, and cheap, as I could also use a bicycle. The second reason was that though these places were not far from each other, the atmosphere and the characteristics of homelessness in these places differed greatly from each other. The third reason was that I accessed the homeless people there relatively easily quite instantly. Naturally these factors must be taken into account in extrapolations and comparisons.

The method I used on the field resembled a known method called “participant observation”. I did informal interviews and direct observation, participated in the life of the groups, had collective discussions, and became kind of “buddies” with many of the informants.<sup>59</sup> Spradley (1980) aimed at systematizing “participant observation” as an ethnographic method in his book of the same name. My “participant observation” differs greatly from Spradley’s version, but there are also many congruencies. Spradley defined ethnographic analysis as a “search for the parts of a culture, the relationships among the parts, and their

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<sup>58</sup> The simplified maps of both Ueno and San'ya can be found in the appendix section. Appendix 2 is the map of Ueno and the Appendix 4 is the map of San'ya.

<sup>59</sup> About this and the associated “buddy-researcher” strategy see e.g. Snow & Anderson, 1993 pp.24–26.



relationships to the whole” (ibid. p.116). I did not have this thought clearly in my mind, when I was carrying out my fieldwork, but I could easily find examples of these parts and relationships in my data afterwards. In my analysis I think of Lebra’s aspects of social relativism as the “parts of a culture.” I am trying to search for these in my data, but I also leave room for other findings, which may not be compatible with Lebra’s findings.

On the field I tried to record my observations as thoroughly as possible, trying to include both the behavior and the context in the notes. This approach was inspired by Geertz’s (1973 p.9) method called “thick description”. The basic principle is that to understand the meaning of the observed behavior, one must also understand its context. I tried to keep this in mind both in the field and in the analysis of the data I collected.

I am aware that my own version of “participant observation” on the field had many shortcomings, but this was the first time I carried out field work. In some cases the interviews were tape-recorded, but mostly they were just written down and completed afterwards. Sometimes this may have lead to a distortion or loss of information, and thus it may have also affected the interpretation. The same goes with the other observed data, as the field notes were originally recorded partly during the observation, and partly afterwards. I have transcribed most of my field notes after over one year they were recorded. In the quotes of my own field notes there are commentaries in square brackets. The commentaries have been added during the transcription. These factors may have caused further losses and distortions. According to Geertz (ibid. p.9): “[What] we call our data, are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to.” I have also tried to follow this principle in my analysis.

It must be noted that my observations may only have been valid during these certain periods of time that they were made. Most significantly, most of these observations were made during the early autumn, when it was still quite warm. During the coldest time of the year in the January and February the situation differs greatly. Unfortunately, I did not have an opportunity to make observations then.<sup>60</sup> I, however, strongly believe that many of these observations have implications that are universally applicable.

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<sup>60</sup> I have only some recollections from the December 2001 and January 2002.

In addition, on September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of 2003 I taped interviews with 14 homeless individuals, who were living on the banks of Sumida river. They were residing near two bridges, Komagata-bashi<sup>61</sup> and Sakura-bashi. I was introduced to the homeless living near Komagata-bashi by the leader of the organization that supports the homeless in the area. At the time of this introduction I was participating in “food patrols” of the organization, and this connection undoubtedly helped me to get acquainted with the homeless. However, I only interviewed these homeless about their thoughts of what kind of a place “home” is, though some of them went on talking about other things as well. I did not observe the daily life of these homeless, as I spent only from half an hour to one hour with each one of them. I will only use these interviews as a data in this study, only if I find something relevant in them. On September 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2003 I went to Adachi Ward, north of Taito and Arakawa Wards, trying to find a big *takidashi* (a food handout) I had been informed about, but ended up finding a small local one instead. This differed from other scenes in many respects. It was notable, that these homeless had not been abandoned by their local friends and maybe relatives, who came to see them and talk to them in food handout.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.1 Ethnography of Ueno<sup>63</sup>

The most eye-catching place in Tokyo’s Ueno, where one can clearly see the presence of the homeless people, is Ueno Park and its “*Buruu Tendo Machi*” (“Blue Tent Village”), an area occupied by a vast amount of blue tarpaulin tents and shacks covered by tarpaulin. Most of the homeless there lead a seemingly organized life. Ueno Park has a long history of being a place of residence for the homeless, as are many other places along the JR Yamanote train line.<sup>64</sup> I, however, felt that the park was too big and complex for me to

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<sup>61</sup> E.g. Sakura-bashi could be translated to Cherry Bridge, but I prefer to use the complete Japanese place names about the bridges because they are well known and widely used, and because Jewelry Bridge (curiously) does not have a Japanese translation. This goes for the bridges only.

<sup>62</sup> See Appendix 6 for field notes (pp.15-16).

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix 1 for a map of Ueno Station and its immediate surroundings.

<sup>64</sup> See e.g. Giamo, 1994 pp.10–11. In his article Giamo also quotes Dazai, who had written about the Ueno Homeless already in the late 1940s. Obviously many of these people had become homeless because of the war. In his book “San’ya Blues” Fowler (1996 p.122 ) interviewed a man who claimed he had lived in the

begin with. I had also decided to concentrate first on the homeless, who occupy other public places than parks or the river embankments. I ended up doing field research concentrating on the Ueno JR Station and its close surroundings.<sup>65</sup>

My field research in Ueno started on 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 2003. It was a Monday evening. I first descended to the subway, where I also encountered the first homeless:

Time 22.15

When I reach the Ueno Station, the subway, the first apparently homeless people I see are sleeping/taking a nap next to the Marui City entrance. They look pretty rough, but it is hard to describe them beyond that in a more specific way, because they are sleeping, often faces turned to the wall. They do not seem to be a group, but of course it is hard to tell. They all have minimum amount of baggage, and they are lying on cardboard, which they have set on the floor.<sup>66</sup>

However, there were not many homeless individuals inside the subway, or inside the station building. The reason may have been that these places were closed soon after midnight after the last trains had run. Some homeless people did spend their time inside these structures during the daytime, but they always had to leave after midnight. Besides, the homeless inside the station were not really interested in co-operation, and—as I noted later—few of them came there regularly.

I never saw any homeless being removed from inside the station structure. In the subway the occasional homeless could sit or lie on the floors or stairs in peace, as long as they did not disturb anyone physically, and they never did, when I was present. The presence of the homeless may have influenced the furnishing of the station facilities. E.g. the only stools

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Ueno Park for seven years in the 1960s. This man told Fowler that there were about thirty homeless people living in the Ueno Park in the 1960s. The man also claimed that due to the Tokyo Olympics and the growing amount of tourists coming to Tokyo the homeless living in the park were constantly under pressure to move out of there.

<sup>65</sup> Fowler (1996 p.40) continues that also the Ueno JR Station was heavily occupied by the homeless immediately after the war, and that there were forced and repeated evictions by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Later many of these men were the ones whose labor helped to build the post-war Japan.

<sup>66</sup> Ueno Station, subway, Aug 25 2003. See field notes p.1.

inside the station outside the office and restaurant spaces could be found in front of some restaurants, and these were allegedly meant for queuing to get inside the restaurants. One homeless told me once that about ten years ago there used to be more benches meant for waiting inside the station, but that the benches were removed when the amount of the homeless using them started to grow.<sup>67</sup>

I found a better place for my study at the nearby bridges outside the station building, and especially at the Jewelry Bridge, which leads from the station's front entrance to the south-east of Higashi-Ueno San-Chôme. Under the bridge lies a mixture of roads, crossings, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and a taxi station. A narrow part of the bridge is covered by the raised Shuto Expressway, which crosses the bridge, and under which most of my significant Ueno key informants spent some of their "free time" and slept at night.

Jewelry Bridge is the biggest of the bridges located on the eastern side of the Ueno Station. Even bigger is the bridge called Panda-bashi<sup>68</sup>, which leads over the row of railways, and cuts through the station connecting its eastern and western side. There were stairs and an escalator which lead from the mid-level, where the Jewelry Bridge is, to the upper level, where the Panda-bashi is. Many homeless also used Panda-bashi for sleeping during the night and for resting during the day. On the smaller bridges and platforms there were usually less homeless sleeping during the nights. When it rained at night, the covered areas around the station were naturally the most popular ones used for sleeping. During a storm people went elsewhere to look for a better shelter. Common feature was that if one wanted to sleep overnight on one of the bridges, one also had to pack one's belongings in the morning "out of sight." If one's belongings got too scattered and started to take more space, the police sometimes interfered and ordered to remove them.<sup>69</sup> On the street level the most popular place for sleeping and hanging out were the front of the Front Entrance and the front of the Shinobazu Entrance. During my field research in Ueno I concentrated mostly on Jewelry Bridge, so it is hard for me to tell more about the permanence of the other places' population. However, I noted that some individuals used to hang out every day mostly in the same places around the station.

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<sup>67</sup> "Sensei" at Jewelry Bridge, Sept 4 2003. See p.22.

<sup>68</sup> Named after a giant panda located in the nearby zoo in Ueno Park west of the station.

<sup>69</sup> I saw this happen once to "Sensei" at Jewelry Bridge, after which he explained it to me (Aug 28 2003). See p.9.

To the west of the station is Ueno Park, which contains a zoo as well as many well-known museums. Ueno Park had a large population of homeless people, and many *takidashi* (food handouts) were organized there. In the south-west there is the Keisei-Ueno Station and Shinobazu no ike -pond. Many homeless people also hung out around these places. As I visited Ueno Park in November 2005, I noticed that in certain areas there were less homeless people than in 2003. There were vacant spaces here and there demarcated by ropes. The implication was that when some homeless people had left the park, and vacated the space it was enclosed from new candidates wanting to move in. I asked one homeless man in the park, if he knew what had happened. He told me that these particular homeless had moved away from the park to nearby apartments. I did not inquire further at the time, but this was clearly connected to the aforementioned Self-Reliance and Support System and Entry to Local Community plans.<sup>70</sup>

East of the station locates the Taito Ward Office (Taitô Yakusho), at the time of the field research a controversial NPO, called Social Security Service (SSS)<sup>71</sup>, and a small park where the homeless gathered every morning for the SSS *takidashi*. In the south there is Ameyoko, a well-known bazaar-like shopping area. The bazaar is usually very crowded during the day, and as far as I know, the homeless do not really go there in the daytime. During the night some homeless go to the area for scavenging and *arumikan*, the latter meaning collecting empty aluminium cans to be sold later to the firms that accept and buy

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<sup>70</sup> See pp.7-10.

<sup>71</sup> At the time SSS was a quite recently founded NPO, whose organizational background and ways of action aroused controversy among the residents of Tokyo, the people in some other NPOs, and the homeless themselves. Due to its unpopularity SSS had already moved some of its action to the surrounding cities. SSS itself has manifested that their foremost aim is to bring the homeless closer to each other (Social Security Service, 2002). An SSS staff member told me that they concentrate on acting as a guarantor and providing accommodation for the homeless who apply for social security, to organize handouts, and to protect their customers from illegal debt collectors (field notes, pp.13-14). I heard from many sources that in exchange for organizing accommodation and protection SSS takes a cut of 100,000 yen from 160,000 yen, which is the monthly social service payment. From the same sources I heard that the provided accommodation means not single rooms or single room apartments but rooms for 6–10 persons. The SSS morning handouts however played a significant part in the daily lives of many Ueno-based homeless. The organization was often called “*esu esu*” by many.

scrap aluminium.<sup>72</sup> In the south, across the street, there is also a shopping building, where the homeless of the Jewelry Bridge often go to get water and use the toilet<sup>73</sup>.

In Ueno I mostly observed the daily life of those homeless, who slept and hung around the Jewelry Bridge regularly. I first met this “Jewelry Gang”<sup>74</sup> under the raised highway in the late evening of August 26<sup>th</sup>. I learned to know better most of the gang only a couple of days later, and some of those whom I initially met in the first evening I never met again. The most important key informants were called “Sensei”, “Nichiren” and “Cap”. The “Jewelry Gang” also included a mysterious couple, whom no-one ever called by their names, and a man called “Hawaii”, who seemed to be friendly, but who hardly ever talked to me directly. Later another man joined the company, and the couple disappeared at one point, allegedly to somewhere in Chiba, where the man had found work.

The “Jewelry Gang” lead a very orderly life, and they all had relatively fixed weekly schedules, often determined by the then fast increasing organized food handouts. They also often travelled together or in pairs to many food handouts which were organized in the Taito Ward area, and sometimes even further. They went to sleep early in the evening and woke up early in the morning. I never saw any of them too drunk not to be able to take care of themselves. The “Jewelry Gang” never seemingly quarrelled about the sleeping places under the raised highway. It seemed that everyone always found room. Occasionally some unknown homeless individual slept among them.<sup>75</sup>

In the end, the “Jewelry Gang” kept the Jewelry Bridge as their headquarters, where they returned in late afternoon or evening to socialize with each other, and to sleep. They spent the greater part of the day elsewhere, in food handouts and other kind of social occasions, and travelling to them. I assume that this kind of daily rhythm does not actually differ greatly from the mainstream society’s daily rhythm, according to which one leaves home

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<sup>72</sup> I saw this happening many times in the alleys of Ameyoko during my walks there.

<sup>73</sup> The access to public toilets is easy in Japan, and no one seemed to care about the homeless using the toilets in the station or shopping buildings. I once joined “Nichiren” on a trip to get water from the toilet of the shopping building, but I do not have anything about this in my notes.

<sup>74</sup> My own term. The word “gang” used in this connection does not imply any criminal activity.

<sup>75</sup> See Appendix 3 for a drawing of the sleeping arrangements during one night on the Jewelry Bridge. “Cap” of the Jewelry Gang also told me, that if someone accidentally took someone else’s sleeping place, the issue was clarified in the next morning. “Cap” at Jewelry Bridge, Sept 6 2003. See p.26.

for work in the morning and spends many hours away from home, just to return there later for relaxation and sleep. But there are clear differences anyway, concerning privacy and other things.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4.2 Ethnography of San'ya<sup>77</sup>

There already exist thorough descriptions of the old San'ya area,<sup>78</sup> which is nowadays officially divided between two wards and three towns.<sup>79</sup> The modern San'ya was built after the Second World War. One of the nicknames for the modern San'ya is the "Labor Town", and still a great part of the population is allegedly "labor-class". During my field work in San'ya I concentrated roughly on two gathering places of the homeless: San'yūkai, a free clinic and a support organization for the homeless, where many homeless went every day for help and advice, and where some homeless and welfare recipients went to spend most of their day; and Tamahime Park, a small but venerable park, which at the time, was a place of residence for about 10-20 homeless, and also a gathering place for those homeless, who slept elsewhere but had connections in Tamahime Park, and for some day-laborers, who had taken an occasional day off, as well as older welfare recipients, who came to the park to relax and socialize.

In addition to these two places I will shortly introduce the following places: First, the crossing of the probably two most important roads of San'ya, Meiji-dōri, which runs from east to west, and San'ya-dōri, which runs south from the crossing, is called Namida-bashi (the Bridge of Tears), despite the fact that there is no bridge any more. To the north from the crossing runs the Kotsu-dōri, which leads north to the Minami-Senju. In the north lies the Minami-Senju station, earlier frequently used by the day-laborers, who had managed to get a job. Namida-bashi separates the three towns from each other: Minami-Senju in the north, Kiyokawa in the east, and Nihonzutsumi in the west.

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<sup>76</sup> For some ethnographic description about the "Jewelry Gang" see the field notes.

<sup>77</sup> See Appendix 4 for a Map of San'ya.

<sup>78</sup> In English, see e.g. Fowler, 1996 pp.16–35; see also Gill, 2001a pp.81–91.

<sup>79</sup> See p.4. For the effect of this on the bureaucracy concerning the employment and social welfare, see e.g. Gill, 2001a pp.89–90.

On the Nihonzutsumi side, not far from the Namida-bashi crossing, is the Jōhoku Welfare Center, a central place for the San'ya day-laborers' social security and casual labor -related issues, and a place where many homeless and unemployed day-laborers also go to spend time during the day.<sup>80</sup> A couple of streets to the south is the Iroha Arcade, a covered shopping street, a regular gathering and sleeping place for the homeless. One night I rode my bicycle silently through the arcade, and counted about 100 homeless sleeping there on cardboard with minimum belongings.<sup>81</sup> At the east end of the Iroha Arcade lies the “Mammoth”, a big-sized *kōban* (police box), which was formerly located across the street on the Kiyokawa side. “Mammoth” aroused a lot of public anger and confusion when it was built for the first time<sup>82</sup>.

On the Kiyokawa side next to Tamahime Park there is the Tamahime Shrine, which is open 24 hours a day for visitors, but I never saw any homeless there when I visited it.<sup>83</sup> Some five minutes walk east from Tamahime Park there is the Tamahime Labor Agency (Tamahime Rōdō Shucchō), where one may get casual work if one is either fast or lucky or both<sup>84</sup>. The local unemployment office (*shokugyō anteisho*; often abbreviated as *shokuan*) is located in the same building. The registered day-laborers can collect their unemployment dole there. An impressive construction on its own is the Nippon Telephone and Telegraph (NTT) building, with a massive antenna on top of it. It can be seen from many directions, and it stands opposite the north-east corner of Tamahime Park. It takes another five minutes walk to the south from Tamahime Park to its “sister” park, Ishihama Park. When I

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<sup>80</sup> I visited the place once with one homeless man (“Sneaker”, Sept 15 2003). The description is on pp.47-49.

<sup>81</sup> Iroha Arcade during one night (Sept 15 2003). See p.35. The practice at Iroha Arcade is probably the same as in the Ueno Station environs, i.e. if one slept the night there one had to pack one's belongings and move elsewhere in the morning.

<sup>82</sup> See e.g. Fowler, 1996 p.42; the new building is said to be more modest than its predecessor, see *ibid.* p.228. However, it is still called “Mammoth” by many. During my span in San'ya the presence of the police was hardly threatening or pressing. I saw the police interfering only once to take away a man who was acting aggressively and threatening the others (Tamahime, Sept 19 2003. See field notes p.52.), and one day one homeless showed me the locations of some surveillance cameras around the surroundings of the police box (“Sneaker”, Sept 15 2003). See p.48.

<sup>83</sup> According Fowler (1996 p. 68) also the site of the shrine used to be a sleeping place for the homeless in the year 1990. Fowler's studies in San'ya could suggest that in the beginning of the 1990s there may have been even more occasional homelessness in San'ya than nowadays. Gill (2001a p.82) has noted that the site is also used for a “semi-annual footwear festivals”, but I have never witnessed these myself.

<sup>84</sup> See e.g. Gill, 2001a p.89.



visited it one night, it did not contain shacks or tents, but about 10-20 homeless individuals, some of them sleeping on cardboard.

I selected San'yūkai and Tamahime Park for the main targets of my field work in San'ya. My field research in San'yūkai was for the most part carried out between September 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of 2003, but I also went there occasionally throughout my stay in Tokyo, and I had also worked there as a volunteer about two times a week for five months between the beginning of September 2001 and the end of January 2002. San'yūkai is a minute's walk away from Namida-bashi on the Kiyokawa side. It opens for the public every morning at 10 a.m. and closes at 4 p.m., except on Sundays when it is closed all day.

At San'yūkai most of the homeless, who went there regularly, usually stayed in front of the building on the narrow alley socializing, drinking tea, cracking jokes and helping the San'yūkai staff. Some of the regulars were “elder statesmen” of San'ya, people, who because of their high age, were entitled to social security, and who had been guaranteed an address in Tokyo. This way they had managed to get the residence permit and access to welfare. Now they lived in *doya* or business-hotels nearby, or some other subsidized accommodation. These people, too, had experienced homelessness earlier in their life, but they did not normally choose to talk about it, at least not to me.

Many “regulars” were literally homeless, many of them living in shacks along the Sumida River. Some of the oldest and most hard-working ones were still homeless. In San'yūkai these people found many tasks to perform: I witnessed many regulars helping to open and close the place, serving tea to others and distributing clothes and other material for those in need. The older welfare recipients, on the second floor, helped to prepare food, most often *o-nigiri* (riceballs), to be later distributed to the homeless in food handouts or patrols.

The other homeless who went there were usually looking for support, either medical, social, or material. Some of them may become “regulars”, but I do not know how often. In this paper I will concentrate more on the “regulars”, who obviously perceive the organization as something more than simply a fast and faceless help-provider.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Examples of San'yūkai-related activities can be found in the field notes.

Tamahime Park<sup>86</sup> has been one of the many central places in San'ya throughout its post-war history. In the September of 2003 the place looked the same as it is usually depicted in several English written texts on the subject<sup>87</sup>. The caged playing field, which was built in the late 1970s, takes the lion share of the park area. The homeless had no access to inside the cage. I saw it being used by other people only once. There were two toilets and a drinking fountain, which were solely used by the homeless. One of the toilets stood in the centre of the northern side of the park, a drinking fountain next to it, and another drinking-fountain in the south-east corner.

I carried out intensive field research in Tamahime Park for a week between September 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 2003. This included sleeping one night in the open in the park (the night between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>).<sup>88</sup> I had made some preceding observations before the actual field work, and I also made some additional observations after the intensive period.

The population of the park was spread out in three directions: the north-west, the north-east, and the south-east. Other directions were covered by the cage. I spent most of the time at the north-west area. Two of my most significant key informants, “Deshi” and “Ookami”, and three others, “Florist” and “Long-Hair”, and one unnamed lived there. “Florist” lived in a well built shack, which stood against the cage. The others slept more or less in the open. If it rained, they built covers or just left their belongings covered and went elsewhere. Everyone had quite a selection of belongings, except “Deshi”, who was living from hand to mouth, sleeping literally rough with hardly any belongings.

In the north-west there were some regulars living and keeping their belongings, as well as some other homeless who came and went. The most stable-seeming group was the group of three men, who stayed and kept their belongings near the north-east corner of the cage. One man once used the children's slide for sleeping in the north-east corner of the park. A man I call “Waiter” did not have a shack or a tent, but he had some belongings in the park,

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<sup>86</sup> See Appendix 5 for a map. The map presents the park as it was most of the time. Marked in the map are the residents of the park that I knew of. In any case, the map is only suggestive at best.

<sup>87</sup> See e.g. Fowler, 1996 pp.28–29. According to my field notes and recollection there were no park benches inside the park anymore.

<sup>88</sup> Description in the field notes on pp.48-51.

and he slept there occasionally, and I mostly met him in the north-east area. “Arumikan” was another very friendly-appearing and shy man, who said that he usually lived in the nearby Ishihama Park, but I saw him in the park almost every day flattening out the cans next to the cage on its eastern side.

At the south-east end of the park there were two shacks built in the middle of the piles of rocks and some vegetation. The residents of these shacks remained a mystery to me: They did not seem to want to co-operate, and I hardly ever saw them. There were some other individuals, who seemed to choose their sleeping places randomly. “Clumsy” was a younger homeless man, who had troubles both talking and moving, and who sometimes got himself into trouble. He was often treated badly by some of the other homeless, and sometimes he did not seem to know how to act in the situation he was in.

The liveliest part of the park was undoubtedly the north-east, where people gathered to play the two most popular games: *shôgi* and *go*. This tradition goes way back in Tamahime Park. Allegedly most of these people were welfare recipients, some of them off-duty day-laborers, and only a few of them homeless. Among the residents of the park, “Deshi” was almost a fanatic player, and “Ookami” also played sometimes. Others usually just followed from the side and/or chatted. As there were no benches or tables, the game boards were usually placed on the ground, as were the players. Others were sitting on the ground or on the fence separating the park from the road, or on the big logs that were stuck in the ground here and there, or standing. Some people had brought their own chairs.

A significant and reoccurring occasion around Tamahime Park was the San’ya Morning Market, which took place every morning on the otherwise quiet streets around the park on its western and northern side. The market opened every morning at 4 a.m. and continued roughly until 7 a.m. During that time the streets were filled with people. The salespersons included both homeless and non-homeless men and non-homeless women. I am not certain of every salesperson’s respective backgrounds, but some of them were professional street salesmen and saleswomen, some were former day-laborers, some were welfare recipients, and some were the homeless of Tamahime Park.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Descriptions about Tamahime can be found in the field notes.

### 4.3 The Key Informants

In each place where I did field work there were a number of individuals who were essentially important sources of information for me. In Ueno there were actually many of them, as the whole gang whose life I studied got along very well with each other and with me. So much so, actually that I think they even sometimes forgot my not being one of them, in some occasions.<sup>90</sup> In San'yūkai I got more spoken first-hand information from the San'yūkai staff than from the homeless or ex-homeless, but there were some individuals who were not disturbed about my inquiries, and with whom I had conversations. In Tamahime Park there were a couple of residents co-operating out of their own will. They possibly occasionally forgot my “researcher status”, too. There were also two individuals whom I met in the park only once, but who taught me many fascinating and clarifying things. I also talked with and observed the behavior of many other homeless, but I do not call everyone of them “key informants”. The names of every informant are changed to protect their anonymity.

-“Sensei” (Ueno)

“Sensei” was very much the leader of the “Jewelry Gang”, though not in the most rigid sense of the word. My impression was that he could somehow, without words, dictate the other people’s attitudes toward me. When he was not present, the others seemed to be more open toward me. I got most of the information from the other ones at times when “Sensei” was not present, and when they gave me information when he was present, I often had a feeling that it was something they believed “Sensei” wanted to hear them say.

However, “Sensei” was probably the most important source of information of all the homeless I encountered. He told me that he had been homeless for about a year at that time. He also told that he was 62 years old. He had been as a consultant in a construction firm, and he had been to China, but the company he had worked for had gone bankrupt some

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<sup>90</sup> See p.30 n.59.

time ago. After that he had tried to start his own company, but it had not worked out. He had run out of money and become homeless.

“Sensei’s” motto has been “*Mai nichī nomitai*” (“I want to drink every day.”) since the day he became homeless, but he was never too drunk, and he never caused any trouble, when I was present. He also seemed to have a good all-around education, and he seemed to be outstandingly well-informed about the current situation in politics, economy, and society in general. The most amazing thing was that some things he said sounded almost unbelievable at first, but were proven correct later, and I simply never caught him lying. Sometimes, something he said, turned out not to be true, but that did not necessarily mean he was lying intentionally. “Sensei” also seemed to know some things about everyone around him. He also had many friends in other areas.

“Sensei” led a very punctual life. It consisted of travelling to food handouts both nearby and further away, meeting some of his friends in self-arranged meetings, some casual cleaning work, and going to the organizations which provide support for the homeless. Everything he did seemed to be well planned beforehand.<sup>91</sup>

-“Nichiren” (Ueno)

“Nichiren” had become homeless very recently, a month ago, and sometimes it seemed that he had not got used to the homeless lifestyle, yet, especially when it came to sleeping rough: he had troubles getting sleep, and consequently he woke up later than the others.<sup>92</sup> Still, “Nichiren” seemed to have accepted his situation at this that point of his “homeless career”<sup>93</sup>. He never really complained about anything, and he never showed his anger if he ever had any inside him. I felt him to be a bit naïve, but a very friendly person, who was ready to help or socialize with anyone whom he met on the street. He told me once that the only difficult thing for him was sleeping, but he was smiling gently even when he said that. Sometimes he corrected me, if I had done something inappropriate, and he seemed to like to take me around the place.

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<sup>91</sup> There are plenty of “Sensei’s” comments in the field notes.

<sup>92</sup> “Sensei” told me once that it takes time to get used to the traffic noise especially.

<sup>93</sup> For more information about “homeless careers”, see e.g. Snow & Anderson, 1993 pp.272–302.

“Nichiren” was also a dedicated member of the Soka Gakkai religious group, and sometimes he tried to use an opportunity to tell me about his religion. The engagement to Soka Gakkai also directed his behavior in every day situations. He started his day by saying prayers and reading sutras. He did not drink, smoke, or gamble, and this in part had probably helped him to hold to his own faith better than he might otherwise have done.

-“Cap” (Ueno)

“Cap” and “Sensei” spent a lot of time together. Usually “Cap” let “Sensei” do the speaking, but once he suddenly started to tell me about all kinds of things I had wanted to know about. Allegedly, “Cap” had been living on the streets for a longer time than “Sensei” or “Nichiren”, and he had already become a kind of a “regular straddler”<sup>94</sup>. His case was not ordinary, either. He told me he had a wife, who had “kicked him out.” He also told me he had managed to save some money, and he was about to move in an apartment in the near future. Once he happily but calmly announced me he was going on a date with some woman.<sup>95</sup>

-“O-cha” (San’yūkai)

“O-cha” was working as a homeless volunteer in San’yūkai. I had a chance to observe him performing various tasks, and I had a couple of short but revealing talks with him. He had first come to San’yūkai about five years ago just to get help and hang about, but then he had gradually become a volunteer. His story gave me some insight into the significance of the organizations to some homeless people’s lives.<sup>96</sup>

-“Hoshi” (San’yūkai)

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<sup>94</sup> Another term used by Snow & Anderson (1993).

<sup>95</sup> For “Cap’s” interview in see the field notes pp.25-28.

<sup>96</sup> See the field notes p.31.

“Hoshi” also used to volunteer at San’yūkai on a regular basis. He was not a homeless anymore but a welfare recipient. He told me some valuable things about the systems linked to homelessness in San’ya.<sup>97</sup>

-“Deshi” (Tamahime)

“Deshi” lived in Tamahime Park. He was a very sympathetic figure, who seemed to worsen his health and situation by drinking, smoking and gambling. Most of the time I saw him he was very communicative and willing to teach me all kinds of things about the lifestyle of some homeless, especially his and his “mentor’s”, “Ookami’s”. “Deshi” had not given up: Every morning he woke up at 3 a.m. to put together his salesdesk for the Tamahime morning street market. Everything he had for sale he had received from his buddies. However, as soon as he managed to sell something, which happened very rarely, he spent the money on alcohol or cigarettes. Sometimes, when he got drunk, he just passed out, and did not really cause any trouble.

“Deshi” looked up to “Ookami”, whom he thought to be a real salesman. He told me confidentially that his wish was to become “Ookami’s” “*deshi*” (“disciple”), so that he could work for him, and that “Ookami” would then look after him financially, until he would become independent and take care of his own business after one year. However unlikely this may have appeared, it was still something that drove him forwards. “Deshi” also told me many of his thoughts, partly representative of his own philosophy, and partly something that constitutes a part of a greater cultural domain called “the homeless etiquette” among the Taito Ward homeless.<sup>98</sup>

-“Ookami” (Tamahime)

I chose the name for “Ookami” from the expression “*ippiki ookami*” (a lone wolf). “Deshi” once told me that his mentor was a real “lone wolf.” “Ookami” was my first real contact in Tamahime Park. When I first met him he was very drunk and acting threateningly towards me, but I think this was just some kind of a show. The second time I met him was during

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<sup>97</sup> See field notes e.g. p.51.

<sup>98</sup> For some commentary by “Deshi”, see field notes e.g. pp.37-38, 47.

the first longer period I spent observing the park residents. Then he was sober and very informative. I think I lost my contact to him a bit later on, and I got more information from “Deshi”. There was another day when “Ookami” was really drunk, and he maltreated “Deshi”, slapping him constantly and repeatedly calling him *bakayarô* (“idiot”). When Ookami was drunk, I could not understand his speech, and he acted very irrationally, not causing any real danger, though.

“Ookami” was a *daidôshônin* (a street salesman), and he had great amounts of merchandise in the park hidden under blue tarpaulin. However, during the week I stayed in the park, I never saw him actually trying to sell anything. He always had an excuse: he took days off, he started to drink in the morning, or he just quit before even starting, saying e.g. “*Mô yameta. Kyô wa dame nan da*” (“I quit already. Today is not good [for selling].”) This led me to think about that maybe he got too nervous to do it, when I was present. I heard from “Deshi” that “Ookami” got most of his merchandise from a place in Ikebukuro, and he had enough money to go to a hotel when it rained, and during the coldest months. One day when it was raining heavily I did not see either “Ookami” or “Deshi” in the park.

-“Pro” (San’ya)

I met the bearded “Pro” only a couple of times. He had friends living in the park, and he himself told me that he often came to the park to meet them. He said that they used to be working buddies in the construction business a long time ago, doing *tobi shoku* (scaffolding). He told me that they had been building the massive Nippon Telephone and Telegraph building, which can be seen from the park. Nowadays “Pro” did *arumikan* (collecting empty cans and selling them to the scrap-aluminium firms).<sup>99</sup> Some of his friends who lived in the park did construction work occasionally, and one of them said he gets work every now and then, but another one said that he had not found any work for a month.

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<sup>99</sup> “Pro” showed me some tricks of the art of *arumikan*. He told me that every Monday, Wednesday and Friday a nearby “*arumi no kaisha*” (probably some kind of a scrap-aluminium firm) bought the flattened aluminium cans for 82 yen a kilogram. He also showed me how to get them easily: he went to the back doors of a couple of dining rooms/bars, and the owners gave him full sacks of them. These people seemed to know “Pro” well.



“Pro” seemed to know personally many of the key persons in some of the support organizations, as well as many homeless in different areas. Importantly, he knew people on the eastern side of the park, and he was the one who introduced me to them. I wanted to know more about him, but I did not meet him after this.<sup>100</sup>

-“Sneaker” (San’ya)

“Sneaker” was a short, youngish-looking man, who smiled in a friendly way all the time. He also had a nervous giggle, but it only bothered me a little in the beginning. He liked to show me many places in San’ya.

“Sneaker” took me to the Jôhoku Welfare Center (Jôhoku Fukushi Sentaa) as well as to the Tamahime Labor Agency, and some other places. I will present the “journey” here, because it gives a good insight into the life and street wisdom of one homeless in San’ya:

First I hear from “Sneaker” that on Sunday there is going to be a self-organized *takidashi* at the Jôhoku Fukushi Sentaa. They light up fires, cook pudding and other stuff. [I went to participate in it the following Sunday.]

Then we go to take a look at the Jôhoku Sentaa itself. We walk through it. The stairs go down a couple of floors. Then there is a big combined dining room and lounge. Many people pay attention to my being there, but I do not feel threatened at all. The place is quite packed, even though the weather is good outside. There is cigarette smoke in the air. Almost half of the visitors are watching sumo on television, the other half is playing *go* or *shôgi* in pairs. *Raamen* (Chinese-style noodle soup) costs 80 yen. At the back of the room there is a “box” inside which two staff members are sitting behind the glass windows. There are also some people hanging about in the hallways. I note that the place is open from Mondays to Saturdays from 8:30 to 20:30, except on Tuesdays from 8:30 to 18:30. On Sundays it is closed. [I later realized that I may have understood the opening times wrong.]

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<sup>100</sup> See field notes pp.42-43.

We go outside, and next there is the place where one can get work every morning, if one is fast and lucky. “Sneaker” says that the jobs are given out again the next morning at 6:30, and that men line up and sleep overnight in front of the place. Apparently there are some men preparing to do just that.

Next “Sneaker” shows me the Tamahime Rôdô Shucchôsho (Tamahime Labor Agency). Here, “Sneaker” says, one can get so-called “*harô waaku*” (casual work)<sup>101</sup>. There are some men already present, though not in front of the agency, but hanging around the place anyway. They have put up tents there. The local “*shokygyô anteisho*” (an unemployment office) operates in the same building. “Sneaker” tells me that nowadays one must work 15 days a month to be entitled to get unemployment dole. [If this is true, the requirements have gotten stricter<sup>102</sup>.] He continues that three years ago it was possible to get the dole using whatsoever means. And, he says, it is still possible to buy stamps to *shiro techô* (a white handbook)<sup>103</sup> from *yakuza*. If one gets unemployment benefit, it means 7,000<sup>104</sup> yen a day. I think of it as a prize from being lucky to get work.

I offer to buy “Sneaker” whatever he wants to drink from the vending machine. He seems to find this confusing, and he coyly points at an orange drink. After this we go to “*Manmosu*” (“Mammoth”), which is a big *kôban* (police box) on the Nihonzutsumi side of the street. It used to be on the other side, but later it got moved. “Sneaker” shows me the locations of the surveillance cameras around the police box.

Next we go to the Nihonzutsumi side. “Sneaker” shows me a cheap hotel run by Koreans. The hotel is often full of foreign tourists, who are looking for cheap accommodation. I see a bunch of Americans outside the place. Next “Sneaker” goes to *izakaya* (bar) and asks me to wait. Then he makes a phone call. He says something about gambling, that these moves have something to do with gambling, but I am not sure of what is going on. Anyway, he says that he has gambling

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<sup>101</sup> The Japanese often dub these kind of public labor agencies “Hello Work” offices. It may be purely coincidental that this kind of casual work is called “hollow work” in English, but I consider it possible that there could also be a lingual misunderstanding in question.

<sup>102</sup> This is hardly true because according to Fowler (1996 p.226) the day-laborers’ unemployment fee got lowered to 26 days in two months in the mid-1990s. Earlier it was 28 days a month. Gill (2001a p.72) suggests the same. The information given by “Sneaker”, however, suggests that there could be ambiguous information about the subject among the homeless of San’ya.

<sup>103</sup> A small white book for the registered day-laborers, where they collect stamps from the employers.

<sup>104</sup> According to Gill (2001a pp.71–72) this was 7,500 yen. It may still be the same.

debts for some 1,000,000 yen! [I can't tell if this is true or not.] He also shows me a place around the Namida-bashi crossing, a restaurant with a night club upstairs, where he says there may be Chinese prostitutes. There are some dressed up women on the street in front of the building. "Sneaker" tells me he hates the Chinese. He says they cheat, among other things. Then we head to the north to Minami-Senju Station.

At the station we go through a tunnel under the rails to the area where there are many *izakaya* (bars) and restaurants. We go in through a door and go upstairs. There is a small bar. "Sneaker" tells me both the keepers and the customers are Chinese. He greets them as his friends. So, not all Chinese are bad after all! I have my doubts, but I get in and they greet me. We talk about Finland and other things. And then: "Sneaker" buys me a cola drink! A Chinese male customer tells me a funny joke about San'ya: "*San'ya no hito wa mittsu ni wakareru: rôdôsha, hômuresu to seikatsu hogo.*" ("There are three kinds of people in San'ya: workers, homeless, and welfare recipients.")

After some time I exit the bar.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Field notes, Sept 16 2003. See pp.43-45. This was written partly when it happened, and partly afterwards as I remembered it. I met "Sneaker" once more in the Johoku Welfare Center *takidashi*. See field notes pp.53-54.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 Belongingness

Lebra presents the traditionally identified reference groups in Japan: *ketsuen* (blood ties), *chien* (geographical ties), and *shaen* (company ties) [Kato et al. 1971]. Nakane [1970] calls these “*ba*” (“field/frame”). Nakane also argues that the Japanese stress their positions in reference groups more than their individual attributes in identifying themselves. Lebra adds the concepts *shozoku* (current belonging) and *shusshin* (origin). (Lebra, 1976 pp.20-22.) I suggest that *shaen* could be understood as any group e.g. an organization or a subculture one belongs to. A person may belong to many reference groups at the same time, and the groups may consist of a mixture of different ties. It is often argued, though that the Japanese often concentrate on only one group that they take seriously.

The homeless may not identify themselves with all of these traditional reference groups. They always have *shusshin* but often not *shozoku* in a traditional sense. It depends on what is understood as *shozoku*. A support organization for example can be a *shaen*, maybe also *chien*, if it is working on a certain area. Some homeless may have *ketsuen*, some may still have a sense of *chien*. The *shusshin* is not much discussed by the homeless, because it is expected that they do not want to talk about it. The Jewelry Gang homeless thought of this and other loosely defined norms as part of the “homeless etiquette (*hômuresu echiketto*)”<sup>106</sup>. Some of the same principles were known to the Tamahime homeless as well as to the

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<sup>106</sup> The following subjects were voiced parts of the so-called “homeless etiquette”: 1. The names are not asked (“Sensei”, Sept 28 2003); 2. Backgrounds are not snooped (“Nichiren”, Sept 28 2003); 3. It is not customary to talk about one’s private business amid the crowd, not to speak of giving interviews (“Sensei”, Sept 1 2003); 4. No-one takes another man’s sleeping place. If this happens, it will be clarified on the following day. (“Cap”, Sept 6 2003.) These were told to me by the members of the Jewelry Gang. Later “Ookami” in Tamahime fortified (Sept 16 2003) the second principle by saying that it is not common to ask about things concerning *inaka* (hometown, or past). “Deshi” of Tamahime added (Sept 15 2003) that “[o]ne can not rely on other people, but people can help each other”, which could be understood as a some kind of principle. Other rules can concern e.g. the organization of the lining order in a food handout: those who arrive early get first in line for food. In San’yūkai no questions were asked from the homeless about their past.

homeless who went to San'yūkai, but they did not use the term in their speech. In San'yūkai, however, another set of rules existed alongside.

What comes to *chien*, it seems that of the groups I observed in different places, the Jewelry Gang did not identify themselves with their environment as much as the homeless in Tamahime or those at the Sumida river. This seemed to be dependent on the style of accommodation: those who had a some kind of a shack for a living had also more belongings around them, and they were kind of tied to these as well. The Jewelry Gang had few belongings, their place of sleeping varied, and they had all left Jewelry Bridge, when I later visited the place, whereas people in Tamahime had not.

Identifying with *ketsuen* is allegedly very rare among the homeless. Though this is not unheard of, it seems to be very rare. An example of this was the “homeless family” who visibly spent most of their time on the upper platform at the Ueno station, next to the Panda-bashi. This was also contradictory, because it seemed to me that all members of the family would rather not have been tied to homelessness, even if it meant severing the blood ties. However, they were homeless and they had only each other for daily support.<sup>107</sup> A couple of times during the San'yūkai patrols I have run into homeless people who told me how their relatives have continued to help them, and once I even witnessed once a relative to visit and help a homeless person.<sup>108</sup> But the majority of the homeless did not talk about their relatives.

In some cases there may be a mix of *chien* and *ketsuen*. On my visit to Adachi Ward on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2003 I witnessed a local gathering of homeless and non-homeless. The homeless were former residents of the area, and some non-homeless residents continued to help them in spite of them being homeless. Both the homeless and the non-homeless who were present were clearly of the opinion that these homeless were nevertheless a part of the community. They were former neighbours, and probably also relatives in some cases.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> For descriptions about the family, see the field notes e.g. pp.4, 20.

<sup>108</sup> These incidents are not recorded in the field notes.

<sup>109</sup> Description about a food handout in Adachi Ward, Sept 2 2003. See field notes pp.15-16.

Identifying with *shaen* was common among many of those who went to San'yūkai, especially among those who went to do some kind of volunteer work there. These homeless also sometimes differentiated themselves from the others who came to San'yūkai to get help or just to hang out.<sup>110</sup> They may have felt that they were more part of the organization than the others. But also those who only went there to spend time, may have felt they were part of San'yūkai.

Belonging to a group can be an important factor in the establishment of one's identity. When meeting for the first time, the Japanese want to know where one belongs (Lebra, 1976 p.23). In my experience, it is very common in Japan for one to do a *jikoshōkai*, a self-presentation in front of the others, when e.g. one is joining a new group. However, this differs radically among the homeless. First, referring to the "homeless etiquette" mentioned above, it is not customary to ask questions about one's background. Second, belonging to a some kind of group is more or less a rare opportunity for a homeless, as normally all the ties to the past are severed, and the groups that welcome homeless are normally low in numbers. The homeless support organizations are basically the only groups for a homeless individual, in which the ties resemble *shaen*. In these groups, too, the homeless normally hold only "minor posts", but they may still feel strongly being part of the organization. Some of the homeless are also eager to mention some organization or place where they have connections in. Good examples of this are San'yūkai in San'ya and the now defunct Shinjuku renraku kai in Shinjuku, though I am not personally familiar with the latter.<sup>111</sup> These organizations do not simply just help the homeless, but give them also something to do. Once I also went to observe a meeting, organized by San'ya sōgidan (San'ya Labor Dispute Group), and there were many homeless present,<sup>112</sup> but I do not know more about the organizational structure of these groups. Finally, one must note that a group of friends or buddies is not actually *shaen*, but it may be a group one draws some of his identity from.

Collectivism is another aspect of belongingness. Accordingly, individual identifies with the collective goal of the group to which one belongs. Belonging to a group involves

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<sup>110</sup> E.g. "O-cha" at San'yūkai, Sept 10 2003. See field notes p.31.

<sup>111</sup> Information about the movement can be found in Hasegawa's (2006) definite book on the subject.

<sup>112</sup> This happened on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2003, but I do not have any written notes about the meeting.

cooperation and solidarity, and desire for *ittaikan*, “feeling of oneness”. (Lebra 1976, p.25.) Lebra argues that “[c]ollectivism fosters a taste for togetherness, intensive interaction, and gregariousness” (ibid. p.26). Lebra continues that “[g]regariousness serves to confirm and reconfirm solidarity and group identification...But it also indicates the Japanese concern not to be left out of any collective activities” (ibid. p.27). Lebra goes further indicating that this contributes to the overcrowding of the streets in Tokyo (ibid.)! This argument could also be stripped of its excessive Japaneseness. One can think about the cliché of an American party, how the host takes care of no-one being left alone, does it not involve a similar manner? But when one thinks about how the Japanese seem to behave as tourists abroad, it is another cliché altogether.

In the case of the modern Harajuku area in western Tokyo, Lebra’s last argument could well be even true, though it concerns mostly young people, and it also lacks the mutual goal. What comes to the homeless, they hardly form any crowds, except when their time around a food handout waiting for food. Getting food is a common goal for everyone in a food handout, but the only thing one has to do is nothing but wait patiently. My common perception was that the homeless did not usually feel uneasiness in these situations. The atmosphere in a food handout is normally very peaceful, but it is hard to say if the homeless feel any feeling of *ittaikan* or not. Many homeless people may also live in close proximity to others, and collectivism, wish for togetherness, may well affect this. Still, there is certainly a subgroup of homeless individuals who may in fact despise collective goals of the group and try to escape from them.

I also find Lebra’s examination of “loneliness” is one-sided. She argues that “[g]iven their cultural gravitation toward togetherness, it is no wonder that Japanese readily admit to being lonely (*sabishii*) or that lonely persons are likely to receive attention and sympathy...Japanese find a type of cultural hero in the man who fights for justice all by himself, bravely overcoming loneliness (...) Precisely because togetherness is so desirable, mild depression engendered by loneliness becomes a culturally articulated style of behavior.” (Ibid. pp.27-28.) The homeless often differ in this respect. They hardly raise sympathy, partly because people want to avoid them systematically. If a homeless would bravely overcome his loneliness, would this particular homeless become a cultural hero?

No, because there are many attitudes and assumptions about the homeless that can be just the contrary. However, some homeless may be respected by their peers. But Lebra's examination does not include a possibility that some people may well appreciate loneliness. Indeed, some homeless individuals may spend great lengths of time sitting and staring into the void, and not talking to anyone. I observed this kind of behavior only from a distance. I did not meet homeless like this in the Taito Ward area, though, and once when I tried to approach a homeless individual, I got a really bad response.<sup>113</sup> I have mainly second-hand information about the motives for this kind of behavior. "Sensei" of the Jewelry Gang told me that "[i]t is a way of life (*ikikata*). They just like that kind of living, hate to communicate with other people. They are not necessarily mentally ill or crazy, only some of them: *case by case*. However, if you go to talk to them, many of them speak."<sup>114</sup> Those whom I tried to approach in the beginning of my fieldwork, certainly had some problems with communication, maybe also mental problems.<sup>115</sup> But probably most homeless individuals who live alone, speak back, if they are spoken to.

Collectivism can "[generate] pressures for conformity to group norms" (Lebra, 1976 p.28). This seems quite obvious, though the degree of rigidity can vary from group to group.<sup>116</sup> Conformism is sustained by "the desirability of being accepted by the peers, anxiety about being left out, and a competitive urge for always being 'in'" (ibid. p.29).<sup>117</sup> Here, we can make use of Giddens' structuration theory, and replace "sustained" with "reproduced by human agencies"<sup>118</sup>, and see both enabling and constraining aspects of "conformism" (Giddens, 1984 pp.170-174). According to Lebra, sustenance (or reproduction) of conformism can be seen especially in school education and media.<sup>119</sup> Conformism is coupled with intolerance for failure to conform, and this works both internally (pressure) and externally (unity). (Ibid. p.29.)

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<sup>113</sup> "Kaidan-san" inside the Ueno subway station, Aug 26 2003. See field notes pp.3-4.

<sup>114</sup> "Sensei", Aug 28 2003. See field notes p.7.

<sup>115</sup> "Kaidan-san" and "Marui-san" at the Ueno subway, Aug 26 2003. See field notes p.3-4.

<sup>116</sup> Interesting point is borrowed from Agnes Hayakawa [1966; in Lebra, 1976 pp.28-29], that conformism has also served as a cultural basis for egalitarian ideology in an otherwise hierarchically ordered country.

<sup>117</sup> Quotes by Lebra.

<sup>118</sup> This was also considered by Bourdieu in his theory of "habitus".

<sup>119</sup> There are also other things at work. However, media is interesting in the sense, that it transmits ideas via technological means. Of course, these ideas can again be interpreted contrary to the original intentions.



Pressure leads to self-restraint called *enryo*. At the same time there are both “the presence of agreement” and “absence of objection”. (Ibid. pp.29-30.) In a footnote Lebra adds that there are occasions where dissension and criticism are in fact encouraged, and where the Japanese involved have a freedom to express themselves without any restraint (ibid. p.30, n.1.). Equally important, according to Lebra, is that the “inner selves” of the Japanese may lack this kind of conformity. She argues that in Japanese social relativism, though conformist, there is tolerance for individual's inner autonomy and resistance to totalitarian control. (Ibid. p.30.)

The homeless are often unambiguously left out of any groups they could have belonged to before they became homeless, excluding the possible marginal groups such as the unions for the day-laborers. However, they continue to behave as a group of homeless, which is manifested in some organized gatherings such as *takidashi* (food handouts). Their behavior may resemble the behavior, which could be labelled as normal conformist behavior. But is this behavior of the homeless actually conformist or ritual, and do they differ from each other? In his study of American social structure and anomie, Merton (1968 p.193-194) separates conformist behavior from the forms of deviant behavior, one of which is labelled “ritualism”. The use of these terms becomes problematic, as Lebra considers the conformist behavior to be part of the ritual setting or ritual behavior, as explained above. By “ritualism” Merton (1968 pp.203–204) means “*overt* ritualism”, which again leads to abandoning the cultural goals but continuing abiding by the institutional norms. I suggest that ritual behavior may also include goals, and though the goals among the homeless may not always be cultural, they may be sub-cultural<sup>120</sup> and personal. For example waiting patiently and behaving correctly in a food handout could be seen as conformist by everyone, if the goal, the actors, and the situation itself would not be seen as deviant. Merton’s definition of “ritualism”, however, describes well some aspects of behavior of the

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<sup>120</sup> By “sub-cultural goals” I mean that some goals may be very common to the homeless sub-cultures outside the “mainstream culture”, which could be said to have other goals. It could be argued that the homeless sub-culture is one part of the general Japanese culture, but there can be many differences between the two. However, both the mainstream culture and some sub-homeless cultures may have some common goals. I use the plural when speaking of the homeless sub-cultures. We could also speak of only one homeless sub-culture without common values, but I argue rather that there are sub-cultures inside the homeless sub-culture. For some analysis about subcultures in connection with American homeless, see e.g. Snow & Anderson, 1993 p.39.

homeless, when they continue to do something without being able to achieve commonly accepted cultural goals.<sup>121</sup>

Because the homeless are often considered to be outside the normal society, it could be expected that they also possess more freedom to dissent and criticize others. However, in many situations it seemed that they practised a lot of *enryo* (“self-restraint”). This was definitely true in food handouts and other social gatherings. Only few individuals ever caused any trouble, and the reason for this was normally (suspected) mental illness<sup>122</sup>, drunkenness<sup>123</sup>, or the individual’s sense of having been betrayed or otherwise badly treated<sup>124</sup>.

Lebra claims that in some cases (she uses political parties as an example) the individual’s frustration may build up so much that one may form a splinter group or defect completely from the group one belongs to (Lebra, 1976 p.31). Some homeless, day-laborers, so-called ex-pats who have left Japan and moved abroad, and maybe some Japanese youth subcultures<sup>125</sup> can be considered as examples of this. They may have been frustrated by the “demand for conformism” in groups they have belonged to or tried to join, or simply by the expectations created by the supposed demands. What comes to my own data about the homeless I met, no-one claimed that they had wanted to become homeless because they wanted to dissociate themselves from the groups they had belonged to, or from the “pressure to conform”, but not everyone denied this possibility either. The homeless of Tamahime seemed to be most ambivalent about this, as the Jewelry Gang homeless always claimed that they did not want to be homeless. There was also a man who lived near Iriya Exit of Ueno Station, wondering “why there is no work, why do they just drink alcohol and

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<sup>121</sup> Such as trying to get work from *yoseba* every morning, despite the fact that there is not enough work available.

<sup>122</sup> See e.g. the incident in Tamahime (Sept 19 2003).

<sup>123</sup> See e.g. Iriya-guchi people (Aug 27 2003); San’yūkai (Sept 11 2003); “Ookami” at Tamahime (Sept 16 2003 and some other times).

<sup>124</sup> This was nevertheless very rare, if drunkenness was not involved. I remember a homeless man complaining about not getting enough food at some *takidashi*. There was also “Blue Overalls” who at some point was angry at me about my studies (Aug 29 2003), but who maybe changed his mind later on.

<sup>125</sup> Though members of many youth subcultures may behave in a very conformist way in a ritual setting, and the subculture-life may serve only as a temporary escape from the “demand for conformism”. Even in a most deviant and antisocial subculture the conformism may persist in some form e.g. as in the form of hierarchical relationships. A good example of this are the most extreme forms of Japanese punk rock subculture.

smoke cigarettes”<sup>126</sup>. “Sensei” often emphasized that those who went to food handouts did not want to be homeless, but wanted to be able to work continuously and lead a normal life.<sup>127</sup> But “Sensei” also described that “life of a homeless is boring but okay (*tsumaranai kedo daijôbu*). *Sarariiman*’s life is miserable all the time (*mai nichi tsurai*).”<sup>128</sup> He also talked about those homeless who want to live alone,<sup>129</sup> and who may have deliberately escaped the “demand for conformism”.

Following Lebra’s idea, belongingness as a self-identity, reinforced by collectivism and conformism, calls for total commitment and loyalty to one’s group. Conversely, it means that a group is held responsible for taking care of the needs of its members. Also: “Total commitment to a group necessitates careful screening of the group before a decision to join is made.” (Lebra, 1976 pp.31-32.) It is reasonable to suppose that if commitment decreases, less care is provided. Also complementarily, if the amount of care received decreases, the commitment may weaken. Can the care-takers then be held responsible? I think this is highly unlikely to happen. But the first mentioned alternative is very probable, considering why some people become homeless. Why does the commitment weaken? It may be that the pressure felt is unbearable for some individuals. It may also be a string of unlucky events: illnesses, bankruptcies and so forth. It can be hypothesized that in the present-day “mainstream” Japanese society to receive care requires total commitment, and when the commitment decreases below a certain point, caretaking lessens, too, or ceases altogether. In the present-day Japanese society there are some marginal areas, in which caretaking may be received without any demand for commitment.

Does “total commitment” exist among the homeless? There is some evidence of this in my data, not only in San’yûkai, but also among the other groups I studied. This commitment, however, may have been less than “total”, sometimes just occasional. In San’yûkai the commitment was often “total”: This was manifested in the daily voluntary duties some homeless took. This included serving tea, allocating clothes, and other goods to other homeless. The individuals who performed these tasks engaged themselves totally to doing

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<sup>126</sup> “The 4<sup>th</sup> Man” near Iriya Exit, Aug 27 2003. See field notes p.5.

<sup>127</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Aug 29 2003, in connection with the homeless attitudes towards social security. See field notes p.8; Also “Sensei” on a recorded interview in SSS morning handout, Sept 1 2003.

<sup>128</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Aug 28 2003. See field notes p.9.

<sup>129</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Aug 27 2003. See field notes p.7.

their job properly and effectively.<sup>130</sup> Some of the homeless also took part in patrols and food handouts, and worked with commitment to get their job done.<sup>131</sup> In other places than San'yūkai the commitment to e.g. a group of friends was commonly less than “total”. I hardly saw any signs of commitment among the Jewelry Gang, though they seemed to get along well and enjoy each others' company. Maybe they intentionally avoided too much commitment. In Tamahime, instead, it seemed that at least “Pro's Club” was more tightly knit as a group. They often ate breakfast together and had arranged their accommodation in a certain area of the park. Still, it is hard to say anything about the level of their commitment. In any case, the examples of San'yūkai prove that more or less “total” commitment towards one's group can exist among the homeless, but the opportunities for this can be rare.

How does lack of opportunity to commit oneself for the group affect the psyche of the homeless, if they have committed themselves to groups during their childhood, youth, and their adulthood before homelessness, if they have not felt this “total commitment” unbearable, but—on the contrary—rather embraced it? This could be a valid point when analysing two kinds of homeless individuals: those who are on good terms with their homelessness and those who are not.

Shared belongingness can be used as a strategy (ibid. pp.33-34). Lebra argues that e.g. the *sempai-kohai* relationship, as described by Nakane Chie [1970; in ibid. p.34], “is a mixture of shared belongingness and hierarchical order that has a pleasant connotation for Japanese.” This may be true with many homeless individuals, as well. Ultimately, if the homeless belong to any group, they may also use the membership and its components as a strategy. E.g., if there are any *sempai-kohai* relationship opportunities available, the homeless may also use them, because it offers them a ready-made pattern of how to act, and because they may gain something from it. The relationship between “Ippiki Ookami” and “Deshi” who were living in Tamahime Park, offers a good example of this. Deshi clearly attempted, somehow, to enhance his self-identity by taking a *kohai* role. He wanted to be “Ippiki Ookami's” apprentice, for he saw it as a way of surviving. He also thought about the future, how he could, maybe some day, become independent from his mentor,

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<sup>130</sup> See e.g. San'yūkai's “O-cha” and “Joker”, Sept 9 2003, in field notes p.29.

<sup>131</sup> See “Grumpy” and another one on patrol, Sept 11 2003. See field notes p.33.

and start his own, however small-business.<sup>132</sup> At the same time it must be remembered that some homeless individuals may have intentionally tried to escape the “demands for conformity” these kind of relationships can create.

Priority of group goals and collective implications for inner experience (Lebra, 1976 pp.34-37) are aspects one would not think to have much relevance to the social behavior of the homeless. Lebra argues that the Japanese adhere to the so-called “collective egotism” instead of individual egotism (ibid. p.35). One would expect this aspect to change, when someone becomes homeless. Naturally, the homeless identify with the collective goals of their own group differently. Some goals could also take priority in one’s life. The manifestations of the second aspect are mainly pride and shame shared by one’s group, but also suffering, or guilt (ibid. p.36) shared by the group. On the basis of my data, I would argue that for a group of homeless people sharing of pride, shame, suffering, and guilt is as common as for any group. The fact is that the homeless, as a *group*, rarely perform any actions that would cause them any of the above mentioned feelings. The only groups that would come to question are those of the homeless movement, which try to improve the living conditions of the homeless.<sup>133</sup> These groups were not included in this study. The homeless in San’yūkai actively participating the patrols and other tasks, may not have been aware of the “gains and losses” of the whole organization, but may have felt occasional feelings of both pride and shame, maybe even suffering and guilt.

If an individual of a group performs an action that would cause shame or suffering, it would be likely that the others feel shame, but they hardly feel guilt for the “trouble-maker”. One example comes from San’yūkai:<sup>134</sup> Customarily, the homeless had gathered to enjoy a sunny afternoon in front of the San’yūkai. They were cracking jokes, talking to each other and to the staff, drinking tea, and performing normal tasks. Suddenly, a quarrel seemed to arise. It was caused by a man who was drunk and angry for some reason. The leader of the organization simply told him after a while, that because he was acting disrespectfully, the others would not pay any attention to what he was saying, and he should go away. Though everyone seemed to feel uneasy about the situation, no one

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<sup>132</sup> “Deshi” at Tamahime, Sept 15 & 16 2003. See field notes pp.38 & 40

<sup>133</sup> As the Shinjuku Coalition that Hasegawa (2006) studied.

<sup>134</sup> I do not have an exact date of this. The same man quarrelled at least once more near San’yūkai (Sept 11 2003), though on that day the atmosphere at San’yūkai seemed to be quite tense.

expressed any sign of guilt. On the contrary, they seemed to be ashamed of the man's behavior, but at the same time they did not show any signs of somehow being held responsible for it. It must be remembered, though, that this is my interpretation of the situation. The same can be said about the other offensive behavior of another drunken individual I witnessed. "The 4<sup>th</sup> Man" who lived near Iriya Exit of Ueno Station apologized for the drunken behavior of his friends, but he did not seem to feel guilty about it.<sup>135</sup> It may be that the drunken behavior is not regarded as a serious mistake. Otherwise I did not witness any such "failures" which could cause shame or guilt for a group of homeless.<sup>136</sup>

## 5.2 Empathy<sup>137</sup>

Lebra is tempted to call Japanese culture an "*omoiyari* culture". "*Omoi-yari* refers to the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling, to vicariously experience the pleasure or pain that they are undergoing, and to help them satisfy their wishes." The ideal way to do this is to do it non-verbally, "to enter into other one's *kokoro* (heart)." (Lebra, 1976 p.38.)

Undoubtedly like many others, I have experienced this *atmosphere* in many daily situations in Japan. There is also a variation to this "heart-to-heart" talk: some individuals emphasized to me that there are two levels of understanding of what the other one means, when talking. One level is to hear and think with one's brains, the other level is to do that with one's heart. This alternative includes both the ordinary speech and the heart-to-heart talk. Based on my information I would hypothesize that this kind of social behavior or interaction is common in Japan. It can be supposed that even more so in Japan than

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<sup>135</sup> "4<sup>th</sup> Man" near Iriya Exit, Aug 27 2003. See field notes p.5.

<sup>136</sup> I was not specifically searching for them, as I did not consider group mentality to play big role in the social interaction and behavior of the homeless.

<sup>137</sup> There are at least three translations for "empathy" in Japanese language: *kanjōinyū*, *ninjō* (as in *giri* and *ninjō*), and *kyōkan*. These all Japanese words have other translations in English, which are the same as for *omoiyari*, which Lebra uses here. Lebra herself does not translate *omoiyari* directly as "empathy", but they resemble each other. Actually *omoiyari* is often translated to mean "sympathy" or "consideration", and "empathy" is translated *ninjō*. In principle, in English empathy means ability to understand how someone feels, and sympathy means feeling sorry for someone, but in Japanese these may be intertwined. I try to use a correct English word depending on the context.

elsewhere, because the Japanese refer to *omoiyari* in their speech than people elsewhere. Of course, the conclusions I make here remain only hypothetical and can not be generalized.

An interesting thing is that because of my sometimes limited ability in the Japanese language, I may have unconsciously used my own “heart-to-heart” approach to reaching a better understanding of the situation. I am not denying the possibility of the existence of a semi-telepathic (as Lebra suggests) way of communication and understanding. However, this is not an issue here, since there is no reliable data of its actual existence and remains a matter of belief.

Are these ideas relevant to the homeless issue? There are some examples of *omoiyari* in my data: e.g. “Sensei” once told me about an old man (friends with people of Jewelry Bridge) right after he had had a short conversation with the man, that everyone always lets him tell whatever he wants (“*hanashi o ukeru*”), because everybody kind of feels bad about his alleged misfortunes in the past.<sup>138</sup> This often means listening without necessarily answering anything.<sup>139</sup> There can be other examples on the subject as well.

Some forms of *omoiyari* can thus be said to exist among the homeless. Lebra suggests the following forms of *omoiyari* to in the social behavior of the Japanese (Lebra, 1976 pp.38-49): maintenance of consensus, optimization of Alter’s<sup>140</sup> comfort, sentimental vulnerability, social echo effect, intuitive communication, and guilt.

Next, I am going to examine these forms of empathy and their occurrence in the context of the social behavior of the homeless. According to Lebra, *omoiyari* requires the suppression of one’s own ideas, if opposed to the another person’s ideas to maintain the consensus. This is manifested in ordinary conversations, where the sentence is left unfinished (leaving the verb out) until the listener's opinion is known. (Ibid. p.38.) This is a well known feature

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<sup>138</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Sept 4 2003. See field notes pp.20-21.

<sup>139</sup> This was a common practice in San’yūkai as well: Some members of the staff often just sat listening to what the homeless had to say. E.g. San’yūkai, Sept 9 2003. See field notes e.g. p.30.

<sup>140</sup> Lebra uses the words “Ego” and “Alter” to make a difference between the actors. “Ego” refers to the main actor, “Alter” refers to the “other”. To my best knowledge, there is no connection with Freud’s psychoanalytical terms. I have used the terms the same way Lebra has.

in Japanese dialogue. For the homeless, it can be of importance: If the homeless would use less *omoiyari*, or not use it at all, they could be considered more “daring” individually, and this could be used as a justification for discrimination. In any case, this is not really generalizable, because the homeless are individuals, as well, and some of them are simply more conforming than others. The same kind of differences can be found among the non-homeless Japanese. This is a wider question of individuality, and thus it is something I will not examine here.

Consensus-maintenance overlaps with conformism, but where “[c]onformity based on shared belongingness may be easy to maintain and taken for granted... [c]onsensus-maintenance out of *omoiyari* goes over and beyond of shared belongingness and often applies to interaction between strangers as well” (ibid. p.39). Thus consensus-maintenance can be more relevant among the homeless, since for the homeless acting in groups may not be common and may not be tied by the same regulations as with others. As Lebra expresses it, because there may be an expected difficulty of reaching the consensus, *omoiyari* could be needed the most (ibid.).

The “Japanese way” to optimize Alter’s comfort is to do this by anticipation, by knowing in advantage what the Alter wants. Another term *osekkai*, or “meddlesomeness”, is the antithesis of *omoiyari*. They are two sides of one coin, situational variation of cultural values. (Ibid. pp.40-41.) It is difficult for me to think of many manifestations of this among the homeless. The homeless living along the Sumida-river, probably follow some practices, e.g. when they visit each other. I was offered coffee there in two different tents where I interviewed their residents on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2003. In the first place the coffee was exactly what I wanted at that time, and on the other place I was also offered cake! However, these people did not really know anything about me in advance, and they simply offered me coffee (and cake) out of hospitality. These examples are the only first-hand empirical evidence about how optimizing Alter’s comfort by anticipation works among the homeless.

Lebra claims that Alter's comfort is optimized also by not causing displeasure, or *meiwaku* in Japanese. *Enryo*, or self-restraint is exercised not only for the sake of group members, but for others too. (Ibid. p.41.) The other side of the coin here could be “minding one's own



business”, which can also cause *meiwaku* in some situations, if it is seen as “evasion”. It is remarkable that the Japanese homeless in general rarely cause concrete *meiwaku* to other homeless or to anyone. For many people the mere presence of the homeless may cause *meiwaku*, but this is something the homeless can not help<sup>141</sup>. Sometimes they actually try not to cause *meiwaku* to others by keeping a very low profile. Occasionally heavy drunkenness might cause *meiwaku*. Examples of drunken *meiwaku* have already been presented here. These incidents were quite rare, since a general consensus of not causing *meiwaku* seemed to exist among the homeless. The fact that most homeless people do not often drink heavily, could also be the reason for lack of aggressiveness among them. *Enryo* is obviously exercised among the homeless, bilaterally for and by the homeless and the non-homeless, but again this is often dependent on individual personalities and the context.

Importantly: “the concern for not causing trouble for others may conversely lead to a compulsion of independence. Something that Japanese most insist on avoiding is becoming a nuisance or burden to others” (Lebra, 1976 p.42). Here could lie a suggestive answer, why the Japanese homeless rarely beg or carry out other similar practices. This could also partly explain the existence of the practice of the “homeless etiquette”, which helps to keep the relationships more distant. And again we must note, that sometimes drunkenness acts, among other things, as a more or less accepted way of releasing pressure, which in turn may cause *meiwaku*.

Lebra states that empathetic care is complementary to “sentimental vulnerability”, which she sees as common among the Japanese. This kind of reciprocity or complementarity is the “very essence of social relativism.” This can be also used as a social strategy. (Ibid. p.43.) In turn, the violation of *omoiyari* may lead to an *urami* (“grudge”). Lebra claims that “[p]reoccupation with *urami* seems to reflect the sentimental vulnerability interlaced with empathy that is so common among Japanese.” Lebra continues that “[v]ulnerability is further demonstrated by the masochistic display of wounded feelings”, and that this may be understood as “a punishment for the Alter's lack of *omoiyari*” or as a threat that an *urami*

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<sup>141</sup> An example comes from the “1<sup>st</sup> Interviewee” I interviewed at the first tent I entered on Sept 26 2003, when I interviewed people living along the Sumida River. According to her, they had unintentionally caused *meiwaku*, when they had placed the laundry outside to dry after they had washed them. The local people did not like this and called ward office and complained. The interviewee said that they did not want to cause *meiwaku* (or that they do not really think they cause *meiwaku*) but they have to do the laundry sometimes.

may take place. Finally, an *urami* may be turned to a success e.g. by moving upward in status and bypassing the offender. (Ibid. p.44.) Again we have to be careful with Lebra's argument, that sentimental vulnerability would be "so common among Japanese" (ibid. p.43). Obviously, this is hard to prove, but nevertheless, it is reasonable to suppose that the Japanese are somewhat sentimentally vulnerable.

The above mentioned feelings could be manifest among the homeless. I occasionally witnessed a scene with definitely some hurt feelings exposed in the end.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, I did not come across with many examples of a long-standing *urami* or *urami*-related success stories in my data. Some homeless I met, and supposedly many more, held a grudge against the Japanese Government or the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), and the grudge against the State was more manifested than against the TMG.<sup>143</sup> One person in Tamahime park once told me that "they" hate the emperor, because they are human and he is a god.<sup>144</sup> This is interesting, but I do not know how widespread this kind of thinking is, though one staff member of San'yūkai also once told me this to be quite common. On a personal level, someone may hold a grudge against someone who may have contributed to his/her homelessness, or may have caused trouble to him or her during the time of homelessness. Getting off the streets could be understood as a success story<sup>145</sup>, of course, but I doubt whether *urami* is involved? The status of any homeless is at the bottom of the social hierarchy, at least financially. It is highly unlikely that the "offender" happens to pass by on the street, especially, if the "offender" is something as abstract as the Government. I do not really expect that the homeless themselves get any satisfaction from doing better than someone else, as it is more a matter of survival. The satisfaction may come from the general sense of doing better than earlier.

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<sup>142</sup> See e.g. Tamahime on Sept 16 2003. Field notes p.41; discussion with "Blue Overalls" on the upper platform, Sept 1 2003. See field notes p.13

<sup>143</sup> See e.g. "Cap" at the Jewelry Bridge (Sept 6 2003); "Deshi" and his friends at Tamahime (Sept 18 2003); "Grumpy", personal interview near Sakura-bashi, Sept 27 2003. "Interviewee 1" spoke about the TMG and Sumida Ward authorities in negative tone, as the decisions of the city and ward authorities had caused them difficulties. Also other interviewees on the eastern (Sumida) side of the river criticized Sumida Ward officials' actions. This was not so much the case on the western (Taito) side of the river.

<sup>144</sup> An old man (who was a welfare recipient) at Tamahime (Sept 18 2003). The same man also said that the Christians (those who organize food handouts and do missionary work) are "evil". He said that "one understands it, when one looks into their eyes. (*Me ni miru to wakaru.*)"

<sup>145</sup> C.f. Lebra's notion of turning a grudge to a success, see Lebra, 1976 p.44.

“The social echo effect” means shared feelings and mutual influence in interaction, e.g. trust presupposes trustworthiness. The Japanese are told to put an emphasis upon *magokoro* (“true-heartedness”). (Ibid. p.44.) Lebra claims that this goes as far as reciprocating, shared suffering, and in the ideal type the “boundary between Ego and Alter disappears: social echo ends up in a “social fusion”, where one person joins another in, ‘feeling of oneness’” (Ibid. pp.45-46). In a sense, *ittaikan* resembles the before mentioned<sup>146</sup> “heart-to-heart communication” because it can not be observed in the same way as, say, *magokoro*. It is, however, supposedly thought of, spoken of, and felt by many Japanese. “Social fusion” underlies the concept *ninjô*, “human feeling”. In *ninjô* “self-indulgence seems to merge with empathetic consideration for others.” (Ibid. p.46.) *Ninjô* with *giri* (“duty”) and could *giri* and consideration for others merge in *ninjô*?

My data is not sufficient enough to prove that *ittaikan*, *ninjô* and *giri* would be common among the homeless as well. Some homeless live in pairs or groups, but verifying this hypothesis would require a close and long-term observation into homeless individuals' everyday life. It is true, however, that the homeless may need to think just for themselves much more than the non-homeless individuals. This is so because in many occasions the homeless spend most of their time alone, without any direct social contact. I also heard from a Japanese student of sociology based on his study, that it is common for some homeless individuals to stop thinking about e.g. their own health after some time. However, they hardly begin to regard other people with less respect. Presumably they just stop thinking about their own situation.

Firstly, intuitive communication is tied to the supposed stressing of empathy in Japanese society (Lebra, 1976 p.46). Secondly, in reference to empathy, non-verbal communication is considered more sophisticated than verbal communication. Thirdly, intuitive communication is seen as essential in preserving the Japanese way of life, which is traditionally seen to lack privacy. One could ask here, what kind of traditional way of life Lebra means, and if intuitive communication could also be “essential” in the new ways of life.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, Lebra claims that the avoidance of "ocular expression" is common

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<sup>146</sup> See pp.60-61

<sup>147</sup> Later Lebra notes that all the social relativism -flavored behavior represented in her book could be classified as (an ideal) traditional way of life, which had already been changing in the 1970s and earlier

among the Japanese. (Ibid. pp.46-48.) This would mean a partial elimination of the body language. E.g. Goffman has often emphasized the importance of the eye contact in social interaction, which again, it should be remembered, is only one part of the available forms of body language (Goffman, 1963 p. 33). The avoidance of “ocular expression” can be considered to have significance here only in those situations, which Goffman classifies as “focused interaction”. The well-known concept of “civil inattention” involves eye contact, but does not necessarily mean that the participants in the situation want to approach each other further than that (ibid. pp.33-38). Goffman considers also one’s physical appearance as non-verbal communication (ibid. p.33). The basic rule is that in Goffman’s terms most of the interaction between the homeless and the non-homeless is “unfocused interaction” in the form of non-verbal communication, as may be the major part of the interaction of the homeless in general. My observations seem to support Lebra’s theory here. I noticed that the non-homeless people did not normally seem to make “civil inattention” eye contacts, but it is more common to avoid these kind of eye contacts with the homeless. Some homeless individuals told me that when other people come close to them, they do not often glance at the homeless, but pass them with what they call an “enigmatic Mona Lisa smile” on their face.<sup>148</sup> What Lebra presumably means, though, are more intimate situations, in which also the “ocular expression” is avoided. This kind of interaction presupposes that the participants know each other to some degree. Since I did not specifically observe this kind of behavior, I can not make further remarks about its possible relevance.

I find it irrelevant in this connection to consider, what exactly can possibly be managed to be transmitted through the above mentioned intuitive communication, the way Lebra means it. The important thing is that the Japanese, more often than not, seem to believe in intuition and at the same time value it. Probably, the homeless also enjoy this kind of communication, when they gather in groups in e.g. food handouts. If this is the case, not only verbal communication, but also other forms of interaction might be relevant in this connection. This implies to Goffman's theory about the nature of social situations and gatherings: "civil inattention" may also be tied to place. However, verbal communication in food handouts and other gatherings between acquaintances is a common practice, and I

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(Lebra, 1976 p.257). She also says this in the beginning, in connection with “interactional relativism” (ibid. p.8.); see also p.22-23.

<sup>148</sup> “Nichiren” and the woman of the couple at the Jewelry Bridge (Sept 1 2003). See field notes p.15.

have no reliable evidence that intuitive communication would (a) be tied to stressing the empathy; (b) would be considered more sophisticated than verbal communication; or (c) seen essential as preserving the traditional way of life. There were hints of more or less intuitive communication which I noticed during my observations. Sometimes a homeless individual silently listened to another homeless talk about his or her hardships. “Sensei” gave me a concrete example of this, of “stressing the empathy.”<sup>149</sup> The question of “preserving traditional way of life” is more complex in the case of the homeless. In a sense, the homeless lack privacy even more than the non-homeless people, because they live in more or less public places. But they may also enjoy more personal privacy than a household of more than two individuals. The same question about the traditional way of life concerns the homeless, however: do they really want to pursue a traditional way of life. In some cases something that could be called “traditional” was openly followed or at least admired. “Deshi” told me about his objective of becoming “Ookami’s” *deshi*, (“disciple”) and that one day he could be strong enough to become independent.<sup>150</sup> The appreciation of the “old ways” was also expressed by many individuals in their talk: “Waiter” criticized the modern day service in restaurants, how it lacks substance, especially in the use of *keigo*.<sup>151</sup> “Iaido” told me his opinion about how nowadays people are more interested in the practical instead of the aesthetic.<sup>152</sup> “Corleone” who was a welfare recipient and visited San’yūkai occasionally, told me how he thought that the “spirit of Edo-era had almost disappeared in modern Japan.”<sup>153</sup>

Finally, I will deal with the subject of empathic guilt. Lebra states that Alter's pain makes Ego feel guilty even more than Ego's own aggression (Lebra, 1976 p.48). “If Alter's pain is due to Ego's aggression, the [Ego's] guilt will be overwhelming in intensity. Similarly, Ego will feel more guilty, if Ego finds Alter suffering vicariously on Ego's behalf” (ibid. pp.

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<sup>149</sup> “*Hanashi o ukeru.*” “Sensei” at the Jewelry Bridge, Sept 4 2003. See field notes p.20. I also did this with many homeless in countless occasions. It also seemed to happen in San’yūkai, and during the patrols. The occasions were numerous, but I do not have any adequate descriptions of this practice. I probably saw it as a normal routine at the time.

<sup>150</sup> Deshi in Tamahime Park, Sept 15 & 16 2003. See field notes pp.38 & 40.

<sup>151</sup> “Waiter” in Tamahime Park, Sept 19 2003. See field notes p.52. *Keigo* means the honorific language, which is often used in Japan in more or less formal situations. There are many different forms of *keigo*, and their use is dependent on the context.

<sup>152</sup> “*Hanayori dango.*” “Iaido” at Tamahime Park, Sept 17 2003. “Iaido” was not homeless, but he was a friend of “Deshi’s”. See field notes p.47.

<sup>153</sup> “Corleone” at San’yūkai, Sept 9 2003. See field notes p.30; Same kind of opinion, especially about Tokyo, was expressed by “Iaido” at Tamahime Park, Sept 17 2003. See field notes p.47.

48-49). This could be related to “conscience”. Again, this kind of guilt is difficult to find explicitly between the homeless and the non-homeless, because they are not much involved with each other, but certainly occasions arise, in which empathic guilt is involved. It can be hypothesized that it is more likely to occur in those areas, where people are more tolerant of the homeless and other marginal groups, like at San’ya. Evictions are a proof of a case in point. Empathic guilt certainly exists among the homeless, between two or more homeless persons, although I do not have any examples of this in my data. Actually witnessed occasions, in which the feelings were hurt, but afterwards there was no sign of empathic guilt. These occasions were quite rare, and the behavior was affected by drunkenness.<sup>154</sup> Based on my observations, I suggest that the homeless consciously try to avoid causing pain to each other, because that could lead to empathic guilt, and further complicate things. Some aspects of social relativism may, in fact, lose their reciprocal significance among the homeless. Verifying this argument, however, would require more empirical data to back it up.

### 5.3 Dependency

Empathy and dependency stimulate and sustain each other in the framework of social relativism (Lebra, 1976 p.50). As was mentioned earlier<sup>155</sup>, also “sentimental vulnerability” and empathy have this kind of reciprocal relationship. Lebra presents several “cultural types of dependency”: dependency on patronage, on attendance, on indulgence, and on pity. (Ibid. pp.50-55.)

“Dependency on patronage” can be understood as a “symbolic filiation”. The most well-known examples of this are the relationships of: *sempai-kôhai*, *oyabun-kobun*, and *oyakata-kokata*.<sup>156</sup> *Oyagokoro*, or “parental sentiment” is what the *oyabun* displays toward one’s *kobun*, and the latter is expected to respond with gratitude. (Lebra, 1976 p.51.) This

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<sup>154</sup> “Ookami” punishing “Deshi” (Sept 16 2003). See p.41; An old man shouting at “Clumsy” (Sept 19 2003). See p.52. Both incidents happened at Tamahime Park.

<sup>155</sup> See p.63

<sup>156</sup> These could all be translated to mean “superior-inferior” relationships, and I will also use this term later as does Lebra.

has been noticed to have begun to weaken already at the time Lebra wrote her book (ibid. p.52). Most probably, it has weakened even more in recent times. However, these relationships still widely prevail e.g. within Japanese organizations, and they can not be ignored.

The relationship between “Ookami” and “Deshi” who used shared belongingness as a strategy and adhered to *omoiyari*, could be understood to reflect this kind of symbolic filiation. “Deshi” repeatedly expressed his wish to become “Ookami’s” *deshi* (“disciple”).<sup>157</sup> “Deshi’s” wish is a good example of *oyabun-kobun* relationship in action, as also “Ookami” sometimes used “Deshi’s” services.<sup>158</sup> Other such examples can be found at San’yūkai. At San’yūkai dependency on patronage was like an internalized code among the homeless, among the volunteers and the staff and also between the volunteers and the staff, and between the homeless and the volunteers and the staff. Notably, some homeless individuals who were also regular volunteers, not to mention some regular ex-homeless, were in a superior position compared to many homeless and even to many non-homeless Svolunteers. These homeless and ex-homeless often had a leading role in some tasks, and they often taught things to newcomers who responded with explicit gratitude.<sup>159</sup> Not all friendships between two homeless can be said to reflect this phenomenon, though. The basic principle of “parental sentiment” must be followed to qualify for filiation. This was not manifested among the Jewelry Gang. Although “Sensei” had clearly had an influence on others, the relationships did not resemble the ones based on symbolic filiation. The Jewelry Gang may indeed have avoided this intentionally or unconsciously.

“Dependency on attendance”, also “the taboo of status” in Lebra’s words, is inverse to the above mentioned dependency on patronage, and ideally they are complementary (ibid. pp.52-53). One could consider San’yūkai and the homeless who go there, in this respect. To some degree, San’yūkai seemed to be dependent on the homeless and ex-homeless who helped as volunteers in the organization. Especially downstairs on the first level, the homeless chosen for this task took care of most of the allocation of goods and serving of

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<sup>157</sup> “Deshi” in Tamahime Park, Sept 15 2003. See field notes p.40.

<sup>158</sup> “Ookami” let “Deshi” clean up the spot sometimes and send him to shop to buy things for him. He also gave “Deshi” food sometimes in return for services. Tamahime, Sept 16 2003. See field notes p.41.

<sup>159</sup> I have no specific examples of this in my written data, as I did not understand to specifically look for these during my observations.

green tea. It must be noted that some of the homeless move upwards inside the San'yūkai hierarchy, and become regulars. They may turn from *ko* to *oya*, when moving upwards in the status hierarchy.<sup>160</sup>

Lebra notes that these forms of dependency may be felt as satisfying or constraining, depending on the situation (ibid. p.53). In principle, this comes close to Giddens' idea of both enabling and constraining nature—the so called duality—of social structures (Giddens, 1984 p.25.) An example of satisfying dependency on patronage could be the following: An individual A has received food or money in abundance, and he gives part of it to his friend B. B is grateful for this, and makes other kinds of favors to A. An example of constraining dependency on patronage could be the case of not having enough food, and not being free to act independently because of the obligations related to the relationship. Again I could use the relationship of “Deshi” and “Ookami” as an example of this kind of relationship.

Based on my data, it would seem that only satisfying dependency was at play, and that constraining dependency was avoided. This may be due to an assumption that the troubles caused by the homeless way of life may have been difficult to handle, and sometimes help simply was not offered. Also the “homeless etiquette” suggests this. According to “Deshi”: “*Hito ni tayoru koto ga dekinai. Tasukeau koto ga dekiru.* (One can not ask for help from other people, but people can help each other.)”<sup>161</sup> I saw people at Jewelry Bridge offering help, but not asking for it.<sup>162</sup> The same goes with those homeless I met during the patrols. They did not ask for help, before they were approached and the help was offered. Those people who went to the San'yūkai clinic were often invited to go there, as their health problems were discovered by the volunteers during the patrols. The reasons for not asking for help vary according to situation. As discussed earlier, Lebra claims that the Japanese try to avoid becoming a burden to others (Lebra, 1976 p.42).<sup>163</sup> However, it may also be that the homeless may want to keep as anonymous as possible, and asking for help may

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<sup>160</sup> This was indirectly explained to me by “O-cha” who often served tea and allocated clothes among other tasks at San'yūkai. This was of course only his experience, but also some other individuals had gained a strong position inside the organization. “O-cha” at San'yūkai, Sept 10 2003. See field notes p.31.

<sup>161</sup> “Deshi” in Tamahime Park, Sept 15 2003. See field notes p.37.

<sup>162</sup> For an example of offering help and accepting it, and having fun at the same time, see the suitcase-on-wheels incident in the field notes p.9.

<sup>163</sup> See also p.63. Later, though, she argues, that in fact the Japanese are inclined to ask for help from the others (Lebra, 1976 pp.56-57).



endanger this. Some individuals may also want to keep their independence, and do not want to ask for help. They may think it to be embarrassing and shameful.<sup>164</sup>

“Dependency on indulgence”, or *amae*, a term elaborated by Doi Takeo, is normally attached to a relationship between a mother and a child, but it can also bind two adults. Lebra argues that Doi looks at *amae* only in its passive form, and that Doi does not consider the role complementarity between the one who expresses *amae* (*amaeru*) and the one who accepts another's *amae* (*amaeyakasu*). (Lebra, 1976 p.54.) Lebra gives a fourfold definition of this (ibid.): (1) active *amaeru*: to solicit Alter's indulgence, (2) active *amaeyakasu*: to solicit Alter to wish indulgence from Ego, (3) passive *amaeru*: to accept Alter's indulgence and, (4) passive *amaeyakasu*: to accept Alter's wish for indulgence.

Lebra continues that despite the negative implications of *amae*, the relationship is a "desirable and often irresistible one" (ibid. p.55). I have not enough expertise to speculate, how relevant *amae* is as a psychological concept in reference with the modern day Japan. Some recent references<sup>165</sup> speculate that the same kind of dependency on indulgence can be found in American society, as well, but there are more unique “identity-confirming responses” from the Japanese children to their mothers. These responses are reproduced by slightly different child-rearing techniques in both countries. Lebra has referred to this difference in her work in the part called “Early Socialization”. (Lebra, 1976 pp.137-155).

Does *amae* have relevance in the life of the homeless? It could be asked whether the homeless find an *amae* (*amaeru-amaeyakasu*) relationship desirable and irresistible. Do they experience it in their daily lives? However, this is something I did not pay attention to during my field work. It could be assumed that this experience correlates with the time spent on the streets. Obviously, when one becomes homeless, as shocking as it may be in many respects, only a minority seems to suffer from some kind of rapid mental change. Snow & Anderson (1993 pp.195-196, 203-213) have studied how the time spent on the

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<sup>164</sup> “Sensei” told me that this is the case with so many homeless for not applying for social security (Aug 28 2003). See field notes p.8. There were also examples of seriously ill homeless not asking for help themselves, e.g. the man in Sumida Park (Sept 17 2003) and the other man at the San’ya Nobori Park (Sept 10 2003). See field notes pp.46 and 32 & 46 respectively. The man in Sumida Park accepted help, the man at San’ya Nobori did not.

<sup>165</sup> See e.g. Smith & Takako 2000.

streets may affect the psyche and the “cognitive and behavioral orientations” of the American homeless. Presumably, adjustment takes place all the time. Thorough changes develop gradually, and the changes in psyche take place little by little.

Thus, if *amae* can be found among the non-homeless Japanese, it should be found desirable by at least those homeless who have managed to adapt to the street life, but have not been on the streets for a long time. Snow and Anderson would call these types of persons “outsiders” who have “developed relatively stable material, psychological, and social patterns of adaptation.” Often these include a large number of peer relationships, the nature of which vary according to the character of the “outsider”. (Ibid. pp.195-196.) Of course, this varies between individuals, and depends on situations, living environment and human relationships. However, it is also possible to regard *amae* as a burden, which complicates things further. It can be felt both satisfying and constraining.

The fourth form of dependency presented by Lebra is “dependency on pity”, which can be manifested as an appeal for empathy. Lebra claims that the Japanese are actually quite inclined to self-pity and asking for help from others. Empathy and dependency on pity are also complementary.<sup>166</sup> (Ibid. pp.56-57.) This is paradoxical, if one compares this to the avoidance of causing burden to others, as Lebra argued earlier (ibid. p.42).<sup>167</sup> The homeless are often in need of some kind of support, but I am inclined to think that there are few of those who pity themselves openly and ask for help. My data offers examples of dependency on pity (see “Empathy” above), but these applies for help were not expressed openly. It is also notable that these kinds of complementary patterns of dependency on pity exist among the homeless, not between the homeless and the non-homeless. An exception to this are the homeless support organizations. It may be easier for the homeless to ask for pity and accept help from an *organization* with no presupposed reciprocity than from another *person*. In any case, the homeless rarely take the initiative openly.

Besides the above mentioned forms of dependency, Lebra presents three different dependency relationships: a mother/child relationship, a heterosexual relationship, and the

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<sup>166</sup> As are all forms of dependency and empathy. Also “sentimental vulnerability” and empathy are complementary (see pp.63 & 68).

<sup>167</sup> See p.63.

relationship of physical dependency of the sick, aged, and dead (Lebra, 1976 pp.57-65). Lebra presents the concept of “parthenogenetic” independence as an alternative (ibid. pp.65-66). This means there is hope of becoming “*ippondachi*”, or independent, one day, to withdraw from the *oyabun-kobun* relationship, and becoming *oyabun* oneself. This is a situation often longed for.

First, when one considers the mother/child relationship among the homeless, one could argue it to be non-existent as an active relationship. This can be very difficult for a homeless, if we take for granted that the homeless believe in the system of *on* debt and repayment. As a homeless it can be felt as difficult to pay back one’s *on* to one’s mother. (Some homeless are on good terms with their relatives, though, as noted earlier.) There are also other dimensions in this relationship, which the homeless simply lose, if the relationship is broken. On the other hand, I met one group of three homeless people who claimed they were a family.<sup>168</sup> This was also verified by “Sensei”. He added, that the son of the family must have felt very angry towards himself because he could not find work, and help his parents.<sup>169</sup> For the aged parents it would have been even more difficult to find work, and all things considered they may not have been old enough to be eligible for national pension, or for some reason they had not applied for it. It seemed to feel to be dependent on the son of the family. I will return to this occasion later. It was difficult for me to believe, in the first place, that the “family” was actually kin but why would they have lied about it. I did not ask about their age, because our first encounters were quite tense. The son seemed to be relatively young, maybe about 40 years old. Actually, the son told me during the second encounter that they did not give a hoot about my study, and that they wished that I would return to where I came from. Later on, after they had seen me distributing food for the homeless in a San’yūkai *takidashi*, the relations got warmer, and from then on the son always greeted me.<sup>170</sup>

In theory the same rule applies to the mother/child relationship, and the heterosexual relationship. Some of the homeless have a heterosexual relationship. Some allegedly have

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<sup>168</sup> “Blue Overalls” on the upper platform of Ueno Station, Aug 27 2003. See field notes p.4.

<sup>169</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Sept 4 2003. See field notes p.20.

<sup>170</sup> Second encounter with “Blue Overalls” on the upper platform, Sept 1 2003. See field notes p.15; Soon afterwards he greeted me smiling at the Pandabashi (Sept 4 2003). See field notes p.20

homosexual relationships<sup>171</sup>, and this tradition dates back to at least 1960s (Caldarola, 1968 p.520). I only met few homeless men who lived in pairs or in groups and shared a *koya* (a shack) but I was not able to follow their daily lives more closely. I interviewed only two homeless households living in a tents, and then there was the couple among the Jewelry Gang, before they disappeared from the scene.<sup>172</sup> Most of the homeless, however, live alone most of the time. It must be remembered that also many non-homeless people live alone, so lack of a heterosexual relationship is not unique for the homeless, only. The written history of the Tokyo's day-laborer population, among whom temporary homelessness was not unusual, reveals that the services of prostitutes could be used when opportunity offered.<sup>173</sup> This could in some instances be regarded as a heterosexual relationship. In any case, though I have not examined this issue, in present day Japan it would seem unlikely, though not impossible, that a homeless would be able to buy services from prostitutes, except very occasionally.<sup>174</sup>

Here Lebra does not refer to the relationship which can be formed between a man and *mama-san* (bar hostess) who acts as a replacement of a mother or a wife. *Mama-san* in a bar listens to everything one wants to talk or complain about, and shows compassion. Visiting a *mama-san* is often considered normal "routine" for a *sarariiman* who may visit a bar after day's work, spend the rest of the night there, and not even return home for the night but go to a hotel, instead. However, other population groups may also use the services of a bar hostess (or host). Many day-laborers may spend the whole day in a bar maybe talking to the hostess, in case they have not managed to get work that day, or have decided to take a day off (the freedom of the day-laborers).<sup>175</sup> Some homeless men who manage to get temporary work but are still homeless, occasionally do this. This relates to the "dependency on indulgence" but the relationship is paid for, and especially the homeless can not rely on its continuity.

"Sick" and "aged" well describe the major part of the homeless population. Premature death is often an inevitable result of the homeless life. However, Lebra argues that

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<sup>171</sup> See e.g. Gill, 2001a pp.71.

<sup>172</sup> Nichiren told about it on Sept 6 2003. See field notes p.25.

<sup>173</sup> See e.g. Caldarola (1968 p.520); This is also suggested by e.g. Fowler's (1996 p.39) writings.

<sup>174</sup> See also Gill (2001a pp.70-71) about the sexuality among the Kotobuki day-laborers.

<sup>175</sup> This information comes from the San'yūkai staff, but also from Fowler (1996 pp.175-224).

“sickness provides a social occasion for emotional communication” (Lebra, 1976 p.63). This is hardly so for the Japanese homeless. It is only when a homeless person falls seriously ill that he/she may receive any attention and have e.g. medical care. Probably, some of the homeless go to e.g. San'yūkai clinic to receive some sympathy,<sup>176</sup> but not many homeless do that. Help is mostly accepted when it is offered, but it is not asked for.<sup>177</sup> According to my observations the homeless did not talk much about each other's health issues, but this may well be otherwise.

In reference with the aged people, a homeless person who has severed ties, if he/she had any, to one's children, lacks support from them. One has to take care of oneself. I have witnessed instances when the relatives have come to visit and help their homeless relative. Also, the above mentioned homeless family of the parents and a son is interesting in this sense.<sup>178</sup>

Becoming *ippondachi* relates to the homeless as well. The major part of the homeless live alone, and in case they live in pairs or groups no clear-cut status differences or hierarchies are presented inside the group. San'yūkai offers an exception to this in many regards: Firstly, San'yūkai can be understood as a hierarchical organization. Some homeless “regulars” have raised from the status of “lower” to “higher regulars” performing various tasks inside the organization; Secondly, some of the homeless want to become independent in the future, and may go as far as start helping other homeless people independently in or outside of San'yūkai. “Deshi” in Tamahime Park clearly revealed his dream of becoming independent one day with the help of “Ookami”.<sup>179</sup> This relationship reflected both the *oyabun-kobun* and *ippondachi* traditions. Probably, this is not a planned for, general goal among the homeless but it is, nevertheless, possible.

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<sup>176</sup> According to “O-cha”, at least one homeless came to San'yūkai clinic often just to talk to the staff. “O-cha” at San'yūkai, Sept 10 2003. See field notes p.31.

<sup>177</sup> See the notes 163, 164 & 166.

<sup>178</sup> These were already discussed earlier.

<sup>179</sup> “Deshi” at Tamahime, Sept 16 2003. See field notes p.40.

#### 5.4 Occupying the Proper Place

A Japanese is normally expected to “occupy the proper place” in a social group, in an organization, and in society as a whole. Lebra uses the term *bun* in this connection. *Bun* can generally be translated as “share”, “portion” and also “duty” and “place”. Lebra translates *bun* as “status” and “role”. She makes the distinction that the “status” is being occupied, whereas the “role” is being carried out. *Bun* has three implications: (1) the individual is a fraction of a whole, where from he/she derives his/her self-identity; (2) the “*bun*-holders” are interdependent, and they are aware of this; and (3) everyone is expected to be a “*bun*-holder”, to be able to claim his/her social significance. (Lebra, 1976 pp.67-68.)

This is interesting, in reference with homelessness. First, if we oversimplify, one homeless individual is a fraction of *the* homeless, a fact that may often be seen as negative and not desirable. Being a part of a group but not wanting to be a part of that group is paradoxical.<sup>180</sup> However, it is partly from this group that homeless individuals more or less derive their self-identity, at least partly, even if unconsciously. It is also possible, that an individual also continues to derive his/her self-identity from the groups he/she belonged to in the past, and also from the surrounding organizations, institutions, society, and environment, thinking that one (still) belongs to them.

Second, the homeless may also be interdependent, but I argue that this may also be unconscious, a homeless individual not being aware of it. Instead, he/she may have developed imagined interdependence with someone, which is not the case in reality. Real interdependence *between* groups exists, between the homeless as a group in general, and other kinds of groups.

The third implication relates to the homeless in more than one way: If everyone is expected to be a *bun*-holder, this also concerns the homeless. But firstly, a homeless individual is not

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<sup>180</sup> There are also other non-homeless individuals who may belong to a group they do not want to belong to. Some individuals may not want to be a part of a group that is respected and has a high status simply for personal reasons.

expected to have any *bun* by the majority of the Japanese society. The homeless are thus seen as socially *insignificant*. In a more negative respect they are seen as a nuisance or socially harmful and undesirable. There are exceptions to this e.g. the homeless support organizations and people in areas where they have “more tolerance” of the homeless. Secondly, I would suggest that not all homeless individuals are expected to hold *bun* even by the other homeless, especially since some of the homeless do not identify with the other homeless at all. Snow & Anderson (1993 pp.214-215) found in their study of American Austin homeless that some homeless persons commonly used a strategy of distancing from other homeless individuals, from street and occupational roles, and from the caretaker agencies, when they were talking about their identities. I detected this kind of distancing every now and then but it did not seem to be commonly talked about. However, the sample for my study was quite small. “O-cha” who volunteered in San’yūkai, distanced himself from some other homeless individuals who were actually his peers. He talked to me about how he had come there for the first time 5-6 years ago, and had just sat outside like others, but now he was a helper here on *this side*.<sup>181</sup> “Sensei” once called the homeless, living along the Sumida River, “*San’yūkai no kodomo*”, because they were allocated a little amount of food every week and were also otherwise a special concern in San’yūkai.<sup>182</sup> This could be interpreted as role-distancing, and maybe also institutional distancing, though, at the same time he also said that he has respect for San’yūkai. Earlier he had told me how he also visited support organizations—including San’yūkai—for material help.<sup>183</sup> These are still minor forms of distancing. There are numerous subgroups among the homeless, and inside these groups there may actually be interdependent “*bun*-holders” with social significance, as well. A minority of the homeless people may think that there are individuals whose *bun* can be considered insignificant or non-existent. According to Snow and Anderson (ibid. p.195), this can be the case with the recently dislocated who may temporarily feel strong aversion towards other homeless persons. As noted earlier, some homeless individuals actually want to live alone, and do not want to communicate with the others.<sup>184</sup> Most notably, “Cap” of the Jewelry Gang made a clear distinction between

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<sup>181</sup> “O-cha” at San’yūkai, Sept 10 2003. See field notes p.31.

<sup>182</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Sept 4 2003. See field notes p.21.

<sup>183</sup> “Sensei” at the Jewelry Bridge (Aug 28 2003). See p.8

<sup>184</sup> See p.54.

*hômuresu* who go to *takidashi* and do not beg, and *kojiki* who do not go to food handouts, and may beg.<sup>185</sup> Having *bun* also relates to the belongingness (Lebra, 1976 p.68).

As briefly discussed earlier,<sup>186</sup> Lebra distinguishes between “status” and “role”, and she does it in the following way (Lebra, 1976 p.68): (1) rights and prerogatives versus obligations and responsibilities, (2) passive versus active, and (3) quality versus performance.

“Status refers to a position in a hierarchical structure, whereas role does not necessarily imply hierarchy.” Thus defined, both concepts can be seen as relational or independently conceptualized. When *bun* is used as synonymous with “status”, it then normally refers to a position in a hierarchy. Status orientation involves the following: First, “Sensitivity to rank order” means that the behavior is oriented in relation to the positions in the status hierarchy. Status can be enjoyed only if it is recognized. Second, “Dichotomization of behavior” results from sensitivity to rank order. This means the dichotomization of both speech and other behavior. There can also be “status reversals” depending on the context. (Lebra, 1976 pp.68-73.) These are more evident in the areas of work, business, and education, but also in the area of hobbies and leisure, wherever people engage in focused interaction. Goffman’s “situational proprieties”<sup>187</sup> dichotomize behavior and speech, but “status” constitutes only small part of dichotomization. The level of status differentiation based on hierarchical positions and the consequent interaction is dependent on the context as well as on the persons.

Lebra's argument is that at the time her book was written there were still “forces” inside society that enhanced the Japanese tendency to the sensitivity to rank order, despite the presumable changes in the postwar education of the school children, which has stressed equality as a basic value (Lebra, 1976 pp.71-73). E.g. Kerr (2001 pp.333-334) has emphasized how the Japanese education starting around mid-1960s has especially concentrated on the form instead of the substance in many areas, and for that reason the generations schooled after this phase have been more obsessed with form than the

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<sup>185</sup> “Cap” at the Jewelry Bridge, Sept 6 2003. See p.25.

<sup>186</sup> See p.76.

<sup>187</sup> See p.29.



preceding generations. It may well be true that some manifestations of the rank order system have weakened or disappeared (learning of *keigo* in schools), but some practices may have preserved their position to this day.<sup>188</sup> On further consideration of Kerr's argument it could be assumed that formal sensitivity to rank order and the dichotomization of behavior accordingly are still very common in Japan. At the same time, since equality may have been a basic value in school education, the students may still be formally educated to dichotomize and behave according to rank order. The students are equal with each other but they are e.g. taught to take a strictly inferior position upon their teachers.

How is status being displayed? Status symbols can be found among Western products, and a good knowledge about the West can be seen as a virtue and thus as of high status (ibid. pp.73-74). Riesman [1964] has called this "cultural humility", and Kato [1972] has called the Japanese culture a "translation-culture" (in Lebra, 1976 p.74). However, also Japanese products, normally well-known and often traditional, can be seen as symbols of high status (ibid.). This has probably not changed much since the 1970s. This may be an exaggerated oversimplification, though. People who are specialists in some areas of the Japanese culture may also be valued as having a high status.<sup>189</sup>

What comes to the homeless, this kind of display of status is normally non-existent. The status of a homeless person is normally understood as simply negative and undesirable. I have met many homeless individuals who, in some respects, have had a good understanding of the aspects of Western culture, e.g. general Western history. However, this has had a zero impact on the non-homeless people who do not want to know nothing about them, and just ignore the homeless on the street. To possess Western products as symbols of high status is naturally very exceptional among the homeless. This is relative, of course: some homeless individuals may get respect from their peers by possessing Western products or by having a good knowledge about Western culture.

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<sup>188</sup> Lebra also notes a general tendency towards femininity (Lebra, 1976 p.78). Curiously, I once had a conversation with "Deshi" and his friend in a "Vending machine bar" near Tamahime Park. The friend was a traveling day-laborer, and among other things we talked about martial arts and the possible persistence of the samurai-spirit in the modern Japan. The friend and "Deshi" both argued that no such samurai-spirit exists in the post-war Japan. Sept 17 2003. See field notes p.47.

<sup>189</sup> Sometimes I have had a feeling that it could even be so that the "cultural humility" is more at display when there are "Western" people present in the situation.

However, there are other factors that have an effect on status differences among the homeless, and these differences are not always clearly visible. Homeless persons make status differentiation based on the behavior. Those who beg, scavenge, and pick up cigarette fags on the streets without hesitation, are despised by some of those who do not do it.<sup>190</sup> This kind of status differentiation is mostly one-sided: those of “lower” status may not even think about it. The homeless can also have their own imagined status differences. A group of homeless persons or groups of homeless individuals may think they rank higher in status, if they are able to survive without outside help. The differentiation between the “higher” and “lower” “regulars”, and between the “regulars” and “visitors” in San’yūkai offers another example of status differentiation.<sup>191</sup>

It would be interesting to know what the homeless think of status differences, and how they experience the loss of opportunity of displaying their status in a normal way. To do this, however, would require additional field work and careful analysis.

The status can be raised through a long-range effort in education and occupation. *Doryoku* (“strenuous effort”) and *kurô* (“suffering”) are expected especially from young persons in the education. (Lebra, 1976 p.75.) Though the attitudes and preferences of the young people had started to change in the 1970s already, this system still continued to exist at the same time (ibid. p.77). It apparently still exists in some form. E.g. Kerr (2001 pp. 289, 296) states that in the education it is still normal to use the word “*gambare*” (to “persevere” or “endure”) overwhelmingly to push the students to overcome their daily difficulties. Genda (2005) repeatedly refers to the harmful effect of the omnipresence of *gambare* in the context of Japanese employment and working life. In addition to this, there are various other ways to raise one’s status. An easy way of achieving a higher status in some circles is money and other possessions. The demands for achieving a high status may also vary from group to group. A group of young people may value other things than *doryoku* and *kurô*. The famous “three k’s”, coming from the three Japanese words beginning with the letter “k”—*kitsui*, *kitanai*, and *kiken* (difficult, dangerous, and dirty)<sup>192</sup>—have come to represent the dislike towards some forms of manual labor, which are seen as hazardous and

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<sup>190</sup> See e.g. “Cap” at the Jewelry Bridge (Sept 6 2003). See p.25; This was also noted in connection with *bun*. See pp.77-78.

<sup>191</sup> See the discussion on *bun* on pp.76-78.

<sup>192</sup> The order of the words seem to change from one context to another.

undesirable, and this view is especially common among the younger generation. Another expression, *karôshi* (“death resulting from work-related stress”)<sup>193</sup> has quite recently become into common use. What this expression means has a negative connotation, and it can partly be seen to result from excessive *gambare*.

What is paradoxical to Lebra’s writing is that many homeless make “strenuous efforts” and experience “suffering” constantly in their lives, but their status could be significantly raised only if they got off the streets and could successfully put it behind them so that nobody could find out about their past. Small status elevations can also be achieved by e.g. getting more or less reliable income from a regular part-time work, although this status raise may only be noticed by some of the other homeless and a few non-homeless individuals. Actually, I suggest that it is also possible, that these small status elevations could well be hidden from others. Reasons for this could be e.g. modesty, fear of robbery, and insecurity about the future. I interviewed a homeless couple (a man and a woman) who lived along the Sumida River, and they told me that though the man was receiving money from a job, they did not want to move to an apartment just yet, because if he lost the job in the near the future, they would have to return to the streets immediately.<sup>194</sup>

Lebra claims that the Japanese Ego is more at ease in a superior-inferior relationship, than among equals, unless there is an intimate relationship between equals. Lebra calls this easiness of a superior-inferior relationship “vertical alliance”. (Lebra, 1976 pp.77-78.) It is difficult to estimate, how tenable this is in the modern day Japan. It may be normal in institutional and formal relationships i.e. in “ritual” relationships. It is, nevertheless, quite often the case in Japan as well as in other countries that ritual relationships imply some kind of hierarchies, or superior-inferior relationships. These very same superior-inferior relationships can also be seen as obligatory instead of desirable. Considering Giddens’ argument about the duality of social structures,<sup>195</sup> also these can be both enabling and constraining. However, equal relationships can be preferred sometimes. Equal relationships will also take place between older and younger persons, not to speak of people of same age, especially young people. This may also be the case when a third party is present.

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<sup>193</sup> See e.g. Algeo & Algeo, 1993 p.256.

<sup>194</sup> “1<sup>st</sup> Interviewee” at the Sumida River, Sept 26 2003.

<sup>195</sup> See p.29.

The homeless seem to consider themselves more or less equal. Exceptions take place, especially (again) in San'yūkai, sometimes in Tamahime Park, and also the Jewelry Gang people talked about equality in terms of distinctive features. For some homeless, though, the required demands for the adaptation to the superior-inferior relationship may have contributed to the process of becoming homeless. While some homeless may long for these “vertical alliances”, some others may have disliked them from the beginning. The problem is that the homeless who supposedly had consciously rejected the “normal” way of life, were the most difficult to approach for my studying purposes. Also, much closer scrutiny and more focused fieldwork would be needed to find out how the “vertical alliances” actually work among the homeless, if they work systematically at all,

“Status propriety” means how acting out one's status is expected. It is connected to conforming behavior and appearance (Lebra, 1976 pp.78-79). I propose right away that the behavior is quite contradictory among some subgroups of homeless people. Lebra notes that “[S]ince most Japanese conform to the status-corresponding codes of behavior and appearance, it is easy to guess the status of a stranger from a glance at him or her” (Lebra, 1976 p.79). But paradoxically, some homeless try to hide their status. It is also common to remind one of one's status by address terms, and this kind of “resocializing” happens in different life stages (ibid.). But the homeless are mostly reminded about their homelessness,<sup>196</sup> if at all.

One could compare this “resocialization” to e.g. Bourdieu's or Giddens' concept of “social reproduction”. After all, “resocializing” is not caused by mechanical social structures, but fundamentally by the human agents, who reproduce these social structures and the means of resocializing.<sup>197</sup> However, when one becomes homeless, this kind of resocialization may cease completely. Still, some homeless individuals may manage to preserve fragments of their status. This is a complicated issue, because even if they have preserved some fragments of their past status or identity, they may not have an opportunity of displaying it. But again, some individuals may have that kind of opportunity, however transformed. Many homeless try to hide their social status from outsiders, as this may provide better

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<sup>196</sup> E.g. by the way of so called “negative attention”. See Snow & Anderson, 1993 pp.199-200.

<sup>197</sup> See e.g. Giddens, 1984 pp.170-174.

opportunities e.g. in the labor market. Nevertheless, many homeless people behave according to what is expected of them by the majority of people, and appear to conform to their status. Normally this is very low key, as abiding to one's faith, but some may even celebrate it, as it provides some kind of freedoms not enjoyed by others.

Lebra claims that the Japanese are sensitive to *shame* mainly because of their status orientation. There are two conditions: (1) status-incongruous behavior will not generate shame unless the status in question is recognized and identified by an audience; and (2) the behavior must be subject to exposure. The second condition also implies that there must be a ritual distance between Ego and Alter: otherwise there are no private matters to be exposed. Lebra argues that the status orientation including the aspects of pride and shame limit the dependency factor in Japanese culture. (Lebra, 1976 pp.79-80.)

One wonders if it is a part of status propriety for the homeless to not ask for help. This is paradoxical especially, when an individual can clearly be recognized as a homeless person. What about hiding one's status? The homeless may often try to hide their homeless-status, because that way they may have better chances to get work, and it is possible that they are not treated (or ignored) as homeless people. This kind of behavior—hiding one's status—has also been typical of people who “represent” Japan's *burakumin* minority. But when a homeless is recognized as a homeless, he may be expected just to keep to oneself and survive on one's own, and many homeless seem to behave exactly like this.

Status, as the above mentioned “shared belongingness” and “sentimental vulnerability”, can also be used as a strategy. Status manipulation can be used by a superior to persuade an inferior and *vice versa*. Ego can humiliate himself to flatter the Alter to cause both pleasure and guilt in the Alter. The status can be exchanged like a commodity for something else, and the higher the status the more it has value in exchange. (Lebra, 1976 pp.80-81.) After all, this kind of manipulation and bargaining is probably very common in many societies.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Lebra also discusses the “breakdown of vertical alliance” and the “ritualization of status” (Lebra 1976: p.82), but my data is inadequate to discuss them in relation to the homeless.

The homeless clearly feel equal with each other with some exceptions. Some homeless individuals may have survived well on the streets, and they may be respected because of that. Some homeless persons may still have some of their prestige left from the time before they got to the streets. Moreover, there are hierarchies among the homeless as well, as discussed earlier.

“Role performance” consists of “role commitment”, “role versatility”, and “role vicariousness”. Lebra presents five instances of “role commitment”: (1) The role can act as a mirror image of status orientation. “[T]he more individual identifies himself with his status, the more committed he should be to his role.” This has a consequence that failure leads to shame. Lebra quotes de Vos [1973] and his concept of “role narcissism”, which can go as far as to lead to suicide. (Lebra, 1976 pp.82-83.) Three levels of comparison can be distinguished among the homeless as a subject: the homeless status compared to the non-homeless status; status compared to other minorities; and to the other homeless. As the homeless are largely ignored or even despised by the non-homeless population, they can not fail their role commitment in the eyes of the non-homeless. The homeless can only fail to commit to their role in the eyes of their peers and other given individuals who may have expectations about the role a homeless person. Other minorities who may also suffer from discrimination from the other non-homeless population, present a kind of middle form who may have more insight into the lives of the homeless, but not necessarily.<sup>199</sup> “Role narcissism” as a concept is interesting, but, in general, the homeless have little to lose in pride once they have accepted their homeless status. This also means that the homeless are not prone to commit suicide for role narcissist related reasons, except maybe at the very early stages of homelessness.

(2) The “sense of belongingness, including strong identification with a collective goal is tied to “role commitment”.” This kind of role commitment is particularly manifest, when the goal is expected to promote the status of the group, and in these cases the failure leads to guilt. (Lebra, 1976 p.83.) To some degree, the amount of guilt depends on the

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<sup>199</sup> By saying this I refer to the difference in tolerance to the homeless in different parts of Tokyo. E.g. in San’ya there are also other marginalized groups, though they are not necessarily considered minorities. “Sensei” told me once about the Adachi Ward homeless’ connection to local *burakumin*, but I did not find any evidence of this when I went there on Sept 2 2003. However, e.g. Fowler (1996 p.15) has discussed this matter.

seriousness of the failure, but definitely one can strongly commit to a role in a group, when e.g. the reputation of the group is at stake. Some homeless people who have tried to promote the status of the homeless have belonged to groups in San'ya and Shinjuku.. These groups have also included many non-homeless people such as social workers, volunteers, and activists. Homeless individuals who have been part of these groups, may have been committed to their roles in the groups, although I did not, however, specifically observe and study commitment to group in this connection.

(3) Role commitment “receives cultural support from the internalized moral value of work” (ibid. p.83). A discussion about supposedly different “work ethics” around the world is not relevant here.<sup>200</sup> It could simply be stated here that “work” has some kind of moral value in every society, and it is often emphasized in the speech of the Japanese. What is significant about the many homeless in Japan, is that they constantly speak about the absence of work and how it affects their situation. Many homeless people still see work as of intrinsic value. Based on the conversations and interviews I had with the homeless, I conclude that many homeless individuals want to get work, but there is not enough work available. Some homeless people, though, are either too old or otherwise physically unable to do hard work. Yet, some other homeless individuals, seemingly do not even think about work on a daily basis. This varies greatly between the groups. Some homeless people do temporary work every now and then, and this was a dominant feature among the Jewelry Gang. Some homeless do some kind of “institutional labor” or “shadow work”, using the terms of Snow & Anderson (1993 pp.134-138, 145-170), and these were the dominant features among the homeless at San'yūkai and in Tamahime Park, respectively. However, whenever I saw a homeless person doing some kind of work—be it official part-time work, institutional labor, or shadow work—it looked like the work was done with commitment and diligence as if the person was performing some kind of a role.

(4) The belief in social utility can work as a basis for self-identity (Lebra, 1976 p.84). Through his/her work, one can believe that one's social actions can have meaning. But what could be the social utility of the homeless (or *a* homeless person)? Actually the homeless are often utilized—or exploited—in the Japanese society. There are several

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<sup>200</sup> The pioneer in this field is Max Weber whose studies of sociology of religion covered not only European Protestantism but also Asian religions, and their influence on different work ethics.

studies on the utilization of the day-laborers. Nowadays many homeless people are hired to do certain odd jobs, such as cleaning or carrying advertisement signs. Some of the jobs are not even physically overbearing, but rather time consuming (e.g. queuing for tickets<sup>201</sup>). However, it seems that, other than work, the homeless hardly ever feel they are socially useful, except perhaps when they are helping other homeless people. Possibly, when participating in events and activities that are open to the homeless and non-homeless, as well, the homeless can feel they contribute to society e.g. if they are able to give joy to other people present. San'yūkai offers the best example of this in my data. While some individuals volunteered to do a variety of tasks available at the organization (“institutional labor”), some others simply gathered in the front of San'yūkai to hang about and socialize.<sup>202</sup> Another question is, whether the homeless feel they are able to contribute socially at all, and how this possibly affects their self-identity. Again, it would require more focused and long-term field work, including profound interviews, to find out this.

(5) Finally, “the Japanese taste for regimentation” through schooling, military or industrial can contribute to role commitment. In Japan the establishment of the personal identity on the basis of primary role is demonstrated by the use of occupational role names i.e. *sakaya-san* (liquor store keeper). Role names are also used with strangers e.g. *omawari-san* (police officer). “Sociocentric roles may override egocentric kinship terms.” Also, “[t]he kinship identity is often replaced by an occupational role identity.” The use of role names elucidates status orientation as well as role identification. (Lebra, 1976 pp.84-85.) The homeless may have experienced this in their lives before homelessness, and some of them may still preserve the use of their former role names as part of their identity even after becoming homeless. However, most of the time the homeless are simply addressed by various names referring to homelessness, such as “*hômuresu*”, “*nojukusha*” and so forth. This contributes to the reproduction of the homeless identity. E.g. at San'yūkai a more neutral word “*ojiisan*”<sup>203</sup> is used, which may also reproduce the homeless identity, because in this environment it is used of the homeless only.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Of course this is also hard physically, but not as hard as some other jobs.

<sup>202</sup> See a description of an average day at San'yūkai (Sept 8 2003) in the field notes pp.27-28.

<sup>203</sup> See the earlier discussion on the terms used of the homeless on pp.16-18.

<sup>204</sup> It can still be appropriate to use this word in this context.



“Japanese role orientation also involves versatile adjustment to whatever role one is expected to play.” As the role shifts, the behavior is also expected to shift. Role narcissism and role versatility differ from each other in that role is internalized in the first and remains external in the other. (Ibid. pp.85-86.) Lebra goes on to compare the roles in Japanese and Western societies (ibid. p.86), but the comparison is weak and simplified. The intensity of role versatility can be somewhat higher in Japan, but it has been studied that people play different roles in other societies as well.<sup>205</sup> In any case, this is something that can not be examined here. On the basis of Lebra’s argument, should not the Japanese homeless adjust to their roles more promptly, because they are used to role adjustment whenever the need for a new role arises. Maybe this is only partly true, and partly the homeless may have trouble in adjusting to homelessness and to the “role” it involves; they may even be entrapped in their previous roles. I wonder whether the expected role of a homeless person differs greatly from any other role. The answer could be yes, but it must be remembered that the homeless can also try to adopt other roles, e.g. when they try to hide their homeless status.

Role vicariism means capacity and willingness to take substitutive roles (Lebra, 1976 p.87). Lebra quotes Hsu’s [1971; in ibid.] study of *iemoto*, a social organization that according to Hsu permeates Japanese society. “Vicarious kin terms” are an expression of Japanese inclination of empathy. Another concept Lebra gives here is *migawari*, a “self-sacrificial action on behalf of another person”, and it is connected to *ittaikan*.<sup>206</sup> Finally, Lebra argues that “[r]ole substitution can provide compensation for failure in status raise (especially for fathers and mothers).” (Ibid. p88.) This may only have relevance among the present day homeless, if the homeless are ready to take substitutive roles. I argue that this may well be the case: I have witnessed a homeless person taking a role of a guide in many places,<sup>207</sup> and also a worker in certain places, such as in San’yūkai allocating clothes, serving tea, or doing other tasks, and also in food handouts and food patrols allocating food.<sup>208</sup> These roles were mostly acted out willingly, dutifully, and in some cases intensively. The role of a homeless, which a homeless individual is representative of, is undesirable, and

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<sup>205</sup> This has been well covered by Goffman in his book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959).

<sup>206</sup> See p.53.

<sup>207</sup> As “Pro” and “Sneaker” in San’ya. Curiously, both “tours” took place on the same day (Sept 16 2003). See pp.42-43 and 43-45, respectively.

<sup>208</sup> There are numerous examples of this in my field notes, especially in connection with San’yūkai.

“substitutive” roles may be adopted to diminish the homeless identity. This does not concern all homeless people, however. Beyond this, my data does not give examples of *iemoto*, use of “vicarious kin terms” (except the *ojiisan*), or *migawari*, but it is possible that they exist among the homeless as well.

## 5.5 Reciprocity

Reciprocity underlies all the above mentioned aspects of social relativism, but it can also be examined separately more closely. Reciprocity is often seen to be connected to the principle of *on*, which can be translated to both “favor” and “obligation”. Lebra discusses *on*, stating that “[*o*]n is a relational concept combining a benefit or benevolence given with a debt or obligation thus incurred” (Lebra, 1976 p.91). Lebra emphasizes the complexity of *on* (ibid.), but one can argue that the concept of *on* is not difficult for the non-Japanese to understand, especially if they are even slightly familiar with the Japanese culture. Possibly, similar structures exist in many other societies.

According to Lebra, there are three interrelated aspects of social action between individuals or groups (ibid. p.90): 1) bilateral contingency, where favor obliges repayment; 2) interdependence for mutual benefit; and 3) equality of exchanged values. Aspects of this kind of action could well be manifested within the homeless, but not necessarily between the homeless and non-homeless, because the homeless rarely have anything to offer except their gratitude. Actually, those very situations, which might lead to a reciprocal relationship including *on*, may be avoided by both parties. The situations may also be avoided by two or more homeless individuals who may otherwise have close relations, as I have discussed in connection with the Jewelry Gang. Also, the homeless people’s reluctance to ask for medical and material help is suggestive here.

The norm of *on* can be understood as “moral sustainment”. Lebra, as many others, considers the concept of *on*, and the gratitude linked to it, as a basis for Japanese morality. *Ongaeshi*, or *on* repayment is motivated by bipolar orientation—gratitude and guilt, or *giri*,

or a mixture of both. The debtor responds to a favor with gratitude and receives “the *giri* constraint”. The *on* receiver is expected to feel grateful to the *on* giver. Gratitude is expressed verbally and finally by repayment. The moral significance of gratitude lies in the receiver's awareness of being in debt. The giver is internalized as a benefactor. The receiver is expected to remember being in debt, or otherwise the receiver is accused of being *on-shirazu* (not aware of being in debt). (Lebra, 1976 91-95.)

According to Lebra, Doi [1976; in *ibid.* p.92] noted the word *sumanai*<sup>209</sup> to be used for expressions of both gratitude and apology, because the receiver either feels that the giver has made a sacrifice, and he/she is unable to make a full repayment. Thus, Japanese gratitude involves guilt (*ibid.*). But again one could ask how this works in other societies. I argue that “western gratitude” also involves guilt, e.g. we have the concepts of “indebtedness” and “debt of gratitude”. Also, the word “favor” can be compared to the Japanese *on*. This kind of “Western” gratitude may, however, be of less importance in societies where it exists. Japanese gratitude involves much more formal physical action e.g. bowing. In English there is no equivalent to *sumanai*, which combines the ideas of “thank you” and “sorry” in one expression. To analyze this further I would need to know if there is a big difference between the words *arigatô* and *sumimasen* in the everyday use among the Japanese, or whether they refer to, more or less the same thing in the Japanese mind in various situations.

Importantly, Lebra also argues that receiving *on* is not always appreciated. Though *on* is seen as a basis for Japanese morality in this connection, it is in many cases, identified as a heavy burden, or *giri*, the word which also has many other meanings and connotations. *On* may thus be regarded as a constraint. (*Ibid.* pp.92-93.) However, if we consider Giddens' above mentioned principle about the duality of structure, *giri* may also have an enabling feature.

The “*on* creditor” must, in turn, consider the receiver's feelings and not give an unsolicited *on*. This consideration can be demonstrated by the donor's belittling of the gift. The favour receiver's possible ambivalence towards gift is called *arigata-meiwaku*. The receiver is not

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<sup>209</sup> Often used in its “-masu” form in the normal speech i.e. *sumimasen*.

expected to readily accept favors, especially those that would make the burden unbearable. A favor can be refused politely under the guise of *enryo*, meaning “virtue of reserve and modesty”. “Avoidance of *giri* may be sought in a free-floating, isolated, independent life.” (Lebra, 1976 pp.93-94.) The quotes are very interesting in reference with the homeless. The reason why I decided to carry out the analysis of *on* is that many homeless people accept favors daily in the form of food and material help, maybe even from the same persons or organizations (the persons, of course, giving a human face to the organization). At the same time, though, they may feel that they will never be able to pay it back. This could explain why some homeless people do not accept favors. Some might even consider this to be *arigata-meiwaku*. However, some evidence in my own data would seem to show that some homeless individuals occasionally manage to return a favor, repay the *on* debt, or ask for a favor in return of a favor. On a couple of occasions “Sensei” asked me to buy him a bottle of *shōchu* (Japanese liquor) as a favor in return for a longer conversation.<sup>210</sup> This represents immediate repayment. However, the others members of the Jewelry Gang actually despised this practice as “bribery”,<sup>211</sup> and they did not demand any favors in return for giving information. A concrete example of returning of a favor, took place when a homeless person who guided me through San’ya, bought me back a drink, maybe one hour later than I had bought him one (in return for his trouble of showing me around).<sup>212</sup> However, this was only one incident, and one should not make too far-reaching conclusions about it. Although many homeless accept help and seemingly take it as *on*, there is also a possibility that many of the homeless (not to speak of many of those who help the homeless) think that this kind of help does not qualify as *on*. This is something I did not come to think about asking anyone, and it would probably have been a difficult question to answer, anyway. These *on*-transactions between the homeless can be expected to go as they normally do. All in all, I have no adequate empirical data about this.

As the creditor expects repayment, at the same time he/she must be cautious not to demand the repayment too crudely. I.e. “[e]xpectation of payoff, constrained by the need for apparent altruism, must be communicated with extreme subtlety...”. *On* credit can also

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<sup>210</sup> See e.g. “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Aug 28 2003. See field notes p.8.

<sup>211</sup> E.g. “Nichiren” at the SSS food handout, Aug 29 2003. See field notes p.12.

<sup>212</sup> “Sneaker” voluntarily gave me a tour in San’ya, showing many places, and we ended up in a small karaoke bar, where he bought me a drink (Sept 21 2003). This was already quoted in the part on ethnography. See either that or field notes pp.43-45.

accumulate as a social insurance. Lebra claims that “Japanese culture, as other cultures, endorses opportune repayment and disapproves immediate return, unless the transaction is a purely economic or conventional gift-giving.” There is also “transitive reciprocity”, which may be utilized only if role vicariism is not restricted. (Ibid. pp.95-96.) As can be expected, the transactions between the homeless and the non-homeless are often one-way, the non-homeless being in the role of the creditor. Most often the homeless do not even have a possibility for immediate return, but sometimes this may happen. During my field observations, I was sometimes the receiver of *on* in the form of information. I sometimes paid this back immediately, as in the above mentioned case with “Sensei”, sometimes later, and sometimes I did not have a chance to do it at all, or I did not feel any need for it. The clearest example of a homeless person returning a favor to me, however exceptional it may have been, was when I received a drink from “Sneaker” in the bar.

Lebra considers specific and generalized reciprocity. I have no reason to examine specific reciprocity<sup>213</sup> more closely here, because I have not enough examples in my data to create any analysis. Specific reciprocity is mainly something that the homeless don’t have access to, e.g. gift-giving in different occasions. There is an interesting phenomenon, though, *mimai*, which is a gift given to a person who has faced e.g. a serious illness, a fire, or a major robbery, and these gifts are intentional to help the victim economically (ibid. p.97). Sometimes homelessness can be partly or totally caused by these factors. It is difficult to estimate the influence of *mimai* in modern Japanese society, but at least it is reasonable to doubt, whether *mimai* has helped those who have become homeless. Otherwise, this kind of conventional gift-giving among the homeless may not be too popular, but nonetheless I think it exists, as far as there is a closer relationship (e.g. when someone pays a visit). I noticed that “Deshi” was often given some things free of charge by his friends, and he could try to sell them at the morning market.<sup>214</sup> Some homeless individuals may, of course, feel that they are deprived of this possibility, too. The phenomenon of gift-giving in *shûshoku-iwai*, which means “celebration of being employed” (ibid.), is actually ironic in this connection.

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<sup>213</sup> See Lebra, 1976 pp.96-101 for more information.

<sup>214</sup> “Deshi” at Tamahime, Sept 15 2003. See field notes p.38.

Generalized reciprocity can more visibly influence the life of the homeless. Lebra states, that the significance of reciprocity lies in the creation of social relationship. It is distinguished from a purely economic exchange and from a contractual relationship, and it is especially derived from memories. Reciprocity tends to deviate from its ideal type, namely bilateral contingency, interdependence of values, and equality of exchanged values. It involves some degree of unilaterality or asymmetry i.e. it tends to become generalized. The moral implications of *on* lie in the relationship between generalized benevolence and generalized obligation. (Lebra, 1976 p.101.)

Generalized benevolence is a moral virtue under such names as *shinsetsu* (kindness, gentleness), *nasake* (feelings, emotions), or *jiji* (compassion, benevolence), *awaremi* (pity, compassion) and *omoiyari* (consideration, sympathy, but also empathy<sup>215</sup>). Buddha is seen as “the ultimate embodiment of unlimited benevolence.” However, how Ego's awareness of Alter's generalized benevolence reflects the essence of social relativism is more important. Generalized benevolence is not limited to an occasion, it is not economically calculable or repayable. It is the overall attitude and good will of the *onjin* (benefactor) and it is associated with *sewa* (help, assistance). The amount cannot be estimated. The parental *on* is associated with *sewa*, *shimpai* (concern, care), and *kurô* (pain, trouble). It is also a source of guilt. (Ibid. pp.101-102.) These aspects, or at least those which are relevant in connection with the homeless and with my field data, have already been analysed in the homeless context, in connection with empathy and dependency, for example.

Generalized obligation is created by generalized benevolence. One is always indebted, always has to remember the debt, and always has to make effort to repay. Repayment is complementary instead of being symmetric. Its common form is overall compliance, submission, or loyalty. It forms an interdependent tie in-between. The chance for repayment may come at a point in one's career, when status reversal has taken place. The generalized *on* may be repaid through economic support or through *sewa*, *shimpai*, and *kurô*. Repayment does not necessarily require status reversal, but the other one's status raises. (Ibid. pp.102-103.) These aspects of obligation have also been analysed above e.g. in connection with “occupying the proper place”. Again, it must be noted that a more

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<sup>215</sup> See the discussion on translation of *omoiyari* on p.60 n. 130.

careful study of these aspects would require a more focused and comprehensive ethnographic field work.

According to Lebra, the generalization of *on* is supported by numerous structural factors in Japanese society. *On* can be ascribed, meaning that it is given at birth, and one is indebted to one's parents, to the groups one belongs, and to one's society and country. (Ibid. p.104.) The level of each one of these presumably varies from person to person, and strong commitment to *on* could be expected to have weakened in recent times. For the homeless this ideal type of *on* could pose a problem, if they feel they are indebted. I analysed this shortly in connection with the family of homeless parents and their son in Ueno Park in the context of "dependency". If a homeless person feels, he/she has received *on* from any of the above mentioned, it must be frustrating not to be able to pay it back. At the same time it must be remembered that a minority of the homeless may have intentionally escaped from this generalized obligation to repay *on*. The same can also be with the "hierarchically based *on*"<sup>216</sup>. Hierarchical relationships can pose problems for those who do not "fit in". As a homeless it is easier to be independent, and not get involved in *on* relationships. However, some homeless individuals form simple hierarchies between themselves and other homeless people, consciously or unconsciously, and these hierarchies most probably include exchange of *on*, as well. Lebra notes, that ascribed *on* and hierarchically based *on* may come into conflict, and in this case the latter normally merges into the former, as a superior takes a parental role (ibid. p.105).

## 5.6 The Three Domains of Situational Interaction

Lebra distinguishes three domains of situational interaction. These domains are "intimate", "ritual", and "anomic". The domains are defined by two distinctions: *uchi-soto* distinction and *omote-ura* distinction. *Uchi-soto* ("inside-outside") distinction can be drawn between e.g. an individual person, a family, different groups (e.g. a company), a place of residence, and nation. The distinction is drawn "not by social structure but by constantly varying

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<sup>216</sup> For more information about hierachically based *on*, see Lebra, 1976 pp.104-105.

situations.” Note, that this comes close to some aspects of Giddens’ methodology of time, space, and regionalization, which is influenced by Hägerstrand’s “time-geography” and Goffman’s discussion on “front and back regions” (Giddens, 1984 pp.110-144), as the situations vary according to actors movements in time-space. Shortly put, “[a]nalyzing the time-space co-ordination of social activities means studying the contextual features of locales through which actors move in their daily paths and the regionalization of locales stretching away across time-space” (ibid. p.286). Goffman has analysed at length various occasions in which people come to each other’s proximity, and change their behavior accordingly, but he has also analysed the difference between “front and back regions” and how the behavior or roles people take may differ on these occasions (Goffman, 1959 pp.106-140). Goffman’s theory about front and back regions can be applied to correspond Lebra’s theory, in that *omote-ura*, can be translated “front-back”, “public-private”, but also “shown-hidden”. Note, that while *soto* and *omote*, as well as *uchi* and *ura*, are overlapping expressions, they are mutually independent dichotomies. There are four possible combinations: *uchi-omote*, *uchi-ura*, *soto-omote*, *soto-ura*. These lead to actually four situational domains (the first is unnamed<sup>217</sup>):

	Omote	Ura
Uchi	-	Intimate
Soto	Ritual	Anomic

(Lebra, 1976 p.112.)

Lebra argues, that “the Japanese tend to be sensitive to these three situational domains and to vary their behavior in accordance with them”, but there is also “a dynamic interchange between a situation and interaction behavior” (Lebra, 1976 p.113). Correspondingly, Anglo-American cultures may be quite as sensitive to the “front and back regions” and the situational domains they create, which are roughly equivalent to the Japanese ones.

On a general level, what *uchi-soto* and *omote-ura* distinctions would the homeless Japanese make in different situations? For a homeless person also, “*uchi*” can mean more

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<sup>217</sup> According to Lebra, this combination is unlikely to occur in reality. It can be valid e.g. among the mentally disabled people, but it could of course be debated, how much this has to do with the reality.



than one person (oneself). Depending on the context, it may refer to the partner one is be living with, the group of other persons living in the same place, one's homeless friends, or even e.g. San'yūkai or some other support organization. If we are to believe Lebra's argument, the distinction between *uchi* and *soto* is flexible depending on the context. How are the three situational domains manifested among the homeless?

Intimate behavior tends to happen with those that the Ego interacts most. Nakane [1970] calls these relationships and situations "frames". Also two strangers can be temporarily brought into intimate interaction. Intimate behavior is manifested in two ways. The first is "communication of unity" which is based on mutual liking and emotional attachment, and is communicated both outwardly and inwardly. Outward communication means normal expressions of intimate interaction. Inward communication means the above discussed forms of "silent communication", namely *ishin denshin* ("heart-to-heart" communication) and *ittaikan*,<sup>218</sup> but here "a situational boundary, not a relationship, permits such intimate behavior." Even an intimate relationship is not always acted out in intimate behavior, if there is a situational boundary affecting it. (Ibid. pp.114-115.) The homeless can engage themselves in friendships, which can offer opportunities for intimate behavior. These intimate relationships can also be acted out in e.g. ritual fashion, if the situation requires this, but this may rarely be the case among the homeless. Actually, when I was making my field observations, I occasionally had a feeling that when I interrupted a seemingly intimate situation as a stranger, the situation continued as intimate, and did not turn into a ritual one. The homeless seemed to act according to ritual mostly, when they were asked for information, and this also seemed to transform their way of speech into ritual. It can be speculated, whether the homeless prefer the intimate behavior more generally in everyday life. Although the food handouts were often organized and carried out according to routine, the atmosphere between the dealers of the food and the homeless was otherwise distinctively relaxed. This seemed to be the case, especially when the homeless started to gather at the place before the actual handout started. On a sunny day the atmosphere was like a combination of tranquil waiting and modest but easy-going socializing. Again, one must note that the speculation about the position of "silent communication" as a manifestation of intimate behavior is problematic, as it is hard to prove empirically. In

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<sup>218</sup> See pp.53 & 60-61 respectively.

addition to appearing intimate, there were some ritual aspects at play at the same time. This was manifested in the relative tidiness of almost everyone's clothing and appearance, in the way how most people seemed to have sharpened up their appearance, and in the way people positioned themselves at the scene. Naturally, the circumstances varied according to the place and the size of the food handout. Of all the handouts, the one in Adachi Ward seemed to be the most intimate, obviously due to its small size and communal nature.<sup>219</sup> Actually, in every food handout there was much freedom to act any way one wanted, as long as one did not cause trouble. The organization e.g. the queuing for food varied from handout to handout according to the organizer. Some were more rigidly organized than others.<sup>220</sup>

According to Lebra, natural inclinations and wishes are expected to flow freely and without penalty in "display of spontaneity", which is normally expected to appear only in intimate situations. Moreover, "[t]o show inhibition and reserve in an intimate situation may even be disapproved as *mizukusai* ("strangerlike"). Relaxation is the norm of intimate interaction." An extreme form of spontaneity is social nudity. It is "often intensified by the deliberate violation of conventional manners and etiquette (*hame o hazusu*)."<sup>221</sup> This frankness in intimate interaction may sometimes lead to "aggression, including impoliteness toward one's superior...[A confrontation] may ensue, which ends up negating the very unity that is supposed to be reinforced in intimate interactions".<sup>221</sup> Lebra states that the ideal form of interaction is a balance between allowed spontaneity (which leads toward disunity) and attained unity (which leads toward inhibition). (Lebra, 1976 pp.116-117.)

Do all the homeless behave the same way in this context? Do they have a chance to display spontaneity in intimate situations? Spontaneous behavior could be expected to be

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<sup>219</sup> For descriptions of different food handouts, see e.g. SSS morning handout, Aug 29 2003; Adachi Ward handout, Sept 2 2003; Komagata-bashi handout, Sept 4 2003; and Shirahige-bashi, Sept 6 2003

<sup>220</sup> Of the food handouts the SSS morning takidashi queuing system was the most regulated and complex. It involved a long walk from the waiting place to the SSS branch headquarters. See a description in field notes pp.10-13; The handouts organized by the Korean Christian churches in Ueno Park included a lengthy ceremony before the food was distributed. The homeless sarcastically called these "*aamen-raamen*".

<sup>221</sup> Lebra argues in length (Lebra, 1976 pp.116-117) about how the Japanese act more spontaneously in spontaneous intimate situations than foreigners, especially when drinking. This could, after all, be very close to the truth. I guess in Finland it depends a lot on the average age of the drinkers, as well as on the level of drunkenness.

considered normal in situations with only homeless friends present. There are examples of this in my data. What the homeless sometimes lack, however, is the chance to manifest equal social nudity with the non-homeless. If a homeless individual manifests social nudity or, even more, violates conventional manners e.g. when drinking, it is seen as despicable by the outsiders. The situation is not seen as intimate by the outsiders. Most notably, the homeless have a chance to behave like this only among their peers and the environment is not normally private enough to be compared to spaces, which enable display of spontaneity in Lebra's terms i.e. the space is not closed from the outsiders. However, the homeless may not care about this in some situations, and they may, instead enjoy the opportunity of being spontaneous even in situations in which ritual behavior would be expected by the outsiders.<sup>222</sup> From the perspective of the homeless themselves the situation as well as their own behavior may appear as intimate, and from the perspective of an outsider the situation and behavior of the homeless may appear as anomic.

It could be argued, that commonly the lives of the homeless are characterised by a greater degree of social nudity. But it is often evident that many homeless behave very carefully in certain situations, showing inhibition and reserve. I have witnessed some activities that have been organized for the homeless, and I have noticed that many of the homeless do not participate e.g. the merriment, laughter and conversation. However, these situations are not exactly intimate, and accusing homeless of being *mizukuzai* would be absurd.

Home is considered to be an ideal setting for intimate interaction. However, Lebra argues that this is not always so because of the domestic work, during which the setting may not be ideal for "emotional communication of unity", and especially in a middle-class home, the maintenance of status distance between the members of a family. (Lebra, 1976 p.118.) This part of Lebra's argument feels a bit outdated and ambiguous to me. Firstly, what is considered middle-class in modern day Japan? It is a well-known cliché that when inquired about the subject, most Japanese consider themselves as middle-class. This classification covers a very heterogeneous group of Japanese citizens with different income levels and

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<sup>222</sup> There are some examples of this in my field notes. First time I met "Ookami" at Tamahime, he was sitting among the crowd, and though the others acting in a friendly way, "Ookami" was drunk and made threatening gestures and grunts as if to scare me (Sept 11 2003). See field notes p.34; Another such thing happened near the Iriya Exit of the Ueno Station, where a group of homeless was having a blast (Aug 27 2003). See field notes p.4.

individual lifestyles, which are also due to differences in residence and family background. Secondly, there's also the part of population that lives alone. Even many *sarariiman* with a family can spend long periods of time away from their families, if they work far away from home. Of course, living alone in a house does not count for intimate *interaction*, but the setting is intimate, because it is private, and inviting friends to one's home can create intimate interaction. Thirdly, the amount of domestic work depends on different circumstances, e.g. the place of residence, technology in general, availability of technological appliances, and the size of the house and family. Besides, when the family or part of the family is doing domestic work, does it not also affect the possibility for "emotional communication of unity" at the same time. It also depends on the family, how they actually share the domestic work.

According to Lebra , instead of home, the "ideal setting for intimate interaction requires...separation from the setting of daily work...[and] apparent equality among the participants in these activities" (ibid.). The first requirement occurs in time and place, somewhere between the workplace and home. It is even further reinforced by institutionalized interaction, like e.g. periodic gatherings, where also "social nudity" may occur. The problem with the second requirement is that of sex. If the intimate interaction is not sexually segregated, it must be regimented. (Ibid. pp.118-120.) In a sense, Lebra's argument has relevance. When a group of young people travels somewhere on a vacation enjoying each other's company, it may offer greater intimacy than staying at home. Also, a bar can offer greater intimacy for a married *sarariiman*, than being at home with children. But, this can simply be another kind of intimacy, not an absolute presupposition for it.

The settings for intimate interaction for the homeless are numerous: they can hang around at the Jewelry Bridge; at *takidashi* (food handouts); on their way to *takidashi*; in front of, or inside San'yūkai; Tamahime Park's *go* and *shogi* games; evenings after the daily routines; do occasional drinking. In most situations equality among the participants is enhanced by lack of opposite sex, although other kinds of hierarchies may exist and a great amount of feeling of alienation. Generally, the homeless go to work irregularly and these occasions do not necessarily offer opportunities for institutionalized interaction, except maybe the random meetings in bars after a day's pay. But this can hardly be considered as

an organized setting for interaction. However, there is at least one organized activity which can serve as a setting for intimate interaction for the homeless: *takidashi* (food handouts). Some San'yūkai activities can be considered as organized settings for intimate interaction, as well, and also some festivals, so called *iryô sôdan kai* (medical counselling meeting), where the homeless can go and discuss their health problems.<sup>223</sup> However, all of these situations may involve a lot of inhibition and ritual behavior, as well.

What comes to ritual behavior, the ritual situations are linked by the fact that “Ego defines Alter or a third person as an outsider whose opinion [Ego] cares for”, and this happens most often because “Alter has some influence over [Ego] and Ego thinks Alter would exercise his [or her] influence variably depending on Ego's performance.” As in intimate behavior, ritual behavior corresponds with a ritual situation. Indicators of ritual behavior are as follows: posture, gestures and countenance, style of speech, and physical distance between the actors. Ritual behavior closely relates to status orientation<sup>224</sup>; this is, however, ignored in an intimate situation. “The ritual actor concerns himself with conforming to conventional rules, manners, and etiquette, presents himself with his social mask on, and manages to make his impression on Alter or a third-person witness in a manner well depicted by Goffman (1959). The actor tries to maintain face. There are two ways of maintaining face, defensive and aggressive.” (Lebra, 1976 pp.120-121.)

Ritual behavior, as described by Lebra, is very common among some homeless people, however, while some homeless people are indifferent to it. The differences of attitude may be due to various reasons, e.g. the time spent on the streets. As noted earlier, the majority of homeless individuals may wear a “social mask” in many situations, especially when they are interviewed face to face, probably when they apply for work, and so forth. According to Snow & Anderson (1993 p.214) such things, the earlier mentioned posture, gestures and countenance, style of speech and physical distance, can also contribute to the construction of personal identity. They claim that primary means for these are verbal, but at least in Japan it seems that “the arrangement of personal appearance” is highly important as many homeless take good care of their appearance. But it could nevertheless be argued

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<sup>223</sup> See a description of one *iryô sôdan kai* (Sept 21 2003) on field notes p.53.

<sup>224</sup> See Lebra, 1976 pp.69-82.

that ritual behavior is most easily recognized from the speech, as it clearly changes to formal whereas the physical appearance may already be formal.

Defending face requires heeding of the ritual code of behavior, and ritual circumspection. It can be seen as the opposite of social nudity. It is manifested in physical and emotional distance, and expressed especially by bowing. It may extend to total inaction, when a ritual code is not immediately available in a new situation. (Lebra, 1976 p.121.) I would suggest that this kind of careful behavior may not always stem from the fear of losing one's face, but from the fact that it makes interaction easier in uncertain situations. The code can be compared to Goffman's concept of "veneer of consensus", a flexible set of loose agreements that "facilitates the smooth working of society" (Goffman, 1959 p.9), or "situational proprieties", a special set of rules that guides the individual when in presence of others (Goffman, 1963 p.234). The code could be argued to exist especially in a ritual situation as Lebra means it above. (It also exists in intimate situations, though in much looser and flexible form.) This kind of system seemed to be at work in some, more or less, ritual situations in which I was present. I am not able to tell how the facilitation through agreement worked between two or more homeless individuals, because I observed their interaction only for a short period of time. I believe, however, that most homeless people prefer ritual behavior every time they meet a stranger or someone they see only occasionally. But I also believe that a ritual situation can presently turn into a more intimate one. And, as already noted, if an intimate situation is interrupted, it may in spite of interruption continue as intimate. It is also possible, that the interruption turns an intimate or ritual situation anomic.

Ego may also try to save Alter's face (Lebra, 1976 p.122) by using various techniques. These are interesting issues, although I do not have any examples of this kind of communication in my data. Instead, my data offers examples of the so called "anticipatory communication" being used by the homeless I met. Anticipatory communication relates to empathy, and the degree of communication is dependent on the status of the participants. Ego "must be trained to be both receptive to the offer of such service by Alter and sensitive to Alter's unexpressed needs." *Omoiyari* can be found in both ritual and intimate settings.

(Ibid. p.123.) A good example of the use of so called practice was *hanashi o ukeru*,<sup>225</sup> both ritual and intimate at the same time. “Sensei” and other homeless individuals around listened intently to everything that an old man told them about his past misfortunes. For “Sensei” and the rest of the group it may have been more like ritual interaction, but for the old man more like intimate interaction. I clearly lacked this ability e.g. when I tried interview people in a crowd, not understanding that it is against the “homeless etiquette” to enquire from a homeless person about something in front of the others, as “Sensei” told me.<sup>226</sup> Among the homeless it is more common to anticipate, what should be left unsaid and undone.

Also “self-communication”, another form of communication presented by Lebra, evidently occurs among the homeless. It simply means writing down one's thoughts and wishes to one's own satisfaction, like in a diary . The style is “that of the monologue status-free, distinct from the socially adressed spoken style.” If it is disclosed, it may become social. (Lebra, 1976 p.123.) Some of the homeless actually manage self-communication in social context. The most well-known example of this is the weblog kept by Nozarashi Kenjirô.<sup>227</sup> There are some other examples of this practice, still marginal, according to my impression.

"Correspondence" acts as a combination of self-communication and interpersonal communication. In this case, communication is indirect. (Lebra, 1976 p.124.) Postal correspondence is not common among the homeless because they normally lack address, and only few of them actually have a postal address, at e.g. one of the support organizations, but even then correspondence seems very unlikely. More notably, the homeless supposedly feel they have no reason to communicate through correspondence.

“Understatement”, in this connection, means open-endedness of a statement especially in the spoken language, so that “by omitting subjects, verbs, and negatives the speaker can avoid making a verbal commitment and thus risking the loss of face” (ibid. p.124). Presumably the homeless use understatement as much as any other Japanese, but they must certainly feel they can express themselves more freely and frankly by spoken language in

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<sup>225</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Sept 4 2003. See field notes p.20.

<sup>226</sup> “Sensei” at the SSS handout, Sept 1 2003. See field notes p.15.

<sup>227</sup> See “Midnight Homeless Blue” blog (a).

their speech. “Unobtrusive behavior”, is implicit in “understatement”, and besides being a virtue it is a “social weapon” to not to risk losing one's or the Alter's face. The use of self-restraint, or *enryo*,<sup>228</sup> which describes both “polite hesitation to accept a desired offer and polite refusal of an undesired offer”, is also a common feature. According to Lebra *enryo* refers to polite hesitation in most instances, so that the Alter is “supposed to keep insisting that his offer is accepted.” (Lebra, 1976 p.125.) The homeless, though, may have given up the general use of *enryo* e.g. when they are offered food. However, in some cases *enryo* may resurface, especially when something exceptional is being offered. In my observations the use of *enryo* varied from person to person and from situation to situation. E.g. “Sneaker” showed a lot of *enryo*, when I offered to buy him a soft drink. “Sensei” explicitly wanted me to buy alcohol for him as a favor in return for a conversation. When I asked “Cap”, if he would also want to have alcohol in return for an interview, he unambiguously turned the offer down. “Nichiren” told me I should not buy alcohol for “Sensei” either.<sup>229</sup> In “Sneaker’s” case it can be argued to have been a matter of “polite hesitation”, in “Cap’s” case, as “Cap” did not get angry and showed his understanding, “polite refusal of an undesired offer”. E.g. “Deshi” in turn, gratefully accepted everything he was offered, but this was affected by the situation he was in. For some reason the homeless, living on the eastern side of Tamahime Park, including “Deshi”, did not take the trouble to go to food handouts, even if they happened to be on that side of the park.<sup>230</sup>

“Ritualism” acts as a way of minimizing the options and uncertainties. A “rigid, meticulous control of interaction behavior in a predetermined way so as to prevent embarrassing surprises.” (Lebra, 1976 p.125.) In theory, “ritualism” is the exact opposite of intimate behavior.<sup>231</sup> My overall impression is that the homeless hardly ever got involved in these kind of situations. Embarrassing surprises were avoided by refraining

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<sup>228</sup> See pp.55-56, 62-63, 90.

<sup>229</sup> “Cap” told me he did not want to express his thoughts to me, when he was drunk. Not recorded.

<sup>230</sup> Hoshi no ie’s handout at Tamahime, Sept 16 2003. See field notes. It is possible that they were given food when I was elsewhere. Besides, everytime the food was brought to them directly, they accepted it. See e.g. the first time I went there on Sept 11 2003, in field notes; and San’ya Yobawari no kai people at Tamahime, Sept 18 2003. See field notes. It was quite rare that someone did not accept the given food.

<sup>231</sup> Other kind of ritualism has been examined by Merton as a form of deviant behavior. By ritualism Merton (1968 pp.203–204) means overt ritualism, which means abandoning cultural goals but continuing abiding by the institutional norms. The “ritualism” Lebra suggests above refers to conforming and formal way of interaction. These two concepts should not be mixed with each other. See also p.55.



from situations which could lead to them. In this respect the homeless enjoy freedom that may otherwise be quite rare.

Tempting one's face through social aggression, is implicit in the same cultural matrix as defending face. This necessitates self-exhibition and ostentation. The face is maintained, promoted, or demoted in competition with Alter's face. In the extreme form Ego can change his/her face only by demoting Alter's. There is no *omoiyari*. (Lebra, 1976 p.126.) Naturally, some homeless individuals may have a desire to display their faces in certain situations. They want to stay as anonymous as possible to the outside world for most of the time. This is clearly manifested in their refusal to being photographed. However, in certain situations when they are not able to hide, or do not feel the need to hide their faces, they may engage in "social aggression". The line between intimate and ritual behavior is sometimes blurred in these occasions, as already noted above. Again, it could be expected that the homeless have a greater freedom to display their faces more "aggressively" in ritual situations, but according to my observations, this is the case very rarely.

Lebra goes on to discuss "conspicuous generosity", "self-praise", and "arrogance" (ibid. pp.126-128). These characteristics are all detested by the Japanese, as they probably are everywhere, to some extent. They represent specific forms of ritual behavior, and my data is inadequate for me to be able to examine these aspects further. E.g. "arrogance" was presented mostly when someone was drunk, and this kind of arrogance was generally dismissed as "drunken nonsense".<sup>232</sup> This can be classified as anomic, not ritual behavior. Lebra states that the cultural ideal in ritual behavior is in the balance between "dignity" and "humility" (ibid. p.129). This kind of ideal is not unique to Japan only, it can be supposed to be implicit in any society.

How is the code for ritual behavior reproduced? Lebra offers some implications: Violation of the cultural value leads to humiliation. Historically the ritual conformity was stressed under the Tokugawa regime. Lebra takes the example of the story of 47 rōnin, in which the humiliation led to an act of aggression. The following punishment was an order to commit suicide, which again led to retaliation for the sake of loyalty. Probably all the Japanese

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<sup>232</sup> E.g. "Deshi" told me later, that "Ookami" acts differently when he is drunk, and that he is not normally like that (Sept 15 2003). When "Ookami" was not drunk, he was friendly and almost shy.

know this story, since it is being portrayed in Japan all the time. Deliberate self-humiliation, in turn, is of value for its scarcity. *Manzai* comedy has utilized deliberate self-humiliation which is representative of “total deritualization” for its own benefit. (Lebra, 1976 pp.129-130.) Its opposite is *rakugo*, which values the use of ritualistic display minimizing extemporaneity (ibid. pp.130-131). These examples are only suggestive, however. Obviously ritual behavior and its “situational proprieties” are reproduced in different phases of “resocialization”, as Lebra suggests (ibid. 1976 p.79).

Anomic behavior is characterized by indifference to the ritual behavior. It means Ego’s action toward Alter who is defined as an outsider and yet with whom Ego feels no need to maintain “front”. *Omoiyari* is irrelevant in anomic situation. Ego does not have to worry about his/her face, and does not have to consider Alter’s face. (Lebra, 1976 p.131.) Much of the behavior of the majority of the homeless can be thought of as anomic. *Anomie* is a well-known concept in Western sociology. It was made famous by Durkheim (1893) who defined “state of *anomie*” to mean a breakdown of norms in society, which has gone through fast transformations. Durkheim also saw *anomie* leading to all forms of deviant behavior, as Merton (1968) did later. Lebra’s definition of “anomic behavior” resembles this more or less. In addition to this, when one considers the rapid increase in homelessness, one can argue that Durkheim’s development of this concept is applicable in this context.

According to Lebra anomic behavior is likely to emerge in new situations with no new set of norms is available, yet. The following behavior may range from total inaction to totally uninhibited action. The latter could also be experienced as freedom. (Lebra, 1976 p.131.) This reminds me of a case in connection with “defending face”<sup>233</sup>, which at the time was seen as a part of ritual behavior. The difference is that anomic situation “allows” uninhibited action, but ritual situation does not. Total inaction is prohibited in both situations it, however, emerges for different reasons: in a ritual situation from general wariness, and in an anomic situation from insensitivity. As has already been argued, the homeless can be free from many constraints of the ritual behavior, but they can act in a ritual way, even when the situation could be expected to be more or less anomic. Moreover, because they are free from the constraints of ritual behavior, they are simultaneously

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<sup>233</sup> See pp.100-103.

deprived of the opportunities offered by the ritual situation. This partly explains why most homeless behave ritually in certain situations. The ritual situation can offer a kind of ontological sense of security,<sup>234</sup> since the interaction is much more regulated in a ritual situation than it is in anomic situations, and some goals can not be reached by anomic behavior but by ritual behavior, only.<sup>235</sup> Also intimate behavior may often be preferred to anomic behavior, and sometimes intimate behavior may appear anomic to an outsider, or anomic behavior may appear intimate to the homeless, especially drunken behavior.<sup>236</sup> However, it would often seem that anomic behavior is a choice made out of necessity, since the homeless live continually in public places, where their behavior can be seen by any passer-by, unless they own a shack or a tent, which offer a little more privacy. It would be impossible to try and keep up a “ritual” appearance all the time. Some homeless individuals, indeed, have abandoned this “ritual mask” altogether. E.g. “Sensei” told me about the homeless who lived alone, practically without any need for spoken interaction.<sup>237</sup>

Anomic behavior is also related to anonymity. A group may offer anonymity in the eyes of outsiders. (Lebra, 1976 pp.131-132.) The homeless often try to preserve their anonymity.<sup>238</sup> Some of the homeless try to stay as anonymous as possible, some are more easy-going with it. Generally, members of the Jewelry Gang spoke more openly about their individual pasts than some of the homeless I acquainted with in San’ya.<sup>239</sup> There were various reasons for this, mostly related to background, to feelings of shame and guilt in consequence, and also to chances of getting work. Allegedly, some people had escaped their debts. In this case, perhaps, they wanted to stay anonymous in order to be able to avoid their debtors.<sup>240</sup> Some individuals were unable to find work, and at some point they

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<sup>234</sup> See e.g. Giddens, 1984 p.125.

<sup>235</sup> An example could be the normal overall politeness of the homeless, when they are offered food or other help.

<sup>236</sup> See e.g. the Iriya Exit incident, in field notes p.5.

<sup>237</sup> “Sensei” at Jewelry Bridge, Aug 28 2003. See field notes p.7.

<sup>238</sup> This is written in the “homeless etiquette”, as mentioned above. See e.g. p.50 n.106.

<sup>239</sup> “Sensei”, “Nichiren”, and “Cap” all revealed me how they had become homeless. On the contrary, the homeless couple who disappeared to Chiba were silent about their past. In San’ya only “Pro” and “Waiter” revealed me something about their individual pasts. Others did not want or did not feel need to bring out the subject. “Deshi” who was otherwise very talkative, told me once: “*Mukashi no koto mada dare ni mo hanasanai. Muzukashii. Ienai.* (I am not speaking about my past to anyone yet. It is difficult. I can not talk about it.)” “Deshi” in the “vending machine bar”, Sept 17 2003. See field notes p.47.

<sup>240</sup> This fact was verified by “Cap” at the Jewelry Bridge, Sept 6 2003. See field notes p.26; and by a staff member of SSS who claimed that SSS protects the homeless against loan sharks. Staff member at the SSS branch office, Aug 29 2003. See field notes p.13.

had been obliged to leave their apartment (sometimes leaving their families behind). Feelings of shame can be caused by a more general stigma that homelessness attaches to people,<sup>241</sup> but also by a feeling of failure, in general. A homeless person can be considered to have failed to conform, and to act out his/her role, especially as a member of a group, and to raise his/her status, as well. This may be connected to guilt, since an individual can feel oneself guilty for causing pain and shame to others. The feelings of shame and guilt have become so overbearing that one has intentionally escaped and become a homeless person, wanting to stay anonymous. This, however, is only my speculation, since I do not have any examples of this in my data. To preserve anonymity in itself is not so important, but one's real identity needs to be hidden sometimes e.g. when looking for work, so that the employer does not find out about one's homelessness. In this connection I adhere to Lebra's definition of a group that can offer anonymity means any group, in which one can act faceless (e.g. a riot) and do things one would not otherwise be capable of doing (Lebra, 1976 pp.131-132). The homeless do not feel the need to belong to a group to be able to act anonymously more than any others. They may belong to homeless movements, where they can also take part in demonstrations. But they may feel need to belong to a community, where they can *stay* anonymous, and where they can actually have more privacy from the non-homeless.

An important factor that reproduces ritual behavior and lessens anomic behavior among the homeless is the so-called "homeless etiquette", which has been partly described above.<sup>242</sup> Though the etiquette does not exist in any concrete form, it affected the behavior of many

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<sup>241</sup> Goffman (1963 p.9) defines "stigma" as "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance." In society it is normal to anticipate people's "social identities". If the person's "social identity" is considered to be undesirable by the others, the person is reduced to "a tainted, discounted one" i.e. possessing an attribute, or stigma. Only those attributes are at issue, which "are incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be." But it is not just the attribute but "a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype", which is stigma. (Ibid. pp.10-14.) A stigmatized person in a situation may be either instantly discredited, or potentially discreditable, and a stigmatized person is likely to have experience of both of these situations (ibid. p.14). One can imagine a homeless man who tries to maintain his appearance as "normal-looking", and is trying to find work. He may go to the unemployment office, and may have a temporary address in some support organization. He may not be considered homeless. It may also be not that common to be stigmatized because of being a homeless in an unemployment office, where undoubtedly many homeless visit every day. Thus, depending also on the office's general attitude toward the homeless people, the homeless person may be either discredited or discreditable in the situation. However, when he is seen on the street building a shanty for himself, he is instantly discredited by the passer-by. If he was just walking on the street, depending mainly on his appearance, he could also be "only" discreditable in that particular situation.

<sup>242</sup> See p.50 n.106.

homeless individuals I got to know better. It is “ratified” mainly by those who go to food handouts, and take care of their appearance to some extent, and are willing to work if they get a job opportunity. However, all my “key informants” seemed to agree on the main issues of the etiquette. The “homeless etiquette” is a loosely defined set of norms, which Goffman would refer to as “situational proprieties” (Goffman, 1963 p.243) that guide the behavior of the homeless individuals as well as anyone’s who wants to interact with the homeless on their terms. The etiquette also comes close Giddens’ term “tact” (Giddens, 1984 p.75). One of the fundamental principles is that names are not asked and backgrounds are not enquired.<sup>243</sup> One can tell one’s name and background, if one wants to, but it is not required. These practices are directly related to preservation of anonymity, but between the homeless situations in some cases become ritual, since the etiquette guides the behavior. In the case of the homeless, the preservation of anonymity may contribute to a feeling of—using another term Giddens (ibid.) uses—increased “ontological security”. A ritual situation can be transformed into intimate, if names are exchanged and friendships emerge.

However, behavior that is normally seen as anomic can be dominant among most of the homeless in most situations. I have also witnessed anomic behavior among homeless people, especially in Tamahime Park. In some cases alcohol was involved, but not always. Once a homeless man, in Tamahime Park, started to attack the others by shouting and throwing things at them. Soon the police came and took the man away. The reason for the man’s behavior was unknown to others. Another homeless man, “Clumsy”, in Tamahime Park was also taken away from the park on the same day. He seemed to be suffering from a serious nervous breakdown, since he was mumbling and scratching the asphalt with his fingernails. An old man was sitting on a fence next to him, shouting at him and calling him names.<sup>244</sup> When “Ookami” was drunk, he sometimes acted very arbitrarily.<sup>245</sup> The anomic behavior of the homeless gang living near the Iriya Exit of Ueno Station has been mentioned above few times. I also tried to approach two lone homeless men in the beginning of my field work, but interaction with them turned out to be impossible.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> For other voiced principles see p.50 n.106

<sup>244</sup> Both incidents in Tamahime Park (Sept 19 2003). See field notes pp.52-53.

<sup>245</sup> E.g. “Ookami” mistreating “Deshi” in Tamahime Park (Sep 16 2003). See p.40.

<sup>246</sup> “Kaidan” and “Marui” around Ueno Underground (Aug 25 2003). See p.4.

According to Lebra, when survival is at stake, ritual behavior is put aside. The same applies to the contest of power: If both parties are equally powerful, mutual hostility, suspicion, and competitiveness may be exhibited. If there is a clear difference in power, the other party dominates and the other submits itself to the other. No concern about preserving face is manifested. Members of a group, in which anonymity is offered, may also exercise their power by behaving arrogantly toward someone outside the group, and the outsider may submit because of fear. In both cases arrogance and docility are anomic. (Lebra, 1976 p.132.) People running into a train during the rush hour offer a common example of arrogant behaviour. Gill (2001a p.51-53) has depicted a similar situation in which people rush towards the counter in Kotobuki Labor Center (in Yokohama) trying to get a job. For some homeless people survival may have become a daily routine, which can affect their psyche. The dimensions of behaviour can be directly proportional to the time spent on the streets, but personal factors are also influential, since some individuals can stand more pressure than others (Snow & Anderson, 1993 p.195). As already mentioned on the previous page and before, during my field-work I tried to approach some homeless persons, whose behavior can be argued to have been dominantly anomic, and it was very difficult to make any sense of their motives and ideas. It would require a long-term study to achieve a more profound understanding of the lives of these kind of homeless people.

Lebra argues that though these forms of anomic behavior are more or less universal, in Japan there is more differentiation between anomic behavior and other types of behavior, because the Japanese have “clear-cut definitions of intimate and ritual situations, together with cultural prescriptions of how to behave in either situation” (Lebra, 1976 pp.132-133). I am not able to make cross-cultural comparisons about this differentiation. What I can draw from my data, is that many Japanese homeless persons clearly differentiate between anomic and other types of behavior. Anomic behavior is difficult to observe, because once you begin a conversation, the situation normally turns into ritual or even intimate. Anomic behavior can be observed from a distance, but then it is difficult to draw conclusions from what has been observed. It could be asked, how this rigid division between the intimate and the ritual behavior as Lebra suggests, has developed. Nevertheless, it can be said that many Japanese homeless are likely to make this division .

As I have already suggested above, the intimate, ritual, and anomic situations often overlap in practice. Lebra calls this cross-situational behavior. It can manifest itself in different forms: ritualization, collusive disperception, and sequentialization. If intimate situation is interrupted by an outsider, ritual behavior replaces intimate behavior. Anomic situation may turn into ritual if it turns out that people have e.g. a mutual friend, and embarrassment may follow, if there has been e.g. arrogance involved. (Lebra, 1976 pp.133-134.) Of course also intimate behavior may take place. This can not be called “ritualization”, but could be called “intimatization” instead. Anomic situation is often turned into ritual, when people engage into a conversation—or, using Goffman’s (1963) terms, when the unfocused interaction turns to focused interaction, all the way to spoken interaction. This happened between me and many homeless individuals. The situation was sometimes fast turned into intimate too, when the talkers realized that they do not have to—using another Goffman’s idea—“play a ritual role on the front region” (Goffman 1959). The more active aspects of anomic behavior such as “boasting” are seemingly rare. *Takidashi* (food handouts) offer a good opportunity for ritualization (as well as intimatization) of an anomic situation, as it brings together, in one place, many homeless people with similar interests. They can talk not only to each other, but also to the non-homeless who participate in organizing the handout. Handouts are often dominated by inactive anomic and ritual forms of behavior, but they also offer a chance for intimization, since people who see each other often may get to know each other better. They may also have mutual friends and other mutual interests.<sup>247</sup>

Collusive disperception refers to two intertwined behavior patterns, e.g. intimate and ritual, in which the ritual etiquette restricts intimate behavior until the stage is completely set for intimate behavior (Lebra, 1976 p.134). It is also possible that intimate behavior is inevitable in a ritual situation, and it is intentionally disperceived (ibid. p.135). In sequentialization different situations are organized to follow one another, and potential collisions can thus be prevented. Of the Japanese sequentialized situations *enkai* is a ritual gathering, and *nijikai* is informal. *Nijikai* is commonly closed from the outsiders and offers a setting for intimate behavior. *Nijikai* also helps to tolerate the formal ritual gathering. (ibid.) This kind of sequentialization is also common in e.g. letter writing (ibid. p.136), but

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<sup>247</sup> For me personally, as I was doing the field research, sometimes mentioning San’yūkai or a name of a certain homeless opened some doors, and changed the anomic or ritual behavior into a more intimate one.

also in e.g. Finnish weddings and funerals. One could argue that *takidashi* (food handouts) have this sequentialization: the homeless arrive early to *nijikai*, during which they can talk and act freely, and this is followed by more or less regulated *enkai*, during which the actual food is served. However, only some homeless may see the waiting for food as *nijikai*. Many may arrive early simply to secure a better place in line. In any case, the food handouts in Taito Ward are often very peaceful events, and the above described “homeless etiquette” can be a major reason for this.

According to Lebra, the cultural principle demands that one situation should not be mixed with another. It is a sign of maturity to be able to make *kejime*, or discrimination from situation to situation. (Ibid. p.136.) How much the homeless think about this, is difficult to estimate from my field data.



## 6. Conclusions

In my master's thesis I have examined the social interaction and behavior of homeless people living in three communities in different parts of Tokyo's Taito Ward. I detected various individual differences but the differences were sometimes greater between the communities than between the individuals inside the communities. My findings suggest that variety in interaction and behavior can also occur according to environment. However, the three communities of homeless people I collected my data from, represent only a small sample of the homeless population. It can be presumed that there are further differences between these communities and the communities in other areas, and thus it is not reliable to generalize the findings too much. However, my findings further strengthen the claim that providing sustainable social and housing policy measures to help the homeless population may require specific situational sensitivity. On the other hand, many similarities between the homeless living in different areas were evident, which suggests the existence of some kind of common principles.

I have analysed my ethnographic field data by using as a model Takie Sugiyama Lebra's theory of "social relativism". Lebra's themes and aspects of social relativism were clearly perceptible in the social interaction and behavior of the homeless I observed, but also sometimes in contradiction with my own findings among the homeless. Lebra's theory suggests that behavior that is not "socially relative" is either "unilaterally deterministic" or "anomic". The theory is not applicable to all findings in these cases, because it does not examine the reasons for other than "socially relative" behavior. In theory, "socially relative" behavior is also, in many cases, taken as predetermined, and it does not leave room for individual action and motives behind the actions. Because of this, I have also used other sources and my own data to find explanations for reasons and motives behind various behavioral patterns, since the behavior of the homeless can not be exclusively classified within the framework of "socially relative".

Giddens has presented his macrosociological view of the "social reproduction" by the "human agents". He does not give any suggestions about the individual motives of the

actors, either. However, in principle Giddens' view is useful in this connection. The motives behind the behavior were often expressed by the homeless during the field study, and can be collected from the data. It is possible to make a differentiation between *dependency*, *empathy*, and other universal "socially relative" aspects of social interaction, but in some cases the motives may appear contradictory. I would suggest a fundamental motive, *ontological security*, to lie behind many actions, but this does not offer any specific answers. Specific answers are to be found in specific situations, and these always depend on the context and the actors' personality. On a bigger scale specific actions reproduce social structures.

The analysis of the data remains insufficient, since the data was not collected systematically with the above mentioned themes in mind at the time. However, the results may be suggestive, and may offer valuable, and, in some cases, maybe universally applicable information. One such finding is the unwritten "homeless etiquette", which includes some loosely defined norms for social interaction between the homeless, who comply with it. Often this etiquette appears as contradictory to Lebra's aspects of social relativism, but it does not consist of e.g. unilaterally deterministic, or—in intimate and ritual situations—"socially aggressive" selfish actions. On the contrary, it takes other people into account, and fundamentally adds to the ontological sense of security as any set of rules that facilitates social interaction. As a set of norms, it is the opposite to anomic. It may appear as anomic, because one of its main aspects is to protect the anonymity among the homeless. But alongside the anonymity there may exist "socially relative" intimate and ritual behavior.

The "homeless etiquette" could be defined as only those actions that were discursively taught to me by the homeless individuals I had conversations with. On the other hand, much of it can be part of the practical consciousness of the homeless. The recurring themes in my analysis of the interaction and behavior of the homeless can also be said to be part of the etiquette. The "etiquette" partly overlaps with Lebra's aspects of social relativism, which can be considered universal. It can also be thought of as Goffman's "situational proprieties" and Giddens' "tact", a situationally sensitive set of norms that fortifies the feeling of "ontological security" in social situations.

The importance of San'yūkai must also be taken into account. San'yūkai has its own "etiquette", which slightly differs from the general "homeless etiquette", e.g. the norms concerning the preservation of anonymity for the reason that the atmosphere at San'yūkai is instantly less anomic than in e.g. Tamahime Park. Nevertheless, there is also overlapping between the two. It was only after the analysis, when I realized the greater significance of the finding of these "etiquettes".

Findings, such as these, must be taken into account, when planning measures to fight homelessness. This thesis gives only a small amount of suggestive answers. One must consider more carefully, how the homeless people interact, what are their individual motives, needs and expectations, and how do they survive on a long-term basis after the homelessness period, if they succeed to get off the streets. Many homeless want to return to normal life, and they need sustainable solutions especially in the field of social and housing policy. The homeless support organizations can offer valuable help in this respect. It is important to be aware of the "homeless etiquette" when studying homelessness in Japan, since it may have more relevance in the life of the Japanese homeless in general. However, one must remember that there are also those homeless, who may have escaped the pressures of society intentionally or unintentionally and may actually prefer life without social obligations, and then there are the mentally ill homeless. Their situation would require more study, and many questions are still left unanswered.

## 7. References

### -Field Data

The field observations were originally written in separate notebooks, which are in the possession of the author. Almost all the observations including the interviews were written down on the spot or soon after the interview. Some tape-recorded interviews have been used for the thesis, but transcriptions are not available. All the interviews were unstructured and resembled more conversations than interviews, because this was the only applicable and reliable way to get enough information in most situations. Only some individuals accepted the recording of the conversations, and the carried out recorded conversations were less valuable for the purposes of the study than the ones that were merely written down. The people living along the Sumida River accepted the use of a tape recorder, but I asked them other questions for other purposes, and have used only few comments in the thesis. The ethnographic fieldwork was carried out between August 21<sup>st</sup> and September 31<sup>st</sup> of 2003. I have attached an edited version of the field notes to the thesis as Appendix 6. The tapes and original field notes are in the possession of the author.

### Interviewees:

I have included here only those whom I interviewed, and whose interviews I used in the thesis. In the field notes there are more comments by other informants, but I did not use them in the thesis. “1st Interviewee's” interview was tape-recorded. I also had a recorded interview with “Grumpy” on September 27th. I recorded some interviews with “Sensei”, “Nichiren”, and “The 4<sup>th</sup> Man”, but did not use them in the thesis. Others did not want to speak on tape. The comments can be found in the field notes.

-“Blue Overalls” - Homeless. Ueno, Panda-bashi. Male, 40-50 years old. August 27th - September 4th 2003.

- “Cap” - Homeless. Ueno, Jewelry Bridge. Male, 50-60 years old. August 27th - September 6th 2003.
  
- “Corleone” - Welfare recipient/pensioner. Formerly day-laborer and occasionally homeless. San'yūkai. Male, 60-70 years old. September 9th - 15th 2003.
  
- “Deshi” - Homeless/street salesman. Tamahime. Male, 40-50 years old. September 15th - 19th.
  
- “1st” Interviewee” - Homeless. Sumida River, Komagata-bashi. Female, 50-60 years old. September 26th 2003.
  
- “The 4<sup>th</sup> Man” - Homeless. Ueno, Iriya Exit of Ueno Station. Male, 50-60 years old. August 27th 2003.
  
- “Grumpy” - Homeless. San'yūkai and Sumida River, Sakura-bashi. Male, 60-70 years old. September 4th - 27th 2003.
  
- “Hoshi” - Welfare recipient/pensioner. Formerly day-laborer and occasionally homeless. San'yūkai. Male, 50-60 years old. September 10th - 19th 2003.
  
- “Iaido” - Day-laborer. Tamahime. Male, 40-50 years old. September 17th 2003.
  
- “Ookami” - Homeless/street salesman. Tamahime. Male, 60-70 years old. September 15th - 22nd 2003.
  
- “O-cha” - Homeless. San'yūkai. Male, 60-70 years old. September 9th - 12th 2003.
  
- “Nichiren” - Homeless. Ueno, Jewelry Bridge. Male, 53 years old. August 27th - September 6th 2003.

-“Pro” - Homeless. San'ya. Male, 50-60 years old. September 16th 2003.

-“Sensei” - Homeless. Ueno, Jewelry Bridge. Male, 62 years old. August 27th - September 11th 2003.

-“Sneaker” - Homeless. San'ya. Male, 40-50 years old. September 16th - 21st 2003.

-“Waiter” - Homeless. Tamahime. Male, 40-50 years old. September 19th 2003.

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## **APPENDIX**

**Appendix 1 - A List of Japanese Terms**

**Appendix 2 - Map of Ueno**

**Appendix 3 - Jewelry Bridge in August 28th 2003**

**Appendix 4 - Map of San'ya**

**Appendix 5 - Tamahime Park in September 2003**

**Appendix 6 - Field Notes**

## Appendix 1

### A List of Japanese Terms

Some of the translations are official translations used in many dictionaries. Quotes are used if the translation is Lebra's or my own translation, or if it is not an established translation. The translations are not exhaustive. I have placed the terms translated roughly as "homeless" in the end separately. More exact definitions are given in the thesis (in part 2.3 The Japanese Terms for Homeless and General Definitions for Homelessness).

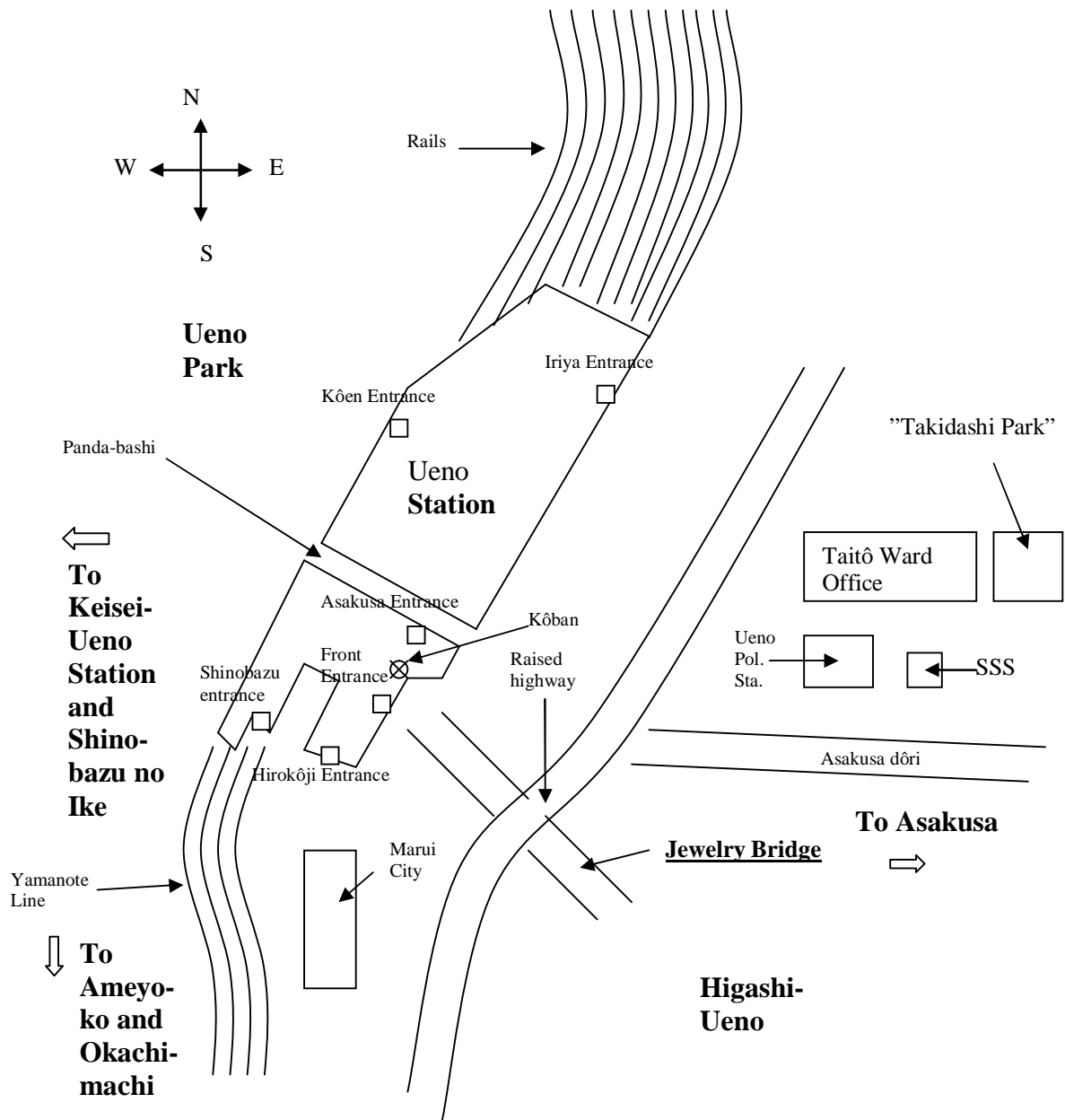
*amae* 甘え - “dependency on indulgence”  
*ano yo* あの世 - the other world  
*aozora* 青空 - blue sky  
*arigata-meiwaku* あり方迷惑 - ambivalence toward a gift/favor  
*arumikan* アルミカン - collecting empty cans and selling them to scrap metal firms  
*ba* 場 - “field/frame”  
*bashi* 橋 - bridge  
*bun* 分 - share, portion, status, role  
*chien* 地縁 - geographical ties  
*daidôshônin* 大道商人 - a street salesman  
*deshi* 弟子 - disciple  
*doryoku* 努力 - “strenuous effort”  
*doya-gai* どや街 - flophouse district  
*enkai* 宴会 - “ritual gathering”  
*enryo* 遠慮 - self-restraint  
*furiitaa* フリーター - part-time worker  
*gambaru* 頑張れ - to persevere, endure  
*giri* 義理 - duty  
*hame o hazusu* 羽目を外す - “deliberate violation of conventional manners and etiquette”  
*hiyatoi rôdôsha* 日雇い労働者 - day-laborer  
*hômuresu echiketto* ホームレスエチケット - homeless etiquette  
*inaka* 田舎 - hometown  
*ippondachi* 一本立ち - independent  
*iryô sôdan kai* 医療相談会 - medical counselling meeting  
*ishin denshin* 以心伝心 - “heart-to-heart communication”  
*ittaikan* 一体感 - “feeling of oneness”  
*jikoshôkai* 自己紹介 - self-presentation  
*kantan* 簡単 - simple  
*keigo* 敬語 - honorific language  
*kejime* けじめ - “discrimination from situation to situation”  
*ketsuen* 血縁 - blood ties  
*kitsui, kitanai, kiken* きつい、汚い、危険 - difficult, dirty, dangerous  
*kôban* 交番 - police box  
*kôen* 公園 - park  
*kono yo* この世 - this world  
*koya* 小屋 - shack  
*kurô* 苦勞 - pain, suffering, trouble

*magokoro* 真心 - “true-heartedness”  
*mama-san* ママさん - bar hostess  
*meiwaku* 迷惑 - displeasure, trouble, nuisance  
*migawari* 身代わり - “self-sacrificial action on behalf of another person”  
*mimai* 見舞い - a gift given to a person who has faced an accident  
*mizukusai* 水臭い - “strangerlike”  
*nijikai* 二次会 - “informal gathering”  
*ninjô* 人情 - “human feeling”  
*ojiisan* おじいさん - grandfather, senior citizen  
*omoiyari* 思いやり - empathy/sympathy  
*omote-ura* 表裏 - “front-back”, “public-private”  
*on* 恩 - favor  
*ongaeshi* 恩返し - return of a favor  
*o-nigiri* お握り - riceballs  
*on-shirazu* 恩知らず - “not aware of being in debt”  
*osekkai* お節介 - “meddlesomeness”  
*oyabun-kobun* 親分子分 - senior/superior-junior/inferior  
*oyakata-kokata* 親方子方 - senior/superior-junior/inferior  
*senpai-kôhai* 先輩後輩 - senior/superior-junior/inferior  
*sewa* 世話 - help, assistance  
*shaen* 社縁 - company ties  
*shimpai* 心配 - concern, care  
*shôchû* 焼酎 - Japanese liquor  
*shokuan* 職安 - an abbreviation of unemployment office  
*shokugyô anteisho* 職業安定所 - unemployment office  
*shozoku* 所属 - current belonging  
*shusshin* 出身 - origin  
*sumanai* 済まない - “be (feel) sorry”, but also “thank you”  
*takidashi* 炊き出し - food handout  
*tobi shoku* 鳶職 - scaffolding  
*uchi-soto* 内外 - “inside-outside”  
*urami* 恨み - grudge  
*yoseba* 寄せ場 - place where the day-laborers gather to seek work

#### Homeless Terms:

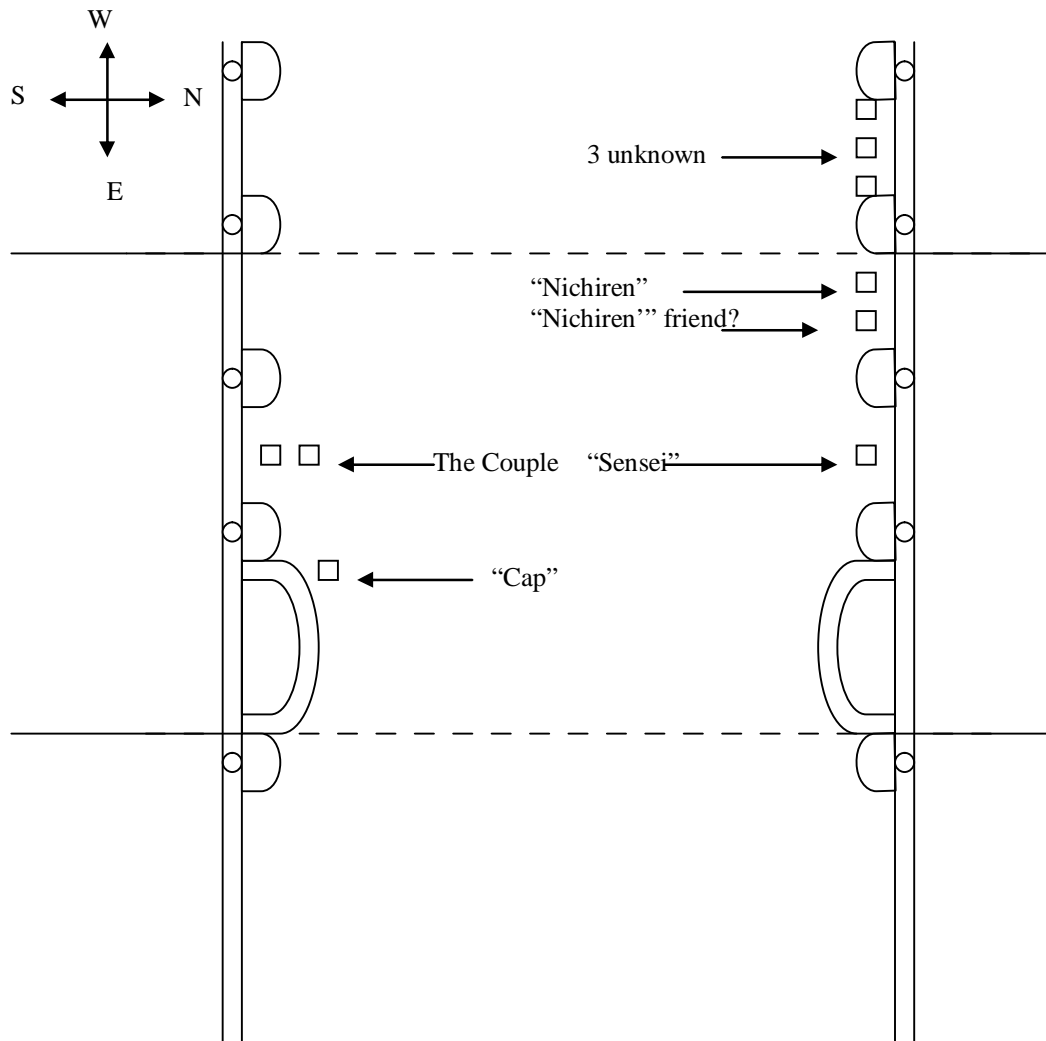
*aokan* 青間  
*furôsha* 浮浪者  
*hômuresu* ホームレス  
*ie no nai hito(bito)* 家のない人々  
*jûsho futei* 住所不定  
*kojiki* 乞食  
*monogoi* 物乞い  
*nojuku rôdôsha / nojukusha* 野宿労働者/ 野宿者  
*ojiisan* おじいさん  
*pûtarô* 風太郎  
*rojô seikatsusha* 路上生活者

## Appendix 2: Map of Ueno

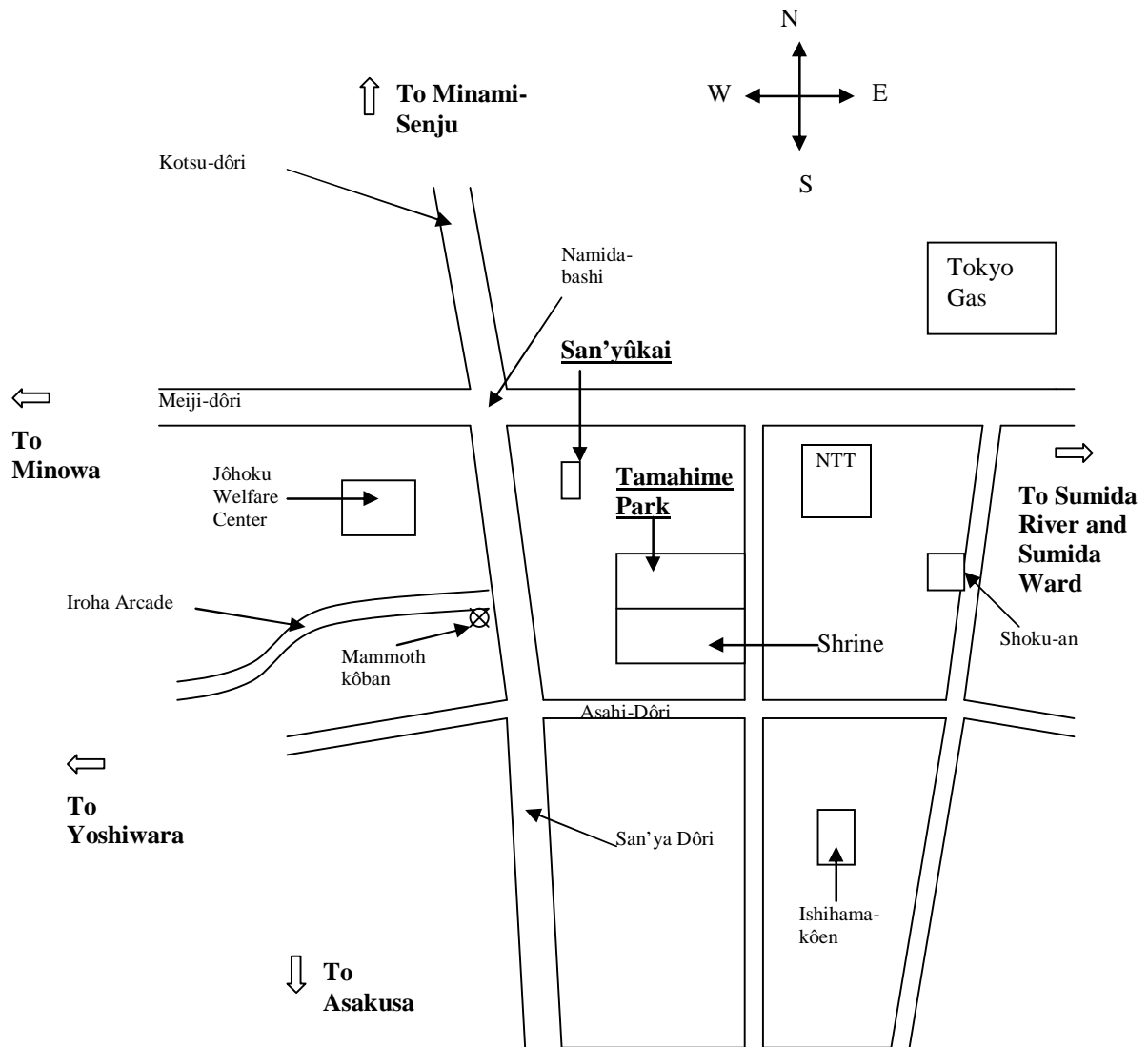




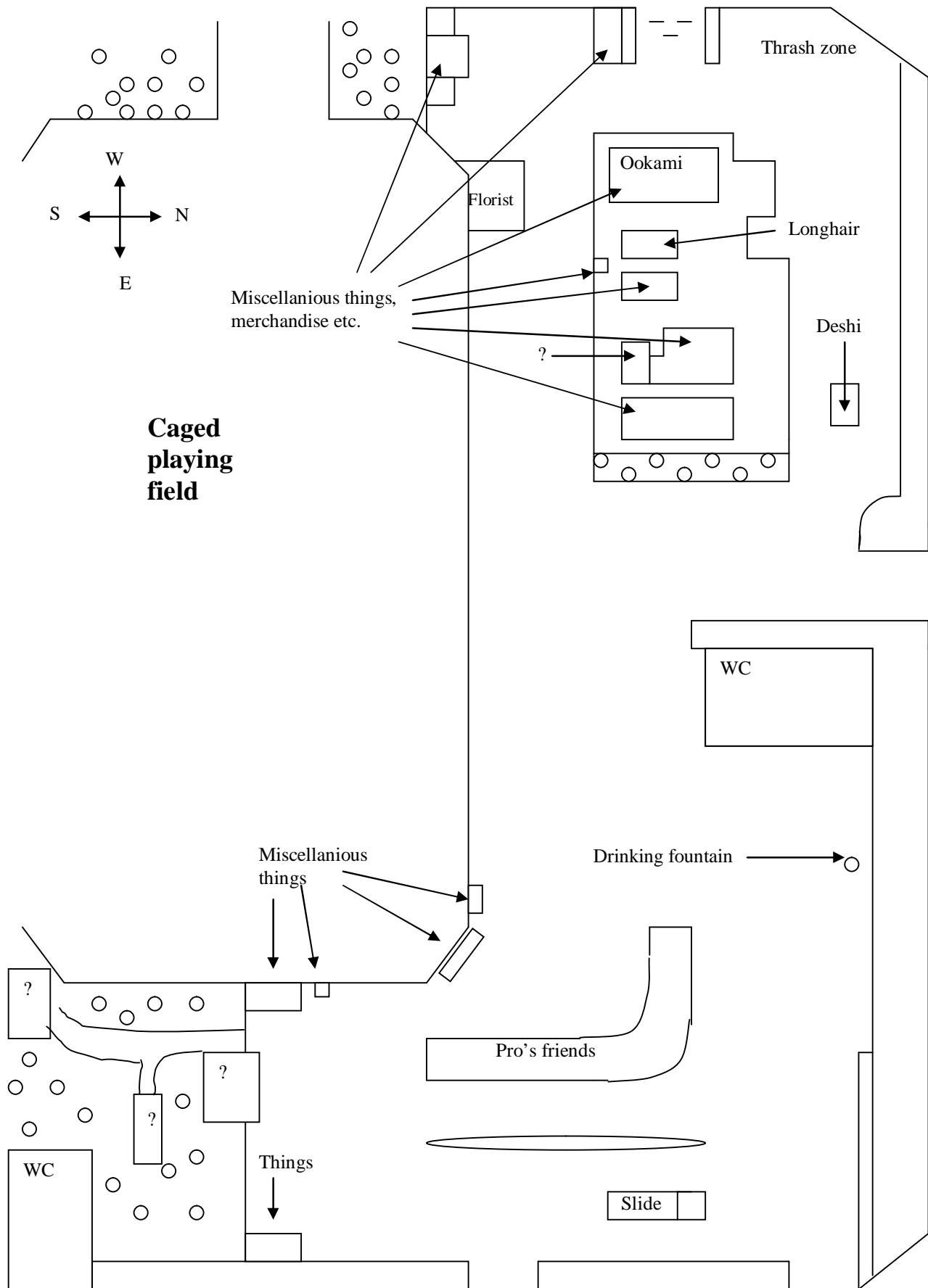
**Appendix 3: Jewelry Bridge in August 28<sup>th</sup> 2003:**



# Appendix 4: Map of San'ya



# Appendix 5: Tamahime Park in September 2003



## Appendix 6

Field Notes

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August 25th 2003

Ueno-eki

Time 22:15.

When I have reached the Ueno-eki, the underground, the first undoubtedly homeless people I see are sleeping/taking a nap next to the Marui City entrance. They are looking pretty rough, but it is hard to describe them more in a more specific way, because they are sleeping faces turned against the wall. They do not seem to be a group, but of course it is hard to tell. They have minimum amounts of baggage, and they are lying on the cardboard set on the floor.

--

(Examples of anomic behavior, and description about the difficulties in the beginning, and consideration of the ethics)

Time 23:55

I return underground. The man on the stairs has stood up, and is now leaning against the wall. I wonder, if he is waiting for the exact closing time. The men next to Marui City entrance are still in their place.

As I wait, I start to wonder, what is the thing I want to study among the homeless. Practical things, how they get food and when? Are there any support organisations in Ueno? How much do the homeless individuals have influence on their own ability to choose, how much are the conditions created by the society, and how much it influences the actions of the homeless? Are the efforts tried to be minimized, so that it would always require just the minimum efforts? What are the theories of this kind of research?

August 26 2004 (Tuesday)

Ueno-eki

Time 00:10

I return to see the man on the stairs. He's standing on the top of the stairs his back against the wall, arms crossed. He is seemingly doing nothing but probably waiting for the order to get out.

Time 00:20

Near the Marui City entrance the other, older looking man has lift himself to a sitting posture. He's starting to pack his things. Soon the guard arrives and—with a friendly tone—shouts: "*Hai, okorimasu yô!*". The older looking man gets up, and heads to the stairs. He passes the man on the stairs, and goes to the toilet. The stair-man follows him soon after.

The last ones are running to catch the last trains. The homeless head to the exit number nine, reaching the lobby of the JR-station. The older looking guy goes to the toilet. I have lost the stairs-man, since I decided to focus to the other man.

Time 00:30

I'm thinking about the ethics of my field-research, and the question, can I ever have a contact to these people, so that I could have conversations with them.

Time 00:33

The man comes out of the toilet, and walks back to the lobby, continuing towards the some exit. He goes out, moves to the left side of the entrance, and stops for a moment. Then he proceeds slowly, crosses the street (traffic lights), and continues towards the Okachimachi, walking beside the railroad. I have an impression, that he may not have decided the next place he's going to.

Time 00:45

The man stops every now and then to dig the garbage bags.

Time 00:50

I pass the man in one street corner (Kasuga-dôri and Ameyoko), where he has stopped to search the contents of a garbage bag.

Time 00:55

Man finds something that qualifies for him as food. He continues to walk eastwards along the Kasuga-dôri. When he reaches the highway, he turns to north. He walks a short distance, digs some more garbage bags, and returns the same way.

Time 01:00

The man has gone through the tunnel that goes under the railroad tracks. He stops again to find some more food.

Time 01:05

He continues towards west.

Time 01:30

I seem to have lost the man, and now it's like searching for a needle in a haystack. Suddenly the streets are literally filled with prostitutes and pimps. I can see many homeless moving around. Many have lots of collected *arumikan* with them.

I get "interrupted" every second step, and I notice, that it may not be reasonable for me to walk among this crowd back and forth, maybe provoking suspicions. Then again, I think, if I came here every night, maybe everyone would get used to me.

The homeless also move in pairs, so I think, that I should probably start observing some place, where there is some group hanging around, where there would also be some kind of social interaction.

I still make a decision to return tomorrow to see, if anyone of the underground homeless returns to the same place.

(Later on that same day)

19:40

I walked around a bit, returned to the Marui City entrance, and the same older-looking man, who was sleeping there last evening, has returned! He's sitting exactly at the same spot as yesterday.

I prepare myself mentally, and go talk to the man. I introduced myself, telling I'm from Finland, and that I'm doing research on homeless. [This was one of the many instances, where I used the term *kenkyū* (research) instead of *benkyō* (study). Later I heard, that I'd better use the latter term, because it sounds softer to the homeless. The use of the term *kenkyū* in the beginning of my field research may have had consequences.] I asked him, if he wanted to have a conversation with me, but he seems bothered and answers no. Another man, not the same as a night before, settles down next to him. I ask the older man, if he knows the other one. He says that he knows him. He tells me that he's tired. I ask, that is it because of work. He says yes. He kind of promises me, that he could maybe talk to me later.

(At this point I met some people of "Jewelry Gang" for the first time)

21:35

I feel a bit tired. I go check out the bridges.

Before I go, I ask, if the station personnel, or more precisely, the police in the station *kōban* would like to answer to some questions. They told me to turn directly to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department in Chiyoda-ku. [I don't think, that people there would be experts on issues concerning Ueno-eki.]

22:25

I have returned from the bridges, and they were not silent! At least not the Jewelry Bridge. [Jewelry Bridge leads connects the Ueno JR-station (mid-level) and Higashi-Ueno sanchōme. Under it lies a mixture of crossings, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, taxi station etc. Over the mid-part of Jewelry Bridge crosses the elevated National Road No. 4, which serves as a roof for some homeless, when it's raining.] First I went to ask a group of three men, if they were just visiting Tokyo (doing *dekasegi*). They answered directly, that they are homeless.

They were all very normal-looking. I talked most with a man called Hattori. [At this point I found out, that the bridges have names.] One man was called "Nichiren", I think. They said, that they sleep on the Jewelry Bridge every night.

[I can't remember exactly, what I was talking about with them. But mainly it was about if it was okay with them, that I'd come back and observe their way of living, talk to them, and maybe even interview them.]

Could this be a good object for my studies? Close to Jewelry Bridge, there's Panda-bashi. So far I don't know about the residents of Panda-bashi, are they homeless or not. [Of course many of them were.]

I consider the possibility, that since these people don't have any sheds etc., their homelessness may be only temporal, for a short periods of time.

I'm going to eat something.

(In the following I encountered some anomic behavior, had the first real setbacks, but also learned something. This also made me think about the ethical issues. After this I did not encounter that many ethically dubious situations, as I knew better how to approach the homeless.)

23:20

Ueno-eki, chikatetsu

“Kaidan-san” has returned to the same stairs. At the Marui City entrance there’s only the same man I followed last night. Why have they returned to the same spots? “Marui-san” seems to be sleeping, so I’ll not ask him. I’ll try “Kaidan-san”.

23:40

“Kaidan-san’s” reaction was as I had expected. When I approached him saying “*sumimasen*”, and introducing myself, he just kept on smiling very nervously, made movements, which looked like he couldn’t control them, and didn’t answer a thing. I could do the same as I did last night, go follow him. But would it offer anything good for my research, and just how unethical that would be? I don’t really want to disturb this guy. I’m afraid, that some thing I could say, would cause some kind of a serious reaction in him, and maybe he couldn’t cope with that.

23:47

I walk past the stairs, and he’s gone. I feel bad.

August 27 2003 (Wednesday)

00:10

Marui-san gets up without suggestion by the security personnel, and walks up the stairs of the entrance 5a. I follow him, and try to start a conversation on the sidewalk. He grunts angrily, and turns away.

I get quite depressed. It would take a long time, before I could create at least some kind of friendly contact with him. Not to speak of Kaidan-san. Probably he hasn’t been talking to anyone in ages.

--

August 27 2003

After midnight

Interesting phenomenon: Some *sarariiman*, who have arrived at the station and missed the last trains, do not really know where to sit to wait. Some of them try to stand, but many are tired, and they are forced to sit down among their underprivileged peers. (The front of Ueno station which is covered was crowded by the homeless, because it was a rainy night.)

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(“Blue Overalls”)

Aug 27 afternoon

“Blue Overalls” told me he had been homeless for over 6 years, and his "father" for a year.

He also told me that he thinks, that the number of homeless will not rise anymore, because the mortality rate is the same as the rate of becoming homeless. He said that *risutora* is the biggest reason for the increased homelessness. He told me that many homeless at the station have once been *sarariiman*. [I didn’t ask him, does he know this, or is he just guessing.]

--

August 27 2003

Evening

A lot happened during the past hour. After I had passed the Iriya entrance, three homeless caught my eye. I could also see few *buruu tento* alongside the wall, which are a clear signs of more long-lasting settlement in the area. The row of dwellings starts on the street-level from where - after Iriya exit - there goes a twisting ramp up to a bridge, which again crosses the railroad tracks, and connects Ueno-kōen and Ueno-nanachōme. [On the east side there is *Baiku Taun*, “Motorcycle Town”, where there are many stores selling motorbikes. On the other side of the street there is also at least one store selling Harley Davidsons.] The row of dwellings continues for a while, then it stops, at least for now. [Did I count them?]

A man, happily drunk, comes explaining to me something I can’t understand. He has a same kind of fisherman’s hat that I’m wearing, except that it’s black. (Mine is green.) He comes very close, when he speaks. It’s almost offending. (I’m Finnish.) He asks me to return with him back to his friends. I gave him some chewing gum (xylitol). As I later realized, it might have been a mistake.

I follow him to his friends, and I’m almost forced to sit down among them. There are three of them. Everybody’s asking questions, and I’m confused. Soon a fourth man arrives. He looks a bit tired. He’s not allowed to go to sleep. Instead he’s forced to take some chewing gum. (This turned out to be good for me.)

Soon I’ll find out, that this man is the only one, I can have a sane conversation with. The first man I met is very drunk, aggressive, almost offending. One is a becoming bald on the top of his head, but he has a long hair anyway. Another is quite heavyweight, and his speech is hard to follow. I can’t remember anything else about him. The balding man doesn’t seem to be very interested about me. He doesn’t direct any words towards me. [It could have been simply shyness.]

During this, two women go past riding bicycles. The balding man throws a cigarette fag at the first woman. The woman realizes something hit her, but she doesn’t stop to find out. When the second woman passes, the balding man shouts after her. She doesn’t look behind either.

“Fisherman’s Hat” demands me to accept a gift from him: a marshmallow. Just because I’m afraid of possible diseases, I try not to accept the gift. [This approach is not recommended, because if you want to make contacts, you probably can’t make exceptions in these situations. Otherwise people don’t trust you. See, if Gill had something about this. Maybe it would be best to receive gifts, but eat them only if absolutely necessary. If there’s a real danger involved, maybe it’s better to give up, and try some other way or day.] The man won’t give up. He threatens me with an expression, which resembles a hit in the face. What should I do? I don’t want any trouble, nor to escape. I decide to eat the stupid marshmallow. [Nothing happened, I’m alive.]

I start a conversation with the fourth man, the most sane appearing one. [The one that acted least suspiciously.]

[Interview of the 4<sup>th</sup> Man, Ueno-eki, the side of the wall, beneath the ramp after Iriya-guchi, sidewalk, street-level. Around 18:45-19:35.]

After this we take a step aside to have another conversation. The man wonders, why there is no work, why do they just drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. “Just look at them!” He points at his buddies. He says, that they are not real friends, but just buddies. Before we part, he warns me about the place a bit more north from this place. [Later I took a short walk to that direction during daytime, but could not find anything special.]

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(Example of the topics of one conversation I had with the Jewelry Gang. This part was written afterwards at my residence after I had left the field early on that particular evening. This represents the relative easiness of the communication between me and most of the Jewelry Gang.)

August 27 2003



Evening

I went to check out different entrances of the *chikatetsu* and the JR-station. After that I went to Jewelry Bridge, and immediately I saw “Nichiren”, whom I had already met yesterday. I went to talk to them.

Present were “Nichiren”, the couple, “Cap”, and one whom I saw yesterday, with whom I had not changed any words, but who now turns out to be most chatty of them all. [I’ll call him “Sensei” from now on.] Communication between me and them was quite easy for me to understand. Everyone also took actively part in the interaction, and I didn’t feel like an intruder.

“Nichiren” told me that he has been homeless for only one month so far. “Sensei” splashed that “Nichiren” enjoys the homeless life-style, and this evoked laughter. “Nichiren”, as everyone else (except maybe “Cap”; this, however, is relative), was wearing tidy clothes, and his appearance is also very “tidy”.

“Sensei” told me, he’s been homeless for over three months now. They both told me their respective ages: “Nichiren” is 53 years old; “Sensei” is 62 yo. [Check this out from the interviews.] They both looked younger to me.

“Sensei” also told me about “Cap”, that he has been here for a longer time. “Cap” also looks a bit more experienced, that he’s undergone through some rougher times.

About the couple I didn’t ask anything yet. However, they also look tidy, they are friendly to me and energetic in their actions. But there’s some kind of anxiety in the air.

“Nichiren” told me, that he had been sleeping under the bridges the whole day. “Sensei”, for one, claimed that they are always here at the same spot. I think, he meant the night-time. They both told me, that the only bad thing is the continuous hunger. They also claimed to understand the fact that during the winter it is different. “Fourth man” from the Iriya-guchi told me earlier, that there’s no one sleeping on the bridges wintertime.

--

(A trip to Taito Ward Office.)

August 28 2003

At the *yakusho* I found my way to the social security department, and got a pamphlet and a questionnaire concerning the applying of social security. [Often the *yakusho* look like a chaos to an outsider, especially if it’s a Japanese style office, meaning that everything happens in an open space: no walls separating the offices etc. This one, at least, was different. Taitô Yakusho is more like a Finnish style office, with many floors, separate rooms, more narrower spaces. Especially “narrow” was the place where to apply social security: one window. However, there were many elderly people waiting in the waiting space, which had just enough chairs for them.]

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(Another example, where there are many different situations happening at the same time in the same area)

August 28 2003

I walk through the Panda-bashi. “Blue Overalls” is standing on the upper platform. On the sides of the bridge there are many people sleeping, as well as many normal looking people (young and middle-aged, men and women) sitting. [On a good day every second bench is occupied by a homeless, every second bench by a non-homeless (or pairs or groups of them). This was Panda-

bashi's notable difference to Jewelry Bridge: on the Jewelry Bridge there was rarely anyone sitting and waiting next to the homeless. This being the case only in the daylight.]

I arrive at the front of the Kôen-guchi, where there is a swarming crowd of people. Here and there are homeless looking people lying and sitting on concrete, that surrounds small areas of trees and bushes. [Most likely those who were lying on concrete were homeless.]

--

(Another good piece of "Sensei's" talk, which offers hints about the social interaction of the homeless, or the lack of it.)

Aug 28 2003

Jewelry Bridge

I talk a lot with "Sensei". I ask him about those homeless, who just want be alone, and who don't talk to anyone etc. "Sensei" tells me, he knows many homeless like that. "It is a way of life (*ikikata*). They like just that kind of living, hate to communicate with the others. They are not necessarily crazy or anything. Only some of them: *case by case*. But if you go to talk to them, many of them speak", he says.

He also tells me that there are many homeless at the Tokyo Station. He asks me, why don't I go there. I explain him. [I consider the area around Tokyo Station too big for me to handle alone.]

An interesting point is that every time when I ask him, what do the homeless do, he answers: "*Nani mo shinai.*"

"Sensei" continues: "At afternoon many homeless leave their sites, and go to *takidashi* to seek food. About 500 people every day, maybe even more. Today it was 2 pm, alongside Sumida-gawa. Tomorrow it's Ueno-kôen." [By this "Sensei" of course meant only the big *takidashi* arranged not too far from the Ueno-eki, and the homeless who live nearby. There are many minor ones happening everywhere in Tokyo, as well as bigger ones. The distance is crucial for going to *takidashi*, because mostly the homeless go to them by feet. "Sensei" later taught me his weekly schedule, which included all the *takidashi* he goes. The furthest of them was in north at Adachi-ku, more specifically at Senju-Shinbashi crossing the Ara-kawa. I went there once, but found only another really small-scale handout and meeting arranged by the locals and one active person for a handful of homeless in the area. More about it later.]

It is easy to speak with "Sensei". I understand almost everything he says, and he has patience to explain me things more than once, if necessary. But I decide to keep the recorder still in my bag, since they are also asking me many questions.

"*Mai nichi nomitai*", says "Sensei". But isn't it expensive? He tells me that there is cheap *chôshu* for sale at the supermarket not far from here.

The man of the couple and "Hawaii" depart. I ask the woman, where do they go. She tells me that they go to get water from Marui City.

Apparently everyone regard me at least interesting, and do not have any hostile thoughts about me.

We also talked about some bribery. "Sensei" tells me that if I'm going to interview him, he wants to have something in return, namely *shôchû*. [Not everyone agrees with this, as I later find out.] I explain to them that I'm not going to drink at the same time, because I'm doing research. I also try to explain and get them convinced that I'm just a poor student, and I'm not going to offer them alcohol every day in exchange for data! [This worked out fairly well after all. One of them was a convinced Soga Gakkai member, and an absolutist anyway.]

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(An excerpt about the possible lack of objectives in the homeless way of life according to “Sensei”)

(Aug 28, 20:40->)

As soon as I arrive, we start to talk about San’ya. [I’m not sure if I was the one who brought up the subject.] “Sensei” was waiting for me - and shôchu - sitting inside a cardboard box. Immediately there was a flow of information:

In San’ya “Sensei” has used the following facilities and organizations to get what he has needed:

San’yûkai – clothes  
Sôgidan – food  
Yamanichirô – nightware  
Kaji Gurûpu – Bentô (In Tamahime Kôen)

[This is only how “Sensei” “exploited” the organizations; For example, you can get also food and nightware from San’yûkai. Sôgidan and Yamanichirô are *hiyatoi*-based organizations, whereas San’yûkai is not. I witnessed a *takidashi* at Tamahime once, but later it turned out that Kaji Gurûpu did not exist anymore. However, there were at least two organizations handing out food at the Tamahime Park, but only one of these organized a bigger Takidashi.]

[There’s a mention about the amount of rice during the Tokugawa era, but I’m not sure about the connection anymore. It’s probably that I asked something about the ancient homelessness.]

”*Hômuresu wa ikiru tame ni mokuteki o mottenai. Shugendô motteiru.*” This is what “Sensei” answered, when I asked him what he thinks about the homeless compared to *shugendô*. [Mountain ascetism involving elements of traditional Japanese shamanism, tantric buddhism, taoism etc. See: [http://arvigarus.bravehost.com/history\\_001.htm](http://arvigarus.bravehost.com/history_001.htm) ; the only common feature between the *shugendô* and the contemporary homeless may have been the withdraw from the ordinary society. What “Sensei” meant, is that unlike the *shugendô* practitioners, the homeless don’t have a goal in their life for what to live for.]

“Sensei” tells me about himself: Earlier he was a *sarariiman* in a construction company, working as a consultant. He spent a lot of time in China. Then, because of *risutora*, he was laid off. After that he tried to put together his own company for two years, but it didn’t work. He returned to Japan without money, and was forced to go live in the streets.

At this point he tells me an important thing about the etiquette of the homeless: names are not asked. [This supports Gill’s (1999 p.122) finding about the anonymity in *yoseba*. According to him, many homeless day-laborers and homeless want to stay as anonymous, and they respect this quality that can be found in *yoseba*. This seems to be true also for the other homeless than those whose lives are set around *yoseba*.] Later “Nichiren” adds that neither the backgrounds are ever snooped.

More important information: From the October, 2003, a new law called *Hômuresu sochi hô* is put into practice. The homeless are against it, because it would give permission to the authorities to remove the homeless to an isolated island near the Haneda-kûkô. [This sounds quite unbelievable, though.]

“Sensei” continues: It is embarrassing (*hazukashii*) to apply and receive *seikatsu hogo* (social welfare) and *hôgai enjo* (livelihood protection). *Iwakan?* Incongruity? [He could have meant anything by this.] *Yakuba* does not offer work opportunities every day. It is mainly cleaning jobs. “Sensei” estimates that if there was enough work for everybody, there would still be one quarter of the homeless population, which could not work.

He reveals, that the couple has been here since the April. [That means 4-5 months of street life before the time I started my field research.]

The police stops by to tell “Sensei” that his cardboard has spread too widely across the sidewalk. (They aren’t.) “Sensei” humbly answers “yes sir”, but makes no reparations. Before he goes to sleep, he informs me about the *takidashi* next morning.

(Some estimates etc. by “Sensei”. Embarrassment and discomfort in connection with applying of social security, mostly for individual reasons?)

“Sensei” continues: It is embarrassing (*hazukashii*) to apply and receive *seikatsu hogo* (social welfare) and *hōgai enjō* (livelihood protection). The homeless do not feel comfortable with it (*iwakan*). *Yakuba* does not offer work opportunities every day. It is mainly cleaning jobs. “Sensei” estimates that if there was enough work for everybody, there would still be one quarter of the homeless population, which could not work.

After 10 p.m. most of them have gone to sleep. It is now 22:40. I continue observing without any talk.

About the sleeping arrangements: [There’s a drawn picture in the notebook about the sleeping order. This seemed to change every night, but at least the couple and “Cap” kept the same place at least two nights.] Under the highway there were “Nichiren” and his possible friend in-between the same gab, and “Sensei” alone on the northern side; and the couple sleeping side by side in one gab next to fountain, and “Cap” in the corner next to the fountain. There were also three men in the gab next from “Nichiren’s”, which is a bit off the cover provided by the highway. Now it is not raining, but it’s windy. Both “Cap” and “Sensei” put many cardboard boxes together to produce bigger ones, which give some shelter from the wind. [This was also explained to me earlier.] They told me earlier that it’s useful to put blue vinyl sheet under the boxes, [This obviously helps to isolate cold and moisture.] but they don’t use it today. The couple don’t construct bigger boxes, but they use vinyl sheet and apparently aluminium foil.

There were also two people sleeping on the sides of the artwork, and four people in the east (observation made around 23:00), all in the open. They didn’t belong to this group, however.

Before “Sensei” went to sleep, he told me that life of a homeless is boring but okay (*tsumaranai kedo daijōbu*). *Sarariiman*’s life is miserable all the time (*mai nichi tsurai*).

I give up my plan about sleeping on the bridge, because I have to get up early tomorrow and be freshly awake, and – as “Sensei” noted earlier – I’m not used to sleeping in places like this.

(Continues. Some examples of interaction as well, and also depiction of the hardness of getting sleep.)

Around 22:50

Contrary to my beliefs, the couple is not yet sleeping. And neither is “Nichiren”. Him and the man of the couple are hammering away at a suitcase-on-wheels, trying to figure out, what’s wrong with it, laughing at the same time.

The place is very noisy, especially when there are ambulances passing. Every now and then there are also pedestrians passing through. Some of them may loudly talk to each other. Some people are talking to their cell phones. Some stop.

“Cap” goes to sleep 22:55. [At this point I went to see the surroundings, and found the four men sleeping in east.] 23:05 he’s up again. There’s a group of drunken *sarariiman* passing through the bridge. They are not looking for trouble, but they make some noise while they are passing. Some man goes taking out the garbage. Soon I go talk to “Nichiren”. He wants to talk about Soka

Gakkai. A proverb: “*Hyaku mimi wa ikken shikazu.*” His friend’s stuff is also on the ground, but the friend is not present.

I have a thought that “Nichiren” may be a bit obsessed about Soka Gakkai. He always wants to talk about it.

23:30

Everyone else is sleeping except “Nichiren”. He tells me more about Soka Gakkai: who are the leaders etc. He shows me his Soka Gakkai book and his id. [This is quite unusual, I think.] He explains that he reads the particular parts of the book every day, three times in the morning and five times in the evening.

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(An example of a morning. Description of SSS *takidashi*. Here one can find examples of ritual and intimate behavior among the homeless. Note the relative tidiness in this group of homeless. Note also that many seem to know each other. Compare to Goffman’s theory about social gatherings.)

Aug 29 2003

5:05

I arrive at Jewelry Bridge. “Cap” is gathering his stuff. “Nichiren” is still sleeping. “Cap” leaves for the opposite direction I thought he would go. [I thought he would go to the park.] A policeman goes to wake up “Nichiren”. Probably he asks “Nichiren” to gather up his stuff and go. “Nichiren” is rubbing the sleep from his eyes. [Because he is not a veteran on the streets, every morning must still be quite a shock for him.] I will not go to disturb him yet.

The others have already left the scene.

Here and there around the bridge complex there are people sleeping. It’s already light.

5:10

I decide to go to *yakusho*.

5:15

A park next to *yakusho*

First I don’t see anybody, but then I see a homeless looking man. I start to follow him, past a building to a small park on the eastside of the building, and I find the right place. [I wrote the name in the notes. The park is called Kōtoku Jidō Yūen. Ironically it means “Kōtoku Children’s Playground Park”.]

There are about ten people present. “Hawaii” and the old man join the couple’s company and start to talk. Everyone’s sitting on the concrete elements. They have brought their stuff with them. [At least everyone has brought something. This implies that these people move around constantly. I should have tried to find out.] Many people I don’t know are just sitting silently and reading books. Gradually their amount grows. Everyone’s wearing relatively tidy clothes. One man sits next to me. He was first on the other side.

5:30

“Cap” arrives as well as a crowd of other familiar faces. Pretty many seem to know each other. Maybe everyone knows each other. The number has risen up to over thirty.

I pass a Shelter-less –magazine to an older looking man next to me. He notices that the name of the [publishing] organization has changed. [True?] He speaks something about some declaration or something. (Maybe human rights related stuff or the manifest of the organization, hard to tell). [This could have been the declaration of the Shinjuku Movement.]

5:45

“Sensei” arrives at last! So far, there has been no signs about the food.

“Sensei” & “Cap” do not come to me. I try not to pay too much attention to them only.

Many are also reading *manga* and newspapers. There are now about 30 of them. Has one man brought a chair with him? [Most likely, but I did not ask.]

Many of them are in a seemingly good shape. Many are smoking cigarettes. No one’s drinking alcohol.

“Hawaii” asks me, if I slept outside last night? I answer that I didn’t. He asks me if I have a hotel room. I say I don’t.

The average age of the men (and one woman, the woman of the couple) is probably about 60 years. [Pure guess.] There are not any young looking people at all. Some have started eating something. The couple is feeding pigeons. And as soon as I noticed the absence of younger people, one young looking man arrives. [I shortly interviewed him later.]

They have now waited for over 25 minutes. The people sitting on the right side are observing the birds' eating habits and laughing.

Then a man comes out of the building, and places cones on the sidewalk and poles on the road.

These homeless may not think about it consciously, but this is a good example of a social situation [actually a gathering]. They gather here before the meal. To talk about stuff, to hear news about each other and about the events concerning each other etc. I think they know and are aware of it. [But when I think about it now, this is far from being obvious: First, there is a possibility that whoever arrives at the scene first, is also offered the first place in line. I think this happened later, in the mass *takidashi* elsewhere. However, even if the gathering and socializing is not conscious, this is a social gathering of a kind. Second, in case it is not about who's getting first, it could be that no-one is sure, when exactly the meal is served. Maybe it is never served exactly at the same time of the morning. So some people would probably arrive exactly when the meals happening. However, the social gathering occurs even if the people try to be as passive as possible. Think about this more.]

6:05

A car arrives at the scene. A cleaning lady passes by picking up cigarette fags and other trash. Suddenly there’s also a cart. Some stuff is loaded from the car to the cart and is taken inside. Was that food? [Soon I realize that the food was not coming from the *yakuba*, but from a nearby organization.] Otherwise it is silent.

6:15

I just had a conversation with a man who was wearing a white shirt and a white cap. I found out a couple of important things:

First, the food is not served until eight.

Second, the man said that “everyone comes here, because they don’t have anything else to do. They wake up early, because they go to sleep early.”

Third, the food is served by an non-profit organization [NPO] called SSS [Social Security Service]. The man says that SSS has no connection to *yakuba*. [This means with the food. I later found out that the organization has at least informal connections to *yakuba*.]

This truly is a social occasion! [I think, “a social gathering” would be a correct term. When I wrote these notes in the first place, I was not thinking about all the possible implications of different terms. Therefore I used them quite inconsistently.] But this also means that I have to wait for one and half an hour more!

Cigarettes are delivered all the time. I don’t know if it has anything to do with who owns a cigarette to whom [I think this is not often the case.], but rather there’s a joy of giving. Cigarettes become also something to talk about.

Another woman has arrived as well as some other younger looking men. The younger people are still a minority.

I go to draw a map about the scene. [See another notebook.] I also check out the SSS’s and Biker’s Town’s (a part of the city which has lots of motorbike selling stores) whereabouts. And I go to use the Ueno-eki’s toilet. [!]

7:15

I ask them, if I could take some photos. No. The crowd has grown, not everyone of them have a place to sit in the park. [Here I could suggest that some of these people come over just for the food.] I see the balding man, whom I met near the Iriya-guch the other night, among them. [See above, the men living in shacks beyond the Iriya-guchi.]

“Nichiren” approaches me. He says that it’s not appropriate to give booze for the homeless. He’s right of course. [Well, now I’m not that sure about it. I think it’s not considered to be unethical in the academic world to do bribery for the sake of getting information.] I feel tired, it feels that I can’t really concentrate on anything.

“Nichiren” also tells me that he just spoke with his friend a long time about all kind of things, what has happened etc.

7:45

It’s starting to happen: A man dressed in a suit brings a metal bucket to the edge of the park. The crowd takes this as a sign, and forms a line, which winds all the way through the park. The people seem a bit amused about my presence: somebody even cracks a joke that it’s an international event today (“*Kyō wa kokusaiteki na ibentto da*”)! [This was, of course, better than if e.g. they had been angry because of me.]

[There is a drawn picture about the lining system in the notebook II. I also took photographs so that no-one’s face is shown.]

The system works as follows: A man cuts the line and delivers the lining numbers. About 25-30 people are let go through at once. The group walks fast [runs] towards SSS. [See the map in another notebook.] I’m standing in a line together with “Nichiren”. [At this point my description ends, because things started happening too fast. I can add, however, that when we got to the SSS doorway, people were let inside one by one, where they received food. After receiving it, they were directed outside. I don’t know, if they received anything else (clothes etc.) or if they were offered a place to stay for example. (More about the SSS’s strategy elsewhere.) Note, that I have pictures somewhere.]

(I could argue about the *takidashi*, that when it was organized by a Korean church involving a ceremony, there seemed to be less interaction between the homeless as everyone seemed to sit

passively on the ground with their heads to their knees, but I did not see the scene before the ceremony began, and naturally they were expected to be silent during the ceremony. On the other hand, in other *takidashi*, when it was the time for serving the food, the spoken interaction seemingly stopped and the lining for food began, and after that everyone left the scene rapidly.)

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August 29 2003

SSS interview

“Nichiren” helps me to access the staff. Everyone’s talking without hesitation [in the beginning]. Someone says that the boss arrives at 9 am.

SSS is a non-profit organization which provides chosen homeless an apartment for a cut of their social welfare. The organization was founded five years ago.

Number of facilities: 130

In Tokyo: 66

Accommodations: 1400

In line waiting: 300

[I’ve received information that the number has been over 3000 at one point. See Gill’s article: [http://www.orientaleconomist.com/images/07\\_2003\\_toe.pdf](http://www.orientaleconomist.com/images/07_2003_toe.pdf)]

The breakfast is served every morning except on Saturdays and Sundays. Two years ago they started to serve *o-nigiri* alongside *kappuraamen*. Before that it was only *kappuraamen*.

Their headquarters is in Shinjuku, Nishi-juku.

They tell me about the law on NPOs 3-4 years ago. [See more.]

NPO in Japanese: *Tokutei hieiri katsudô hôjin*

Last year another law concerning the homeless [The Homeless Law]. Last year also a law on government’s subsidies to NPOs.

20 years ago there was a revision (*minaoshi*) of the *seikatsu hogo hô*. This month there’s a new revision.

Private financial constituent. [What does this mean? The man I interviewed wanted to say it in English. Maybe it’s about funding the NPOs. Man’s opinion was that the amount of social welfare money is quite high per person.]

*Hômuresu no hoshônin to shite katsudô suru hôjin*. NPO that works as a guarantor for the homeless.

- *Kyojû no teikyô* Supplying a dwelling

- *Shokuji no takuho* Securing food

- Protecting the homeless against the loan sharks and helping them in loan issues

[These were written in my notebook in Japanese. The meaning is that SSS is an organization trying to guarantee the safety of the homeless by guaranteeing apartment and food. I think there’s more informal rumours around about the actions and background of the SSS (I don’t even know if they exist anymore) than actual information. Well known rumour is that the founder is a famous ex-yakuza mid-level boss, or at least he used to be in a national motorcycle gang in his past (this was one newspaper article I haven’t found since the day I saw it in the internet). One Ueno-city



council member said that the yakuza-connection is true but that it is a public secret. The actions of SSS have been widely declared at least controversial. I heard from many informants that the amount of money they cut from the welfare recipients *seikatsu hogo* was 100,000 yen out of the total 140,000.

At the time I went to the SSS branch office, I had no idea about the yakuza-connection. First time I heard about it from "Sensei" a bit later.]

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("Sensei" on *yoseba* and Tokyo homeless)

August 29 2003

Afternoon

"Sensei" claimed that *yoseba* does not mean a labor recruiting place. Instead he offered many other titles [those kanjis explained and translated before], of which I have never heard about, and he draw them in my notebook. Maybe he just has not heard about the other connections.

What is important, is that for example "Sensei" does not follow any fixed weekly schedule. However, he has many opportunities. But then again, these *takidashi* direct his actions, even though there are choices available, to which ones he goes to. The amount of organized *takidashi* seems to have grown tremendously during the last couple of years, at least what comes to their visibility. [This is true anyway, and the information is available somewhere.] So has grown the amount of the homeless, according to "Sensei": there are more homeless in Yoyogi than here. [This is also true, statistically and otherwise. Of course "Sensei's" view - that there are more homeless - may be just his guess, and thus not verifiable information.] "Sensei" also tells me that the mindsets, or the ways of thinking, of the homeless vary from one place to another. [This would also concern their actions. But this is only "Sensei's" opinion so far. Definitely there is expectable variation, but just what kind of variation is that. That's something I should try to find out, and that's why I also tired to closely observe another group of homeless, who live elsewhere in a slightly different environment.]

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Small interview with "Sensei"

August 30 2003

Jewelry Bridge

Today "Sensei" and "Cap" first went to Shirahige-bashi, then to Asakusa to watch a samba-carnival, and later on "Sensei" went to Ueno-kôen to meet his friends. "Sensei" says that this is a part of the so-called *nikka*, daily program. However, he said, that these happen different time every day, which makes things a bit more complicated [at least for me]. So there seems not to be any overtly tight schedule for "Sensei".

[At some point during the day, there may also have been some singing in the program, in Sumida, and not Christian flavored. At least, I wrote something like that in my notebook.]

When I asked him, how he has the energy to go to all the different places, he said that he works a little every now and then, and that he owns some kind of an underground/bus ticket (probably only for fixed stations). [Again something I should have asked for once more.]

Tomorrow he goes to Kudanshita and Kanda. Something work and welfare related. [Later I heard that in Kudanshita there was a church that offered a sleeping place and an opportunity to wash against a small amount of work.]

--

September 1 2003

At some point I felt that my relationship with the Jewelry Gang was deteriorating, and I thought it was because the others were not happy about the fact that I had given *shōchu* to “Sensei”.

On September 1 I tried to make recorded interviews in the small park where the homeless waited for the SSS *takidashi* to begin. This undoubtedly affected the atmosphere in a negative way, and suddenly I did not feel that welcome there. The reasons were obvious.

An addition by “Sensei” concerning the homeless etiquette: Because of the etiquette, it is not customary to talk about one's private business amid the crowd, not to speak of giving interviews.

[On the same day I was strongly criticized and put-down by “Blue Overalls”, who said that I should take my research and shove it.

However, later on that afternoon I was talking to Jewelry Gang at the Jewelry Bridge like before, without any restraint. I even interviewed “Nichiren” and taped it. This could be an example of “belongingness” and “occupying the proper place”: The “homeless etiquette” forces people to act “ritually”, and as they are expected to by their peers. But when they are not in a ritual situation, when the situation has turned more intimate, they are not bound by the etiquette. Sometimes I felt that “Sensei’s” presence also affected the behavior of the others.]

(An excerpt)

September 1 2003

And now, what is happening? Here I am, on the Jewelry Bridge, talking to these people I'm growing familiar with. Present are “Nichiren” and the woman of the couple. We are sitting in the same familiar place, on the edge of the small fountain under the highway. Many funny things are shared. One was that “Nichiren” and the woman told me that in their opinion the by-passers look like Mona Lisas: they have the same kind of enigmatic smile.

At this point I also interview “Nichiren”.

(...)

During the interview the man of the couple returned from somewhere. Accordingly, he had walked all the way to Arakawa and back, during one day. He has blisters in the soles. These are lanced with a sterilized needle. The needle is heated with a cigarette lighter.

So, suddenly everything seems all right, at least what comes to personal relationships. “Sensei” may just be “demanding”. And the family on the upper platform...yes, you can't please everyone.

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(Ethnographic description, maybe themes of dependency and others.

On September 2<sup>nd</sup> I went to Adachi-ku trying to find a big *takidashi* that should have taken place under a certain bridge crossing the Ara River. “Sensei” told me that homeless people grow their own vegetables there, and that they are somehow connected to the local *buraku*. I never found them, but I witnessed something very interesting instead. This differed from other scenes in many respect. It was notable, that these homeless had not been abandoned by their local friends.)

(An excerpt)

September 2 2003

Senju-Shinbashi, 12:00 onwards

“Dynamo” comes to tell me that “*yokattara hajimemasu*”.

It begins. There are about 10 persons, some volunteers. [Good counting!] *O-nigiri* and *o-cha* are served. I am introduced as a special guest.

I hear that once a month a doctor comes for the homeless. It is not exactly organized, everyone just volunteers and comes. “Dynamo” acts as a chairman and an entertainer.

I get a thought that I should go to Ueno to see, if there is a same kind of meeting there. [Apparently at some point I forgot about it, which is a shame.]

They are talking generally about the food, and about the *taifu*, which had come to Tokyo right before I arrived. They talk about how the surface of the water rose because of the rain.

This seems to differ a lot from the meetings, where there are only homeless present. The homeless do not talk that much to each other, but with the volunteers. Especially “Dynamo” talks all the time, but he also acts as a transmitter of information. He talks in a negative tone about the new law concerning the homeless. [“Dynamo” always seemed to be totally in comfort when being with the homeless. That said, he also had very critical opinions about them. He divided them to those who are either victims of circumstances and those, who just did not care. (See Sep 21 2003, medical counselling meeting) However, at this place I did not note any anxiety between the volunteers and the homeless. Probably that is because allegedly they had known each other for a long time.]

Another volunteer says that there are not any other meetings here like this. [This was the answer I got, when asking about other *takidashi*. These homeless live near here, also in that place with the high-growing weeds. [It would have been very interesting to observe these homeless' life as an alternative way of homeless life.] He says he has been here for about two years, and that “Dynamo” has been here for a much longer time.

*O-nigiri* are slowly disappearing.

I'm talking with the one sitting next to me about how these meetings should be, and why the *kurisuto* meetings are not so good. [Some homeless feel it is important that they can talk to someone.]

I think I should wait until the meetings over, and ask “Dynamo” some questions. [He did not have time to stick around for them. No one really has.]

The homeless man next to me opens out to me a bit: he gives me his pessimistic opinion about the future and the present, how all kinds of resources are wasted all the time, and how people just buy more and more all kinds of stuff all the time.

Everyone emphasizes that they do not know or care that much about the Christian business. I ask the homeless themselves about their weekly rhythm. I get an answer that there is some kind of *takidashi* near enough on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays at Sumida-gawa. [The last one most probably by Food Bank Japan.]

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(Situation)

September 1, evening

I realize that e.g. “Sensei” and “Cap” get tired every now and then, and they become more reluctant to answer my questions. The potential intimate situation may turn into anomic, because of a change in a mood caused by tiredness. They also advised me to not try to be too active on the following day (literally to take a day off), because there would be not *takidashi* in the area, and they would be more hungry than on the other days.

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(Some kind of example of “individualization of mass culture” (de Certeau) maybe)

September 1 2003

Evening

About “Platform Lady”: It is still difficult for me to understand, what has been her fate, and how does she handle the situation she is in. Anyway, yesterday we decided on an interview at the Asakusa-entrance, where she was watching the weather forecasts in the television. [There are many screens put up on the wall inside the corridor that follows the Asakusa-entrance to the JR station.] There were also some other homeless-looking men watching the television at the same time. I do not know, how often they go there. Being here I have noticed that the homeless read a lot, lots of newspapers as well. [I do not know what they read, but I think it is only natural for them to try to keep in touch with the rest of the world through the media. But I do not know, e.g. does the time spent on the streets affect the time used for reading or not. Maybe it is a thing based on the individual behaviour. The televisions are obviously meant to be watched by the commuters, who have to wait for the trains, but homeless also take this opportunity. One can find out about the weather for example.]

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(An observation, maybe to the introductory part)

September 3 2003

Midday, Sumida-kôen

I hear from the San'yûkai staff that some people have got off the streets, and now they are receiving *seikatsu hogo*. [For me this does not look like the amount of shacks had decreased.] For example one individual did not want to do that, because he could not have taken his cat with him inside the apartment. [Some people choose to stay on the streets for different reasons.]

16:00

I also hear from the San'yûkai staff that the amount of people getting *seikatsu hogo* has grown, but so has the amount of the homeless.

15:30

Inside a car during the patrol

One homeless is sitting next to me. [Car rides must be rare luxury for the homeless, though not necessarily for these ones, because they are regular volunteers at San'yûkai and take part in patrols. I hear from him all kinds of interesting things, e.g. where can the homeless hang out in peace. The homeless can go to libraries to read, and to sportcenters to drink. [And at the same time to keep warm during the winter, and to enjoy the air conditioning during the summer.] He tells me that in the *Fukushi Sentô* there is a continuous smell of tobacco hanging in the air, and that you can not really sleep in there, because it is noisy all the time. In *chikatetsu* one can wait as long as one can stand.

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(A story about suicides some homeless commit. Reasons?)

September 3 2003

16:00, San'yūkai

I heard from an American nun, who volunteers for San'yūkai every week, about suicides the homeless have committed at the Sumida-gawa. The bottom of Sumida-river is muddy, so once you jump off the bridge, you will get stuck in the mud and you drown.

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(A description of a Komagata-bashi *takidashi* with comments. This is a good piece for interaction analysis as well. Note the part on nodding and eye contacts.)

September 4 2003

I reach the Sumida-gawa around 12:30. For a moment I watch the scenery. It is a beautiful weather. There are many blue shacks along the riverside. Because I have been on the patrols, which bring food to the people living in these shacks, I know that there are also people living in pairs (both man-man and man-woman) as well as groups. The shacks resemble normal houses with their surroundings: small "yards", clothes hung out to dry. Space is used to meet the needs. [There is not just the shack itself but also the space around the shacks, which is often being taken care of, or which at least is considered to be part of the place they live in. Legally, of course, this is public space.] Lots of empty bottles, plastic bags, buckets, and personal stuff is everywhere. These people are most probably trying to make these shacks their castles. [Here, observing this place, I had the idea for my seminar thesis.]

[So why do some homeless build these shacks, and why some do not? There may be many reasons of course, but I had a couple of good points from "Sensei", when I asked him why does he not live in a shack but at the station. He said that, first of all, for him it is *benri*, meaning that from the station there are good connections, and that because there is no shack there is no need to take care of it. Besides, the shacks get smelly.]

I heard before that the *takidashi* starts at 14:30.

There is a huge crowd of people waiting along the riverside. They are sitting in a long row/line against the concrete embankment south from the bridge. [It was the sunny side of the river, and in my opinion it was crazy that the homeless were made to wait in this heat and burning sunshine.] I go downstairs from the bridge to the embankment. I meet F-san and his friend [two homeless I met in the front of Ueno Park], who was sleeping during the interview: he says that he is here for the first time. Also other familiar faces. I see "Sensei" and "Cap". I ask "Sensei", who provides the food. "*Kamisama*", he answers. He continues that this evening the interviews are okay, and that they will return around 7 p.m. He suggests me to bring some *puresento*... Well, let's buy some more *shôchû* then!

When I walk among them, many of them nod me for an answer, when I look into their eyes. I repeat the words "*o-tsukaresama desu*".

I go to buy an ice coffee, and go to sit and enjoy it a bit north from the bridge, so that not everyone sees it. Soon a man passes by with a bicycle, the same man who was sitting next to me inside the car yesterday. [He is one of the most famous homeless volunteers in San'yūkai, whom I also interviewed later in his shack. I'll call him "Grumpy", as he did not really smile that often and seemed very serious all the time.] He comes to tell me that the leader of San'yūkai will arrive here soon. I realize that it is going to be a San'yūkai *takidashi*.

At this point I witness a strange event: a shiny black mercedes is parked at the roadside. Two men in dark suits are sitting inside. Soon the other one gets out and walks to the bridge. He walks around, like he was looking at something (or someone). Soon he gets back in, and they leave. [Yakuza debt-collectors? I thought about this already when it happened. It looked suspicious, but may have been something completely different.]

14:55

The San'yūkai people arrive. I go to help them, thinking about if it is a good idea or not. 450 lining numbers are allocated. I act as one of the two collecting the numbers. One homeless I know takes two *bentô*, before I can react. [Or maybe I did not want him to get caught.] In the end more bread is given for those who are lucky to get it.

After the *takidashi*, the hotter than hot place gets empty. [This would suggest that the most important thing for the homeless to go to *takidashi* is the food. For the food they are ready to suffer (the weather). However, after the *takidashi* some of them may go to some more comfortable places to socialize or to continue socializing. "Sensei" and "Cap" for example told me once that they had gone to watch a samba carnival together after a *takidashi*.]

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(After the Komagata-bashi I met a younger homeless man, who told and taught me interesting things e.g. a weekly schedule of *takidashi*.)

September 4 2003

Late afternoon, next to the Komagata-bashi on the Asakusa-side of the river

After the *takidashi* I meet one very young appearing homeless man. He can not be more that 35 years old. Actually he could have been my age. He kindly taught me a comprehensive *takidashi* program for this area:

Monday	Nothing [?]	
Tuesday	11:30	Shirahige-bashi (Mother Theresa)
	14:00	Ueno-kôen
	20:00	Tamahime-kôen (Kaji Guruupu?)
Wednesday	10:30	Senju-shinbashi
	14:00	Sumida-kôen (by Morihoto kyôkai [or San'yūkai?])
Thursday	14:30	Komagata (by San'yūkai; if rain --> Kuramaebashi)
	20:00	Betsudai (?)
Friday	14:00	Ueno-kôen
Saturday	11:30	Shirahige-bashi (Mother Theresea)
	14:00	Ueno-kôen
	15:00	Tôbudensha (by Food Bank Japan [The site changes regularly])
Sunday	8:00	Yoshiwara (by Morihoto kyôkai)
	14:00	Ueno-kôen (by Seiyôhan kyôkai)
	19:00	Ueno-kôen

[Now when I think about it, there might have been two *takidashi* at Sumida at the same time. I remember San'yūkai staff talking something about these. Kaji Guruupu's *takidashi* was actually organized by Hoshi no ie-Kaji Guruupu had quit.]

The man has been homeless now for about one month, and he has been hanging out at the Ueno and Asakusa area.

He told me all kinds of things. However, he also admitted that he has just begun learning about these things, though he says has been homeless sometimes before as well. He has worked at the

highways as a concreter, but now there is not work available. Last year from June to November there was not work, and this year it looks the same.

The man told me about the Korean churches, who arrange *takidashi*. He claims that the churches are cooperating with yakuza. *Pinhane* is involved. [Probably so that yakuza help them to get members, and get a cut from every member. Or the churches get money from the Korean state from every new member. There was talk about this thing somewhere. See a couple of paragraphs later.] The *tehaishi* patrol the ceremonies looking for labor. [Co-operation.]

He made a clear distinction between *Rojô seikatsusha* and the men living in blue shacks.

I have a thought that I should directly ask this man about how the *takidashi* supposedly control the lives of the homeless. And “Sensei” as well.

He says that the number of the homeless at the train stations has decreased because of the *oidashi*. They have been "pushed elsewhere." I remember that some people living at Sumida have said they have not witnessed as much *oidashi*, in a sense like at Arakawa for example. (I remember one destroyed shack with a note left on it by the authorities I saw at the Arakawa.) [But there are definitely *karikomi* at the Sumida. How often these happen at Arakawa, I am not sure.]

At this point I remember that e.g. the Canadian priest emphasized that the co-operation between them and yakuza is passive from their side, that they are just doing their own thing. But at least some Korean churches and yakuza co-operate, however passively, and the churches get money from the state from, according to this man, every new member. The church also acts as an introducer of work: one goes to the church and thus is able to get work, and the money from work goes to the church. [!]

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(Social interaction?)

September 4 2003

Evening, Jewelry Bridge

We are sitting in the usual place. There are three other men, whom I have not met earlier, sitting among us. They are Ueno park's inhabitants, but now they are here because they "like this place." “Sensei” teaches me about the tomorrow's program. He also teaches me other things.

21:30, Pandabashi

“Blue Overalls” of the upper platform family greeted me smiling, when I saw him earlier at Pandabashi. [It must have had some effect that he saw me volunteering at San'yûkai. I remember him looking somehow delighted, when he saw me there.]

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(“Sensei's” interview, not recorded. Note empathy right in the beginning, *hanashi o ukeru* etc.)

September 4 2003

Evening, Jewelry Bridge

Today “Sensei” spoke a lot after I had given him a can of *shôchû*.

“Sensei” said that he knows something about the aforementioned family: he thinks that the youngest of them (“Blue Overalls”) is probably very angry at himself, because he has no work. Then he speaks about the old man I have seen many times: he thinks that the old man's life is most

probably very "tsurai". It is known that where the man comes from he has a sick wife there. Allegedly he has children [of course grown-up] too. He is one of the oldest homeless around here, over 70 years old, and when he comes over to talk, everyone just listens ("*hanashi o ukeru*") and is sympathetic to him. [I remember witnessing this right before "Sensei" taught me about this.]

"Sensei" notes that I should never start asking questions without introducing myself first. I notice I have done this mistake many times. In Finland it would probably be otherwise: you can start a conversation with a foreign person by making a question. But not in Japan, ordinarily. [My impression is that a foreigner can also start a conversation in Japan without making an introduction first. It is very likely, though, that one introduces oneself sooner or later.]

"Cap" declined my present. I did not ask for an interview. Now he would probably not be too eager to do it.

"Sensei" teaches me about a library in Asakusa. [I went there later, and it had small but special locations for the homeless and San'ya, respectively.]

As "Sensei" also said, it seems that San'yūkai is well-respected around here. "Sensei" especially emphasized that San'yūkai does not try to cash in on the NPO-brand as do some other NPOs.

More about mysterious Dixon [a priest, who according to "Sensei" offers *takidashi* in Adachi-ku—the one I did not find]: he did not offer them alcohol, it came from the others! But there was food that he offered. He is a priest. That is why he can do it. The *takidashi* takes place on Tuesdays every two weeks and on Wednesday every other. Allegedly Dixon has written a book in Japanese about the homeless. [I have not come across this.]

He tells me about one of the Korean churches I have seen in action in Ueno: the Canadian priest is not the head of the church. The leader is Korean. The Canadian is married to a Korean wife.

"Sensei" does not appreciate the younger homeless. They could do whatever work. The elderly can not. [This is undeniable, at least what comes to the service sector.]

Those homeless along the Sumida-gawa he calls "*San'yūkai no kodomo*." [Because San'yūkai offers them food and befriends them every week.]

According to him, Kanemachi Ikka is still present at San'ya (Kiyokawa), but it has a low profile. However, it has been there since the Edo-period. They still manage the gambling there. [Which I witnessed earlier.]

Though "Sensei" spoke well of San'yūkai, he also questions some of its activity: He says that in Ueno there are many homeless, who do not have the strength to walk that far or hardly anywhere actually. [E.g. if San'yūkai patrol meets someone, who is not in a good condition, but still is not in need of emergency treatment, they ask him/her to go to San'yūkai the next day the clinic is open.] But he also says he understands that San'yūkai can not do everything alone. For Sôgidan he feels sympathy and thinks it is a great organization. [It was probably "Sensei" who told me about how the Sôgidan used to be the only quarter that fought yakuza in San'ya especially in the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>]

"Sensei" tells me about the Morihoto kyôkai [see the *takidashi* timetable] that they offer the homeless a chance to bath.

About the station and the absence of blue shacks: it is not allowed to build the shacks at the station. "Sensei" also says that the shacks and tents get dirty and smelly easily. Bare cardboard is easy to pack in the morning and as easy to put back in the evening. The authorities do not interfere in this. The mere cardboard is also easy to change. The reasons why "Sensei" himself stays at the station in this exact place were the location and thus the connections, and the bridge and the roofs, which give some shelter.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Hester.



“Sensei” even tells me about the Ueno station's close history: about 10 years ago there still were benches inside the JR-station. Now there are only those lining chairs. When the number of the homeless hanging at the station started to grow, the benches were removed, because the homeless used them for resting and sleeping.

[I think the night before, when there was a storm and heavy rain, many homeless had gone searching for better shelter, and thus the surroundings of the station were quite empty.]

There may have been news about this emptying of the station. The eviction of the homeless from the Shinjuku-eki in the mid-nineties is a well-known incident. [Find a reference.] I wonder, what has happened elsewhere.

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(Here is the observation about the use of space in Pandabashi)

(Sep 4 evening, Pandabashi) I remember that today on Pandabashi both the homeless and many young couples were sitting almost side by side. An interesting and thought-provoking sight. [How the public space is used in a same way by both the marginalized and the "normal" youngsters.]

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(Ethnography of a *takidashi* in Shirahige-bashi)

September 6 2003

After 11:00

I arrive at Shirahige-bashi right after 11 am. There are long lines of blue shacks continuing to north, under the raised highway on the east side of the river. Hardly any shacks south of the bridge. [The number rises again towards the Sakura-bashi.]

A big crowd of homeless has gathered to a place a bit north from the bridge, on the east side of the river. There is a platform in the open on the river level, between the river and the raised highway. There are stairs leading from the top of the embankment down to the platform.

I spend my time talking to “Sensei” and some other homeless. We discuss the books I found yesterday.

12:45

A car arrives, the trunk filled with food. It is the Mother Theresa Church. Soon another car arrives and brings more food. I meet an old friend I used to meet regularly during the autumn of 2001, when I was first time in Japan doing volunteer work at San'yūkai and taking part in the patrols. We used to call him "Clapton", because he owned a guitar and idolized "Crapton". He says he is not homeless anymore, and that nowadays he is doing renovation work and *boranteia*. [It is possible he spoke the truth all the way. First I was not suspicious. Later I saw him in another *takidashi* lining for food. Maybe he was just taking the advantage of the *takidashi* he knows, maybe he is still (occasionally?) homeless. I did not have a heart to ask him, because I thought it could hurt his pride.]

I also meet one San'yūkai volunteer. She is one of the regular ladies in the kitchen.

I guess the real name of the organization is "Missionary of Charity - Mother Theresa". They are helping the Tokyo homeless. I am told that they started 25 years ago already, when the number of the [at least visible] homeless was much lower than nowadays. Every day they do different kinds of work. *Takidashi* are organized every Tuesday and Saturday.

It starts: the homeless rise up the stairs. Everyone is given *kareeraisu*, and everyone gets it. Again I take part in delivering the food and see familiar faces during it.

Down on the platform, before *takidashi*, I talked with one homeless I did not know before. He said he hates work but loves booze, women, and gambling. He says he chooses to be homeless. Still he said that he collects *arumikan* for money. [*Arumikan* is considered to be physically hard work, but it is also very independent form of work.]

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(The following is ethnographical description of the area and the blue shacks.)

More about the blue shacks in the area: the underside of the raised highway all the way from Shirahige to Suijin-ôhashi is full of shacks, small and bigger. Quite many of them resemble small houses by their shape and sometimes even by their size. Some of them are being repaired and widened. The sound of banging hammers can be heard here and there.

I walk to the Suijin-ôhashi, and realize that the shacks continue under the highway all the way at least to the next big curve.

Cardboard, wood, and the blue tarpaulin are not the only materials used in the shacks. Plenty of plywood is also used. I realize that many also use scaffolds to support the shacks. [Here could lie the irony of many of these people being (at least semi-) professional house-builders.] Car batteries work as energy-sources. I come up with a question: do these people think of these places as their homes? [I already tried to answer to this question in the seminar paper.] This starts to look like the shanty towns in the developing countries. The yards are full of all kinds of things, but the yards are also kept tidy. People have brooms for sweeping. Futons, clothes etc. are hung out to dry. There are bicycles, carts etc.

On the other side of the river there is the famous landmark of the old San'ya: Tokyo Gas and its big green ball-shaped tanks.

People here are enjoying a warm Saturday afternoon in their own ways: doing small things like renovation, conversing, playing mah-jong etc.

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(Irrelevant?)

I got a flyer from "Sensei": it is Yamanichirô's announcement about a beginning campaign against hostility towards the foreigners.

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(On the same day there was another handout in Sumida Park. I see actually more behavior by the volunteers than by the homeless.)

September 6 2003

15:00, Sumida-kôen

After the Shirahige *takidashi* I headed to Food Bank Japan's [FBJ] *takidashi*, which should have been in the Sumida-kôen under the Tōbudensha railway next to its terminal station (Asakusa). There is no-one here. I ask the homeless-looking men about it, and one tells me that it is going to be on the opposite side of the river.

I go to take a look, and I see a crowd there. It is the same view as in the morning, but there are lesser people. I go to the opposite side. There stands the peculiar-looking Asahi Brewers building. Soon I find a FBJ's car. Takidashi is about to begin. There are lots of foreign volunteers around.

The homeless are waiting below, down on the river-level platform. The handing out of the food itself is going to happen on the upper platform on top of the embankment, north from the red-coloured Azuma-bashi, on the sidewalk between the river and the Asahi Breweries. The Sumidaku yakusho resides next to the Asahi Breweries. [I think this practice of placing the homeless down to wait was always the case whenever possible. Think about the marginalization and the "negative attention".]

I see "Sensei" on the lower platform, waiting. I wonder what he thinks seeing me.

There are a lot less homeless than I thought so far. They are sitting in rows, but very loosely.

I see one homeless dressed up in kimono. [Birthday? Pride?]

The FBJ crowd gathers up in a meeting. They are trying to act on schedule. I think there are many first-timers as well, because lots of instructions are given both in Japanese and English.

There are many Americans. H, L, and R are the names I can remember.

I throw some tomatoes in the plastic bags.

H is a "man in charge" here. I recall seeing him in some other place. Among the food there are lots of vegetables, which is healthy of course. [The food provided by the FBJ and some Korean churches often seemed to be much more "balanced" and thus healthier than the food provided by many other NPOs etc.] The carbage is collected in thrushes whenever possible, and otherwise too the action seems to be planned beforehand and also well organized.

L says he volunteers almost once a week. A guy named S says it is his first time here. He says he works in Asakasa, and that he is not American but Canadian.

[There is a map of the scene and the organization of the takidashi in the notebook III.]

There are also many Japanese volunteers and FBJ staff. Maybe this is why there is such an effective and well-oiled group work happening: everyone carries out his or her own task dutifully. [Occupying a proper place?]

People passing by stop to watch the scene. They have unreadable faces. They also watch the homeless. It is hard to tell what they think about such an event. [Sometimes when I tried to ask unfamiliar people something about the homeless, they did not want to answer me anything.] Some may find it curious, some other may find it deplorable and so forth.

I talk to a bearded man named K for a while, and he tells me how shocking and hard to understand the situation of these homeless is. But soon we are interrupted, because "Joker" I know from San'yūkai arrives and starts to talk about what he thinks is rational to hand out, about the vitamins and so forth. For some it is difficult to cook the food for example, and that is why the instant noodles are not that popular among the homeless.

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(Description of the continuity of the shacks' presence along the Sumida river.)

September 6 2003

Late afternoon

I left the scene after the food was handed out. From there I rode a bicycle to south along the river all the way to Shin-ôhashi. The scene of blue shacks continued all the way, though the density started to decrease the more south I got. Most often the shacks are built under the raised highway. [It gives shelter from the rain.] In this area it means that they are on the eastern side of the river. Just before the Shin-ôhashi the highway crossed the river, and this meant also that the location of the shacks also moved to the other side of the river. There locates also Hamacho-kôen. Elsewhere along the river the shacks lie here and there, but usually in more hidden and silent places.

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(Interview with "Nichiren", not recorded. Information on bathing and working opportunities, and about the couple's disappearance.)

September 6 2003

Evening, Jewelry Bridge

I talked with "Nichiren" about how the women do not have bathing possibilities. "Nichiren" said he goes to Shinjuku once a week to bath.

"Nichiren" also told me that the couple left yesterday at midnight. The man had allegedly got a job opportunity from a *tehaishi*, and they had left for Chiba immediately.

"Nichiren" said he is not wanting to get work from *tehaishi*, because -he says- they are dangerous. He told me that if one looks for work from *yakusho*, one has to fill in a form and write down his or her name, age, and address. And if one does not have an address, he or she can not get work either.

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(Interview with "Cap". Lots of interesting information about: 1. different types of homeless; 2. Seikatsu Hogo and SSS; 3. *Machikin* and interests on loans; 4. *Sôgidan*; 5. The homeless etiquette; 6. Individuality and other aspects of homelessness; and 7. The responsibility of the State. Note especially 1, 5, and 6.)

September 6 2003

Evening, Jewelry Bridge

1. *Hômuresu* is different from *kojiki*. *Kojiki* is more pejorative, especially to the homeless themselves. *Kojiki* dig cabbage cans, pick up cigarette fags, and do not necessarily have an ability to take care of themselves. Sometimes they also panhandle. ("Some do not see any other chance," said "Cap".) Many of them do not go to *takidashi*. They are "really at the bottom." ("And not necessarily anyone even cares about them," said "Cap".) "*Hômuresu wa chigau*." According to "Cap", they (*hômuresu*) go to *takidashi*, do not panhandle, and usually do not pick up facts. [Note that the last one is not absolute.] This seems to be a very important thing for the self-condition of the homeless: at least to "Cap", but to many others too I think.

2. Seikatsu hogo and SSS. It goes like this: When someone gets social security, which is about 140,000 yen per month, SSS provides one with a place in a room with six other people, and takes a cut of 100,000 yen from the social security payment every month. [I assume it actually goes as follows: SSS first guarantees a homeless with an apartment and a fixed address, and then this applicant is able to get social security, after which the cuts are taken.] What is left after the cut, is not really enough for satisfactory living. It is hardly enough for living at all. [According to "Cap". This would mean a bit over 1300 yen per day. E.g. two pints of beer in a bar, or one cheap though reasonable meal, probably. Because SSS allegedly provides free meals, however "*mazui*" as some homeless say, people could survive with the money. Of course, people dying in the hands of SSS would be bad publicity for the organization. I heard often, though, that the life in the SSS barracks was not too bright: the food was not good, and one had to share the rooms with many others.]

140,000 yen per month is not much anyway, if one has to arrange his living otherwise. [For the cheaper *doya*, one can survive for less than 2,000 yen a night, but this does not include food. So far I do not have any official information about the social or subsidized housing in Japan. I have written to my notes, though, that an organization called Brotherhood of Charity was building cheap (rental? subsidized?) apartments in San'ya, and I recall also seeing the construction yard.]

3. Many homeless have troubles with "*machikin*" i.e. money borrowed from yakuza. Ordinarily the interest for loans is about 29 % a year, but for yakuza it can be anything. Many people are hiding on the streets, trying to disappear from the debt collectors. [I assume that there are many kinds of loans with many kinds of interest in Japan. This interest of 29 % may sound abnormally high, especially in the current economic situation, but it is anyway the maximum legal interest in Japan. (According to all sources I found about the subject, the MLI was 29.2 % still in 2004.) In Finland the "viivästyskorko" was fixed 16 % before 1995, and after that it became tied to the general interest so that it has been around 10-13 % during the last five years. This does not concern the loans taken before 1995, and this means that some people who got heavily debted in the beginning of the 1990s are still paying the "viivästyskorko" of 16 or even 18 %. In the year 2000 the average interest for housing loans in Finland was 6,48 % and for "kulutusluotot" 7,36 %. According to the then current "korkolaki" the maximum "viivästyskorko" for them was 4 % higher. (<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/esitykset/he/2001/20010232> ) Apparently the interest can never be higher than the current "viivästyskorko". 2002 there was another "korkolaki" -revision, see e.g. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1982/19820633>. (Todelliset korkokustannukset saattaisivat kuitenkin olla tätä suuremmat? )]

4. Sôgidan's mission: E.g. if the employer has skipped the payment of wages, Sôgidan sends a gang to do some arm-twisting ("*toritate*"). "Cap" experienced this once himself, and Sôgidan helped him to get his money.

5. More about the "homeless etiquette": no-one takes another man's sleeping place. If this happens, it will be dealt with on the following day. "Cap" thought that everyone would like to have a tent, but - he said - they can not pitch it, not here nor in general. [I did not understand this wholly, because many homeless do it anyway.] "Cap" himself told me that, because he has managed to save money, he will move into an apartment after one month. He told me his wife threw him away from his previous apartment. [Compare Y to the one you interviewed at the Sumida-gawa, who did not want to move into an apartment immediately, even though he had a chance. How does the place and surroundings affect the decision? There is of course a possibility that Y fantasized about the future, but he was one of the most sane persons I met during my whole trip.]

6. "Cap" had a view that even though every *hômuresu* go to the same places and act the same way there, they are still individuals, and they all think individually. He continued about the other people's attitudes toward the homeless. He said that he thinks the other Japanese simply do not understand the plight of the homeless. A good example are the helping organizations: often they are run by foreigners. [How often exactly? However, this is the impression among the homeless.] There are many Japanese people who think about the homeless and pity them, but who can not show it. Then there are many, who really despise all the homeless. [Some people behave aggressively towards the homeless, and these incidents sometimes make the headlines. It is not really studied, do any of these people make any distinctions between the types of homeless.]

I notice that I had understood almost every word from "Cap's" speech, and that it was also easy to talk to him.

But I think what makes a man act like *kojiki*, to act like him instead of being *hômuresu*? [The boundaries are of course blurred here.] When I followed this one man in the beginning of my field research, it looked almost like it was some kind of instinct-based routine. Like that man simply did not care about anymore if anyone saw him picking up the garbage.

7. I also talked with "Cap" about the responsibility, and about the structural reasons. Why is it getting worse all the time for the homeless? "Cap" said that he thought that the state alone was responsible. He continued that "in other developed countries the poor and the homeless, however

alcoholics, have a chance to get money for help, but not in Japan. Japan is the darkest place. The number of the homeless grows all the time because of the system. There is no new work for the older people. Yakuza takes its cuts from the social welfare. It is often the only possibility to get access to social welfare by collaborating with the yakuza, and thus it is not considered worthwhile."

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(A description of a day in San'yūkai.)

September 8 2003

10:00, San'yūkai

A new week starts here at the San'yūkai. The head of the San'yūkai greets me at the door. Few regulars are waiting outside. "*Ohayô gozaimasu.*"

I go upstairs. There are two volunteers present.

The morning passes with me serving tea for the regular ones. [Snow & Anderson would call these ones "institutionalized homeless". Not necessarily every one of them is homeless these days.] I spend almost two hours doing it. The other ones are handing out clothes, soap, and towels almost constantly. There are not any breaks. [Something you could call "true voluntarism". Though some of these people get paid - that could be called "Japanese work ethic".]

There are continuously people waiting to get to the clinic on the first floor. One of the volunteers says there are more of them on Mondays because Sunday is always *o-yasumi*.

With me there is the energetic "Joker", whom I met at the FBJ takidashi, "Grumpy" and "Helper". "Grumpy" comes here every day: "*Ikitori ga nai kara.*" He lives by the Sumida-gawa. [He is the one with a bicycle, and I also interviewed him later.]

Clinic gives medicine to the patients. It is packaged in small paper bags. I wonder what kind of medicine they contain.

Today two doctors present, 3 (or 4) nurses. One of the staff takes care of the waiting arrangements, one volunteer talks with the homeless and works as a helper.

Many homeless drink tea a cup after cup. Some of them are here from the morning to the closing time.

When I arrived in the morning, I heard melancholic sounds of *enka* coming from the karaoke-bar in the corner. A member of the staff says that the karaoke probably opens at 5 am. I wonder if those who do not (want to) get work in the morning *yoseba* go there, I mean those who can afford it. [Later I realized that not too many people go to *yoseba* anymore in San'ya.]

Someone just called me *teisatsu*. A spy. [He must have seen me writing down notes. This kind of humour is normal in San'yūkai. ]

Many familiar faces have arrived, some of them I can remember from two years back.

"President" comes to San'yūkai two times today. He arrives the second time in the afternoon, and continues allocating. In the afternoon the head of San'yūkai is also sitting in the front of San'yūkai among the others. He is the man everyone knows.

The talk is pretty much cracking jokes and making witty remarks, jesting, leg-pulling, making benevolently fun of someone now and someone other later. If I could understand their Japanese

better, I could get so much more insight. Now all I get is fragments. [However, it would take a lot of time to make a decent study about this kind of social interaction.]

The homeless may have to spend an hour waiting in the line to the clinic. [But this is one of the few clinics that help the homeless for free. In the case of emergency they are taken to hospital nearby.]

Many of the homeless smoke cigarettes. They can ask for a couple of cigarettes in the course of the day. The cigarettes are not placed in the front. One has to know to ask for them.

(I also got the following information from one San'yūkai informant.)

There exists e.g. "Kibô no Ie" –named NPO, which gives the homeless their own rooms and provides a full livelihood for much cheaper sum than SSS, which also places people to 6-10 person rooms. SSS has faced a lot of resistance, and they have not succeeded too well in Tokyo, so they have had to move their operations in other areas, mainly to the surrounding prefectures (Chiba etc.).

Today I also investigated *doya* or *bisunesu hoteru* ["business hotel"] prices. E.g. one normal-looking small hotel room was 2,200 yen a night. This would make approximately 66,000 yen a month. Living only, that is.

Next NPOs and *guruupu* were mentioned by the informant:

Sôgidan  
Yamanichirô  
Kaji Guruupu [However, at the time already defunct.]  
Mother Theresa  
Hoshi no Ie  
Arigatô Kyôkai  
Yamazatô  
Maria Shokudô  
Kibô no Ie  
Furusatô no Kai

These operate in the Taitô-area. FBJ and SSS also have to be mentioned, though the informant did not mention them without asking about them.

I hear that every Sunday 1 p.m. at Kototoi-bashi Arigatô Kyôkai organizes a takidashi.

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(Some information received from "Sensei" & co about a church in Kudanshita, and about the difficulty of getting work without residence permit. Some considerations.)

September 8 2003

Evening, Jewelry Bridge

I asked for "Sensei" & Co's Sunday program. They told me about Aisen-kyôkai in Kudanshita. They said that it is possible to sleep overnight inside the church too. [At least "Sensei" claimed he had done that.]

We discussed in the evening about how difficult it is to get work from *yakuba* without a fixed address. If homeless applies for work, he must either lie about his address, or take advantage of the possibilities offered by the NPOs, who tell the yakusho people that these homeless have a fixed address at the NPO. [E.g SSS and San'yūkai do it.]

If the address was not demanded, the homeless could get work, save money, and get off the streets. [If there only was enough work. And this situation is not unique for Japan only: In many other countries one has to go through the same procedures. See e.g. Snow & Anderson. In Japan the homeless often have a fixed address in some other municipality, or even in the same city, but they do not want to submit it. In Finland too in principal one has to be a resident in that municipality in which he claims social security. I've been told it is possible too to get living allowance in another municipality, but first the authorities check the situation in the applicant's home municipality, so that one can not get living allowance from two different municipalities.]

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(Another description of another day at San'yūkai.)

September 9 2003

10:30, San'yūkai

The clinic has opened. The chairs, which are for waiting, are now left inside. Clearly many, who have arrived here, do not know that the doctor is present only on Mondays.

(Before clinic opens, there is always a meeting of the staff and some volunteers downstairs at the clinic.)

Otherwise the routines are same than on Monday. The leader is not present. The tea and cigarette serving begins. Again, many faces are familiar. The one who serves the tea remembers me.

On the second floor there is Suzuki-san already. He is always one of the first ones showing up. I do not know if he is on welfare or not. But he is definitely one of the oldest here.

The first patient arrived at 10:25. This was apparently agreed on earlier: he got inside before the others.

"Joker" and "Helper" arrive. Immediately they are up to mischief, and they make a practical joke to one of the homeless I know, too.

There is one more today, so there is less for me to do. There is a cardboard box to be flattened, but for someone I can not do it in time. I find myself being an obstacle. But I do not want to take anyone else's job here, because they seemingly like to do anything available. [This is one of the most important dimensions of San'yūkai.]

Normally "Joker" sits on the stairs next to the junk-shelf. "O-cha" sit in front of the clothe-shelf that stands against the wall between the porch and the clinic. The shelf contains all kinds of clothes (T-shirts, long-sleeve shirts, underwear, socks) as well as some other goods (soap, razors). [There is a drawing and a description about this in the notebook.] "O-cha" acts as an deliverer of clothes. "Helper" moves here and there and does anything, depending on what the others do not do. "Joker" seems to do anything the others do not find time to do, or maybe do not think of. Especially the tea-man's seat is windy, and busy too. "Joker's" role is very interactive, maybe the most interactive here. It is like he always knows what he is doing. He also has lots of experience.

10:55

An ambulance arrives. The volunteers were waiting at the both ends of the alley, in case the ambulance needed someone to show the right direction. Stretches are taken to the front of San'yūkai, a man from the clinic is placed to them, and he is stretched to the ambulance and taken away.

I notice that the ambulance people are actually Tokyo Fire Department people. They are wearing respirators.



Follows a discussion about the man who was taken away. He had *kankôhen*, cirrhosis of the liver. This does not happen every day, though. [Later I heard that the cirrhosis was not in the liver but in the stomach. See below.]

One more familiar face has arrived [though this man is not homeless but is on welfare]: he has a hoarse voice, and he impresses me as if he were an ancient samurai. This time he is not wearing *yukata*, but light-coloured and light clothes, almost like a western pyjamas. He is a very impressive figure. A member of the staff is sitting on the stairs listening to him.

Now I get it: the man reminds me of Vito Corleone from the Godfather.

I took a walk to see the surroundings. I located Kibô no Ie, Pachinko-parlour, the place where they follow horse races (and probably make bets there too), many “business hotels”, and many *shokudô* and *izakaya*.

Around 1 p.m. at the second floor I talked with the samurai. He is called “Corleone”. We talked a bit about Edo-jidai [“Corleone” thought that the spirit of Edo-jidai had almost disappeared.], about the man who was taken to hospital, and “Corleone” told me he had been to the same hospital himself.

On the second floor I helped with the cooking and dishes. The least I can do.

Outside the same member of the staff was talking with the old men. He talked with this one man who was familiar to me somehow. I was told by him that this particular man is a “walking dictionary of San’ya.” [Too bad I never had a chance to ask him about stuff, and he did not seem to be too keen on telling me anything anyway.]

It is 3 p.m. again, and the place closes down. “Joker” rolls up the canopy, and everyone who is still present participates in cleaning up the yard.

The homeless naturally often ask me about Finland, and today too I had to answer many questions concerning Finland.

Upstairs I use a computer to type some questions for my planned “life-story” interviews [which never materialized because it was too difficult for me to interview any of these particular homeless. This of course could tell us many things about these particular homeless. Think about it later.!!!]

With “Joker” I went to a local bicycle-shop to check out the prices of the bicycles.

After the closing time FBJ arrived to deliver food to San’yûkai. The regulars helped to carry the stuff in.

Extra-information: the cirrhosis was not in the liver, but in the stomach. It was caused by alcohol, and it follows that the stomach swells up of water.

On my way home I went to see Tamahime-kôen. [That became the next big target for my ethnographic study.]

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(Two more days at San’yûkai.)

September 10 2003 Wednesday

10:00, San’yûkai

The day begins the same way as usual: I'm "placed" downstairs to observe. Today there is also "Longbeard", one of the hardest working men in the staff. He promises me an interview later in the afternoon. [This never happened. It was difficult to arrange interviews with everyone, but "Longbeard" managed to avoid it until the end.] Again there are new people at the clinic. The doctor (not the same as earlier) arrives after midday. [Every day there is a different specialist at the clinic.]

I can hardly do anything. I could serve tea, but "O-cha" [same one as yesterday and the day before] will not let me do it, though he also helps with handing out the clothes. Typical. [When I think about it now, it was only good that I hardly tried to do anything by force, but was forced to let them do everything instead. Later I only helped when I saw it necessary or when I was asked.]

Then I rob one task for myself: filling the electric water kettles with water.

Suddenly there is a shock: "Joker" is taken to the clinic. He was waiting outside when I arrived, lying on his back in the niche of the building, looking very sick. I do not know yet, what was the matter with him. Later he goes to the toilet to throw up. Maybe it is serious, maybe not. "*Mada haichatta*," he says when he gets out of the toilet.

I notice that everyone else here too like to perform small duties: One gap-toothed man collects cups. This task may mean a lot to him. The same man and one another took part in taking out the garbage as well. E.g. "President" performs many little tasks. [Think about roles, attention etc.]

I have an idea for a simple question: to ask them directly, why they come to San'yūkai. [But I could not get around to it.]

(Some of the homeless have cell phones too.)

San'yūkai's main significance: the clinic, the handing out of the clothes and other things, food and tea. But in the process: these people can gather at San'yūkai to socialize, and to have fun too.

For one man, whose hips are aching, a corset-modelled brace is installed. This man really looked like his hips were causing him trouble: he was walking in a slouched position. He had been here already on the two preceding days.

I have a chance to talk a bit with "O-cha". He says he started to come here 5-6 years ago. First it was only "*buraa buraa*" and drinking tea, but now he is helping here on *this side*. He says that most of the "regulars" hanging around here are homeless, some get seikatsu hogo.

I realize that it may not be reasonable to ask the homeless why they come here. It is quite obvious. Think about it later. [Of course one could find many subtleties from the possible interviews, but the interviews did not happen anyway.]

"Corleone" is present. He is the man in his white straw hat.

Also the man who comes to San'yūkai clinic almost every day to talk arrives. Follows talk between "O-cha" and others: "*Mai nichī shaberi ni kuru.*"

I hear that the clinic has divided its opening days according to the different types of illnesses. [See details in the notes.]

"O-cha" goes to eat, and "Hoshi" replaces him. Mr. "Hoshi" does not come here every day, because he is on welfare. He says he lives in Wakamatsu-chō, or -jō.[?] He says that it differs from Kibō no Ie in that anyone can go to Kibō no ie. [There is Wakamatsu-chō in Shinjuku, but "Hoshi" meant an organization called Wakamatsu-jō.]

"Hoshi" specifies: Wakamatsu-jō is a *dantai* which has five houses in this area. The apartments include two *tatami* and *eakon*. It could be a private business organization. [More likely it is a some

kind of foundation or just another NPO. See if there's anything later.] I think I'll try to ask someone about it later.

Back inside on the second floor one of the most respected volunteers explains to me about the recent homeless-law: It is decided that city governments must create legislation concerning the homeless, and a safety net. The government is obligated to create jobs.

There has also been discussion about the revision of the Social Security Law, which would include the evacuation of all the homeless to a remote place in Ôta-ku near the Haneda Airport, but it is not current yet. [This is the same thing "Sensei" was talking about.]

15:30

The meeting after the patrol starts. Today we went to San'ya Nobori park. It used to be a river and a canal, but now it is a park lane. There were *rojô seikatsusha*, who often spend their daytime there. Nights they sleep under the highway in cardboard boxes.

In the meeting we first talk about the cirrhosis. Then we go through the course of events on the routes of the patrols.

After the meeting I talk with the respected volunteer. I ask him about the homelessness in the ancient times. He says that when in the end of the Heian period the land was monopolized by the gentry, many people were put to poverty, because the production decreased. When Kamakura-era started, these people joined the new Buddhist cults as Jodo Shû and Nichiren.

[This day I also planned about a survey for the San'yûkai staff and volunteers, but it was sometimes difficult to arrange, and the answers I got are only used in this paper if they are relevant for the study.]

There was one particularly not healthy looking homeless we met at San'ya Nobori. He was dirty, smelly, and he was lying in the middle of all kinds of junk (blankets too). An American volunteer and a nun, who comes to San'yûkai every week, says that the same man is always there in the same place in the same position. He accepts the food and says that everything is *daijôbu*.

There were also three men sitting on a low wall. They were not aggressive, but acting a little impolitely anyway.

There were also some other people walking and resting in the park. One of the volunteers asked them "*Sanpo desu ka?*" to find out if they were homeless or not. The head of the San'yûkai staff suggests that this is a good way to enquire if one is homeless or not, because sometimes it is very difficult guess.

I also got more info from the respected volunteer: There is a classic book about San'ya called "*San'ya no doyagai*". In Japan there are approximately 6,000 volunteers, and 30 % of them are Christians.

From him I hear one more word, *kuitsumesha*, which earlier meant about the same as kojiki now. [It implies failure.]

When I returned home, I tried to improve my sense of direction, and succeeded. I located "the Mammoth" police box next to the beginning of the Iroha shopping arcade.

Another old volunteer told me earlier today about one more *boranteia-dantai* called Fukushin no Chiisai Kyôdaikai.

September 11<sup>th</sup> 2003 (Thursday)

San'yûkai

12:30

An ambulance arrives to take “Joker” away to the hospital. Allegedly he had been throwing up all the time. At the same time there is a small fight going on at the other end of the alley. One guy has arrived drunk again [I saw him drunk earlier in the front of San’yūkai some other day.], and he is having a quarrel with some other guy. It is a disturbing feeling. [Maybe “Joker’s” case has provoked some negative feelings among everybody.]

Today I did not spend too much time on the first floor or on the street level, because there were many people already and all the “posts” were filled, and because I felt I was of more help on the second floor anyway. There we made *o-bentô* and other food for hand-out and patrol. [I spent too much time working, and too little time studying and making observations, though I managed to create important contacts.]

In the afternoon there is the regular *takidashi* at the Komagata-bashi. First I see the regular 3-4 person bunch on the upper level next to the bridge on the southern side. They seem to be very friendly and open people. Second I see a badly burnt man, who looks really disturbing. I have never seen anyone like him: he hardly has any chin, nose or anything in his face, except small eyes and mouth. He is wearing a hooded jacket. One finger is missing, the others are twisted in unnatural positions.

Thoughts fill my head: Has this man been in some terrible accident? What has happened after that? Why is this man, who has undoubtedly been through terrible times in his life, here lying on the streets?

Later I go back to him with the Korean woman, one of the veteran San’yūkai volunteers, and give him a piece of paper with directions, how to get to San’yūkai. But I doubt we ever see him there.

[This man was like a some kind of a human monster from a storybook come flesh. It is difficult to even try to make hypothesis about him. This man did not represent a majority of the Japanese homeless, not even a small minority, but just himself. Still, this could tell us something about the Japanese society in general, but I will not go to that now. But just seeing this man put me face-to-face with my own prejudices, and I think I will never forget him.]

At the Komagata-bashi there is again a line of over 300 homeless. It is really hot, and water is also allocated. I see “Sensei”, “Hawaii”, a new friend of theirs, the young fellow who taught me the *takidashi*-schedule...and also “Clapton”. Apparently he still has to rely on *takidashi*. I do not see “Nichiren” or “Cap”, but probably they are here too. “Sensei” gives me some tips for me how to allocate the lining numbers!

We make a following route: We arrive at the Komagata-bashi, start with the northern side, and first hand out the *bentô* to the people living on the upper level; then we go downstairs to the lower level, give *bentô* to the people who live there; then we go under the bridge and to the southern side of the bridge to the ones waiting on the lower level. [There is a drawn picture in the notes.]

The numbers are collected, and those who have got a *bentô* can go back to the end of the line if they want to. After *bentô* there are still some *o-nigiri*.

We are basically divided into two groups, and two homeless are also with us: “Grumpy”, who regularly took part in the patrols, and another one whom one can meet every day at San’yūkai.

After Komagata we go to Sumida-kôen, and me and the two homeless continue toward Sakura-bashi. In the end we return to the van, and the rest of the *bentô* are given to “Grumpy”, who allegedly takes them to Tsukiyama-kôen by bike.

For me it is already nostalgic every time I go on patrol to Sumida-kôen and Sakura-bashi, because I did this couple of years ago, and had a break between.

After we return there is another meeting. After the meeting we go to the nearby (and famous—or infamous!) Tamahime-kôen with the Korean woman and another friendly volunteer of the kitchen to hand out some *bentô* to the homeless there. [This was intentional, and I was helped by Kim and the other woman here. This move was crucial for me to create contacts with the homeless there who became the next targets (and actors) of my ethnographic study. There was a small crowd playing *shôgi* or *go*, which are the two games they play there. I remember one man (“Ookami”) being very drunk, and making threatening gestures and drunken grunts, but it seemed somehow that he was testing me or something. Later I was told by one of his “associates” (“Deshi”) that he is rarely like that. Only when he is very drunk. Many men who had had access to welfare also used to gather to the park to play *shôgi* or *go*. They also played with the homeless who were living in the park.]

September 12<sup>th</sup> 2003 (Friday)

San'yûkai

10:30

I do an interview with the leader of the staff.

There are not too many people here today, because it is too hot, I'm told. I've been helping here and there. On the second floor the old men are watching TV, drinking *o-cha*. They sit quietly, do not really discuss anything, eat the food, and leave.

Again there are different volunteers in the kitchen, two of them. Depending on a day, there can be even four of them in the kitchen. One of the staff, who also works in the nearby Welfare Center, has to leave around 1 p.m. without eating. The head of San'yûkai sits upstairs reading a book. There is also one older fellow, whom I have met before, but I do not find anything to talk about with him right now. No “Y” here today.

Down at the clinic there is an aged doctor, whose hair has turned to white. I greet him, but do not really talk with him. Suddenly I feel desperate again, because I do not find anything to talk about with anyone.

I took a copy of a map about the surroundings, where I can later mark up the locations of the other support organizations. I should have done it already.

I have a talk with one bit younger-looking homeless on the second floor. We argue about if it is better to drink hot or cold tea or something else on a hot day. He claims that the hot *o-cha* is good to drink regardless of the weather. “*Karada ni yoi.*” [This may be true in a sense.]

I realize one stupid mistake I have made: I have been calling “Laughing Man” “X” all the time, luckily not too many times. But it must have been confusing to him. [“X” was one of the oldest men visiting San'yûkai regularly. “Laughing Man” was also one of the older men, a man who always talked and laughed a bit by himself, but he did not seem delusional in any way.]

The food is served every day two times, except on Sundays, when the place is closed. Usually it is always these same people who come here. I do not know yet, if they have to pay anything or not. [I think I found out later they have to pay a small amount every day, so mainly only those who have a little money all the time can come. These are either welfare recipients or working homeless, and those who also volunteer to help. To reach this, one has to move upwards in the hierarchy of the organization, though one can hardly ever reach the status of the volunteers, who have never been homeless.]

There are some people on the alley, but not as many as usual. It is not too busy at this point of the day, but there are visitors to the clinic.

There is the man with a scarf. He comes and takes part in the patrols every Wednesday and Thursday, and he seems to be here always from the start to finish.

14:30

The head of San'yūkai is walking among us. "Hoshi" and "O-cha" are on the first floor's service point. Yesterday there was another man serving tea all day long. [I did not see him that often.]

The doctor leaves at 14:35, and the nurses come after him bowing to him and thanking him. This is normal procedure. Everyone say at least "*dômo*". [I think this was one more peculiarly Japanese practice I had a chance to witness.]

"Eyeglasses" [a man who acted somehow arrogantly sometimes in my opinion] leaves at 14:40. "O-cha" shows him his little finger and says something "*Nandayô...*". [If a man shows a little finger in Japan to another man, this usually means that the man has to return to his wife or has to go to see a woman et cetera.] This is normal teasing that happens at San'yūkai, especially between the homeless, and everyone seems to enjoy it. "Eyeglasses" returns soon: he only went to get some cold drinks for the men.

14:45

Last teacups of the week are going.

A university student of sociology, who is temporarily a staff member, listens to the man with hips ache on the third floor.

15:00

The place closes. There are enough tasks for everyone left in the alley, about 10 persons. One can sort out the trash, use the hose to wash up the place, sweep the alley using a brush, remove the metal sheets and put them back afterwards and so forth.

[I also arranged interviews and surveys and collected lots of material. I heard from two people that Kaji Gurûpu is dead and that Arigatô kyôkai is actually from Aomori [-ken?], but they offer a takidashi every Sunday at Kototoi-bashi 1 p.m. The head of San'yūkai did not seem to know about Yamanichirô, which surprised me. "Longbeard" knew about it, but did not know about the location of their headquarters. It is possible that they do not have a physical headquarters, but they closely co-operate with Sôgidan and Jôhoku Welfare Center.]

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(First night and morning at Tamahime. Also some feelings etc. To ethnography maybe, small piece.)

September 15 2003 (Monday)

02:30

I arrive at San'ya by night. I ride my bicycle through Sensoku and Iroha Arcade. At the sides of Iroha Arcade there were about 100 literally rojô seikatsusha sleeping on the cardboard.

Earlier at Sensoku I stopped at a shrine [not the Ôtori-jinja], where I also studied some history of Yoshiwara. Yoshiwara became Shin-Yoshiwara for the years 1657-1958. After that the place was renamed again, and a part of it is Sensoku. The land used to be a big swampland, but later it was reclaimed, and now only a small pool remains. [This was written in the board at the shrine.]

Tamahime-kôen resides next to the Tamahime-jinja. The gates to the shrine are open at night also. The yard also performs as parking space. The water flows 24 hours through and the place is lit

during the night. There are no homeless here, no shacks or tents. Cats keep company to the beastly statues.

In the Tamahime-kôen not everyone is sleeping: One is sorting out his dishes, a cat accompanying him. One is walking around the park. Many are sleeping outside their shacks and tents, because of the heat.

As I wait for more people to wake up, I draw a map of the place. [Appendix ?]

After 3 a.m. things start to happen. A van arrives. A man begins to move things on a tarpaulin on the side of the road.

[In the notes there is another map drawn about the placement of the arriving salesmen. Irrelevant probably.]

There is also one woman present. She is on her way to do laundry. More salesmen arrive. One is selling *bentô*. I realize that the tarpaulin-covered piles in one street corner were actually merchandise yet to be sold.

3:30

Inside the park things start happening as well: people are waking up, they sit still for awhile, smoke cigarettes, walk a bit, and wash themselves in the two toilets and using the water fountain.

I go talk to the man who arrived with the van. He says he comes here always. Things he sell: tools and power tools (such as power drills) and video cassettes (lots of pornographic movies). [Later he put more things on the show and for sale.]

On one desk there are only three (!) video cassettes, all of them porn.

Two women settle next to the first man to sell their own things. It is mostly all kinds of kitsch.

I take a walk to the surroundings. Little by little more people gather to the roadsides to wait.

4:45

The crowd increases. A man comes to talk to me. He collects *arumikan*. [See later] He sleeps in Ishihama-kôen, usually from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. He says he sleeps there because it is too hot here. And, he says, one can not really sleep at night. He says that five people sleep on this side of the park. [See the map. Which side?] He also says: “*Kaiken suru wa dame.*” No chance for a recorded interview then.

Another man comes to talk. He tells me about the figures: how many gets *seikatsu hogo*, how many goes to work and so forth. I wonder how he knows all this. [It is clear now that these people felt close enough that they had shared this information about themselves.]

This man was the one who was washing his dishes. He presented his friends: One is called “Arumikan”. (Probably he collects arumikan a lot.) Second friend is “the Richest Man in San’ya”. Third one’s name remains a mystery: he was the one who told me the aforementioned figures. I notice he has some troubles walking.

“Dishes” continues: three of them are selling things here. Today he does not: “*O-yasumi.*” He tells everyone that I am going to spend a week here.

There is a man wearing a cap and brawling, stealing attention. Next to me there is a yellow-coated man. [I realized later that I do not remember who these other people were, or did I meet them again, except “Arumikan” and “Yellow Coat”. “Dishes” becomes “Ookami” later. “Deshi” may have been one of them.]

On this side of the there are 5 residents, according to “Dishes”. He claims he does not know the people residing on the other side.

I see familiar faces in the crowd: first “H”, then “Hoshi”.

Three men are sitting around “Dishes” tent. At least two of them seem like his acquaintances. One more arrives.

5:30

Ishihama-kôen

This place works also as a “Natural Disaster Temporary Evacuation Area” (*Ichi ji shûgô basho*). Now too there are people sleeping on the benches and concrete walls, but no tents or shacks here. Just cardboard, boxes and flattened. Some people are awake, sitting still. Some people are sweeping the sand with brooms.

It is soon 6:00. The city starts to be awake. There are other meetings in other street corners, in front of the laundries etc.

“Dishes” said that everyone except him is leaving for *takidashi*. I go take another walk. I meet “Corleone” drunk out of his mind. He comes close and spits some words out. I can not tell what he is talking about. I do not witness any day-labor recruiting today. [I saw it earlier, but it was nothing spectacular.]

Back to the market place. There are even a couple of second hand *shakuhachi* for sale. People buy and sell. There are street sweepers. People sell food. Dining rooms and stands. Garbage is placed in two piles.

On the other side too the homeless are awake. “Arumikan” is stomping on the cans to flatten them out. Some are sitting in pairs, some alone. It is hard to tell yet, who are the regular settlers of the park, and who are just visiting it. I do not want to try to push people too much in the beginning.

I think it is better to go to sleep now. I return to my headquarters.

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(A conversation with “Deshi”. Cool things about social behavior. Empathy and so forth.)

September 15 2003

19:00, Tamahime Park

“Deshi” talks about some people (*dorobô*) who have robbed (*kinpin*) others’ belongings in the park. Then he says something about “Japan being the number one”, but I do not see the connection. Then he speaks more about *shôbai* (selling) meaning how some of them are *daidôshônin*, or street salesmen, who sell things in the San’ya morning market, which is a kind of street market that takes place around Tamahime park. “Deshi” uses philosophical metaphors about the work. He says it is like “*sôsaku, kôsaku, hôsaku*”, meaning “creating, cultivating, harvesting.” What he meant by this, was that “everyone creates one’s own life” (“*sôsaku = seikatsu suru*”).

“Deshi” continues: “When one gets old, one starts to lose his desires (*yokubô*), but that one also loses one’s purity or innocence (*junsui*). He only plays (*asobu*), and forgets himself in the process (*jibun no koto o wasureru*). One can not ask help from other people, but the people can help each other. (*Hito ni tayoru koto ga dekinai. Tasukeau koto ga dekiru.*) [This could be one more add to the homeless etiquette.] Everyone plays solo (*kojin-puree*). Like being a player in a soccer game, where everyone does their own thing. *Sakkaa-geemu. Minna sore sore chigau koto o yatteiru.*”



[But there is not a common goal, is there? And in soccer the co-operation matters a lot. I do not understand, does “Deshi” compare the homeless being soccer players, or selfish soccer players.]

Next I am taught how to play shôgi. My friend (“Deshi”) is called “*San'ya no shidôsha*” [a guide to the area] by the others, because he is teaching me things. There is one player called Rodomondo-san. He has played more or less for over 20 years now. “*Purô ni natteiru. Ware ware amachâ.* (He has become a professional. We are just amateurs.)” “Deshi” started to play three years ago.

We also talk about animals and whales in particular.

More comments:

*Keizaiteki ni hômuresu shakai sei o shinatta hito ga koko ni kita.* This probably means that the homeless are those who did not fit economically in the society, and they came here.

“Deshi” also says: “*Daraku shitakunai.*” [By this he probably means in this connection that one does not want to degenerate, but it happens anyway.] “*Jinsei wa dôryoky aru no imi.*” [This probably means that “life is about co-operation.”]

Man claims that 8 to 10 people do bad things at night, stealing etc. But, using another proverb, he says “*gakushû wa taiken ni motozuku*”, which means that “learning is based on experiences”. [I am not sure if he meant himself or the others by this.]

“Deshi” also says, that he’d like to be “Dishes” “*deshi*”, even though “Dishes” may not want it to be that way. He means that because the older man is an experienced salesman, who gets along, he would like to be the older man’s student in the business. He says that “Dishes” is a lonely wolf, “*ippiki-ookami*”. [All this was told to me by a man in cap and sunglasses. From now on I will call him “Deshi” and “Dishes” “Ookami”. This relationship between the two was quite interesting, and I will analyze it more thoroughly later.]

When I ask “Deshi” about an interview, he says “*Gaman.*”, meaning “patience”.

On the other side a children’s slide is also used for sleeping. Another one is sleeping on the side of a bush. But I do not know these people yet.

“Deshi” says that he knows everyone in the park. “Everybody’s doing the same thing.”

I think I should leave, because everyone is going to sleep or sleeping already.

I draw a hastily drawn map about the western side of the park. [It is in the notes, but there is better one in another notebook.] There are two kinds of distinctive things: the piles of things, and the seats for sleeping.

Some late additions to the comments given by “Deshi”:

Couple of days earlier when I went into Tamahime-kôen for the first time, it was “Ookami” who was very drunk. “And,” Deshi says, “when he is drunk, it is difficult to get along with him: one can not tell what he is saying, and he can act very irrationally.”

According to “Deshi”, “Ookami” is a real salesman. Unofficially, that is. But he buys and sells things, and he gets merchandise from Ikebukuro too.

“Deshi” said that he sells only things that are given to him by his acquaintances.

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(More ethnography on Tamahime. Note also economic relationship at the San'ya morning market. "Pro's" tour. The note about *karikomi*. Drunken Ookami. Hoshi no Ie's takidashi.)

September 16 2003 (Tuesday)

3:50 Tamahime-kôen

Preparations are on the way. "Deshi" has almost finished putting his salesdesk together. "Ookami" is also awake, but he is not preparing anything yet. [But nothing else happens until an hour later. Or I did not recognize any interaction or anything. It was still dark too.]

5:15

It is dawn. New salesmen arrive on the scene. Now there is also one woman "inside" the park. I draw a map of the stalls [in my notebook, but it does not have much relevance.]

I walk around the place. I am also looking for something: an alarm clock. I find the cheapest for 100 yen. A nice one, with a sound of birds singing, and a shape of an egg complete with a crack on top of it, like a hatching baby bird. But I notice that I have only a 10 000 paper money. One man realizes me hesitating, so he pays 100 yen to the salesman and passes the alarm clock to me. I am a bit embarrassed and confused at the same time.

From last night it has been getting a bit colder. But I can still survive with shorts.

In the park most of the homeless residents start to be awake. On the eastern side of the park there are two shacks on the southern end. I do not know anything about them yet. And I don't feel too welcome on the eastern side anyway.

On the western side all the four people I've met are awake. There is a shack built against fence that separates the park from the playing field. [Actually the playing field is separated from the park by a fence.] I do not know yet anything about its resident.

So far "Ookami" has not made a move to organize anything. "Deshi" has put his things together. The long-haired [I'll call him "Long-Hair" from now on; he was the one who has a hammock for bed], is not sleeping in his place, but I do not see him at all. About the fourth man I am not sure yet, who he is. [The fourth man is later called "PH", for some reason I can not remember.]

I saw the man, who walks in a peculiar way and maybe has some disability [I'll call him "Clumsy"], first speaking something at "Deshi's" desk, and then scavenging at the garbage piles. [He was probably very hungry.]

I have not seen "Arumikan", nor the man sleeping on the slide since I arrived here for the first time today.

The man who sells *shakuhachi*, and with whom I talked first yesterday, is also present. He arrived today also very early. [I'll call this man "Early Bird".] I talk with him a little, also with the man in yellow coat, but it is hard for me to understand the latter's speech. [I'll call the latter "Yellow Coat".]

6:10

I had a chat wit "Deshi." He says this is his work. Still seven hours, then he puts the stuff way, and from then on it is "*asobi*." Usually it takes 10 hours to do everything connected to this work: preparations, the work itself including some breaks, and finishing. "Always like this." If it rains, nothing happens.

"Ookami" is not doing anything. [I wonder if he got nervous, because I was making observations there.]

There are also other people sitting [away from the homeless and the salesmen] in the park, on the both sides. On the sides of the streets there are people hanging around or possibly waiting for something or just simply spending time there. Young construction workers are walking by wearing *tenuburi* and *chikatabi*.

I consider it important to find out, how many residents of the park take part in this “*shôbai*-business.”

I go to have some early lunch in a nearby restaurant.

6:55

When I return, there is a surprise waiting for me: “Deshi” & co are putting their things away. I think I mixed “*shichi-jikan*” and “*ichi-jikan*”! What now?

I see the man of the shack has waken up and come out to sight. He is stretching his body, facing the playing field. [He was not the one living in the shack. See later.]

Fourth man is trying to sleep. I can see his face, and I do not recall I have seen him earlier.

So, I mixed the hours. I had a small conversation with “Deshi.” He told me that every day it takes about three hours to do the work, from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. He gets all the merchandise from his buddies i.e. other salesmen. He considers this as help from the others. “Deshi” is humble: he does not ask for help, but he accepts help and help the others when he can. [This was also a part of the “etiquette” in Tamahime, as “Deshi” had told me earlier.] From this moment onwards it is *asobi*. He says his friends come from wherever. *Shôgi* is a very popular game among them. If it rains, he sleeps. He tries to be independent after a year. [All the time I felt “Deshi” was a really sincere but also a bit naïve person. I think that by “independent” he meant that he tries to be an independent *daidôshônin*. That would mean that he also had partly chosen to be homeless, or that he had accepted it while on the streets. All I can say is that he did not seem to be that healthy all the time.]

7:25

“Arumikan” is flattening out the cans on the eastern side. Next to him there is a pile of things. Two carts of stuff is brought in and added in the pile by a younger and an older man. The younger one goes to the furthest shack in the south end. Maybe he lives there.

Another cart full of stuff is brought next to me.

7:30

“Arumikan” has finished his work. He starts walking toward the western side.

On the corner of the caged playing field there is a bunch of four men sitting. I do not know about them yet, which ones are residents in the park.

The aforementioned younger man takes a couple of boxes to the shack.

Around this time the last salesmen are preparing themselves to leave. “Arumikan” is sitting near the “Ookami’s” tent. [There were few round logs put on the ground around this part of the park, which could be used as seats.] He is disentangling some necklaces.

On this side there are two *shôgi* games going. Five to three men (“Deshi” and another man leaves in the middle) are gathered around one chessboard, and eight around another. I do not know the players. [I may had met them earlier, but did not remember them anyway.]

“Arumikan” leaves soon. “Ookami” arrives. It is hard to find out, is he bothered by my presence or not. He has apparently been out shopping.

“Deshi” arrives. He looks tired: “*Nemuin da yo...*”

I have noticed that usually “Ookami” pees in the same place, and now also.

“Deshi” empties “Ookami’s” thrash can, and cleans up the place otherwise too, sweeping etc. “Ookami” tries to explain something, he shouts, he even slaps “Deshi” a couple of times: “*Bakayarô!*”

It seems that “Ookami” buys food, and “Deshi” can eat it, but “Deshi” has to work for it before he gets it.

I realize that “Ookami” smells of booze. He gives “Deshi” 10,000 yen, says something about “*kôro*”, and “*jinsei gokai*”, and tells him just to go buy something. [Unfortunately I did not solve these mysteries.]

It is a difficult situation anyway, the wolf is drunk...

“*Kanashii koto ga atte, ureshii koto ga atte, jibun no jinsei o ma...*”

“*Sore ga jinsei gokai. Sekai hitotsu isshin.*”

[Normal drunken speech maybe. I have troubles understanding this.]

8:30

I am offered some juice and eggs by “Ookami.” But it is frustrating to listen to his drunken blabbering, especially because I can not understand a word from it. [But I do not think it was meaningless to go through this anyway, because I could still make observations. And one situation leads to another.]

I can make sense of something at least. “Ookami” tells me he is from Saitama-ken. Then he says something that it is not common to ask about things concerning “*inaka*.” [Close to the basic rule of the “homeless etiquette” of not asking about one’s background, as told by “Nichiren”.] But he still wants to explain me something about it. But I do not understand a half of it.

Again “Ookami” pees, but this time in another place. [This challenges my theory about keeping some kind of order through one’s actions. This may be drunken behavior, though.]

“Deshi tells me that “Ookami” is totally different person when he is sober. [I had of course noticed that already, when I arrived at the park yesterday.]

“Deshi” also tells me that the *shôgi* players are mostly people on welfare, who live in *doya*.

He tells me more about “Ookami”: “Ookami” spends most of the wintertime in *doya*. “Deshi” himself sleeps mostly “*aokan*”, but sometimes he also gets enough money to go to *doya*. (I wonder if “Ookami” ever loans him money to do that.) [I did not realize to ask about it.] When it rains, “Ookami” makes a cover of his belongings. “Deshi” has to search for a cover elsewhere.

I go to talk to the *shôgi* players. I talk with one old man about *Tennô* and the English royal family.

Then I realize that the man I thought was living in the shack built against the fence, who was doing stretching earlier, was not the resident of the shack. The real one gets out of the shack to water the plants. He greets me and smiles. [I will call him “Gardener”.]

8:45

My body is getting stiff and I think of going for a walk. Right then a scarf-headed man arrives and brings shoes to “Deshi.”

A moment later I am waiting in the corner of the park, if the “Gardener” would come out of his shack to talk. We already changed a couple of friendly words a moment ago. He is doing something in his shack, some kind of house work I assume. [But he did not come out. Maybe he did not feel comfortable, because I was waiting outside.]

8:55

I go to the bathroom.

When I return from the toilet, I have a chat with the bunch that is sitting in the outside corner of the caged playing field. I am told that three men live here at this spot currently. A bearded homeless called “Pro” tells me many stories. For example today 8 p.m. there is going to be Hoshi no Ie’s *takidashi* somewhere.

He also tells me about some American, British or Canadian [can’t remember] social anthropologist, who was here at Tamahime some time ago studying the homeless. [I can not be sure about her real name, but I was told that she was a woman.]

9:30

“*Yakuba no hito*” come to the park to do something. There is a note on the fence:

“*Keikoku*

*Kono bukken o hôchi sareru to, kôen seisô no samatage ni narimasu. 9 gatsu 18 nichi ni tsui ni tekkyo suru yô keikoku shimasu. Nao, kijitsu tsui ni tekkyo shinai ba’ ai wa, fuyôhin toshite shobun shimasu. 9 gatsu 19 nichi ni tekkyo shimasu.*

*Taitô-ku toshizukuribu kôen ryokuchika*

*Denwa (5246) 1111*

*Heisei 15 nen 9 gatsu 16 nichi”*

[The homeless call this thing “*karikomi*”<sup>2</sup>. It means “a roundup”, and in this place it means that people from the aforementioned city department come to park to do cleaning and gardening. In many places this also includes cleaning up the place with water, which means that every single shack or tent must be moved in order to save them, depending on the place and the strictness of the district authorities. Taitô-ku authorities are often mentioned to be more “benevolent” toward the homeless than the Sumida-ku authorities for example. The note says that every thing that is on the way will be disposed, but only the clear garbage was thrown away on that day.<sup>3</sup>]

I am told that this happens once every month, also here.

I hear that the head of Hoshi no Ie is Nakamura Matsumoto.

“Pro” tells me about the art of *arumikan*. [Note that “Pro” is not “Arumikan”!] Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday a nearby “*arumi no kaisha*” buys cans for 82 yen a kilogram.

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<sup>2</sup> There is also another “*karikomi*”, which means “trimming” and “pruning”. Sometimes this is closer to reality than what the word “roundup” would make one think. However, they probably use it as a slang word.

<sup>3</sup> A more strict measure is *oidashi*, which means eviction.

“Pro” gives me a guided San’ya tour. He also shows me how to get empty cans for free from friendly dining room owners. The restaurant keepers seem to know him well.

[“Pro” was a very friendly, calm, and funny figure with a big beard. He surely seemed to be able to take care of himself, and he was also very easy to be social with. He kindly gave me a guided tour in some parts of San’ya. He said he knows the leader of San’yūkai, as well as the leader of FBJ. Actually he seemed to know everyone. He was the first one, who asked me to come to sit on the eastern side of the park, which had been a some kind of mystery for me so far. He said they meet up here, him and his four or five friends. Three of his friends live there, he did not. I did not find out where he lived. He said that they all used to be working buddies a long time ago. They were *tobi*, and did *tobishoku*. Among other things they were building the nearby NTT telephone office, which is a distinctive landmark because of its big antenna.

“Pro” did *arumikan*, one of his friends said he had not worked in a month, an another one said that he gets work every now and then, odd-jobs. I also talked with many other present on this side of park, but usually I just had to tell them things about Finland.]

We return to San’yūkai together. I go to sleep on the third floor.

San’yūkai

12:05

After some sleep, I find myself on the second floor of San’yūkai. The “regulars” are eating and watching TV. There is the famous samurai-series on. Soon there is a funny commercial in the telly: people are asked to call to the number 666-666. The advertised merchandise includes a telescope walking stick, and a chair that is 32 cm high.

13:20

I interview one of the staff. [He talked about the influence of mass media and many other things, but it is only indirectly relevant here.]

Tamahime-kôen

16:15

The games are still on in the park. “Deshi” is playing *gô* with someone. I am thinking I would like to learn to play the two games.

“Ookami” has luckily passed out. I hope he would work tomorrow. [But actually equally important is to note that he do not have to work every day, if he does not want to.]

I see other familiar persons as well: the “distinguished gentleman” I have seen at San’yūkai as well as in some *takidashi*, and “Arumikan”, the latter at his work flattening out the cans, naturally.

In a way it is like two youngsters spending time: a little alcohol and playing games, chatting and spending time.

My buttocks has not got used to sitting on these hard grounds yet.

Next I meet a man, who gives me another tour in San’ya. [The man who gave it, was a bit odd fellow, but he also seemed to be some kind of survivor, maybe not that respected among the other homeless, but very aware of things. He also laughed a lot and smiled all the time. And he seemingly enjoyed a lot showing me around. I also had an access to information and to some people, I would never have had with someone else, I think. After the tour he told me that he has been to San’ya for over seven years.]

First I hear from “Sneaker” that on Sunday there is going to be a self-organized *takidashi* at the Jōhoku Fukushi Sentaa. They light up fires, cook pudding and other stuff. [I went to participate in it the following Sunday.]

Then we go to take a look at the Jōhoku Sentaa itself. We walk through it. The stairs go down a couple of floors. Then there is a big combined dining room and lounge. Many people pay attention to my being there, but I do not feel threatened at all. The place is quite packed, even though the weather is good outside. There is cigarette smoke in the air. Almost half of the visitors are watching sumo on television, the other half is playing *go* or *shōgi* in pairs. *Raamen* (Chinese-style noodle soup) costs 80 yen. At the back of the room there is a “box” inside which two staff members are sitting behind the glass windows. There are also some people hanging about in the hallways. I note that the place is open from Mondays to Saturdays from 8:30 to 20:30, except on Tuesdays from 8:30 to 18:30. On Sundays it is closed. [I later realized that I may have understood the opening times wrong.]

We go outside, and next there is the place where one can get work every morning, if one is fast and lucky. “Sneaker” says that the jobs are given out again the next morning at 6:30, and that men line up and sleep overnight in front of the place. Apparently there are some men preparing to do just that.

Next “Sneaker” shows me the Tamahime Rōdō Shucchōsho (Tamahime Labor Agency). Here, “Sneaker” says, one can get so-called “*harō waaku*” (casual work)<sup>4</sup>. There are some men already present, though not in front of the agency, but hanging around the place anyway. They have put up tents there. The local “*shokyōgyō anteisho*” (an unemployment office) operates in the same building. “Sneaker” tells me that nowadays one must work 15 days a month to be entitled to get unemployment dole. [If this is true, the requirements have gotten stricter<sup>5</sup>.] He continues that three years ago it was possible to get the dole using whatsoever means. And, he says, it is still possible to buy stamps to *shiroi techō* (a white handbook)<sup>6</sup> from *yakuza*. If one gets unemployment benefit, it means 7,000<sup>7</sup> yen a day. I think of it as a prize from being lucky to get work.

I offer to buy “Sneaker” whatever he wants to drink from the vending machine. He seems to find this confusing, and he coyly points at an orange drink. After this we go to “*Mamosu*” (“Mammoth”), which is a big *kōban* (police box) on the Nihonzutsumi side of the street. It used to be on the other side, but later it got moved. “Sneaker” shows me the locations of the surveillance cameras around the police box.

Next we go to the Nihonzutsumi side. “Sneaker” shows me a cheap hotel run by Koreans. The hotel is often full of foreign tourists, who are looking for cheap accommodation. I see a bunch of Americans outside the place. Next “Sneaker” goes to *izakaya* (bar) and asks me to wait. Then he makes a phone call. He says something about gambling, that these moves have something to do with gambling, but I am not sure of what is going on. Anyway, he says that he has gambling debts for some 1,000,000 yen! [I can’t tell if this is true or not.] He also shows me a place around the Namida-bashi crossing, a restaurant with a night club upstairs, where he says there may be Chinese prostitutes. There are some dressed up women on the street in front of the building. “Sneaker” tells me he hates the Chinese. He says they cheat, among other things. Then we head to the north to Minami-Senju Station.

At the station we go through a tunnel under the rails to the area where there are many *izakaya* (bars) and restaurants. We go in through a door and go upstairs. There is a small bar. “Sneaker”

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<sup>4</sup> The Japanese often dub these kind of public labor agencies “Hello Work” offices. It may be purely coincidental that this kind of casual work is called “hollow work” in English, but I consider it possible that there could also be a lingual misunderstanding in question.

<sup>5</sup> This is hardly true because according to Fowler (1996 p.226) the day-laborers’ unemployment fee got lowered to 26 days in two months in the mid-1990s. Earlier it was 28 days a month. Gill (2001 p.72) suggests the same. The information given by “Sneaker”, however, suggests that there could be ambiguous information about the subject among the homeless of San’ya.

<sup>6</sup> A small white book for the registered day-laborers, where they collect stamps from the employers.

<sup>7</sup> According to Gill (2001 pp.71–72) this was 7,500 yen. It may still be the same.

tells me both the keepers and the customers are Chinese. He greets them as his friends. So, not all Chinese are bad after all! I have my doubts, but I get in and they greet me. We talk about Finland and other things. And then: “Sneaker” buys me a cola drink! A Chinese male customer tells me a funny joke about San’ya: “*San’ya no hito wa mittsu ni wakareru: rôdôsha, hômuresu to seikatsu hogo.*” (“There are three kinds of people in San’ya: workers, homeless, and welfare recipients.”)

After some time I exit the bar.<sup>8</sup>

Tamahime

19:30

There is going to be a *takidashi*. People are sitting in a row on the inner concrete embankment of the park. Some other people are here and there. “Deshi” is still playing go. “Ookami” sits in his own place smoking a cigarette and reading a paper. They seem not to worry too much about the *takidashi*.

19:50

So far nothing has happened, except of course many homeless talk to each other. I walk through the park. I am not scared of anything at all, even though it is dark, and everybody is giving looks to me. I think at least some of them already know me.

Before I had a small chat with “Ookami”. He is sober, and he is totally different from the drunken brawler I witnessed yesterday.

In the street corner there is a motorcycle shop. In front of it there is a young girl testing a motorbike. A different world.

It is soon 5 minutes to 8 p.m. The crowd is getting up. The *takidashi* organizers arrive a couple of minutes before eight. On the front seat there is a familiar man: “Dynamo”!

I participated in handing out the *o-nigiri*. I join an older woman. We go to a tour to the place where the *shokugyô anteisho* is. The woman tells me about their group: It is Hoshi no Ie. [This was the one “Pro” told me about.] They started some 13 years ago. It is not only *takidashi*, but in their headquarters they have meetings for the homeless, they give the homeless little tasks to perform, some advice how to use money, and they also have alcoholic anonymous –type of action and so forth. They are Japanese Christians, and appear to be very friendly and down-to-earth people.

Today there are about 120 homeless. Normally there are about 20 people more, I’m told.

They hand out *miso-shiru* and *o-nigiri*. They have two rounds, so that everyone gets two portions, as long as it lasts. “Dynamo” tells me that afterwards he goes to clean up the Iroha Arcade, where many homeless return to sleep and drop the waste. “Dynamo” emphasizes that there should be absolutely no garbage left afterwards. Otherwise they are forbidden to continue the activity. The same concerned FBJ, as I was told earlier in their *takidashi*.

20:30

I leave Tamahime for today. “Deshi” is already sleeping, as are the two others on the western side. “Ookami” is eating. I change a couple of friendly words with him. The man in a shed may be sleeping, I can not tell about him.

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<sup>8</sup> Field notes, September 16 2003. See pp.??? This was written partly when it happened, and partly afterwards as I remembered it. I met “Sneaker” once more in the Johoku Welfare Center *takidashi*, see p.???



(San'yūkai patrol and information. Also Tamahime with "Deshi" and "Taido".)

September 17 2003 (Wednesday)

Today straight to San'yūkai and to patrol. The route goes from Suijōbasu Noriba (a "river bus" stop) to Tsukiyama-kōen along the banks of Sumida-gawa.

Lots of people, not enough food. I am a target of a scam at one point, one man gets two portions. One man is almost left without food, but then the cavalry, or the second patrol, arrives, and there is enough food.

We tell everyone about *iryō sōdan kai* on the forthcoming Sunday in Tsukiyama-kōen. One man in the park was looking very ill, and we call an ambulance.

When we left San'yūkai, we had 100 portions. But the amount of needed portions is rising to over 120-130. There is not enough food left to be handed out to the tents next to the street we normally visit.

I do not know yet, if the aforementioned man has to go to hospital or not. His face was scabby above his other eye. Some of us are trying to get his pants on.

"*Tōnyōbyō*", diabetes. The man is having troubles with his kidneys. I am told he has been hospitalized two times before, but he was thrown out on both times. Now it is going to be the third time.

The paramedics arrive with an ambulance. They start to ask the man many things and measuring blood pressure and so forth on a fast tempo. I would be confused: "What hospital were you in?" "What has happened in your eye?" "Where?" "When did you get to the hospital?" "Have you got other sicknesses?"

The paramedics write the information down to their gloves. They also have helmets. [I think they have to use them just in case, if there is going to be an emergency situation or something.] Black shoes, grey tidy trousers, blue jackets, and white respirators.

They stretch the man into the ambulance.

San'yūkai

16:30

In the meeting there is talk of the man, whom we saw last week at San'ya Nobori. He has another kankōhen, as does "Joker". The man gets a referral to a hospital in Shinjuku, but he says he do not want to go. He has his belongings and his drinking. I wonder why they want to send him to Shinjuku. It is far away. [But maybe this was the only place that accepts him.]

When we returned we drove past Tamahime-kōen. The games were on there.

"*Ude ni yori o kakete tsukuru.*" [Meaning "to put all one's skills into something." It means the games.]

18:00

Tamahime-kōen

*Go* goes on. "Deshi" plays against the same man as yesterday. Next to them there is a *shōgi* game going. They played the *shōgi* yesterday at the exactly same place. [But this may be just coincidental.]

I get a nice advice when I present myself to one man who is not homeless but a day-laborer. He is standing bolt upright and speaking very deliberately. He has a yellow band around his head. [I'll call him "Iaidô".] He says that using the word "*chôsa*" is not good: "*Chôsa wa dame. Benkyô wa daijôbu.*" He also tells me he has practised iaidô as well as some other arts. He shows me and "Deshi" some aikidô/jû-jutsu moves using "Deshi" as an *uke*! But only halfway, luckily. This is a fun moment for all of us.

"Ookami" is cleaning up and organizing his place.

I tell "Iaidô" that he impresses me as a *samurai*. He says: "*Saite no josei...[??] Hanayori dango...* [meaning "today people are more interested in practical over the aesthetic"] *Kaiketsu... Kyôsantô...*" [Do not understand the latter part...]

"Deshi's" partner quits playing. They have played *go* from 2 p.m. Before that "Deshi" was sleeping.

I go to a nearby vending machine bar with "Deshi" and "Iaidô". The space was an open room of a building, like a garage, and it contained three or four vending machines (tobacco and drinks) and a couple of high tables, but no chairs.

"*Ashita seikatsu dekiru ka dô ka wakaranai. Kanjiru, shôbai dekiru kara. Kotoshi yatteiru. Kishimi. Mukashi no koto mada dare ni mo hanasanai. Muzukashii. Ienai. Kakunin shiteimasu.* (I do not know, if I can live tomorrow. But I can still feel, because I can do street-selling. I'm doing it this year. I will grind to a halt. I am not speaking about my past to anyone yet. It is difficult. I can not talk about it. I confirm this.(???)") This is "Deshi" speaking. But there are many things said I can not understand. Frustrating. Actually the last sentence could mean many other things too. It could even mean, that someone could identify him, or that someone could be identified.

Here is one thing I hear: When I try to explain to them why I think it is necessary for me to observe the daily behavior of the homeless, they start to "wonder" can the cats or dogs be understood by observing their behavior!

With "Iaidô" I also talk about world politics, martial arts, and - of course - Finland, comparing it to Japan.

"Iaidô" said that, when I asked him earlier about *samurai*, there are no more *samurai*-hearted men in Tôkyô, unlike elsewhere in Japan. [The same kind of things were told by "Corleone" at San'yûkai.]

[Earlier that day many things happened at San'yûkai, see notes. One important fact I heard was that the *risutora* hits hardest the men in the middle of the company hierarchies. But this is not so surprising, after all. Some historic info from Takazawa as well: in the beginning of the Edo-period the people were driven away out of the way of *samurai*, but later they returned. About the social security: Now people seem to be queuing for it. However at the same time more people are becoming homeless, and they do not necessarily apply for it for different reasons. This, as well as the deaths, affects the number of the homeless.]

Today I also saw "Gardener" watering the plants in the evening, but I did not speak to him today.

"Iaidô" leaves Tokyo tomorrow already.

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(First some San'yûkai info, maybe not relevant. Then preparations for sleeping in the park. Some good observations.)

September 18 2003 (Thursday)

13:55, in the van

I am sitting in a half full van. “Driver” is driving. He is one of the regulars, participating almost every Thursday. “Grumpy” is also in the car. [Normally the homeless were not travelling by car.] Also two women, I have not met before. One of them is some kind of a peace activist. She talks loudly all the time.

We go to the good old regular tour to “Ryôgoku-shita”, which means the area on the eastern side of the Sumida river on the river-level from Ryôgoku-bashi to Komagata-bashi. Another patrol goes the same route but above us on the upper platform, namely “Ryôgoku-ue”.

I meet many familiar ones, especially in the latter part of the route. Also the mentally disoriented “man out of this world” is still living at the same place, and he even looks as healthy as two years before. He starts to make his peculiar gestures and moves: he points at one painting, “shoots”, points at the sky, shoots again, turns again towards the painting, makes a sign of the cross in his chest, makes honor, another cross, puts his hands together. He repeats this a couple of times, without making the sign of the cross.

[I never saw this man communicating in any other way than this. He had himself painted the embankments around him. The characters he had drawn represented angels and demons. He also had put mirrors against the embankment. It seemed like he lived some kind of recurring event in his mind over and over again. He always humbly accepted the food he was given, but often afterwards gave it to pigeons. Allegedly he did scavenging when he got hungry. An interesting character, but because I have not enough knowledge about psychology, I can not make too far-reaching conclusions about him.]

San’yûkai

18:00

Next I interview the leader of San’yûkai.

This is also going to be the night I am going to do *nojuku*, meaning sleep in the open, under the stars at Tamahime-kôen. I tell the San’yûkai people about my idea, and they seem to understand it. Before I leave San’yûkai around 18:30, I receive some supplies from “Long-beard”: cardboard, a blanket, and cigarettes. The latter ones are also meant for making communication easier. It is still warm and not raining, so I am not afraid of getting cold.

When I arrive at Tamahime-kôen the *go* games are over. The boards are still there, however, so “Deshi’s” friend try to teach me the rules. Too difficult! We also start to discuss the politics. “Every politician is evil.” “Everyone hates the emperor because he is a god.” One of the old men almost with tears in his eyes told me that he hated the emperor from the bottom of his heart. This had something to do with him having misfortunes in his life, and the reason for this hate was that the emperor was not a human but a god, and they were humans. [This was surprising for me, that the hatred toward the emperor can be very deep among some Japanese. I was told at the San’yûkai about this, but this time I had a first-hand experience.]

19:30

Everyone is going or have already gone to sleep. The cats are still on the run. “Deshi” has already dropped off to sleep. He is lying on the hard ground between the street and his merchandise. “Ookami” is in his own place, almost asleep. “Clumsy”, who has troubles both walking and sleeping, looks very miserable. He looks at me, and changes his place regularly. I pity him, but I also feel a bit threatening him being around. I can not help thinking that it is possible that he is after my belongings. I also think that he may be jealous of me getting a better treatment than him. I wonder where he sleeps. He is sitting on the round log between “my place” and the fence.

“Ookami” has a radio on, playing old Japanese pop music. He tells me to use my bag as a pillow so that it will not be stolen.

I wonder if someone just took “Deshi’s” futon. I saw the man who did it. [And I forgot this soon afterwards.]

A moment ago “Deshi’s” friend told me that the Christians are also evil. “*Me ni miru to wakaru.*” He said he is 60 years old, and that he would just like to die. He is almost crying. I try to encourage him.

“Clumsy” tells me that there was no work today. Is he working then? [I do not ask. I find it hard to speak to this man. I do not know where to start. The reason is that at the same time when I pity him I am a little afraid of him.]

I have equipped myself with minimum supplies and a 200 ml bottle of sake. (After I left San’yūkai I went to eat in a nearby restaurant. I do not think that the homeless go there. I had all the cardboard and the blanket with me. I wonder if the restaurant keepers wondered anything!) “Ookami” wants to provide me with a futon and another *mōfu*. I can not decline the offer.

But I also feel sorry for the “Clumsy”. He does not deserve the treatment he gets.

A couple of men go scavenge the thrash piles in the corner of the park. “Ookami” says they search for “*kuimono*”, food, and that they only come by night. [They do not want to lose their faces.]

I take a walk and observe: I count 20 people sleeping, but later it could be more. On the western side there are actually more than I thought: there are the regulars + one sleeping next to “Deshi”, two more sleeping on the folding chairs, and “Clumsy” sitting on a round log.

“Ookami” repeats two times the things he has already said, and then he prepares his bed. There are some of his friends [??] still awake around us. Then “Ookami” makes some moves, the meaning of which I can not understand.

20:20

I lay down on my bed. The air is still a bit sticky, but it is not too hot anymore. I know I can not get sleep in a while, but I do not care. I find the position very pleasant. I have a feeling I could stay like this forever.

“PH” is silently talking to himself. He also has a shelf which contains games. It is also covered with a tarpaulin, to cover it from rain. It is placed between two trees. Also two clothes lines are placed above it, and there is one towel hanging on the other one. The bed is a real bed with two futons, one as a mattress and the other one as a pillow.

20:30

Two members of San’ya Yobawari no Kai arrive at the scene. They hand out some rice balls to everyone present. A young man and a young woman, who have very polite tone in their voices. They must be pretty confused seeing me there. (First I thought why they come here when most of the people are already trying to get sleep, but then I realized that it is still most probably a sign of some kind of compassion towards the homeless. These people may know little about the homeless way of life, but they may still have their hearts in the right place.) At least “Clumsy” gets something to eat. This makes me happy.

I notice suddenly that there is lots of stuff around the shack which stands against the fence. There are clothes-screens, a saucepan, some other things under the tarpaulin. On the roof there is a plastic box, metal sheets and so forth. Of course plants too. I wonder if they are his own.

I do not know yet, what hides under “Ookami’s” tarpaulin. He also has two little carts. As a bed he has a thick mattress and a couple of futons. He gave me a copy of this arrangement earlier. The mattress and the futons.

“Clumsy” gives some food to a cat as well. What can I say.

The man with whom I spoke earlier today, who remembered me bringing him a lunchbox last week, is already sleeping. I try to talk more with him tomorrow.

Some analysis: to make solitude easier one can have a radio, play *go/shôgi*, keep cats as pets, and have friends and meetings.

Today I saw one homeless washing himself up with soap using the water of the drinking fountain.

“Clumsy” comes to ask for a cigarette. I give him two. Sponsored by San’yûkai.

22:00

I go to the toilet. When I return, “Clumsy” asks for one more cigarette. I hand him one more. When I get back to my place, I see “Gardener” sitting outside his shack drinking beer. We talk silently for a while about alcohol. He says that there are not that many people living in the park nowadays. I can not tell, however, what he is really doing, for living or otherwise. He has too cute kittens.

On the eastern side there were three people sitting on the concrete platform talking. I can not tell, are they residents here or not. [Probably not.]

Now “Gardener” is flattening out the cans. He does Arumikan at least.

I return to my bed. “PH” leaves for somewhere, returns soon. “Ookami” is talking in his sleep: “*Bakayarô!*”

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(Waking up in the park. Preparations for morning market. Also other morning rituals. Karikomi happens. Two men lose their minds in different ways. Couple of new friends.)

September 19 2003 (Friday)

2:55, Tamahime-kôen

I wake up to the silent singing of the bird, coming from my alarm clock. Both “Deshi” and “Ookami” wake up at three o’clock, exactly. [Must be some kind of routine, because they did not have any alarm clocks ringing.]

One of the new [?] men is already awake. He is sorting out plastic bags. He also has a some kind of broom. [I’ll call him “Broom”.]

“Deshi” immediately puts his sales desk to its place.

3:20

Next desk appears at the street corner. “Ookami” continues preparing his place to its day-condition: first he puts his bed stuff to the other cart.

“Broom” is sweeping up the place nearby. “PH” gets up. “Ookami” folds the tarpaulin and places it over his bedware.

3:25

The third desk appears on the street. “PH” gets back under the blanket and starts to smoke a cigarette. “Broom” is sweeping. [Was this some kind of therapy, or actually an effort to keep the place tidier?]

I observe “Ookami’s” merchandise and belongings: In a polystyrene box there is kitchenware. When he slightly opens more the tarpaulin, I can see a big number of plastic boxes. But mostly it is kitchenware and especially dishes.

I get some eggs for breakfast from “Ookami”. I see San’yūkai’s “Hoshi” in the crowd. We go for a walk. He tells me how before the streets were full at 3:30 already. The most crowded it is around 5 am. He says that he used to do this himself, when he got unemployed; suddenly his boss had just quit. Now “Hoshi” is on welfare.

Surprisingly “Ookami” puts the cover back on the merchandise. I see that in the other cart there is a some kind of a statue wrapped in plastic.

“Hoshi” is wandering from one desk to another. This is also his past, and it seems that he wants to save a part of it. It is nice just to walk around and see what is up.

It is this time I notice that the drinks in the vending machine are about 20 yens cheaper than in some other areas.

I wonder if “Ookami” made just an inventory. Soon he says: “*Mô yameta. Kyô wa dame nan da.*”

Later “Deshi” clarifies: “*Kyô urenai kara mô yameta datte.*” [I never saw “Ookami actually sell anything. Maybe he was nervous about my presence, maybe not.]

“*Asa ikutoko wa*”, says “Waiter” on the other side of the street. He has combed his hair, shaved, washed up, and generally put his appearance together. But he has not found work today.

“Pro’s Club” is sitting and enjoying a morning tea. They tell me that this is a routine for every morning. One is wearing construction work type of clothes. We talk about Finland of course. They tell me they have understood that Finland used to be an English colony a long time ago. [I wonder, if they meant the crusades or some war-related stuff. Most probably this is connected to the Crimean War, if anything. Using a word “colony” is anyway an exaggeration.]

Today it is *karikomi*: The cleaning operation starts now for the “Pro’s Club’s” part. They put tarpaulin next to the slide, and start to pile up things on it: danbôru, futon, chairs, bags, boxes.

“Waiter” also moves his belongings.

6:30

I took a walk in the environments. The *yoseba* is very quiet. I did not see any recruiting, but maybe I was late. There are more people at the Fukushi Center. [That was because the jobs are allocated there at 6:30. I did not realize it at the time.]

I also witnessed a Yamanichirô (a day-laborer support organization) demonstration on the streets. It is not very impressive. There are hardly more than 6 people marching all the way. One woman, one man in a wheelchair. A couple of them wear the traditional white respirators. For teargas or anonymity? I record a small piece of them shouting some slogans.

6:55

Many are leaving the morning market. I make guesses about *karikomi*: the belongings must be transferred to elsewhere, so that particular places can be cleaned. [More later.]

I take some photographs. I find another Christian organization HQ, a place called Nihon no Kurisuto Kyôdan San'ya Tendôsho.

Again I get back to the now closing market area. I go to talk to "Deshi". He is throwing away some stuff. He says he can not save everything: something just can not be sold.

A friend I know from San'yûkai arrives. He is amazed to see me there. He is going to get something from some nearby place, after which he takes it to the nearby church.

8:45

*Karikomi* is about to begin. Some women wearing helmets are working on the plantings on the northern side. A car has been parked on the street near the plantings.

"Waiter" comes back at the same time. He was eating breakfast at a burger place. He says he goes there every morning, because they sell nice and easy breakfast for cheap. He continues that he has worked on the restaurant business as a waiter. After April he has not got any work. He says he hates construction work, and that there is not that work either available anyway. At nine a.m. he goes to *yakusho* just for the hell of it. He criticizes the modern day restaurant service: it is mostly form without substance, especially the speech and the superficial use of *keigo*.

Today for the first time I see people inside the caged area: three old men playing croquet.

I have a talk with one of the *karikomi* people: He says that this gardening is the only thing they do today. He also denies that they had anything to do with the warning left here earlier. [A bit later I realized that these people had nothing to do with the actual *karikomi*. In the beginning this was a very difficult thing to get wise up to.]

On the north-western side the *go* and *shôgi* games have started again. "Deshi" is playing against the same man as yesterday.

Suddenly a fight breaks. A grey-shirted man is drunk and raging. [He might have been the one who lived in the farthest corner of the park.] The old man with a walking stick grunts. The friend of the grey-shirted man is trying to cool him down. Grey-shirted tries to throw a stick at "Arumikan". "Arumikan" runs away, and tries to hide.

9:40

The police arrives soon. At the same time I realize that another part of *karikomi* has begun: Men are throwing garbage and unnecessary belongings the platform of the truck. The homeless help the workers. [This is noteworthy.] On the eastern side the police separates the fighters: the grey-shirted man and old man with a walking stick, who is drunk as well, but not physically aggressive. The officers listen carefully to everyone. The officers go also see "Clumsy", who has been on his knees all the morning.

The *karikomi* continues: everything that is loose is thrown away, and then the place is swept. The officers take "grey-shirted" and "Clumsy" away to the patrol car. "Clumsy" may not have physical injuries, but mentally he is a wreck.

10:00

The *karikomi* is over. "Clumsy" has been released from the patrol car, but he is not okay. He is on his knees, looking at the ground, scratching the asphalt with his fingernails, and moaning incomprehensibly. The old man with a stick is drunk and shouts "Bakayarô!" at him all the time.

The others are putting their stuff back to their places. One man is still cleaning the toilet. The thrash piles are being sorted out.

I do not know what to do, so I go to San'yūkai. [This was a “cowardly” move. I should have tried to find out, what was wrong with “Clumsy”. Instead I ran away, and I did not even ask anyone about *karikomi*. But at the time I may have felt tired and incapable to do anything.]

I return to the park in the evening to write maps before it gets dark. I meet two men: allegedly the other one does *shôbai*, the other one is on welfare. They live in a nearby *doya*. [Unfortunately I do not remember more details about our conversation.]

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(Beyond this there is not too much described interaction. More like opportunities for it.)

September 20<sup>th</sup> 2003 (Saturday)

[The day for the San'ya elders. *San'ya chiki kei rô kai*. A happening organized for the San'ya elderly. Most of them are former day-laborers, and at least few of them have experienced homelessness in their lives. But this is a more communal thing, and has no direct relevance here. It is a kind of “post-homelessness therapy”, but also more than just that.]

[I went to Tamahime a couple of times during the day.]

Afternoon, Tamahime

The weather is bad. I realize that rain covers are attached to many shacks and tents. “Deshi” is not here, nor is “Ookami”. Nothing seems to be happening. People are waiting for the rain to end. They are either staying inside their shacks or they have left the park for somewhere safe from the rain.

September 21<sup>st</sup> 2003 (Sunday)

Midday, Sumida park

*Iryô sôdan kai* (medical counselling meeting) is organized in Sumida park. It is raining a lot. A large tent (about 8 x 3 meters) is pitched behind the square where the San'yūkai *takidashi* normally happen. There are three centers: one has clothes to be distributed as well as counselling; the second is for counselling only; and the third has food to be handed out. This is organized once a month by the local Médecins Sans Frontières. The homeless can talk about other than medical things as well. This time the weather affects the participation negatively: there have been only 30 homeless so far. I know most of the organizers from San'yūkai. I also meet “Dynamo” there, and we talk a little. It was this time “Dynamo” surprised me with his straight-forward opinions about those homeless, who according to him did not really strive to help their own situation. But this was something one could not see from “Dynamo's” behavior, as he was participating and helping as strenuously as ever. There is talk about the usual subjects: chances to find work, accommodation in dormitories and maybe in an apartment after that, SSS...

Afternoon

The weather is really bad. It is a *taifû* raging on the sea. In the afternoon I go to San'ya and to the Fukushi Center. “Sneaker” was telling the truth: there is a *takidashi* to be organized. The tables are loaded with vegetables, large cans are being lightened.

Soon “Sneaker” comes to greet me. He is smiling. I hear from him that this is some kind of a collective San'ya thing, everyone does what they do to prepare the food. It is a part of a weekly cycle on Sundays and Thursdays: first they do it here, then they go to Ueno in the afternoon, and



finally to Shinjuku in the evening. The cans are owned by a church next to Fukushi Center, as well as the car that carries them to other areas. Food comes from those who give it. I hear this from both “Sneaker” and a member of the church. I get a raincoat and a knife, and soon I am there cutting vegetables. There is a small active group doing it trying not to mind the rain. A helluva rain. The old man next to me is a professional in cutting vegetables. He has the same rhythm all the time, and he utters words like “*saa*” all the time.

I go back to Tamahime. No life there, a miserable sight. Cannot see D or O. I remember walking past “Pro’s” friends, and they were just lying still under the covers without a speaking.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2003 (Monday)

Today I visit Tamahime before noon. “Ookami” is fine, doing the inventory and checking up the possible damage. Everything seems to be okay, except for a Korean wooden peacock, which has got a bit wet. According to “Ookami”, it was still raining a little in the morning, so there was no *shōbai*. “Ookami” says that “Deshi” is in the Fukushi Center.

I go to see “Pro’s Club”. “Pro” is not there himself, but his friends are. I talk a little with them, and they crack some jokes for an answer. I talk a bit more with one of them, who seriously corrects my Japanese every time. [Unfortunately I do not remember what we talked about.] Everything that has got wet is put hanging to dry. It is not raining anymore, but it has been a difficult two days for the homeless.

[After this I went to interview the leader of Shinjuku Homeless Shien Kikō. On the following days I interviewed homeless by asking them about the possible meanings of “home”, but my observations about the social interaction and behavior of the homeless pretty much stops here.]

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[On September 26th and 27th 2003 I interviewed some homeless living along the Sumida River about the meaning of “home”. I have used only few of those answers here, so I did not include the transcription in the notes.]